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Ordinary Technoethics



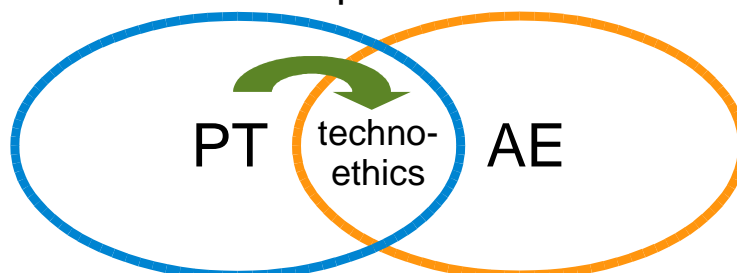
Institut Télécom / TEM Research / ETOS

michel.puech@paris-sorbonne.fr

technoethics

- ▶ intersection
Philosophy of Technology / Applied Ethics

- a vibrant future for phil-tech



- ▶ premonition in Bunge 1977
- ▶ recent deployment in Luppicini and Adell 2008
- ▶ foundational program in Mitcham 1997
- (references on the last slides)

ordinary

- ▶ Ideal Language / Ordinary language split in analytical philosophy
 - see Rorty 1967, the *Linguistic Turn* textbook
- 1) Ideal Language
 - from logical empiricism
 - a neopositivistic project to construct science as a perfect language
- 2) Ordinary Language
 - from Wittgenstein II, J.L. Austin, ...
 - a deflationist project to scrutinize real uses of language in everyday life and describe the implicit metaphysics in it

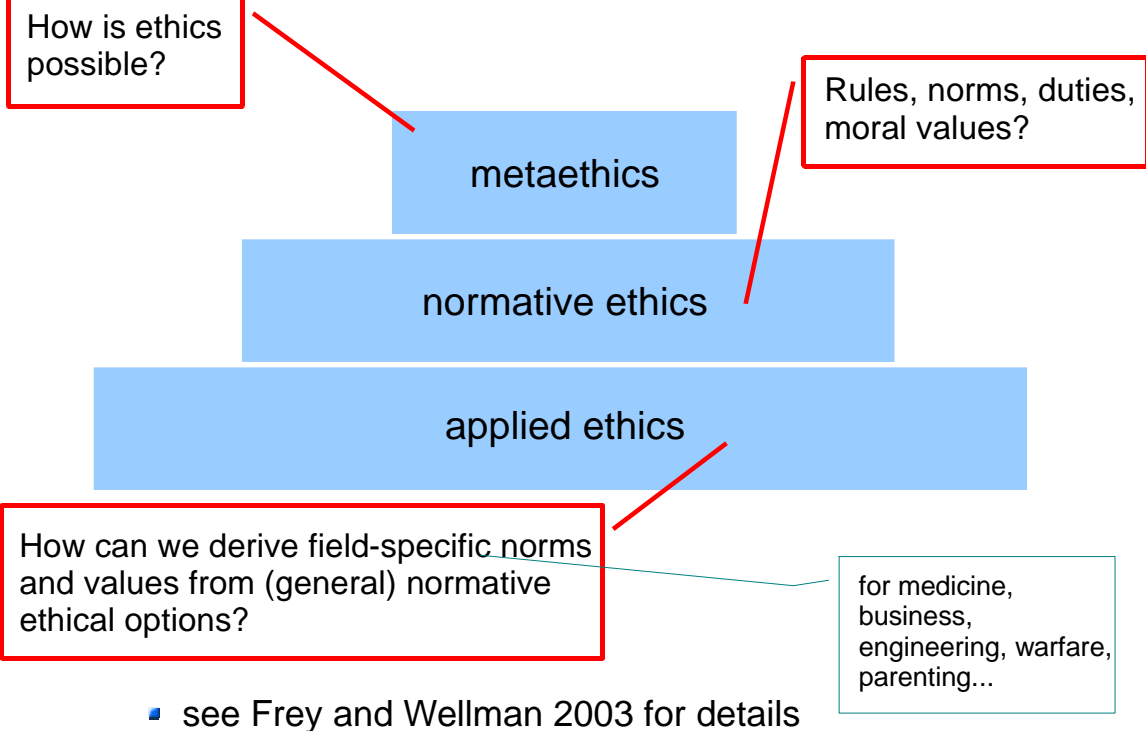
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the problem with Ideal Applied Ethics

- ▶ my vision:
 - an Ideal Technoethics trend is obvious in mainstream academic applied ethics
- favored by the current bureaucratic implementation of ethics in public and private affairs
- → a new language (Ethical Newspeak), scholastic disputes and agreements...
- → an ethical technocracy, or Establishment



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- ▶ why a problem?
 - because it does not work
 - people (pretend to) read the Ethical Committee Recommendations, pin the Ethical Chart to the wall and let out a sigh ...
- ▶ we know why it does not work:
 - Varela 1999, pragmatics of values:
 - ethical action happens in situation: “immediate coping with what is confronting us”, concretely
 - it is not a judgment after deliberate analysis
 - ethics is “skill”, not knowledge
 - it can be an expertise, but a transparent one (not scholastic!)

ordinary phil-tech → OT

- ▶ the importance of *ordinary* technologically-laden behaviors
 - Borgmann 1984 + Borgmann 1995
- focal things and practices → ordinary technoethics
 - e.g. cooking a real meal for a real dinner
- an expansion from the ontology of *the ordinary involvement with artifacts* to the implicit values in this involvement
 - = not only *significance* (ontological and symbolic value) but *action* (pragmatic value)

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ordinary phil-tech → OT

- ▶ skills not principles
 - progressive and deep learning of ethical *skills*
 - example (just one): writing an email
 - more appropriate
 - when to send it, to which one of the person's addresses, how long the message
 - → ethical skills, in progress in everyone's ordinary life (private and professional)
 - nothing in it comes from school, moral lectures or pious readings
 - the *ordinary* empowerment of users (≠ extraordinary technologies)
 - it is what characterizes the Internet as a whole
 - = an *ordinary ethical empowerment* of users, consumers, citizens

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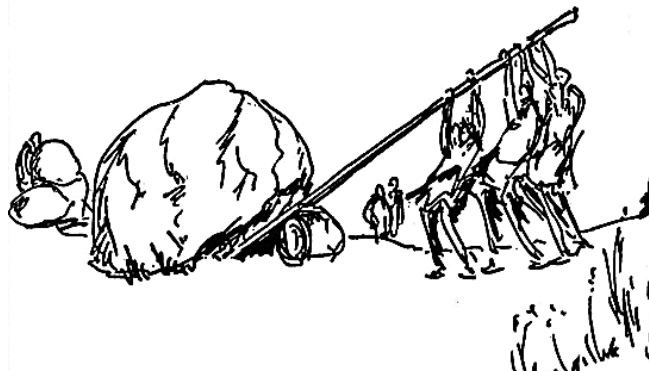
▶ applied examples:

- earphones, laptop...
- cellphones: choices – pay-as-you-go account and dumb-phone
- transportation: walking/driving – stairs – ...
- food
- energy consumption
- violence representation (TV, movies, video games, etc.)
- → the micro-actions and micro-skills of OT

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▶ end user empowerment

- technoethics on the user end / on the designer end
- OT consciously focuses on the user end
- even engineering ethics (designer end) is more and more driven by real uses
 - e.g. food hygiene (fat and sugar) or food micro-politics (organic, no palm oil)
 - → shaping the technostructure upwards from the bottom of the pyramid



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ressources and methods for OT

▶ 1- wisdom cultures

- not heroic wisdom (the sage as an exceptional hero), but ordinary wisdom
 - everyone can be a *junzi* (君子), the Confucian ordinary performer of ethics
- awareness of the ordinary
 - away from the “blasé Dasein”
 - a Buddhist and Zen capacity of attention to the ordinary
 - mindfulness psychology
- self-reliance
 - responsibility not as accountability (justification by discourse) but as ethical responsiveness (see Hershock 2006)

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ressources and methods for OT

▶ 2- importance and care

- see Harry Frankfurt's *importance of what we care about*
- OT stresses the importance of micro-uses and micro-concerns with artifacts and invites us to *take care directly*
- = *reappropriate* moral agency
 - some moral agency seems to be built-in in the artifact, most of the time, just because we do not (properly) *care*

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▶ 3- reappropriation

- ordinary sustainability
 - reappropriate lost skills and do not delegate the essential (time, health, education, environmental accountability...)
- satiety and frugality
 - reappropriate the skills to cope with material and immaterial abundance

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concluding remarks

- ▶ shifts that Ordinary Technoethics involves:
- 1) a shift from the scholastic to the pragmatic
 - 2) a shift from the political to the ethical
 - 3) a shift from delegation to personal sustainability
 - 4) a shift from avidity to frugality

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▶ this presentation online:

<http://michel.puech.free.fr>

▶ contact:

michel.puech@paris-sorbonne.fr