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***The Electronic Body between Fragmentation and Concentration
Tracing Symptoms for an Ethics of Multiplicity***

One of the new frontiers in sociotechnical environments is the dissemination of body representations and bodily identities across very different contexts. From marketing databases to on line avatars, not forgetting embodied prosthetic devices which materialize the hybridity of the contemporary body, many trends and phenomena go back to the transformation and inclusion of the body as both corporeal and not corporeal (id)entity. Communication habits and patterns, as a consequence, consider bodily representations in electronic environments as a starting point for new modalities of conduct.

If ethics is a set of manners and propositions defining good conducts, as well as parameters of appropriate behaviour and social acceptance, how does the electronic body intervene in setting up such parameters?

How are sociotechnical assets and devices involved into circumscribing what is ethically appropriate?

This contribution attempts to articulate the conceptual poles which constitute extremes for the transformation of body and communication. Mediated communication, that means mediated relationships, seem to be not able to avoid some reference to the body, in both its material and symbolic configuration (e.g. Avatars in Second Life and other hyper real environments; physical location of the communication partner in mobile conversations; tactics of reciprocal control through video and camera phones).

All this can be considered as a set of traces, or ‘symptoms’, of a broader phenomenon which transforms the unit of analysis and evaluation of ethics, as well as of what is considered as ‘ethical’ when referring to the electronic, hybrid, mingled body as communicational actor.

Starting from the concepts of fragmentation (distribution) and concentration (saturation), the paper will focus on how actors and their conducts are imbued with a seamless web of sociotechnical references which make ethics, and ethical judgement, not separable from the continuity between the social and the technical, therefore, irreversibly multiple.

Giuseppina PELLEGRINO was trained in Communication Science at the University of Siena. She received a PhD in Science, Technology and Society at the University of Calabria, where she is currently lecturer in Social Communication at the Faculty of Political Sciences. She visited the Research Centre for Social Sciences at the University of Edinburgh and the Lancaster University Centre for Mobilities Research. Her main research interests concern sociology of technology and organizations, mobile and ubiquitous communication, media and everyday life. She is currently working on mobile and ubiquitous technologies in mobile work, as well as on science and technologies in the laboratory. Amongst her latest publications: “Rhetoric, Practice, and Context-Sensitivity in Sociotechnical Action: The Compass Case”, in *Issues and Trends in Technology and Human Interaction*, edited by C. B. Stahl, IRM Press, 2007.

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