

Ethics in Translator and Interpreter Training: from Intention to Freedom in the Digital Era

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Abstract

This article attempts to present an alternative perspective to ethical approaches in translator and interpreter training by applying the principles of the 'Hacker Ethic' (Himanen 2001) to the activities undertaken by translators and interpreters in humanitarian-related events. The paper will begin by a discussion on Ethics in interpreter training, a topic which has long been addressed as a vertical transmission of a list of solutions to specific problems within the exercise of the profession (Pöchhacker, 2004: 164), without a conscious effort to accept that professional practice is influenced by the translator's ideology, not to mention the speaker's, or the interpreting lecturer's (Hatim and Mason, 1990; Baker, 2006, among others). In this regard, a modern ethical challenge for a trainer could be to introduce a wider range of discourses in the interpreting lab, thus avoiding the exposure of trainees solely to traditional speeches and contexts where ideological stakes may arguably be downplayed.

To raise the students' awareness to a second level, trainers and lecturers may also choose to introduce them to the values of the Hacker Ethic, an alternative ethos for the information age considered to be closely related to the 'virtue ethics' of the writings of Plato or Aristotle, which differs from prescriptive deontological ethics and advocates open access to information and education, decentralisation of authority and the improvement of quality of life and work in the digital era (Levy, 1984; Stallman, 1999; Castells, 2001). I shall define the concepts of 'volunteer interpreting for development', and briefly explore the definitions of 'virtue theory', 'deontological ethics', 'ethos' and 'morality' from a critical perspective, as a prelude to defining the ethical values of the Open Learning Model (OLM), the didactic counterpart of the Hacker (work) Ethic. We will argue that these values are relevant to various occupations within our field, such as 'interpreter training as an activity', 'interpreting as a profession', or 'academia as the professional environment for translator and interpreter training', each providing countless examples of real-life ethical dilemmas that can be used in training. From the perspective of the actors or beneficiaries of the educational process, the main aim of this critical exercise is to explore existing frameworks, widely accepted in other professions, and to apply a novel Learning Model which could help democratise interpreter training and empower students to address ethical dilemmas from non-prescriptive viewpoints. The paper will conclude by exploring not only the possibilities, but also the limits of the OLM in the training of "interpreters for society". In the words of Lévy (1997:91), the computer revolution and its offshoots, such as cyberspace, have the potential to democratise knowledge. But bridging the digital gap is still a requirement before more people are given the freedom to learn.

Keywords: Ethics, translator and interpreter training, Hacker Ethics, free knowledge

Introduction

When we teach, translate or interpret, when we teach translation and interpreting or when we write an article on Ethics in the curriculum in a specific field of study, we are continually deciding ethically. Every decision we make in our daily lives, conscious or unconscious, has ethical underpinnings whether we notice or not, whether people judge it to be good or bad. We are moral animals in everything we do, but also in what we do not do. What we do not say in a class, the tiny nuance we omit in a translation (Martín Ruano: 2009), what we do not include in the curriculum, or what we fail to do or decide to continue not learning about, affects the world that surrounds us and our students' and colleagues' *Weltanschauung*.

Ethics is a practical discipline, contrary to general belief, not merely theoretical for the simple reason that it studies human actions. Other than the first distinction between prescriptive deontology and ethics that will be treated below by means of specific examples, experts on work ethics distinguish two facets within the latter: the individual and the collective *ethos*, both essential in the constitution of personal moral character and the collective *habitus* (Bourdieu: 1979). This *ethos*, or ideal consuetudinary system, exerts pressure on the individual, deeming as 'good' only those who acted according to norm or long-standing custom. According to Etxeberria,

Anyone wishing to shape the Ethics of a given profession must be conscious of the scope of Ethics as such. This scope is shown when we address Ethics in its fundamental dimension. Being aware of this helps us avoid those approaches to Work Ethics which are strongly anchored on the codes provided by professionals themselves. It is important to state that Ethics is something more, it is a complex dialectic articulation of both the deontological and teleological aspects which must have their reflection on Work ethics. (Etxeberria, 2002:195).

In the case of Translation and Interpreting Studies, Ethics and norms have not yet been studied or created from the point of view of the quest for plenitude, happiness or goodness (virtue ethics). In the literature we find critical and well-researched articles from a normative *Weltanschauung* aimed at either reaching an ideal of coexistence (Gouanvic: 2001, Marzocchi: 2005) or at examining ethical quandaries and power relations of the translator and interpreter professions at either the microtextual, macrostructural, historical, ideological or metadiscursive levels (see, for example, Harris 1978,1990; Baigorri: 2009; Vidal: 2009).

A translator and interpreter trainer wishing to explain to a class the fundamental difference between deontology and ethics in professional situations may choose to first address the matter with the following example as an introduction, before focusing on real-life situations in our field of study. Looking at ethical values in another profession can be interesting, as is always easier to see the straw in the eyes of the other, especially if the situation is taken to extremes. Students usually enjoy watching *House*, and are happy to identify and distinguish the ethical from the deontological issues involved.

Dr. House, the renowned fictional maverick medical practitioner who is addicted to painkillers and notoriously disrespectful of hospital rules, is being investigated by police detective Michael Tritter on charges of "unprescribed narcotics possession". He cannot ask his friend and colleague Dr. Wilson for more prescriptions, as he is also being investigated after House forged his signature in order to obtain his painkillers illegally. House tries to force Dr. Chase, a member of the diagnostic team working under him, to write him a new prescription. Chase refuses, not on medical or deontological grounds, but

because it is in his interest, as he would "rather lose his job than his medical licence". In the end House resorts to Dr. Cuddy, hospital administrator and Dean of Medicine, who signs the prescription for him on ethical grounds: she knows that House will have to prove he needs the painkillers when the case reaches court; she wants him to remain in practice in her hospital because, however eccentric and disrespectful of coworkers and patients, he is the best doctor around. Having her patients' best interest at heart, as well as her own, Cuddy prefers having a genius addicted to drugs in the hospital, than no genius whatsoever. She even commits perjury to cover up for his breach of the deontological code. Only after the painkiller starts provoking hallucinations does House finally admit he should seek help. (*House MD*, season 3, episode 8).

This example taken from a fictional situation portrays in a clear manner the differences and relationships between the basic definitions regarding Work Ethics (Etxeberria, 2002) and constitutes interesting teaching material for a lecturer wishing to explain the ABCs of deontology and ethics both to undergraduates and postgraduates of any given profession. Cuddy's *good intentions* are based on what she understands as *virtuous behaviour* but also on her own *interest*, which is only partly that of her patients'. Her objective is to offer her patients the best *quality medical service*, but also to be seen by others as a *good administrator* in her *professional community*. Michael Tritter represents the law and is seen as a figure who inflicts *punishment* when rules are broken in a given *society*, where everyone has *rights* and *obligations*; when all else fails, there is a legal framework. Wilson is the *friend* whose *trust* House has betrayed because he has given priority to his addiction and not his *morals*. Forging Wilson's signature is therefore a triple *offense*: it is a breach of the law, of the written deontological code, and of their friendship. He thus fails to harmonise *freedom* and *obligation*. Wilson, however, is critically aware that greater collective good will come from lying than denouncing his friend, in spite of the fact that he has to make a *sacrifice*: he cannot write prescriptions on his own anymore and his *status* may have been compromised. He and Cuddy make the *ethical* decision to try to seek alternative, unofficial ways of sending House to a rehabilitation programme.

Yet, as with the use of real-life tasks in the training of translators and interpreters, instead of fictional texts or speeches, one may feel that bringing into the classroom real-life ethical problems of a given professional situation would be a step forward when trying to dialectically put together the main three levels of morality –values, ethics and metaethics (Etxeberria: 2002)–. Thus, in the most realistic way possible, lecturers can choose to enliven theoretical explanations with examples borrowed from colleagues who visit the class. One option would be to make digital video recordings of professionals who have encountered an ethical dilemma in their practice. The lecturer might wish to spice up the story with anecdotes to make it more interesting and motivating as a case study, perhaps changing the names of the protagonists and spicing up the story with anecdotes to make it more interesting as a case study. The following example is one such embellished real-life ethical dilemma one colleague came across. In the form of a case study, it may be of use in class to ask students how many times the individuals involved took ethical and deontological decisions, and why:

Laura is a professional interpreter of Scottish origin who has just moved to Besançon (France). She is offered an interpreting job from French into English at a medical conference in a nearby ski-holiday resort that will take place the following Friday morning. She knows she is one of the few native speakers of English in the area having received interpreting training into English, and that French interpreters in Besançon charge 300 euros for half a day's work doing *retour*. Laura has never worked in Besançon before and has only one or two contacts among fellow interpreters in the area who are able to interpret

both ways. She does not like them very much, however, because they treat her unrespectfully; she believes they are bullying her because she is a potential competitor. Laura is aware that the client values quality and would be glad to pay more than the usual price in order to have a native speaker of English interpreting at the conference. Laura's former student Susan, who lives in nearby Strasbourg, with whom she has worked in several occasions and is a very helpful and solidary boothmate, gave birth a few months ago. Although Susan has good contacts in Strasbourg and interprets often, she is in need of money after her husband lost his job. Laura sends an e-mail to Rémy, the President of the Association d'Interprètes de Besançon, forwarding him the client's name and e-mail address, informing him that 1. She has been offered an interpreting job; 2. She is going to charge 400 euros for half a day's interpreting into English and 3. She is bringing her friend Susan from Strasbourg as a boothmate. She explains to him that Susan is her former student and she is looking forward to working with her again. A few days later, Laura receives a nasty e-mail from Nathalie, one of her colleagues, accusing her, in the name of a group of fellow interpreters, of being *unethical* (sic) for various reasons. The e-mail is alienating and, far from scaring her into not breaching the unwritten deontological code again, it encourages her only to keep quiet about her future interpreting jobs with Susan.

Students can be moved to study the ethical implications of what Laura did in a real-life situation by putting themselves in each individuals' shoes in a critical manner. A basic exercise is role-playing, which will hopefully encourage empathy and conflict resolution among the trainees: Laura knows she has acted according to self-interest, but she has also helped a friend in need and has taken into account her client's best interest. Susan thinks only about the well-being of her baby, and has never thought that interpreters in Besançon should be forbidden to go to larger Strasbourg, where she lives, so she does not think she is doing anything wrong by working in Besançon. Rémy is an atheist, grandfather of three who is looking forward to retire in peace. Nathalie is undergoing a divorce and is also in need for cash because she is about to lose her house to the bank. Students can be asked to imagine and write Nathalie's e-mail, and Laura's reply.

Before asking the students to write an essay on one of the innumerable ethical dilemmas involved, the teacher may wish to encourage them to come up in pairs with their own questions, and possible answers, on Laura's case study: What are the interests and motivations of each individual? How many times did Laura breach the deontological code? Was she faithful to her own values? Does deontology favour lobbying by definition? Is it related to corporatism in any way? What would happen if no-one followed deontological codes? When confronting this dilemma, will students agree to the fact that rules are necessary and give their own real-life examples? And, when conflict arises, does Laura give preference to ethical considerations over the respect for deontological codes? Is there a solution to Laura's conflict? Was Nathalie's reaction a constructive one? Can you describe the perfect boothmate? Why does Laura feel alienated? Does her e-mailing the client's details agree with the ethics of Cyberspace? Is Nathalie following the "Netiquette"? What would you do if you were Laura? And finally, does the teacher preach by example? What would the lecturer have done in Laura's shoes? Does a teacher's sense of responsibility come into conflict with moral judgement, prudence or practical wisdom in an institutional context? Exploring these questions with students will hopefully allow each individual involved in the teaching and learning process to distinguish the various levels at which Ethics is important in our profession.

In this paper, we will be dealing not only with ethics and morality, but also with the Metaethics of our field of study, that is, we will reflect upon the structure of the way we think and talk about Ethics in translation and interpreting, taking Ethics to its third level. We

will attempt to do so not by theorizing, but by putting it into practice as we give examples, while constructing knowledge from a critical perspective. Homesteading our collective ethos, our 'noosphere' from a different paradigm, the arguments presented here are based on daily moral dilemmas encountered by an interpreting lecturer searching for alternative perspectives to traditional Ethics in translator and interpreter education. We will attempt to apply the principles of the Hacker Ethic to the activities undertaken by translators, interpreters and educators.

1. Intention in 'Translation and Interpreting for Development'

One possible key concept to be explored is that of 'intention' of doing good in a given society or improving a work environment, which contrasts with the predominant deontological ethos of our profession. Thus, 'Translation and Interpreting for development' has been defined as translating for the benefit of humanitarian purposes, whether the interpreter is a paid professional or not. It is a distinction made according to the *intention* of the interpreter but not according to the voluntary nor the paid or unpaid nature of the work performed. Interpreting for development includes humanitarian-related conference interpreting in any technique, but also interpreting in contexts where NGOs or international entities interact in a multilingual environment: international organisations, government-driven initiatives and sufficiently-funded private entities, as well as Public Service Interpreting, performed by paid professionals (Brander de la Iglesia, 2010) and, on the other hand, volunteer interpreting in meetings or conferences for insufficiently-funded NGOs or entities. The latter constitutes a unique setting where professionals, students, lecturers and ad-hocs work together for free, such as in a Social Forum. Interpreting for development also takes place in the classroom, wherever that teaching context may be, and the classroom can in turn be taken to real-life situations of interpreting for development. If the ethos of a community does vary according to latitude, the intentions of its members do not; in the same way as concepts such as ethics, or translation, have been considered natural and perhaps universal (Harris: 2009), it could be argued that good will to help others communicate, and the transmission of values in the teaching of interpreting (see Brander de la Iglesia, forthcoming) can also be natural and universal, as it is done in a spontaneous manner, consciously or unconsciously, through practice and by being surrounded by other moral animals.

If we choose to live in a given community, we might feel an ethical impulse to collaborate in its construction and improvement, whether it is in exchange for the personal benefits it brings or in order to live in peace. Accepting we are ideological animals, and that deontology cannot cover all moral assumptions, would imply there is a need to ask ourselves why a decision can be considered ethical and from which perspective. The intention to do good within personal or collective morals guides our decisions when we act ethically, for instance, against deontological rules. By way of example, translators and interpreters, like members of any professional community, are ethically able to choose whether they perform volunteer work and offer their skills for free to people who need them — they even have the right to do so. If, as it has been traditionally stated, we have the deontological obligation of keeping our skills, language proficiency and knowledge of the world up to date for the duration of our professional life, then perhaps we are ethically bound to be aware of the revolutions taking place in civil society, and ask whether there is space for change in traditional ethical structures, questioning them critically and constructively. One such revolution, with unlimited potential for change and improvement, is taking place in Cyberspace.

2. Training Translators and Interpreters for Development in the Spirit of the Hacker

Ethic

In this paper, 'hackers' will refer to computer programmers and community enthusiasts known for having launched the free software movement – as opposed to 'crackers', referring to those who break into computers and are considered cyber-criminals. Since the start of the hacker culture in the 1970s, hackers have influenced greatly the forming of both deontology and work ethics of the newly-founded computing programmer community, and the free software philosophy hackers promote has become an example of how new paradigms in Work Ethics can be successfully put into practice in the Internet. In Cyberspace, the sharing of free software, free knowledge and volunteer professional work triumph daily, in the shadows of the 'paid' professional work carried out by multinationals in the computer industry.

In many ways, the virtues and disadvantages of traditional deontology in translation and interpreting mirror those of commercial software development and closed-source programming. This is directly linked to the way hackers look at the world: they want to understand the events in depth, to reflect upon the rules, rather than have a simplified version of what happens spoon-fed to them by mass media. This attitude is similar to that of people who look for "primary sources" to a piece of news.

Twenty-year-old translation and interpreting students nowadays spend much of their time in Cyberspace and know about deontological rules such as the the Netiquette, mastering levels of interaction many older generations people are still unaware of (Plough: 2009), in a medium they consider as being natural, since they were born into a world in which computers had long existed and learned to use a mouse before they could write their names in ink. In order to raise the students' awareness to a second level, trainers and lecturers may also choose to introduce them to the values and Metaethics they already master and have experience in. Respecting the rules and preaching by example is a time-old trick used by any vocational teacher who has ever wished to instill deontological values in a group of trainees. As Hortal highlights, "nothing contributes more to the training of moral people than allowing them to grow, study and live among moral people" (Hortal: 1994:19).

The Hacker Ethic, an alternative ethos for the information age, is considered to be closely related to the 'virtue ethics' of the writings of Plato or Aristotle. It differs from prescriptive 'deontological ethics' — presented as codes of practice — and outcome-based 'consequential ethics' such as the Protestant work Ethic (Himanen, 2001), predominant also in translation and interpreting. 'Virtue ethics' focus mainly on what a specific ethical decision taken says about the character of the moral agents and their 'intention', where as 'consequential ethics' focuses on whether the outcome was good or bad according to norm.

The central aspects of the Hacker Ethic notoriously include 'free', open, access to computers, information and 'FLOSS' (free, libre, open-source software); decentralisation of authority and a meritocracy of sorts, based on the social model of the Net Academy – a continuously evolving learning environment created and improved by learners at varying levels of expertise –, as well as the improvement of quality of life and work in the digital era (Levy, 1984; Stallman, 1999; Castells, 2001). Exploring first ideals such as freedom, anti-authoritarianism, creativity and social commitment in the digital era in professions as new as ours could contribute to the improvement of deontological codes in translation and interpreting.

In *The Hacker Ethic and the Spirit of the Information Age*, Himanen (1992) takes up Levy's (1984) definition of 'hacker' in the era of the computer revolution: the hacker is an enthusiast, though not necessarily a computer engineer, who calls for the free access to information and technology (Himanen, 1992:69). He also proposes an alternative to the Protestant work ethic which considered work and earning money as the purpose of life and called for the humbling of the worker's soul. Himanen's critical attitude towards both capitalism and communism (ibid.: 45, 61), together with the fact that the hacker ethic could be described as axiomatic (vs. deontological and prescriptive), makes the value of his 'Hacker Work Ethic' not only philosophical, but social and revolutionary, in a more radical, ideological sense. It constitutes a novel approach, arguably of anarchist inspiration in its anti-authoritarianism, reminiscent of the Enlightenment (education for all) and certain Marxist principles of social justice (in status and against alienation of the workforce).

In the academic context where translation and interpreting are learned and taught, knowledge-sharing (collaborative glossaries, booth manners...), open access to information, education and tools (wikis, open encyclopaedias...), principles such as critical dialogue, non-hierarchical effectiveness and student empowerment can undoubtedly be applied to learning environments and institutional structures, materials, or even the development of a learning philosophy (Himanen, 2001:73). 'Libre knowledge' and free technology imply that knowledge and learning cannot be separated, and free knowledge necessarily entails the freedom to learn (Stallman, 2002). From the perspective of the actors or beneficiaries of the educational process, the main aim of this critical exercise applying the Hacker Ethic to our field of study is to explore existing frameworks, widely accepted in other professions, that would help democratise interpreter training. Allowing for space in our collective consciousness to develop and define values and principles in interpreting studies will enable trainers to share the translation and interpreting community's ethos with students and empower them to address ethical dilemmas from non-prescriptive viewpoints.

The ethical values of the Open Learning Model (OLM), conceived at first as the educational counterpart of the Hacker (work) Ethic, are relevant to various occupations within our field, such as 'interpreter training as an activity', 'interpreting as a profession', or 'academia as the professional environment for translator and interpreter training', each providing countless examples of real-life ethical dilemmas.

The OLM allows for authority to be available to anyone on the basis of achievement and peer reviewing, in a spirit of free knowledge for all. Pioneer hackers, such as Richard Stallman, advocated freedom, refusing to profit economically by closing off access to information (ibid.: 59, 69) — hence the use of the word 'free' as in 'free speech' and not as in 'free beer', also applicable to volunteer translation on the Internet (Jung and Brander, 2007). Receiving information produced by everyone, while withholding information produced by oneself, presented an ethical quandary to early hackers, as is the case for other professionals, notably academics in our field of study. The model, however, is based on critical dialogue and non-hierarchical effectiveness, which presents an ethical quandary to any academic applying the Hacker Ethic to their work environment.

Himanen's 'Hacker ethic' makes space for creativity, a value of essence to any educational proposal in academia and still to be explored in our field, be it at the textual or meta-ethical levels. Virtual communities and the World Wide Web, with their potentially infinite applications, could have become a metaphoric Utopia, which contrast to the tangibility of an invention such as the printing press. We could ask ourselves whether the Internet exists other than in our minds; these issues are currently being discussed by 'philosophers

of technology'. Yet even the Internet, because of its decentralised, enemy-resistant military origins (Lévy, 1997:208), and despite the efforts of early hackers, reflects a non-virtual socio-political structure based on private servers and companies creating wealth for themselves. Large businesses rule the Web and there is an institutional hierarchy mirroring the global importance and presence of certain countries, leaving little space to address social issues, or to care for those who are on the edge of survival, cited as one of the values of the hacker work ethic (Himanen, 1992: 134, 140).

In the same way, new ethical paradigms from pedagogical studies have influenced Translation and Interpreting and are linked to the values proposed in the Open Model of Hacker Ethics, intimately related to the hacker Open Learning Model (ibid.:73) which describes a Platonic 'Net Academy', differing from scholastic medieval teaching in its lack of hierarchy as practised in the old seminars and still preserved in academia throughout the centuries. Even when they 'go virtual', Universities and academics tend to reproduce the hierarchy and learning models of a monastic school (ibid.:76), applying a *teacher-oriented* model. Translation and interpreting studies are no exception (Kiraly: 2000, Torres del Rey, 2005:170). However, like social constructivists in our field, hackers believe in what they call a *learner-oriented*, scientific and research-based model:

The wider significance of the hacker learning model is its healthy reminder to us of the potential in the original idea of seeing the academic development and learning models as identical. We could also use this idea to create a generalised Net Academy, in which all study materials would be free for use, critique, and development by everyone. By improving existing material in new directions, the network would continuously produce better resources for the study of the subjects at hand. (Himanen, 1992:77)

Notions such as the fostering of independent thought and play a key role in the potential of this learning model and of the Net Academy, which could in turn be of interest to critical pedagogy (Kanpol, 1999), as well as to those lecturers and teachers who believe in student empowerment in a community of builders of knowledge where everyone is a learner (Kiraly, 2000:33). Empowerment and freedom are also the main link between educational or ethical proposals of different natures, such as Cortina's education based on citizens' values (Cortina, 1997) and research proposals such as action research, which affect our field of study and our profession as translators and interpreters; failing to notice this link, whether consciously or unconsciously, could be perhaps ethically irresponsible as professionals, but especially as teachers, as we are participants in the learning and teaching process and may be in control of side issues involved. Finding shared values such as 'caring', 'social justice' or the intentions behind 'translation and interpreting for development' within a community as wide as that of Translation and Interpreting, which includes all nationalities and languages, is even more difficult, as would be proposing a framework where those values could be taught through the use of volunteer work (Brander de la Iglesia: 2010). Yet the Internet provides an unexplored sphere of human thought, a noosphere that may surprise the hesitant.

Concluding remarks

In this paper we have attempted to show that it is indeed possible to help students reflect upon all levels of ethical quandaries in real-life translation and interpreting tasks. From specific ethical dilemmas in the texts we translate and the speeches we interpret, to how we help colleagues in the workplace, in the booth and in academia, or from the way to deal with clients and bosses to key concepts such as alienation or mobbing, in this paper we have tried to ask ourselves *how* a lecturer can go further in the *translation journey*

proposed by Vidal (2009: 166), by taking one more critical step forward to the next level of Meta-ethics. Including Ethics in the curriculum would facilitate self-dialogue on the part of all participants in teaching and learning through the humbling process that comes from becoming critical. It would also allow for a dialogue with others that is not teacher-oriented: a Meta-ethical dialogue that does not seek to excuse behaviour from the moral highground but which aims for coexistence and creative answers.

Bearing in mind the fact that concepts such as ethics and ideology overlap inextricably, as do the definitions of vocation and passion³ in hackerism and in the teaching of translation and interpreting, students should be made aware not only of the possibilities, but also the limits of the Open Learning Model in the training of translators and interpreters for society. On the one hand, the computer revolution has inspired and motivated new generations (Lévy, 1997:91). On the other hand, Hacker Ethics has its flaws, and not only those that come from external circumstances such as lack of technologies and Internet in developing countries, or those stemming from cultural relativism. At a personal level, the 'moral animal' is human; each individual has specific difficulties at being self-critical and this is something one does unimposed, in a dialogue with oneself. Needless to say, if it cannot be imposed, some people will never feel the need to have that inner dialogue. From a collective perspective, the hacker ethic is only an ideal and, as such, it has internal flaws: defining 'virtue' is not easy, especially in a community that has its own time and space, and it would perhaps be hopeless to attempt to improve a given ethos by defining virtuous values within that very same ethos, like a dog chasing its tail. Human beings, however, have also proved throughout history they can develop moral theories swiftly.

As the Hacker Ethic does not focus on actions, but on virtues, some may argue it is not suitable for the definition of rules within a given professional community. This quality, however, makes it invaluable from the point of view of a lecturer wishing not to give prescriptive solutions, but to humbly encourage ethical critical thought. Hence the importance of exploring not only the possibilities, but also the limits of the OLM in the training of "interpreters for society". In the words of Lévy (1997:91), the computer revolution and its offshoots, such as cyberspace, have the potential to democratise knowledge. But bridging the digital gap is still a requirement before more people are given the freedom to learn.

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