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# Distance education ethics

*How technique impacts morality and deontology*

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Not attended by Olivier Marty

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## Abstract

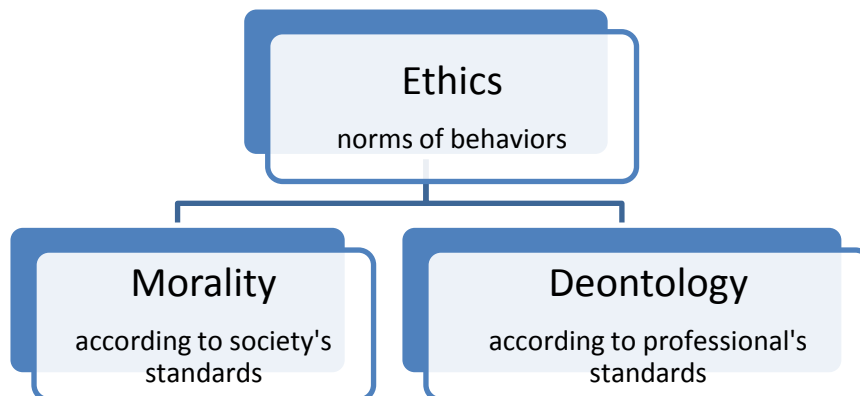
Using a hybrid *episteme* of descriptive education science and prescriptive philosophy of education, I will question the problem of distance education ethics, focusing on how new techniques are impacting morality and deontology. I will focus on every aspect of these ethics: accessibility and neutrality of media as to what concerns morality; then transmission of values and engineering of organizational culture concerning deontology. I will finally study the relationship between morality and deontology, prescribing distance education elitism in order to promote a deontology that will not only be shaped by current morality but will also shape future generation ethics – education being a link between generations.

## Keywords

Distance education – deontology – ethics – moral – e-learning

## Definitions: on ethics and distance education

To begin with, I will put forward a French philosophical distinction that I defended in 2011, for my PhD in ethics (Anonymous, 2011, p6)<sup>1</sup>. Based on etymology, I defined ethics as the study of one's *ethos*, that is to say behavior, life-style or practices. Within ethics, one can distinguish moral and deontology: moral is about the study of consistency with customs of a society (not necessarily a national society); deontology is about the study of rules, norms and values of a profession. On the one hand, one's ethics are judged according to external fitness to standards of behavior within his or her society, on the other hand, one's ethics are judged according to internal obligations to his or her profession.



In this document, I will apply this framework for ethics studies on education, and more precisely on distance education. One can base a definition of *education* on its etymology linked to the Latin word “conduct” – the idea of accompanying someone – and the Ancient Greek *pedagogy*: it has to do with leading someone younger, very often on the path of knowledge.

Distance education is a specialized version of education: through the media, the learner is guided distantly by his master. There is an old tradition of books as a media but this is only based on contents and method: there is no proper guidance. Therefore, modern form of distance education was developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with postal correspondence and industrialized in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the rise of radio, television and Internet – today known as open education or e-learning. Distant interactions between masters and learners were allowed by these media: thanks

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<sup>1</sup> Anonymous O, 2011, *Ethiques héroïques et tauromachie. Les valeurs du combat selon Frédéric Nietzsche*. Available on [www.theses.fr : http://bdr.u-paris10.fr/theses/internet/2011PA100067.pdf](http://bdr.u-paris10.fr/theses/internet/2011PA100067.pdf)

to letters, email, online forum... the younger are educated by the older, collectively or individually guided towards a learning objective<sup>2</sup>.

I therefore distinguish open resources, such as the ones that can be found on the Internet (on Unesco's online platform <http://www.oerplatform.org/> ; or Europa's equivalent: <http://www.openeducationeuropa.eu>) and a complete educational device, including a range of services: orientation, advising, help, motivation, certification... like in Open universities and Massive online open courses. The flow of knowledge available online is channeled by distance educational devices in order to be better absorbed by the learners. Information therefore turns into formation, that is to say in both method and pedagogy.

This new social fact of distance education triggers many ethical questions: what is distance education deontology – or internal rules and values of the profession? Which of the professional practices are moral – in tune with society? Last but not least, with Stephan Ramaekers<sup>3</sup>, one can question the social and societal role of the educator: is there a link between moral and deontology within the ethics of distance education?

## **Is morality linked to deontology within the ethics of distance education?**

We will study the ethics of distance education by analyzing the impact of new technologies on teaching and learning. I mentioned the common techniques of distance education having an impact on didactical practices: postal correspondence, radio, television, email, online forum... In this contribution, I will focus on the latest techniques and look at *massive online open courses* that are creating a *mass pedagogy* based on e-learning. For example, a team of three teachers can educate many thousands of students in a very efficient way: a few pedagogues educate a mass of learners. I will first analyze the morality of this media and secondly how the deontology of the profession is being transformed. Last but not least, I will make an enquiry into the link between moral and deontology of distance education.

In my PhD, I defended a principle of independence between the two realms of ethics: morality and deontology were not correlated. Therefore, one could be a deontological person (following all the rules of his profession) without being a moral person (because his or her profession

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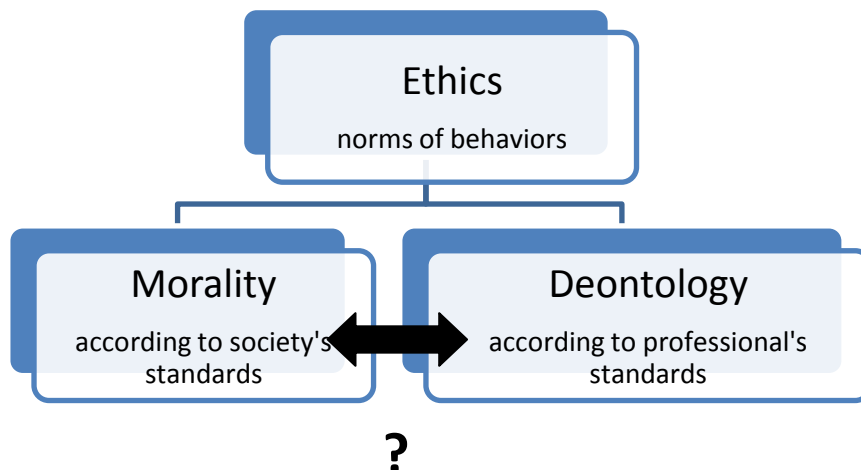
<sup>2</sup> Distance education can be more precisely defined by "six key elements (...) : Separation of teacher and learner- Influence of an educational organization- Use of media to link teacher and learner- Two-way exchange of communication- Learners as individuals rather than group- Education as an industrialized form.". See Mohsen Farmahini, 2012, "Ethics principles in distance education", in *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46, pp. 890-894.

<sup>3</sup> <http://ppw.kuleuven.be/home/english/research/ecs/les/staff/stefan-ramaekers>

was independent of contemporary standards of behaviors). I will show at the end of this contribution that this principle of independence is not true in the case of education. Indeed, education as a profession has an important role within our societies. John Dewey wrote:

*“a community or a social group sustains itself through continuous self-renewal, and this renewal takes place by means of the educational growth of the immature members of the group” (Dewey, 2008, p15)<sup>4</sup>.*

Since the best of a given society is transmitted to the next generation through education, educators are highly controlled: they are seen as role models by the next generation and cannot be independent from the rest of society. In the case of educators, deontology seems to be strongly and positively linked to morality.



### **Epistemology: distance, description, prescription.**

In a recent conference in Prague (Anonymous, 2013)<sup>5</sup>, I promoted an epistemology for education ethnography that can be applied to this contribution on the ethics of distance education. The whole idea is to take distance to one’s practices (I am an engineer in French distance education, managing teachers and designing curricula) as well as one’s scientific community (I am a researcher

<sup>4</sup> Dewey J., 2008, *Democracy and Education*, Wilder Publications. See chapter 2 : Education as a social function

<sup>5</sup> Anonymous, 2013, *An epistemology of distance. Ethnography of training activities*, Prague, conference: “Ethnographies of higher education: researching and reflecting “at home”. Available online: [http://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/docs/00/83/37/39/PDF/epistemology\\_distance.pdf](http://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/docs/00/83/37/39/PDF/epistemology_distance.pdf) and accepted for publication by *Ethnography and Education* (estimated year of publication of the revised version: 2014). See <http://educations.voila.net>

in education sciences at Cnam's Centre de Recherche sur la Formation) – without being too distant from oneself, that is to say avoiding identity shifts and hesitations.

In this case of studying ethics, I distance myself from my practices as well as from the scientific reviews focused on distance education (including the one of the institution I work for). These educational practices and scientific scripts will be taken as raw material for a philosophical analysis.

I will add to this epistemology of distance a useful distinction of another member of the International Network of the Philosophers of Education (INPE). Andrés Mejía, in his article "My self-as-philosopher and my self-as-scientist meet to do research in the classroom: Some Davidsonian notes on the philosophy of educational research" (Mejía, 2008)<sup>6</sup> uses a double epistemology, based on both scientific description and philosophical prescription. He reminds us (p.4) about the classical "separation between on the one hand the activities of educational scientists, doing fieldwork and observing the way the pedagogical world is; and on the other hand the activities of philosophers of education, reflecting in their offices about the meanings of pedagogical concepts". The former being descriptive and the later being prescriptive or normative.

Adopting the same *hybrid episteme*, I will first describe the morality of media in distance education, then describe the deontology of distance education professionals. Last but not least, I will prescribe a link between deontology and morality, in order to discuss the inner consistency of distance education ethics.

## **1/ Description of the morality of media**

My first part deals with the morality of media: whether the use of media in distance education is in tune with customs and traditions. An evident answer is "yes": distance education institutions (in Western Europe : French Centre national d'enseignement à distance, British Open university, Spanish Universidad nacional de educación a distancia... followed by many universities since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century) have always used the latest technologies to share their lectures. They have experimented and industrialized postal learning, radio lectures, video lectures and nowadays e-learning tools such as virtual classrooms or virtual learning environments.

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<sup>6</sup> Mejía A, 2008, "My self-as-philosopher and my self-as-scientist meet to do research in the classroom: Some Davidsonian notes on the philosophy of educational research". *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, vol.27, nos.2-3, pp.161-171. Available online: [http://www.prof.uniandes.edu.co/~jmejia/PDF/empirical\\_research\\_in\\_pedagogy.pdf](http://www.prof.uniandes.edu.co/~jmejia/PDF/empirical_research_in_pedagogy.pdf)

But when thinking twice about their practices, two problems arise. We can take as raw material the very titles of scientific reviews on distance education currently published. Let's start with the French *Distances et Médiations des Savoirs (Distances and Mediations of Knowledge)*. This scientific review emphasizes the importance to think about the mediations of knowledge and individuals during a learning process. There is a technical media interposed between learners and this very media entails ethical issues. Does everyone have access to these media (nowadays mainly the Internet in Western countries, but also the radio in Africa for forty percent of the learners)? Is it equally distributed among the population? Our first sub-section will therefore deal with the problem of accessibility as a moral issue.

A second problem arises when considering English-speaking titles of scientific reviews dealing with distance education: the *American Journal of Distance Education (AJDE)*, the *Australian Journal of Educational Computing*, the *British Journal of Educational Technology*, etc.: all note their national identity. There is a paradox between a scope of scientific truth that is universal and a perspective that is local. They try to grasp the universality of media or techniques bias through a regional approach. Therefore, the question is: are media neutral? Can they be considered as a universal and invisible tool or do they imply local and specific bias?

Henceforth, I will deal with the morality of media in two successive discussions: first the question of accessibility and second the question of neutrality.

#### A/ The accessibility of media: equality at stake

The question of accessibility of media is of uppermost importance: how can distance education be moral if it uses technology that is not available to the society? It is what Philip Brey, from the department of philosophy at the university of Twente in the Netherlands, discussed in his 2006 article "Social and ethical dimensions of computer-mediated education"<sup>7</sup> : "distance education does not seem to help people low on the socioeconomic scale who have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education (minorities and the economically less advantaged), and in fact seems to create new obstacles for them. Therefore, distance education may work to deepen the divide between educational haves and have-nots." (p.5)

Media accessibility, in this sense, is twofold: on the one hand there is the question of having the media (nowadays in developed countries a connected computer) and on the other hand the knowledge and the cultural habit of using that media to be educated. It is for this reason that governments foster the spread of tools, such as computers, and decide to educate the pupils with

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<sup>7</sup> Philip Brey, 2006, "Social and ethical dimensions of computer-mediated education", *Info, Comm & Ethics in Society* 4: 91-101, Troubador Publishing Ltd

them. In France, for example, the ministry of education is debating about giving tablets to primary school children and computer-based education at the high school level is becoming a reality. There is a coupled policy: giving access to the media before teaching through the media. This entails a specific ethic: image copyright, best practices of electronic mail and websites to surf on, computer settings and privacy, brand standards and bias and so forth.

I tried to show that equality could be at stake when it comes to media accessibility. On the very same topic of accessibility, another perspective is more positive: the case of people with disabilities. In 2013, French government gave a multi-million euro grant to a public distance education institution in order to give to disabled persons an easier access to education. Indeed, a person who is hard-of-hearing, partially-sighted or in a wheel chair may have difficulties going to school whereas the media can open up education for them, by compensating their handicap. Turning on the volume, zooming on the text or simply staying at home connected to the Internet, disabled persons can have a full new access to education. In that sense the media is highly moral: it allows the whole society, without discrimination, to have access to the contents.

Last but not least, another issue about accessibility and morality of media was raised by Philip Brey in the same article (p.5): "Positively, distance education has been argued to be an equalizer by making academic education more accessible. Most importantly, it has been claimed that distance education may shatter geographical barriers to educational access and provide educational opportunities to people who may otherwise have not been in a position to enter the higher education system". And indeed, the European Union, through the lifelong learning policy, thinks about how distance education can facilitate migrations of populations. It can be the case when a person takes a distance course before migrating, in order to attain a specific knowledge that will help him/she to integrate easily into the country he/she will live in. It can also be reciprocal, once in the new country, to keep in touch with one's previous country and find a better balance. For example, when I was an Erasmus student in England, I kept studying philosophy with a French university through a distance degree program. I could therefore attend both the English university system and the French, acculturating my learning abilities progressively to the former one.

The question of the morality of media has therefore three common good public policy dimensions as to what concerns accessibility: is the technology equally accessible within a society? Can the media open education to disabled persons? Can the media facilitate mobility, migration and integration? The adaptability of distance education to a society's custom is therefore mainly an issue of accessibility. It is however also a question of neutrality: whether the medium used by distance education have an impact on the teaching it conveys or not.



## B/ The neutrality of media: a cultural and gender issue

Since 2011, distance education has been shaken by Massive Online Open Courses (Mooc). Created in North-America, these free online courses open to any web surfer and often counting thousands of students for a few weeks' time, question the homogeneity of media and teaching. Philip Brey develops his argument in writing: "How can diversity of culture and language be valorized in an emerging market dominated by Anglo-American content, supply and technology investment?" As a matter of fact, most of the Moocs on Coursera necessitate Google applications to develop content linked to the North-American culture. There is a *mass pedagogy* where knowledge is recorded and broadcasted by the media and is no longer attached to any particular teacher. The educational performance is raised: with a minimum of costs (video recording, basic programming development within a virtual learning environment thanks to specialized engineers), thousands of students are taught in the American way. Thus, there is a moral concern in the ethics of distance education: the media is not neutral and homogenizes the mind of learners living on five continents.

Sharon Todd has offered a new perspective on the problem of morality, questioning feminism with the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas. In 2003, she wrote an article untitled "A fine risk to be run? The ambiguity of Eros and teacher responsibility"<sup>8</sup>. In this article, she tries and stresses how a medium interposed between the (male) teacher and the (female) learner, facilitates neutrality and minimizes ethical risks such as sexual harassment. Thus she writes (p.1): "The idea that Eros might constitute part of an ethical response toward another is of utmost concern in developing a notion of teacher responsibility, one that can be attentive to the dilemmas facing teachers around questions of intimacy, closeness and physical contact with their students.". Here the technical device buffers the interactions between teachers and learners and neutralize any misbehavior.

Last but not least, I suggest that a medium anonymizes the educative relationship and avoids cultural or gender preconceived ideas. The teacher may not see his student and therefore is more impartial when grading him or her. Learning interactions are standardized and facilitated by a neutral media. Cultural or gender parameters are less of a stigma and equality, once again, is preserved.

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<sup>8</sup> Todd Sharon, 2003, "A fine risk to be run? The ambiguity of Eros and teacher responsibility", *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 22: 31–44, 2003. Kluwer Academic Publishers. Printed in the Netherlands. The book related in Emmanuel Levinas' work is *Totalité et infini*, see the chapter about Eros and caress.

In this first part, I discussed the question of the morality of media, that is to say the conformity of distance education with the rest of society. The two questions of accessibility and neutrality were raised, both of them concerning education equality.

It appears that distance education institutions follow the society's evolution and keep up with the latest technical devices, making them available to all and using them in a neutral way. Let's now look into distance education institutions in order to discuss the other part of their ethics: deontology.

## **2/ Description of deontology within distance education**

Deontology is about professional obligations and duties; here it deals with internal values, rules and norms within distance education institutions. The word deontology therefore encompasses the values that an institution wants to transmit to the learners (academic values) and the organizational culture to be engineered (shared rules, norms and believes framing the community of practice).

### A/ About values and their transmission

Philip Brey, page 2 in the article previously quoted within *Info, Comm & Ethics in Society* (2006), asks the question whether mediated distance education encounters difficulties with the transmission of academic values. Indeed, one could think that the absence of a teacher prevents the students from understanding academic values. He then eludes to this difficulty by stating that there is a distant presence (video recorded or, even better, interactions on a forum or through emails and phone calls) that allows the learners to feel and adopt the values of their teachers. Often, an honor code for the forum and the exams, written by the head of distance teachers, strengthens these values. Philip Brey then quotes John Daniel, vice chancellor of the U.K. Open University. He "argues that 'distance learning can be absolutely consistent with academic values,' if faculty and administrators are committed to them and distance education courses are set up in the right way.". As a result, academic values are transmitted properly if distance education is taken seriously by the academics and the students.

The fundamental value of academic freedom is a specific case. Indeed, with the webmaster and community manager censorship, there is a tierce intervention between the teacher and the learner that limits freedom. Other limitations come from technical standards used in the discipline

taught (peer evaluation, weekly video lecturing, accounting of 'upvotes' in forums...) or within the community of practices represented by the distance education institution (providers chosen, virtual learning environments imposed...). However, one can argue that these are "best practices", that is to say positive limitations aiming at enhancing the quality of the training and therefore fostering students' trust and optimal teacher-learner cooperation. One can argue that this limited freedom has specific rules that strengthen the transmission of academic values, including freedom.

It appears that a specific set of values are created and transmitted by distance education academics. This deontology is about connectivity (to others through the media, to new technologies experiences), compliance of web rules (mutual help on the forum, respect of differences...) and, last but not least, correspondence habits (to answer on forums, to be reactive). How are these values implemented?

### B/ Engineering an organizational culture

Kunda<sup>9</sup> wrote an important ethno-anthropological book about the corporate culture of American high tech firms and how it is implemented within private organizations. This book is relevant to this analysis in two ways. Firstly, because distance education institutions are embedded within the values of these high tech corporations. Secondly, because this culture constitutes a deontology to be promoted.

Distance education institutions in Western Europe are using the latest technologies, whether they are open and traditional universities or other public organizations. Nowadays it is about the industrialization of virtual learning environments (Moodle, Blackboard, online campuses...) and virtual classrooms (with interactive visual presence of the teacher) on a large scale. On the one hand there is a trend for Moocs and *mass pedagogy*; on the other hand there is an individualization of training through optional services such as tutoring and dissertation guidance. In both of these cases, the teacher has to deal with online student behavior and reaction to his or her own teachings. He or she has to be as deontological as possible, representing the rules and good behaviors in this high tech culture.

Richard Smith comments in the *Journal of Philosophy of Education*: "when I write about 'university teaching' I am referring to the activity of academics employed in universities of the sort we find in the Western world. That activity is usually taken to include teaching, research and

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<sup>9</sup> Kunda G., 2006, *Engineering Culture: Control and Commitment in a High-Tech Corporation*, Temple University Press; Revised edition

management or administration, in varying proportions."<sup>10</sup>. This three dimensional description of academic activities (teaching-research-management) is rather common – it is for example what is required to become a French university teacher. I defend the thesis that, at least in the management dimension, it is the duty of academics to engineer an organizational culture that is in tune with new technological devices he uses when teaching and researching.

The academic manager has to improve the deontology of his or her distance education institution, by setting up the right culture (norms, values, rules, codes of honor) within the structure he/she works in. He or she can implement his/her deontological strategic vision by choosing the right techniques, promoting the best practices among his/her colleagues and delivering the optimal messages to the students. This can be done when recruiting his colleagues, when organizing rites and ceremonies of the institution (prizes and awards celebrations), when choosing the titles of his/her team of teachers. When researching, one has to be exemplary as to what concerns plagiarism, privacy policies, image copyright... In a way, this conscious engineering of deontology is paradoxical: whereas the academic works in an old institution aiming at transmitting the best of the past to the new generation, he has to promote an innovative deontology, stressing peer evaluation, online mutual assistance, etc.

To resume, I showed in this part that the transmission of values, and specifically the value of freedom, was not endangered by distance education; and that a conscious effort to enhance one's deontology should be made. I will achieve my development by analyzing how deontology is embedded within morality. Doing so, I will leave the realm of descriptive education science to enter the realm of prescriptive philosophy of education.

### **3/ A moral deontology: two prescriptions for distance higher education**

This section relies on previous descriptions in order to prescribe a moral deontology: firstly by promoting an elitist distance education system whose deontology will shape next generation morality; and secondly by placing distance education deontology at the center of society's morality. By doing so I will answer the question of research: is there a link between morality and deontology?

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<sup>10</sup> Smith R., 2003, "Thinking With Each Other: the Peculiar Practice of the University", *Journal of Philosophy of Education*. Vol. 37, No. 2, (p.1)

This section is therefore no longer a discussion about scientific results but consists of propositions in philosophy of education. Following a discussion about Jasper's<sup>11</sup> argument, it is no longer the realm of scientific knowledge: we are entering the realm of philosophical consciousness – we are leaving science (results) for conscience (what do to *with* these results).

#### A/ Towards elitist distance education: when academic deontology shapes future morality

We have discussed the recent trend of Moocs, focusing on mass pedagogy of thousands of students learning degree contents. This industrialization of online methods, broadcasted on the Internet with a few services (evaluation, certification, guidance and help on the forum), improves the image of traditional distance education – and all along challenging older distance education institutions, which have now to face this competition by moving on from paper-based distance learning to online devices.

A predictable consequence of this distance learning development and broad recognition is the shaping of tomorrow's morality. Since a large number of learners will have gone through distance education, distance education institution's deontology will have a strong impact on the next generation. The young students are now learning – online and with a remote university – what is good or bad, what ought to be done or avoided. And in twenty years' time, when occupying power positions, they will shape the world according to the values transmitted.

They will be open to what is now considered as marginal: mobility when studying might become a norm. New social models might be valued: a one year sailing family trip while attending distance high school, being an athlete or an artist, constantly moving from one place to the other while graduating at university... Sending children to a remote school for a better education might sound strange, whereas a whole family temporary residency in Eastern countries, while learning in Western countries could become normal. And new opportunities might open up students' visions, like taking parallel courses in North and South countries at the same time, ubiquitously.

This is about the evolution of the deep structure in mentality and social habits. Our academic way of life and deontology may pass on to most average educated citizens in the next generation. However, there is another challenge: what if distance education was not only a quantitative and

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<sup>11</sup> This movement from science to conscience is expressed here: "In another attempt Jaspers tries to clarify the role of philosophy and its difference with science. (...) Based on such a view he calls the results of science as knowledge but the result of philosophy as consciousness". Quotation by Saeid Zarghami Hamraha, 2011, "Investigating the relationship between virtual education and social aims of education from the viewpoint of existence philosophy with an emphasis on Jaspers thoughts", paper presented in the International Conference on Education and Educational Psychology (ICEEPSY 2011), published by *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 29 (2011) pp.1750 – 1758 ; page 3.

massive issue, but also a qualitative and elitist curriculum? What if schools of merit were created online to replace French *grandes écoles* or worldwide institutions alike?

Richard Smith, in his introduction to *Education Policy: Philosophical Critique*<sup>12</sup>, defines the “education establishment” (p.2) as an elite who decide educational policies and authorized debates about the future of universities. What if this “education establishment” was to be trained by distance education institutions? As a consequence, distance educated women and men, whose values were shaped by a distance education deontology in tune with the previous generation morality, would rule the future – deciding about the right policies to undertake, including education policies. Such distance education elite institutions or programs would be the way to keep up with numeric society.

Let’s now answer more accurately our initial problem about whether there is a link between deontology and morality. I showed that there were many relationships; I will now try to define their respective position.

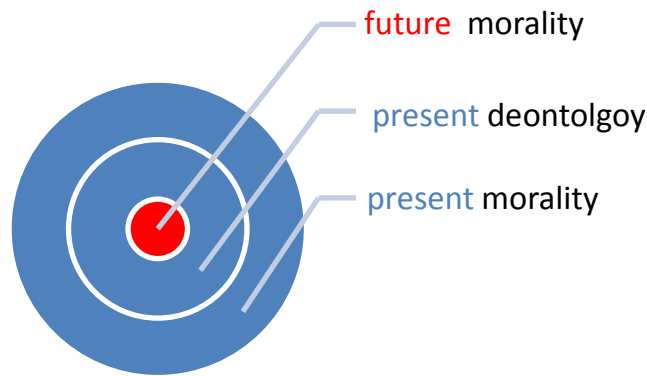
#### B/ Core culture: distance education deontology at the center of moral requirements

I’ve described how current distance education institutions are using the latest techniques when delivering their courses to learners. By doing so, they were promoting a deontology in tune with a society’s morality. I then promoted elite distance education institutions, shaping the future morality by their deontology. Current moral norms frame distance education deontology and this distance education deontology shapes future morality.

Thus, there is a strong link between morality and deontology as to what concerns distance education ethics. Deontology is both moral and moralizing: distance education deontology is structured by present morality and is structuring future morality. Let’s try to visualize this embeddedness of morality and deontology.

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<sup>12</sup> Smith R., 2013, “Education Policy: Philosophical Critique”, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, Wiley-Blackwell



## Distance education's ethical structure

To come back to John Dewey's words that we quoted at the beginning (from *Democracy and Education*), the core culture of our society is concentrated within schools and universities' deontology – and distance education institutions are part of them. Around this center of the present time, there is an external circle of current morality (legitimate knowledge and practices, authorized arts and crafts). The center of a given society, the core of its culture, is transmitted to the next generation by education: it is the smallest circle at the very center of our graph, representing what is transmitted to the next generation.

It is therefore of utmost importance to know whether educational institutions' organizational culture, and their deontology, is in tune with what they have to transmit: that is, the morality of society they are embedded within.

### Conclusion: ethics as a condition for education

Using both descriptive education science and prescriptive philosophy of education, I have questioned the problem of distance education ethics, focusing on how new techniques are impacting morality and deontology. I have focused on each aspect of these ethics; first accessibility and neutrality of media as to what concerns morality; and second the transmission of values and engineering of organizational culture as to what concerns deontology. I have finally studied the relationship between morality and deontology, prescribing distance education elitism in order to promote a deontology that will not only be shaped by current morality but will also shaping future generation morality.

To open up the debate of distance education ethics, I want to come back to Emmanuel Levinas' source of discussion on the relative place of ethics and education. Commenting the French philosopher, Sharon Todd (p.5)<sup>13</sup> writes: "Rather than assuming that education can teach ethics, what I am advocating there is an understanding of education as a condition of ethics itself, education as a site of implied ethics." Indeed, it is of uppermost importance to know how to behave with the Other using new techniques such as Internet – this ethical issue is a condition of possibility for distance education.

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<sup>13</sup> Todd, Sharon, 2001, "On Not Knowing the Other, or Learning from Levinas", York University. *Philosophy of Education*, see also the quotation p.1: "Philosophy's commitment to viewing ethics as a question of knowledge might be summed up as "what do we need to know in order to live well together?" This commitment informs much of our educational attention to difference. Alternatively, Levinas' work asks us to consider knowledge as an ethical question: "what relation to the Other is necessary in order for knowledge to be possible?" In so doing, his work centers ethics at the heart"