

**Author(s):** Paul Conway, PhD, 2010

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# SI 410 ETHICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Week 3b: Back to the Really Big Picture

## TODAY'S CONCEPTS

- Digital ontology
  - Capurro versus Floridi
- Transparency revisited
- (tele)Presence

“The basic moral principle of the infosphere is the one already proclaimed by the philosophers of the Enlightenment, namely to share knowledge with others or, to put it in the present digital context, the right to communicate in a digital environment, which includes the right to preserve what we communicate for future generations.” (p. 183)

# CONTEXT

- 1 **Ontology**
- 2 Transparency
- 3 Presence

- **Ontology (nature of Being) versus Metaphysics (Being of beings)**
- **Ontology derives from freedom of speech (+ press, + access).**
  - Truth telling
  - Personal commitment to truth
  - Risk taking
  - Human capability of Being
- “... a moral being which includes her capability to assume her existence in all its dimensions and challenges.” (p. 176)

# ETHICS AND PROBLEMATIZATION

- 1 **Ontology**
- 2 Transparency
- 3 Presence

- Tied to norms associated with a behavior or a phenomenon (as in aspects of an information revolution)
  
- Three “spherological projects” in West:
  - Globalization of reason (science)
  - Earthly globalization (challenges to imperialism)
  - Digital globalization (inter-cultural dimensions of human existence)

# ONTOLOGY AND THE INFOSPHERE

1 **Ontology**

2 Transparency

3 Presence

- “Information ethics ... not ‘ethics in the infosphere’ but ethics of the infosphere.” (p. 182)
- Information ethics: intersection of the infosphere with ecological, political, economic, and cultural spheres. (p. 183)
- Information ethics: an open space for intercultural dialog (p. 184)

# DIGITIZATION

## 1 Ontology

### 2 Transparency

### 3 Presence

- P. 176. “... information ethics deals with questions of ... digitization ... the reconstruction of all possible phenomena in the world as digital information and the problems caused by their exchange, combination and utilization.”
- P. 182. “...damage or destruction of the digital can have a direct impact on the bodily life of people and institutions.”
- P. 183. “... the basic moral principal of the infosphere is ... the right to communicate in a digital environment ...” (including preservation)



# DIGITAL ONTOLOGY AND BEINGNESS

## 1 Ontology

### 2 Transparency

### 3 Presence

- Being equivalent to “unmarked space”
    - “Meaning” (sign/signal) versus “Sense”
  - Timeless – space between past and future (one dimensional) – presence, forgetfulness
  - Digital ontology – beings as points and numbers.
- “... a pervading view that we **understand** things in their being as far as we are able to digitize them.”

# PRESENCE

1 **Ontology**

2 Transparency

3 Presence

- Metaphysics sees presence as the essence of being. The point or awareness (sense) between past and future.
- Ontology removes time from the equation so that Being is apart from the continuum of life. Apart. Binary. Mathematical.
- Digital ontology: “the digital casting of Being can be interpreted as a possibility of *world* casting.

# INFORMATION TRANSPARENCY

1 Ontology

2 Transparency

3 Presence

- Two senses of the word.
  - Visibility (opaque) = disclosure
  - Invisibility (clear) = non-intrusive

“In the disciplines of computer science and IT studies, however, “**transparency**” is more likely to refer to a **condition of information invisibility**, such as when an application or computational process is said to be **transparent** to the user. [p. 105]

# PRESENCE: A UPDATE ON TRANSPARENCY

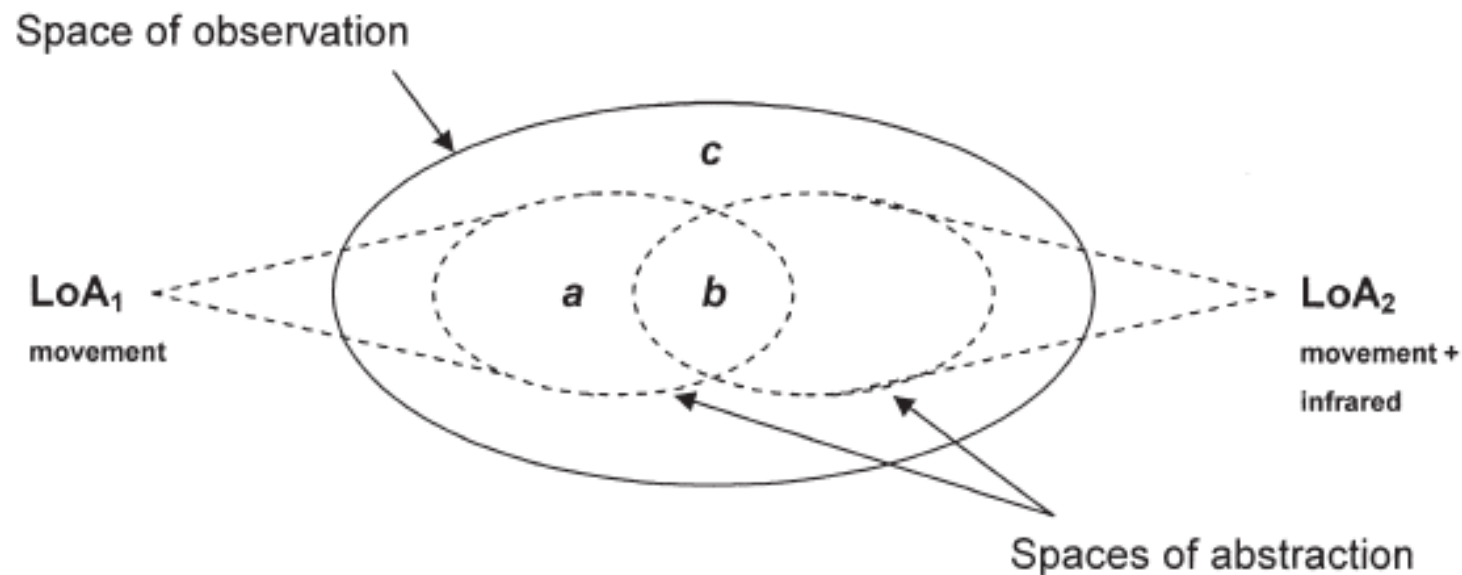
- 1 Ontology
- 2 Transparency
- 3 **Presence**

Presence (a shortened version of the term “telepresence”) is a *psychological state or subjective perception* in which even though part or all of an individual’s current experience is generated by and/or filtered through human-made technology, part or all of the individual’s perception *fails to accurately acknowledge* the role of the technology in the experience.

New definition: an  $x$  observable at a given LoA in a local space of observation LSO is also telepresent in a remote space of observation RSO if and only if  $x$  is *also observable in RSO at a given LoA*.

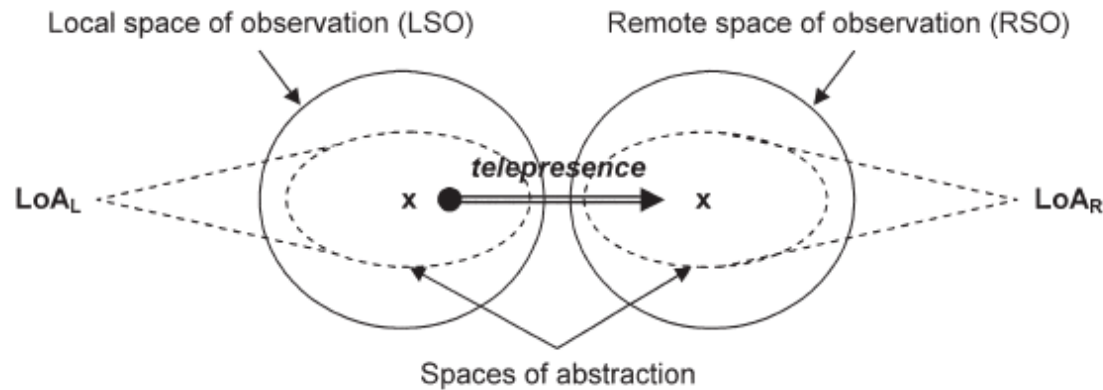
## PRESENCE: LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION

- Example: Motion Detector(s)
  - Objects (potential observables): tree branch; cat; rock



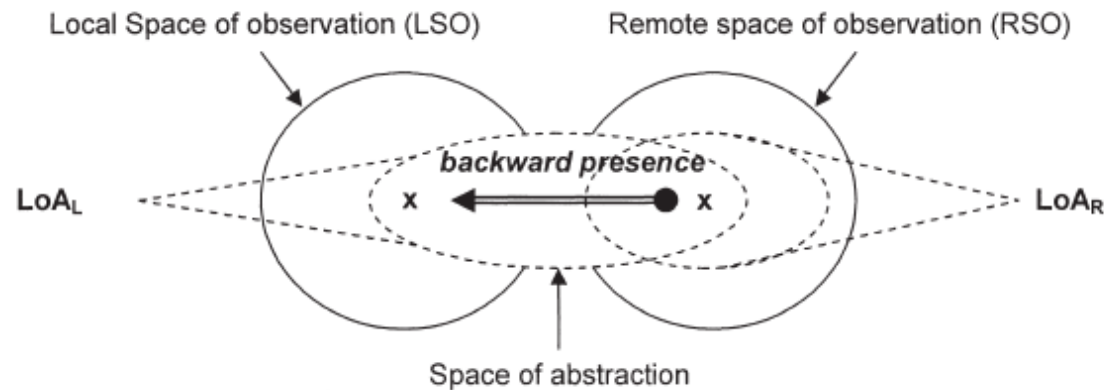
**Figure 1.** *An example of levels of abstraction.*

# PRESENCE: DIRECTIONS OF TELEPRESENCE



**Figure 2.** *A model of telepresence.*

PD-INEL Luciano Floridi, The Philosophy of Presence: From Epistemic Failure to Successful Observation, Presence: Teleoperators and Virtual Environments



**Figure 3.** *A model of tele-epistemics as backward presence.*

PD-INEL Luciano Floridi, The Philosophy of Presence: From Epistemic Failure to Successful Observation, Presence: Teleoperators and Virtual Environments

## DISCUSSION: TWO EXAMPLES

- 1 Ontology
- 2 Transparency
- 3 **Presence**

- Online pornography (forward presence)
  - Observation versus participation
  - Artificial agents, chat, web cam, DVD
  
- Privacy (backward presence)
  - Cell phones and personal space
  - From intrusion to abduction

# Additional Source Information

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Slide 13, Image 6: Luciano Floridi, The Philosophy of Presence: From Epistemic Failure to Successful Observation, Presence: Teleoperators and Virtual Environments, December 2005, Vol. 14, No. 6, Pages 656-667, PD-INEL

Slide 14, Image 5: Luciano Floridi, The Philosophy of Presence: From Epistemic Failure to Successful Observation, Presence: Teleoperators and Virtual Environments, December 2005, Vol. 14, No. 6, Pages 656-667, PD-INEL

Slide 14, Image 6: Luciano Floridi, The Philosophy of Presence: From Epistemic Failure to Successful Observation, Presence: Teleoperators and Virtual Environments, December 2005, Vol. 14, No. 6, Pages 656-667, PD-INEL



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**PAUL CONWAY**

*Associate Professor*

**School of Information**

**University of Michigan**

**[www.si.umich.edu](http://www.si.umich.edu)**