



NORGES IDRETTSHØGSKOLE
NORWEGIAN SCHOOL OF SPORT SCIENCES

Department of Physical Education

**Research Course on
Phenomenological Approaches to
Moral Philosophy and Education
June 6-8, 2006**

Background

The rapidly growing interest in ethics during the last thirty years has also been reflected in phenomenology. However, it is important to stress that phenomenological ethics is not a single normative theory, but rather a set of different approaches as the title of a recent handbook in the field indicates.¹

One of the most controversial phenomenological approaches is the ethical implications of the skills model formulated by H. L. Dreyfus and S. E. Dreyfus.² They assume that acting ethically is a skill based upon long experience rather than reliance on rules. Therefore, in order to become an ethical expert, it's a question of learning to respond appropriately to each unique situation.

The skills model thus supports an ethics of situated involvement such as that of Aristotle against the detached, rationalist ethics of Kant and others. Related to the Aristotelian approach Shaun Gallagher will discuss the place of *phronesis* (practical wisdom) in postmodern hermeneutics.³ Instead of reducing *phronesis* to cleverness (like Lyotard) or elevating it to what Caputo calls "meta-*phronesis*", Gallagher is arguing for a hermeneutic conception of *phronesis* which presuppose an existing schema, a world already in place.

Phronesis cannot operate outside of established paradigms but neither is it possible sticking to formula in advance. Therefore, in learning to act *kata ton orthon logon* (according to right reason) it's a not question of a sudden insight but of years of training and education.

However, irrespective of the competing views within moral theory, it too might be wise to reconsider the power of example in moral discourse. Lars Løvlie suggests a poetics of ethics based upon reflective judgment.⁴ By treating rules and skills as examples they will appear as equivocal and even undecidable elements in moral discourse, he thinks.

While the notion of reflective judgment is expanding the reach of reflection, the notion of undecidability involved in ethical decision-making appears relevant for introducing the role of the body in moral philosophy. When comparing the decision-making processes of experts in ethics to those who are merely competent in the field, the body-subjects tendency to seek an equilibrium with the world (by acquiring skills and establishing what Merleau-Ponty refers to as 'intentional arcs') might be related to ethical deciding in an embodied and habitual manner, or what is called skillful coping by the Dreyfus brothers.⁵

Aim

The aim of the course is

- to introduce a phenomenological understanding of the development of ethical expertise and practical wisdom (*phronesis*), and
- to explore moral life in educational settings and practices of, for instance, research, teaching, philosophy, sport and movement cultures

1. John J. Drummond and Lester Embree (eds.): *Phenomenological Approaches to Moral Philosophy: A Handbook*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002. Review by Fredrick Svenaeus in *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy* 7: 109-112, 2004.

2. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Stuart E. Dreyfus: The Ethical Implications of the Five-Stage Skill-Acquisition Model. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society* 24: 251-264, 2004.

3. Shaun Gallagher: The Place of *Phronesis* in Postmodern Hermeneutics. *Philosophy Today* 37: 298-305, 1993; Shaun Gallagher: Les conditions de corporéité et d'intersubjectivité chez la personne morale. *Théologiques* 12 (1-2), 2004.

4. Lars Løvlie: Of Rules, Skills and Examples in Moral Education. *Nordisk Pedagogik* 13:76-91, 1993.

5. Sean D. Kelly: "Grasping at Straws: Motor Intentionality and the Cognitive Science of Skilled Behavior". *Heidegger, Coping, and Cognitive Science*. M. Wrathall and J. Malpas, eds. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000. See also Jack Reynolds: Habituality and Undecidability: A Comparison of Merleau-Ponty and Derrida on the Decision. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 10: 449-466, 2002.

Program

Tuesday, June 6

09.00 – 09.10: Welcome, Professor and Rector Sigmund Loland, Norwegian School of Sport Sciences

09.10 – 09.30: Outline of the course, Professor Kjetil Steinsholt, Department of Physical Education, Norwegian School of Sport Sciences

09.30 – 12.00: What is Moral Maturity? A Phenomenological Account of the Development of Ethical Expertise. Key note by Professor Hubert Dreyfus, Department of Philosophy, University of California, Berkeley

12.00 – 14.30: Lunch

14.30 – 16.00: Comments on Dreyfus's notion of ethical expertise by Professor Dagfinn Føllesdal, Department of Philosophy, Stanford University.

16.00 – 16.30: Break

16.30 – 18.00: Panel discussion with Dreyfus and Føllesdal.

Wednesday, June 7

09.00 – 11.30: The Educational Backdrop of *Phronesis*. Keynote by Professor Shaun Gallagher, Department of Philosophy, University of Central Florida and visiting professor at Center for Subjectivity Research, University of Copenhagen.

11.30 – 13.30: Lunch

13.30 – 14.30: Comments on Gallagher's educational notion of *phronesis* by Hubert Dreyfus.

14.30 – 15.30: Comments on Gallagher's educational notion of *phronesis* by Sean D. Kelly, Department of Philosophy, Harvard University

15.30 – 16.00: Break

16.00 – 18.00: Panel Discussion with Gallagher, Dreyfus and Kelly

Thursday, June 8

09.00 – 10.00: A poetics of ethics. Keynote by Professor Lars Løvlie, Institute for Educational Research, University of Oslo.

10.15 – 11.00: Comments on Løvlie's notion of moral education by Sean D. Kelly

11.00 – 11.30: Panel Discussion with Løvlie and Kelly

11.30 – 13.30: Lunch

13.30 – 17.00: Introduction to essay writing and consultation for Ph.D-students on essay writing related to Phenomenological approaches to Moral Philosophy and Education, Professor Kjetil Steinsholt and others.

Info

Target group: The course is aimed at Ph.D. students, but participation is also open to scientists, scholars and others with an interest in phenomenological approaches to moral philosophy and education.

Registration fee: 3.500 NOK, payment to Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, bank account 7694.05.00784, project no 54101/5208

Enrollment: To sign up, send an e-mail to ejgil.jespersen@nih.no as soon as possible, but at the latest Mai 15, 2006. The number of participants is limited to 40 and Ph.D. students have priority. Ph.D. students should include a short description of their project and its relevance to the topic of the course.

Required readings: 500 – 1000 pages on phenomenological ethics and education (list in progress)

ECTS points: 3 for participation and 10 for participation and an accepted/accepted plus essay on 12 pages, delivery deadline June 24, 2006.

Organizing committee: Kjetil Steinsholt (chairman), Sigmund Loland, Liv Duesund, Ass. Professor, and Ejgil Jespersen, Head of Department of Physical Education, Norwegian School of Sport Sciences.