

**THE “ETHICAL PARADOX OF COMMUNICATION WITH EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL INTELLIGENCES”.** D. Lestel<sup>1</sup>, Ecole normale supérieure, Department of Cognitive Science, 45 rue d’Ulm, 75005 Paris – France ; lestel@ens.fr.

**Introduction:** Our presentation will follow the following logic. **1)** We will begin to remember in which way each communication with E.T. intelligence would be very different from all kinds of communications we already have experimented as human beings. Indeed, it would be neither a communication between different cultures within a same species nor a communication between species belonging to a common phylogenetic history. It would be a communication between intelligent beings who do not share anything – neither a genetic history nor a cultural history. **2)** We should therefore wonder whether we could be smart enough to be able to deal with a challenge no other living being on Earth has never met, a challenge for which we have not been evolutionary designed, namely the ability to communicate with intelligent beings with whom we share much less than with any other living being on Earth. We suggest that we could be able to design technologies that could be prosthesis in front of our natural cognitive deficiencies to deal with the question at stake. **3)** In such a way, F.Kaplan and alii have shown that some *ad hoc* technologies could help us to decipher the meaning of dogs’ barks we don’t naturally understand and do it independantly of any human. L.Steel and his research group at Sony Corporation has also shown that ‘talking robots’ without any common history could invent alone an efficient language by the sole practice. Indeed, these robots are able ‘to agree’ on conventions required to communicate together without any ‘general designer’ to direct the process in progress. **4)** In that way, we could design interactive computer programs that could establish a dialog with E.T. intelligences, either through direct interactions or through similars devices that would have been built by these E.T. intelligences. **5)** But new ethical questions would then emerge. One of it would be to know whether it would be reasonable to entrust such a communication to machines we could not really control since a major part of their efficiency would precisely be that we don’t control them. Therefore, situation would be close to the one where we would let a machine make a decision about nuclear fire. Shortly, it would mean to let the destiny of humanity within the ‘hands’ of a machine or a group of machines. One could therefore seriously wonder whether intrinsically ethical questions could not eventually stop us to try to communicate with E.T. intelligences. **6)** To sum up, the presentation will be about what could be called the “Ethical Paradox of Communication with

E.T.” showing that that technological conditions required by the boundaries of our human intelligence could put us within a situation in which one could abdicate a fundamental part of what it means to be human, a situation which would be not acceptable. One could therefore wonder whether (because we were not smart enough to communicate with E.T.) we could be smart enough to avoid to be in the necessity to do it.