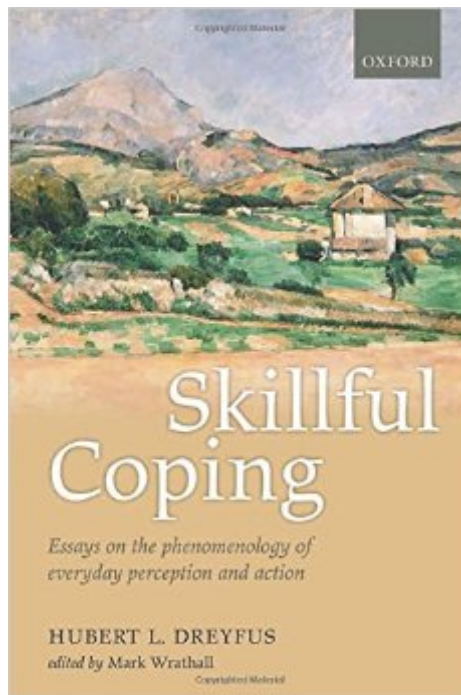


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# Skillful Coping: Essays On The Phenomenology Of Everyday Perception And Action





more traditional model plots a continuous curve from beginner to expert, as the learner acquires a richer and richer theory of the skill domain in which he is learning. He begins with the basic ontology "the things that make up the domain" and the relationships and interactions among them. A beginning driver in fact does learn by understanding the accelerator, the brake, the speedometer, etc., and how each affects the behavior of the car itself, and he learns basic rules about when to press the accelerator, when to press the brake, and so on. And Dreyfus's model doesn't dispute that beginning stage. But, once the beginner advances, the Dreyfus model diverges: it isn't a matter of consciously learning more rules (and more things), but instead a matter of embodying highly contextual heuristics and strategies that resist explication as rules. And the reason that they resist explication as rules is that they simply aren't rules. Some of the best papers in this collection are ones that respond to the objection that, if those more expert skills are not rule-driven, they become mystical "beyond explanation or account altogether. This is the objection that is born of the traditionalist saying, in one way or another, that there must be rules governing the expert's behavior and that we just haven't found them yet: how could it be otherwise? Here Dreyfus calls especially on Merleau-Ponty's notion of "motor intentionality" (and the new-to-me "energy landscapes" of the neuroscientist Walter Freeman). These more positive accounts are suggestive but still a bit sketchy, as presented here. The strength of Dreyfus's work still lies in critique, I think. Even given Deep Blue, Watson, and other AI successes, the obstacles that AI researchers have found vexing (the "commonsense problem", the "frame problem") seem to justify the doubts Dreyfus raised with respect to the theoretical foundations of the AI project. Overall, this is a very good collection for understanding both Dreyfus's critique of representationalism and the beginnings of a positive account in its place. Good, provocative stuff.

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