

## **ABSTRACT OF TERRY BYNUM'S WEIZENBAUM ADDRESS**

***Title:*** Philosophy and the Information Revolution

In the past, major scientific and technological revolutions have altered our understanding of human nature, the nature of society, and the nature of the universe. As a result, such revolutions have profoundly influenced philosophy. The current Information Revolution is no exception. Physicists have recently argued, for example, that the universe is made of information and that human beings are exquisitely complex information objects. New kinds of decision-making agents – such as, robots, softbots, artificial companions – now can be found in homes, schools, hospitals, workplaces, entertainment centers. Instead of being utterly different from human beings, many computerized devices can be viewed as entities very much like ourselves – fellow information objects journeying together through an informational world. This radically different understanding of human nature and our role in the universe offers exciting, powerful – and to some people, threatening – answers to some of the deepest questions of philosophy and psychology: Who am I? What am I? What does it mean to *be*? What is my place in the universe? The result is likely to be a worldwide and decades-long philosophical conversation. (Joseph Weizenbaum was one of the earliest speakers in that conversation.) This presentation is a tiny part of that conversation, one in which I select just two of many significant “philosophers of the Information Age” – Norbert Wiener and Luciano Floridi – and compare their views on human nature, artificial agents, the nature of society and the nature of the universe.