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FACHBEREICH INFORMATIK
ETHIK IN DER
INFORMATIONSTECHNOLOGIE

ÖFFENTLICHE
VORTRÄGE

TAMING THE MACHINES

LOVE, SEX AND POWER: THE RISE OF THE MACHINES AND THE ARTS OF BEING HUMAN

PROFESSOR CHARLES ESS, UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Discussing Ethics and Information Technologies

About the Lecture

I explore a series of closely interwoven questions: How are machines emancipatory – and how might they threaten enslavement? What virtues – excellences, practices, abilities – do we need to cultivate for the sake of emancipation, flourishing, and good lives? What virtues play into “complete sex” as described by Sara Ruddick (1975) – as marked by non-dual understandings of self and body, mutuality of desire, and central ethical norms of equality, respect, and loving itself as a virtue? And: what are the conditions of sustaining and expanding projects of emancipation – including democratic participation, overcoming racism and sexism, and, indeed, an Anthropocene enslavement of the planetary ecology that threatens eco-cide? I will explore ethical dimensions of sexbots – ancient, contemporary and imagined (especially in science fiction) – as a primary example of machineries that may become more enslaving than emancipatory, especially from the standpoint of deontology (emphasis on rights such as equality) and virtue ethics (including loving itself as a virtue). Sexbots more broadly help us explore what remains distinctively human, *contra* what can be replicated by AIs and robotic technologies – helping to establish a philosophical anthropology that understands human beings as *relational autonomies* thereby entangled in a *distributed responsibility* (Simon 2015). These center in turn on central virtues, beginning with courage, that ground the *embodied resistance* and *disobedience* demanded for emancipation in a post-digital era.

About the Speaker

Charles Ess is Professor of Media Studies, Department of Media and Communication, University of Oslo, Norway. He works at the intersections of philosophy, computing, applied ethics, comparative philosophy, and media studies, with particular focus on research ethics, Digital Religion, and virtue ethics, specifically social robots. He has published extensively on the ethics of robotics and Human-Machine Communication and currently serves on: Advisory Board, “Responsible Ethical Learning with Robotics” – REELER (H2020, Coordinator Cathrine Hasse, Aarhus University, Denmark); Advisory Board, “Integrative Social Robotics—A New Framework for Culturally Sustainable Technology Solutions” (Carlsberg Foundation, Johanna Seibt, PI); and the Technical Expertise Committee, Responsible Robotics Foundation.

RINGVORLESUNG
ETHIK IN DER INFORMATIONSTECHNOLOGIE

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Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1
20146 Hamburg

COORDINATION:
PROF. DR. JUDITH SIMON
DR. PAK-HANG WONG
FACHBEREICH INFORMATIK
ARBEITSGRUPPE ETHIK IN DER
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