



Universität Hamburg

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TAMING THE MACHINES

WHY WE NEED ETHICS IN AI

PROF. DR. JOHN TASIOULAS
(UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, UK)

PUBLIC LECTURE
SERIES



About the lecture

Ethics is inescapable for thinking critically about the challenges and opportunities created by AI-based technologies. Central to ethics are the topics of the nature of human flourishing and what we morally owe to others. The importance of ethics is sometimes missed through the adoption of an unduly diminished conception of the ethical - one limited to a sub-set of ethical values, or contrasted with politics, or associated with 'soft' forms of regulation. The paper argues for a more expansive conception of ethics, one with a fundamental significance for our practical thought about AI. It also argues that there is a dominant ethical paradigm in thinking about AI, or at least one that is highly influential among elite actors in the AI domain - this is a broadly preference-based utilitarianism, such as that presupposed in AI scientist Stuart Russell's recent book, *Human Compatible*. In contrast to this conception of ethics, which has strong affinities with modes of thought in science and economics, the paper argues for the need for a more humanistic approach to the ethics of AI, one that contains at least the following components: (a) an emphasis on the plurality of values and the existence of incommensurable conflicts among them; (b) the importance of the value of procedures, and not just outcomes, in assessing the deployment of automated modes of decision-making, and (c) the vital significance of participation, both as an element of the good life and as a moral-political demand. The paper concludes with some thoughts on how the advent of Artificial General Intelligence may impact on this humanistic ethic.

Wednesday, 10. November 2021, 18:15 – 19:45 (CET)

– delivered in digital form –

Details to access the lecture will be made public at <http://uhh.de/inf-eit> on a timely basis.

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CONTACT
Prof. Dr. Judith Simon

www.uhh.de/inf-eit

