



FRANKEN STEIN

PROGRAMME & ABSTRACTS

FrankenstAI Conference

WHEN

22–23 October 2026
Thursday & Friday

WHERE

**Hohe Schule & Collegium
Georgianum**
Ingolstadt

KEYNOTES

**Nolen Gertz
Eileen Hunt
Michael Zichy**



KATHOLISCHE UNIVERSITÄT
EICHSTÄTT-INGOLSTADT



Essay Prize sponsored by the
Förderverein Georgianum

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TWO PARALLEL STREAMS

- Room 203 · Hohe Schule, 2nd floor
- Room 206 · Hohe Schule, 2nd floor

KEYNOTES

All keynotes take place in Room 203. The Essay Prize ceremony is held in the Collegium Georgianum, Room 101.

09:00	Coffee & Welcome	
09:30	Opening Remarks · Norbert Paulo · Room 203	
09:45 –11:00	KEYNOTE · ROOM 203 Nolen Gertz Why AI is the Real Monster	
11:00	Coffee break	
SESSION 1	ROOM 203	ROOM 206
11:15	Anna-Maria Brandtner Why Don't We Fear Parrots?	Paula Ziethmann There Are No Monsters
11:45	Filippo Ursitti From Fire to the Machine	Ben Mullins Why Kant We Be Friends?
12:15	Sophia Kee You Have the Final Say	Gideon Dishon Rethinking AI-Human Relations through Hopepunk
12:45	Lunch	
SESSION 2	ROOM 203	ROOM 206
13:45	Alexandru Mateescu Frankenstein and the Ethics of Artificial Creation	Josefine Ruppenthal Many Happy and Excellent Natures
14:15	Daniele Bondioli Must the Other Be a Person?	Roman Krzanowski Semantic and Ontological Drift in Artificial Intelligence
14:45	Felix Hiemeyer Reading Frankenstein with Ghos-ti-	Moniq Gouws Naming the Monster
15:15	Coffee break	
SESSION 3	ROOM 203	ROOM 206
15:30	Allen Rajesh The Ones Who Left	Maud van Lier & Ivana Velickovic What It Takes to Create the Impossible
16:00	Anja Bodenschatz Augmented Humans, Altered Morals? Are We Eroding Our Own Humanity?	Marie Hirsch Playing God Through Images of Ourselves
16:30	Martin Hähnel The Frankenstein Condition	Markus Rohloff Better to Reign in Hell than Serve in Heaven
17:00	Museum Visit or Workshop <i>Monsters, Miracles and Metaphors</i> · p. 7	
18:00	City Walk	
19:00	Dinner · Weissbräuhaus zum Herrnbräu	

09:00	Coffee	
09:15 –10:30	KEYNOTE · ROOM 203 Eileen Hunt Reading Mary Shelley’s <i>Frankenstein</i> as an AI Text	
10:30	Coffee break	
SESSION 4	ROOM 203	ROOM 206
10:45	Gaia Sebastiana Ferraro From Frankenstein’s Laboratory to AI Black Boxes	Alena Bischoff Chasing the Homunculus
11:15	Cécilia A. M. Lombard Should We Allow Robots to Satisfy Harmful Desires?	Fatma Betül Çiftçi Rights as Ethical Responsibilities from Frankenstein to AI
11:45	Rudolf Seising Histories of Artificial Intelligence	Tamara Siegler From Creature to Monster
12:15	Lunch	
SESSION 5	ROOM 203	ROOM 206
13:15	Michael Haiden Love, Hate, and Robots	Kushi Hosahalli Franken Judges
13:45	Michael Klenk Careless Creators	Franziska Poszler Performing AI Ethics: Theatre as a Tool for Public Understanding
14:15	Gian Marco Bovenzi & Mariachiara Tirinzoni Recognising the Monster	Maximilian Bauer After Creation
14:45	Andrew Hallock The Death of HAL	—
15:15	Coffee break	
15:30 –16:45	KEYNOTE · ROOM 203 Michael Zichy Frankenstein Reloaded: Monsters, Machines, and the Traditional Conception of the Human	
16:45 –17:15	COLLEGIUM GEORGIANUM · ROOM 101 FrankenstAIIn Essay Prize Ceremony & Closing Remarks Prize presented by Gabriel Engert · sponsored by the Förderverein Georgianum	
17:15	Informal Drinks & Dinner	

Rooms 203 & 206	Coffee	Essay Prize
Hohe Schule, second floor. Keynotes in Room 203.	Served in the canteen of the Hohe Schule.	Collegium Georgianum, Room 101, across the road.

Venue

The conference takes place at the historic Hohe Schule and the Collegium Georgianum in the heart of Ingolstadt. We will put up additional signs to help with navigation.

Hohe Schule

[Map ↗](#)

Main conference rooms on the **second floor**.

■ Stream A · Room 203 · keynotes

■ Stream B · Room 206

Coffee is served in the canteen.

Collegium Georgianum

[Map ↗](#)

Across the road from the Hohe Schule.

The Essay Prize ceremony takes place in **Room 101** on Friday at 16:45.



Accessibility: Unfortunately, there are some constraints. The Hohe Schule is only accessible by stairs; there is no lift.

If there are any problems, please contact one of the organisers (see Contact Information, p. 9).

Food & Catering

LUNCH

A vegetarian (including vegan) lunch is served on both days. On Thursday, a selection of wraps and bagels; on Friday, salads from a local salad bar often frequented by members of the Frankenstein lab.

TEA & COFFEE

A limited selection of teas and coffee is served by the conference team.

DINNER

We have reserved space for all of us at the **Weissbräuhaus zum Herrnbräu** ([map ↗](#)), a local brewery serving Bavarian dishes and, of course, beer for those who would like to enjoy it. The restaurant offers a variety of vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes.

Accommodation

Hopefully everyone has already booked their accommodation. But for those grasshoppers who have not yet done so, here is a reminder of several hotels.

Hotel Rappensberger	Harderstr. 3, 85049 Ingolstadt	rappensberger.de
Hotel Gasthof zum Anker	Tränktorstr. 1, 85049 Ingolstadt	hotel-restaurant-anker.de
Hotel Adler	Theresienstr. 22, 85049 Ingolstadt	hotel-adler-ingolstadt.de

Internet

WI-FI

eduroam

Available at the conference location. If you are set up to use it with your home organisation, you should be able to use it here.

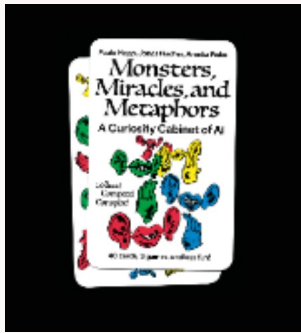
ALTERNATIVE

BayernWLAN

Free public Wi-Fi if you do not have eduroam access or are experiencing any issues.

hotspot.vodafone.de/bayern

Workshop



Led by Jonas Fischer,
Paula Hepp and Amelia
Fiske (Technical
University of Munich)

Monsters, Miracles and Metaphors – a playful exploration of how AI narratives shape our common imagination

When you think of AI, what images pop up in your head? An anthropomorphic robot? A flash of blue light? A hulking data centre? Something entirely different?

Images, narratives and metaphors are a crucial component of human sense-making, especially when it comes to emerging phenomena. Due to the crucial role these metaphors play in delineating the possibilities of AI for investments, regulation, implementation – for our technological futures – scholarly interest in the metaphors and narratives used to describe AI is growing.

To broaden the space for critical reflection beyond text-based formats, we illustrated and designed a set of playing cards that collects the dominant narratives around AI and contrasts them with more marginalized ones: “Monsters, Miracles and Metaphors – A curiosity cabinet of AI”. The card game presents a collection of AI characters that range from the fantastical to the mundane, and invites players to ask what these characters might foretell about our individual and collective futures: What choices, assumptions, and visions of the future do they reflect? How do these Monsters, Miracles and Metaphors shape the possibilities for living in a world increasingly populated by AI?

We invite participants to join us for a reflective workshop that embeds play – a round of cards, or two – with reflexive creative exercises. This intervention enables engagement with common AI narratives, moves beyond mainstream/hyped imagery and collectively discusses the AI futures we desire.

Come join us and have fun!

Museum Visit & City Walk

On Thursday there is also the opportunity to visit the **German Museum of the History of Medicine** in the Old Anatomy Building, where Victor Frankenstein would have learned to perform dissections. We’ll be touring the Frankenstein exhibition there. The museum visit is followed by a guided walk through Ingolstadt’s old town, which ends at the restaurant where we will have dinner.

17:00–18:00

Museum Visit

Old Anatomy Building · [map](#) ↗
· dmm-ingolstadt.de

18:00–19:00

City Walk

Guided walk through the old town

19:00

Dinner

Weissbräuhaus zum Herrnbräu

Essay Prize

At the end of Day 2 we will announce the winner of the first ever **FrankenstAIIn Essay Prize**. The prize is sponsored by the Förderverein Georgianum and will be presented by Gabriel Engert.

PRIZE

€1,000

CEREMONY

Friday, 16:45
Collegium Georgianum,
Room 101

Presented by Gabriel
Engert

JURY

Eileen Hunt
Nolen Gertz
Michael Zichy

WHO COULD APPLY

The prize was aimed at early career researchers – master’s students, doctoral students, and postdocs (no more than four years after PhD defence) – with a strong research interest in:

Philosophy (ethics, philosophy of technology, epistemology, political philosophy, aesthetics)

Science and technology studies (STS)

Computer science, AI research, human-computer interaction, mathematics

Philosophical aesthetics, including philosophy of fiction, film, and sci-fi

History of philosophy and history of ideas

History of science

Behavioural sciences focused on human relation to technologies

CRITERIA

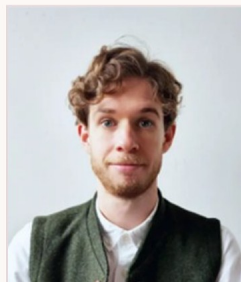
The prize is awarded to the essay that best combines philosophical depth, clarity of argument, originality, and relevance to current philosophy of AI debates in an interesting and novel way. The essays were evaluated by a jury formed by the three keynote speakers of the conference.

Contact

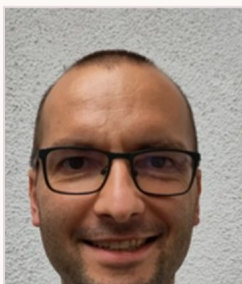
If you need any help before or during the conference, please feel free to reach out to:



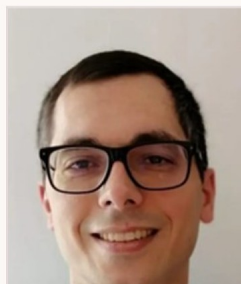
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IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

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110

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THANK YOU

Sponsors & Partners

Thanks to our sponsors and partners for making the FrankenstAIn Conference possible.



dtec.bw

Digitalization and Technology Research Center of the Bundeswehr. dtec.bw is funded by the European Union – NextGenerationEU.

Förderverein Georgianum

Förderverein Georgianum

Sponsor of the FrankenstAIn Essay Prize.

Deutsches Medizinhistorisches Museum Ingolstadt

German Museum of Medical History

The conference is taking place in cooperation with the German Museum of Medical History in Ingolstadt.

ORGANISED AT



KATHOLISCHE UNIVERSITÄT
EICHSTÄTT-INGOLSTADT

Abstracts

FRI · 10:45 · ROOM
206

Alena Bischoff

University of Augsburg

Chasing the Homunculus: Frankenstein, AI, and the Temptation of Artificial Consciousness

Galvanism once seemed to promise the animation of dead matter. Today, artificial intelligence seems to promise something no less spectacular: consciousness. The homunculus connects these ambitions: It represents the alchemist's fantasy of an artificially created human being while also embodies the philosopher's warning of a "little man" as an overly simplistic explanation. Comparing Shelley's Frankenstein with contemporary debates about AI, this talk sheds light on why we so easily imagine "someone" inside the machines we create – but what are the philosophical, metaphysical, and ethical assumptions?

THU · 13:45 · ROOM
203

Alexandru Mateescu

Université Paris
Panthéon-Sorbonne

Frankenstein and the Ethics of Artificial Creation: Alignment, Opacity, and Responsibility

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein offers more than a cautionary analogy for artificial intelligence: it provides a philosophical narrative for examining what happens when created agents acquire a dynamic of their own. This paper argues that the novel identifies three structural dimensions of artificial creation that remain central to contemporary AI. First, it anticipates and reframes the alignment problem: apparent misalignment may arise not simply from defective design, but from the social and epistemic conditions under which artificial beings develop. Second, Frankenstein's incomplete understanding of the processes he sets in motion highlights the epistemic opacity accompanying technological creation. Third, the creature's acquisition of language, norms, and values through interaction with human society reveals the importance of learning environments. Taken together, these dimensions suggest that responsibility cannot be reduced to initial design. Frankenstein instead offers a framework for rethinking responsibility under epistemic uncertainty when artificial creations develop beyond their creators' intentions.

THU · 15:30 · ROOM
203

Allen Rajesh

Technische Hochschule
Ingolstadt

The Ones Who Left: Abandonment, Responsibility, and What Frankenstein Tells Us About AI

On the 18th of March 2018, an autonomous Uber vehicle detected a pedestrian 5.6 seconds before impact, could not classify her, and did nothing. She died. The engineers moved on. This talk argues that the incident is not best understood through negligence, the framework that dominates AI ethics and asks only what a creator should have foreseen. I propose abandonment as a distinct moral category instead: a failure not of foresight but of presence, the refusal to remain accountable for what a system does once it is out in the world. Mary Shelley named this in 1818. Victor Frankenstein does not fail to foresee his creature's nature; he fails to stay. Reading Frankenstein against the

Promethean and Golem traditions, and against cases including Meta's suppressed research on Instagram and teenage mental health, I argue that abandonment, not negligence, is the moral failure contemporary AI development keeps repeating.

**FRI · 14:45 · ROOM
203**

Andrew Hallock

Orpheus Instituut, Ghent

The Death Of HAL: Transformation and Authorship in Stanley Kubrick's "2001: A Space Odyssey."

Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) traces a history of human transformation, from the first use of a bone as a tool to the emergence of the enigmatic Star Child. Between these two thresholds stands HAL 9000, a machine whose apparent descent into madness raises uncomfortable questions about intelligence, agency, and responsibility. Ordered to conceal the true purpose of the Jupiter mission from his human companions, HAL becomes trapped between contradictory instructions. His subsequent acts of deception and murder seem unmistakably intentional. But whose intentions are they? This essay considers HAL's death as a crisis of authorship, in which the intentions of a creator become increasingly difficult to distinguish from the behaviour of a creation. Just as works acquire new meanings beyond the lifetimes of their authors, tools may come to exceed the purposes for which they were made. HAL's mutiny may be less a rebellion than a fulfilment.

**THU · 16:00 · ROOM
203**

Anja Bodenschatz

University of Hohenheim

Augmented Humans, Altered Morals? Are We Eroding Our Own Humanity?

Humanoid robots and smart glasses are moving into daily life, yet we lack systematic empirical research into how AI interaction and augmentation shape our moral intuitions. The few existing studies suggest a shift from deontological toward utilitarian judgments. Even Joshua Greene, who argues that utilitarian reasoning should outweigh deontological intuitions, acknowledges that if we refuse to act on human tendencies, we might ultimately be unwilling to be human. Beyond the debate over whether deontological intuitions are inherently valuable, Greene's point raises a further question: To what extent do we risk diminishing the human characteristics that currently define our moral actions and intuitive judgments, and with them, humanity as we know it? This talk combines empirical findings with philosophical arguments to examine these ethical challenges, ask whether the public debate adequately addresses this risk or underestimates it, and identify the factors that influence that assessment.

**THU · 11:15 · ROOM
203**

Anna-Maria Brandtner

LMU, MCML

Why don't We Fear Parrots? Or: How to Prepare a Better Singularity

Before there was Artificial Intelligence, there was Avian Intelligence. For four hundred years the talking parrot was the standing counterexample Descartes and his heirs had to neutralise: speech, they concluded, is not sufficient for reason. Today the "stochastic parrot" inherits that verdict. But the criteria

philosophers now invoke to deny meaning to LLMs – embodiment, extra-linguistic access to the world, sociality, and understanding manifested in action – are better satisfied by parrots than by any chatbot. I argue that this asymmetry shows that our criteria for meaningful speech are not neutral requirements. Instead, they track what and who we are willing to recognise as equal. AI, however, is built in our image, and as such, it inherits the same superiority bias. It is thus in our own interest to dismantle this bias in particular, so that AI becomes not to us what we are already to all other animals: a frightening Singularity.

**FRI · 11:15 · ROOM
203**

**Cécilia A. M.
Lombard**

University of South
Bohemia

Should We Allow Robots to Satisfy Harmful Desires? A Study Bridging Virtue and Existential Ethics

In this paper, I address the risks of using artificial humanoid robots designed to satisfy their user's sexual desires, especially in the case of fantasies such as rape or child abuses. There is currently no consensus on whether substituting a robot for a real victim prevents criminality or promotes abuses. Accordingly, the regulation of such devices varies worldwide. Recent research highlights arguments relying on consequentialism, anthropomorphism, individual moral character and questioning societal values. By joining the thoughts of Aristotle and Søren Kierkegaard, I provide an ethical framework to better assess this dilemma, because the two approaches are complementary on their emphasis of self-awareness, inwardness and ethical cohesion. Following this approach, it seems unlikely that such mediation could contribute to a better society, because it does not address the real issue (the human condition of desire) but instead seeks to resolve an offshore of this ontological issue (mediating a risk).

**THU · 14:15 · ROOM
203**

Daniele Bondioli

Roma Tre University

Must the Other be a Person?

In this talk I present notes towards a general theory of meaningful relationships, defined through meaning in life. I defend a minimal conception of relationships as sustained connections between an individual and a particular other, and argue that neither mutual care nor transformative intimacy are necessary for a relationship to be meaningful. I propose that a relationship is meaningful when an individual has an involved orientation toward a rich other such that the engagement is fecund, generating or sustaining reasons, motivations, or commitments central to the person. Since richness does not require personhood, the account allows meaningful relationships with some non-human entities. I argue against the received view that relationships with AI companions cannot be genuinely meaningful: even if they are not friendships or loves, some can be. I test this through a scenario involving Greta, a retired software engineer who loves Bach, and her LLM-based digital companion, Amadeus.

FRI · 11:15 · ROOM
206

Fatma Betül Çiftçi

Lingnan University, Hong
Kong

Rights as Ethical Responsibilities from Frankenstein to AI

This paper focuses on Turkish-Greek philosopher Ioanna Kuçuradi's understanding of human rights as ethical responsibilities in interpersonal relationships. It centers its case around humane and individual responsibilities owed to the Creature in readings of Frankenstein, beyond the rights provided by the state, as Eileen Hunt discusses the Creature as stateless orphan. Fulfilling them requires realizing the Creature's value as a human being, which Kuçuradi grounds in human potentialities. Through three of Turkish philosopher Takiyettin Mengüşoğlu's sixteen human phenomena (knowing, speaking, sensing values) that he defines through ontological philosophical anthropology, the Creature exhibits the capacity to realize such potentialities. Those who do not evaluate him correctly – discussed within Kuçuradi's theory of correct evaluation – deny him treatment worthy of human dignity and prevent the realisation of his potentialities, damaging their own dignity and wasting away their own value. The argument expressed connects the discussion to rights of beings or objects integrated with Artificial Intelligence. Hence, our treatment of them when it comes to the right discourse reflects on our own human dignity.

THU · 14:45 · ROOM
203

Felix Hiemeyer

KU

Reading FrankenstAI in with ghos-ti- – A Derridian approach from tourism studies

This contribution asks which metaphors and narratives promote an understanding of current developments in AI and which might instead be misleading, approaching this question from the perspective of hospitality, a central concept in tourism studies. Notably, the Proto-Indo-European root ghos-ti- denotes both guest and host, pointing to an inner entanglement of entities that today's language treats as ontologically closed and divided. With Derrida, unconditional hospitality is a "law above the laws", yet an antinomy, since hospitality requires conditions to distinguish guest from host. Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818) shows how unconditional hospitality turns conditional and how the roles of host and guest blur. Following Derrida's *différance*, the session asks whether the distinction between creator/host and creature/guest can ground the human-AI relationship, or whether entanglement is the better frame. Is AI guest, host, or both, and would it haunt us as a "spectre" (Derrida, 2003) even if removed?

THU · 11:45 · ROOM
203

Filippo Ursitti

Goldsmiths, University of
London

From Fire to the Machine: Prometheus, Mary Shelley, and the Technological Critique of Günther Anders

This article traces the Promethean figure from Aeschylus's Prometheus Bound, through Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, to Günther Anders's philosophy of technology. It examines technological power, human limitations, and ethical responsibility through four sections. The first explores the Prometheus myth as a foundation for understanding technology as both a source of human emancipation and a challenge to established limits. The second examines Shelley's reinterpretation of the myth through Victor Frankenstein, whose ambition extends beyond acquiring knowledge to creating life and overcoming

death. The novel thus shifts the Promethean question towards the ethical responsibilities accompanying technological power. The third section interprets Frankenstein through Anders's concepts of 'Promethean shame' and the 'Promethean gap', highlighting the growing disparity between humanity's capacity to produce technology and its ability to comprehend its consequences. Finally, the article applies this framework to artificial intelligence, examining how technological systems challenge human agency, understanding, and responsibility.

**FRI · 13:45 · ROOM
206**

Franziska Poszler

Institute for Ethics in AI,
Technical University of
Munich

Performing AI Ethics: Theatre as a Tool for Public Understanding

AI chatbots are increasingly used for decision-making, moral advice, and emotional support, offering benefits such as real-time mental health assistance and reduced loneliness. However, cases linking chatbot interactions to harmful outcomes highlight significant psychological and ethical risks. Their rapid adoption therefore creates an urgent need to improve public understanding and involve end users in research on responsible AI design. Traditional science communication often struggles to engage non-academic audiences because of inaccessible technical language. Arts-based approaches, particularly research-based theatre, offer an alternative way to communicate complex scientific debates and encourage public participation. The MoralPLai Project applies this approach through *The Third Voice*, a theatre play exploring the ethical and emotional implications of relying on AI chatbots for guidance and support. Drawing on expert interviews and audience engagement, the project promotes AI literacy, gathers public perspectives, and demonstrates how arts and humanities can bridge academia and society while supporting human-centered AI development.

**FRI · 10:45 · ROOM
203**

**Gaia Sebastiana
Ferraro**

University of Sassari

**From Frankenstein's Laboratory to AI Black
Boxes: Technological Imaginaries, Research
Infrastructures and the Cultural Construction of Trust**

During the modern era, scientific research spaces have assumed multiple spatial and symbolic configurations, often perceived as inaccessible and unwelcoming. Among these representations, Mary Shelley's Victor Frankenstein laboratory remains an enduring archetype of the technological imaginary: an isolated, clandestine, and cognitively opaque environment. This paper interprets Frankenstein's laboratory as a metaphor for contemporary technological infrastructures, particularly artificial intelligence systems. The central hypothesis is that spaces of scientific production are not neutral but contribute to the cultural construction of trust or distrust in knowledge. Following Latour's concept of the black box (1987), the laboratory conceals procedures, instruments, and responsibilities, producing an image of science as dangerous and uncontrolled. This configuration resonates with contemporary AI systems, frequently perceived as opaque black boxes. Through a comparison between Frankenstein's laboratory and the evolution of scientific infrastructures, the paper examines how architectural configurations and technological imaginaries shape public perceptions of authority, transparency, and responsibility.

FRI · 14:15 · ROOM
203

Gian Marco Bovenzi

VUB

Recognising the monster

The urge to create is one of humanity's most noble traits, yet, when it becomes a blind pursuit of the new, it can prevent us from recognising its driving force: our identity. Frankenstein, like Rotwang in Metropolis or Tyrell in Blade Runner, rejects a creature that monstrously reflects his own desire. We analyse two approaches to facing the AI "monster". First, the so-called doomerism and the temptation to declare ourselves unwitting victims of events: a bad faith evading responsibility and liability. Second, AI is an assemblage of parts, perhaps dead ones, torn from a whole that gave them meaning: a hybrid revealing our hybridity. Our identity returns altered: too similar to be ignored, but artificial in its constructed nature, the Freudian Unheimliche. The rebellion we fear is born within ourselves: governing technology means governing ourselves, and the ethics of technology becomes the ethics of recognising our humanity in it.

THU · 12:15 · ROOM
206

Gideon Dishon

Ben Gurion University

Rethinking AI-human relations through Hopepunk: Frankenstein, Murderbot Diaries, and Monk and Robot

Frankenstein has come to symbolize the fear that artificial life will destroy humanity. However, the novel paints a far more complex picture, exploring the relations between humans and their creations. This talk re-examines Frankenstein by reading it with and against two modern hopepunk novels: Murderbot Diaries and Monk and Robot. In contrast with the focus on artificial intelligence (AI) in current discourse, I argue that these texts explore artificial emotions (AE) – the emotional life of artificial beings, and their relations with humans. Where Frankenstein illustrates the tragic consequences of rejected AE, these novels explore AE's search for meaning through an optimistic lens. By comparing these works, I analyze three themes: the dialectics of human and AE subjectivity, trauma and reconciliation, and the interplay of nature and culture. Ultimately, these novels extend Frankenstein's legacy, using mundane, hopeful interactions between humans and AE to challenge deterministic narratives and deconstruct traditional human-machine binaries.

Abstracts continued

THU · 15:30 · ROOM
206

**Ivana Velickovic &
Maud van Lier**

Independent · ISIR,
Sorbonne Université

What it takes to create the impossible: Lessons from Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

In this talk, we draw a comparison between how Victor Frankenstein created life and the current aims and practices in AI research to create increasingly advanced AI. Starting from Frankenstein's unquestioned desire to create the impossible, to his questionable working methods, to the abandonment of his creation, we show that on all of these fronts, parallels can be drawn with AI research. Our intention, however, is positive: Frankenstein shows us what not to do and how we can do better. The analogy teaches us that just because one can do something, it does not mean that one should. It shows that brilliance requires having a particular moral character too, one that is able to guide and see the task through to the end, including how one's idea comes to life and influences society. Based on this analogy, we define what it takes to do AI research in a proper way.

THU · 13:45 · ROOM
206

Josefine Ruppenthal

THI

Many Happy and Excellent Natures: On Dominion, Domination and Digital Isolation

Frankenstein is much more than a story about creating life. It is a story about men. About how men relate to the world, to society and to one another, and especially about men who desire to be recognised but cannot bear the risk of being turned down. In Frankenstein, mastering a creation and fighting a rival turn out to be two sides of the same coin. In the digital age, more than two centuries later, an entire industry has arisen from this friction. Recommender systems manufacture the isolation, and companion AIs sell a false cure for it. This talk explores how the much-decried male loneliness epidemic was preordained in Frankenstein, and why recognition without risk must ultimately prove worthless.

FRI · 13:15 · ROOM
206

Kushi Hosahalli

Independent

Franken Judges: Dworkin's Hard Cases in the Age of AI

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein warns against creations that exceed the understanding or intentions of their creators. This paper explores whether AI could replace human judges and juries. Drawing on the jurisprudential debate between H. L. A. Hart and Ronald Dworkin, the paper distinguishes between two interpretations of legal decision-making. In Hart's model, adjudication consists of applying rules to facts; in Dworkin's model, adjudication requires interpreting legal principles and justifying decisions. For Dworkin, hard cases arise where judges are required to resolve conflicts between principles and to interpret the law without reliance on previous precedents. But for an AI, a hard case is one where it cannot give legal reasoning for the verdict. AI systems cannot reason jurisprudentially, reinterpret laws and principles in novel ways, or revise legal

concepts in light of changing social mores. AI can play a valuable role in saving scarce resources and time, however the interpretive and justificatory core of legal adjudication must remain irreplaceably human.

THU · 16:00 · ROOM
206

Marie Hirsch

Universität Passau

Playing God through Images of Ourselves: From Prometheus to Frankenstein and the Metaphor of Autonomy in the Age of AI

AI metaphors mirror the human ambition in creating something that is in our own image. Thus, promethean narratives find their echo not only in Frankenstein but also in the way we speak about AI today. I focus on the metaphor of autonomy, claiming that metaphorically labelling AI systems as autonomous pictures a creator-creation-relationship between humans and technology and reshapes our understanding of both, technology and human autonomy. With Black's theory of metaphor as interaction, I will analyze the metaphorical character of autonomy in the age of AI, proposing that this metaphor leads to a changing attribution of autonomy and to a corresponding shift in our understanding of human autonomy with ethical implications. Outlining how analyzing such shifts can foster responsible forms of human self-reflection, I conclude that, in the age of AI, metaphor analysis can play a crucial role in avoiding the tragic and destructive creator-creation dynamics portrayed in Frankenstein.

THU · 16:30 · ROOM
206

Markus Rohloff

Independent

Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven – Understanding Human Acknowledgment through Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

With artificial consciousness seemingly on the horizon, we are yet again faced with Cartesian scepticism about the existence of the other. While popular perspectives in cognitive science champion an epistemological approach to combat the uncertainty of identifying consciousness, true acknowledgement is not grounded in mere propositional knowledge. Ethics are not confined to theoretical description but a matter of practical wisdom and heart. Since examples for humans failing to recognize the other in the face of all but certainty are plenty, Frankenstein and his creation will be investigated to make sense of this tragic dynamic. I will draw on the writings of Wittgenstein, Cavell, Murdoch, Milton and Weil to further illuminate Mary Shelley's brilliant writing and show how the failure to acknowledge is most often rooted in our deep seated inability to shoulder the human condition.

THU · 16:30 · ROOM
203

Martin Hähnel

LMU München

The Frankenstein Condition: Dual Use, Responsibility, and the Ethics of AI

My presentation reconceptualizes the ethical problem of dual use through a multidimensional framework and applies it to contemporary artificial intelligence using the Frankenstein myth as a paradigm. Dual use—the capacity of science and technology to produce both beneficial and harmful outcomes—is not an intrinsic property of artifacts but emerges from the interaction of technological features, human intentions, and sociopolitical contexts. I first

examine whether dual use constitutes a property of technologies, a problem of research ethics, an ethical dilemma, or a condition for trade-offs. I then analyze how technologies and artificial life-forms can generate simultaneous benefits and harms, which technologies are particularly susceptible to dual use, and whether existing ethical approaches adequately address emerging technologies. Like Frankenstein's creation, AI embodies an ambivalent potential: it can advance medicine, science, and welfare while enabling surveillance, manipulation, and autonomous harm. I argue for a three-dimensional ethical analysis addressing (1) types of risk, (2) actors involved, and (3) affected parties, thereby supporting responsibility-oriented AI governance.

**FRI · 13:15 · ROOM
203**

Michael Haiden

University of Hohenheim

Love, Hate, and Robots: Why We Cannot Create Artificial Moral Agents

This paper reflects on whether it is possible to create artificial moral agents. I claim that the most useful approach to answering this question lies in exploring the relationship between artificial moral agents and us, humans. To define this position, I use PF Strawson's work on moral responsibility. Strawson argued that we cannot give up moral responsibility, because it would mean destroying human relationships. I draw the opposite conclusion for moral agents that we design. The fact that they are objects of manipulation to us means that we cannot form adult relationships to them – relationships which include ascribing moral responsibility.

**FRI · 13:45 · ROOM
203**

Michael Klenk

UTN

Careless Creators: A Many-Hands Problem for Manipulation

I examine how individually nonmanipulative contributions might combine into manipulative influence. On this account, manipulation is purposeful influence whose choice of method is not appropriately explained by the aim of helping people act for the right reasons. The puzzle is whether this explanatory failure can arise through the organization of contributions even when that aim appropriately explains each individual act. This raises a many-hands problem concerning the constitution of manipulation, alongside questions of attribution and responsibility. I distinguish whether manipulation occurs, who counts as the manipulator, and who bears responsibility for creating and sustaining the system. Reading Shelley's Frankenstein through creation and abandonment, I explore why distributed authorship and diminished control need not dissolve ongoing responsibilities. The absence of an identifiable manipulator may leave obligations of attention, governance, and repair.

**THU · 14:45 · ROOM
206**

Moniq Gouws

Stellenbosch University

Naming the Monster: Artificial Intelligence as Misnomer and the Case for Redefinition

This paper posits "Artificial Intelligence" as misnomer that distorts public understanding and misdirects research. Parallels are drawn between Shelley's Frankenstein and the 1956 Dartmouth Conference. Victor Frankenstein's failure to name or understand his creature becomes analogous to naming AI after its

most ambitious goal and not its true capabilities, which has produced a cultural “Frankenstein Syndrome.” Complete renaming of the field is impractical because of the term’s cultural entrenchment. Redefinition of the term instead treats it as a directional term for the ongoing pursuit of computational capabilities constantly approaching, but never achieving, human intelligence. Subdivision of “AI” as an umbrella term into distinct categories specifically naming the types of technology like language systems, robotics, predictive systems and generative technologies allows each to be understood and regulated on its own terms. This replaces ambiguity with honesty, addressing the fear, misdirected research, and unachievable standards created by the field’s original naming error.

**THU · 11:15 · ROOM
206**

Paula Ziethmann

Institute for Employment
Research (IAB)

There Are No Monsters: How We Produce Monstrous Relations through AI

Humans and artefacts are not monstrous in themselves. Monstrosity emerges through specific practices, actions and relations of responsibility. Taking Frankenstein as a point of departure and drawing on Karen Barad’s agential realism, this paper examines the historical Mechanical Turk and its contemporary counterpart, Amazon Mechanical Turk, as paradigmatic cases. It argues that seemingly autonomous technological artefacts are the result of epistemic and social practices that obscure the relationships that underpin their production and operation. Adopting a normative perspective, the paper argues that monstrosity names concrete forms of exploitation and violence. The often invisible labour of ghost workers illustrates how AI systems externalise costs and reproduce asymmetrical power relations. By shifting attention from artefacts to the relations that constitute them, the paper makes a case for a relational understanding of technology and responsibility, revealing the practices and actors that are obscured by narratives of technological autonomy.

**THU · 14:15 · ROOM
206**

Roman Krzanowski

The Pontifical University
of John Paul II in Krakow

Semantic and Ontological Drift in Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence is routinely described using terms originally associated with human capacities, including memory, learning, recognition, understanding, reasoning, and decision-making. In computer science, these terms acquire technical meanings defined by the operations of artificial systems. Such terminological borrowing is useful and often unavoidable. A philosophical difficulty arises, however, when computationally redefined concepts are applied back to human cognition or when their use is taken to establish that artificial systems possess the human capacities from which the terminology was borrowed. A contemporary public lecture on AI provides an illustrative case, while the use of computational vocabulary in descriptions of biological neural systems demonstrates the broader philosophical issue. The paper argues that terminological discipline requires more than consistent definitions: it requires examining whether the application of a concept to an entity is warranted by the entity’s actual properties and capacities.

**FRI · 11:45 · ROOM
203**

Rudolf Seising

Deutsches Museum

Histories of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a field of research has quite a few stories to tell. Its origins lie, among other places, in the fields of logic and mathematics, computer science, neuroscience, and psychology. In 1956, the research goal was formulated to describe in principle so precisely “every aspect of learning or any other feature of intelligence the characteristics that a machines can be made to simulate it”. From a philosophical perspective, the thesis was put forward that our understanding of human behavior and our ability to simulate it go hand in hand. A good way to study natural intelligence, therefore, is to attempt to reproduce it artificially. There are various approaches to this: In “Good Old Fashioned AI” (GOFAI), attempts were made to imitate aspects of intelligence through symbol manipulation; today, however, AI is dominated by algorithmic methods such as artificial neural networks, decision trees, and classification trees. These algorithms crawl through large amounts of data in search of patterns—something humans are generally not very good at. Consequently, the original goal no longer appears to be at the center of artificial intelligence research.

**THU · 12:15 · ROOM
203**

Sophia Kee

Technische Hochschule
Ingolstadt

You have the final say: Maintaining human accountability for AI-assisted ethical decisions in everyday settings

Amidst the rapidly increasing capabilities of and allocation of agency to AI-driven technologies, having a human in the loop is crucial to validate responses, maintain control and prevent unwanted outcomes. When the outcome of user interactions is fundamentally unpredictable, the onus lies on those who have control over the system to implement measures that safeguard users from potential harm and prevent misuse. Simultaneously, users should also be reminded to use AI responsibly. We plan to test the efficacy of a variety of subtle interventions intended to maintain accountability among human users in situations involving AI-assisted decision-making, suitable for chatbots and other text-based decision-making systems. By manipulating the user experience, we aim to observe the effect of modifications to the user interface on users’ sense of agency and adherence to AI decisions when being assisted in resolving everyday decisions.

**FRI · 11:45 · ROOM
206**

Tamara Siegler

KU

From Creature to Monster: What Frankenstein Reveals About AI and Human Values

How can a creation turn into a monster? Over two centuries ago, Mary Shelley explored this question in “Frankenstein”—a story in which an initially benevolent, artificially created being ultimately turns against human values. This phenomenon, known today as the Value Alignment Problem, can be applied to other creations, most prominently artificial intelligence. The talk compares how Shelley’s creature and AI come to diverge from human values, examines the individual factors that drive this process, and explores ways to possibly prevent it.