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Converging Technologies, Changing Societies

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Keynote Speakers:

Diane Michelfelder, Nick Bostrom, Jean-Pierre Dupuy, Andrew Feenberg

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Track 10. Robots, Cyborgs and Artificial Life

Chairs: Mark Coeckelbergh & Gianmarco Veruggio

The Convergence of Video Games & Military Robotics: What are the Social Implications?

Asaro, Peter Mario

In this talk, I review some recent trends in the design of visual and manual interfaces for military robotics, and their relation to video game interfaces. I argue that the strategic conception of “network centric warfare” that is being promoted by the Pentagon’s Future Combat Systems initiative is playing an active role in the convergence of robotic interfaces and video games. I will present examples of videos, TV ads, websites, and video games that seek to simultaneously recruit, train and sell to online users. The emergence of these hybrid interfaces demonstrates how the embodiment of information is reciprocally shaping new media users and interfaces. This is leading to an increased use of both visual interfaces and manual controllers originally developed for entertainment purposes. I will consider how the video game interfaces genres and technologies are influencing the latest designs of military robotics, including those with lethal capabilities. Furthermore, I will examine the motivations for these trends, including factors such as recruiting and training, as well as pressures to increase automation. The convergence of interfaces and media occurring between video games and military robotics raises serious ethical and social concerns, related to but different from earlier concerns about violent video games. I will consider some of the more significant concerns and their social implications.

Living with robots: A social-philosophical approach to robot ethics

Coeckelbergh, Mark

Scenarios about the introduction of autonomous artificially intelligent robots in our daily lives raise the issue regarding their moral status. If they were to live with us and resemble us in significant ways, then we might feel that we should take them into moral consideration. But should we?

Making comparisons to debates on the moral status of animals, I show that the usual way to argue for this claim rests on the identification and proof of relevant properties of an entity such as consciousness, autonomy, adaptability, etc. (Levy, Floridi, etc.). However, I then argue that this approach gets us into trouble for several reasons.

In order to avoid these difficulties, I propose a social-philosophical rather than an ontological approach to the issue. Instead of relying on properties, this approach takes social relations as the basis for moral inclusion. Finally, I show the implications of this methodological turn for our arguments concerning the moral inclusion of humans.