

Mercator Lecture for AI in the Human Context Prof. Dr. Maurizio Ferraris



Webfare: Digital Equity

9 June 2023
04.00–06.00 pm

Center for Science and Thought
Konrad-Zuse-Platz 1-3
53227 Bonn Oberkassel



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Abstract

We as consumers, as homo consumens qua homo valens, have become a source of a new kind of capital. Until recently the vast majority of human acts did not translate into capitalizable data. This new-found capital represents a new world heritage in a radical sense. Ontologically, it has nothing to do with common goods, which are part of nature. This is about culture and society. Epistemologically, it is a treasure trove of finally reliable knowledge about humankind. Economically, it is infinitely renewable capital, since one can use the data as often as one likes. Finally, from a political point of view, it is radically democratic, since it is produced in equal measure by the richest, most educated, poorest, and most uneducated human beings, provided they are connected to the Web. This capital does not differentiate between rich and poor, because even those who have no money at all (provided they are connected) generate data in abundance. Instead of being a sign of the divine election of the individual, as in the Calvinist origin of bourgeois capitalism, this new humanistic capital is only valuable insofar as it is shared among all humans, regardless of wealth, intelligence, race or faith. So far, the two options to regulate the environment in which this capital is produced have been either to privatize or to collectivize the data economy.

As part of his lecture, Prof. Dr. Maurizio Ferraris, Mercator Visiting Professor for AI in the Human Context, will discuss a third humanistic option for a future data market that allows not only for equality, but true equity: Webfare as a redistribution of capital.

Bio

Maurizio Ferraris is full Professor of Philosophy at the University of Turin, where he is the President of the LabOnt – Center for Ontology. He has worked in the field of aesthetics, hermeneutics, and social ontology, attaching his name to the theory of Documentality and contemporary New Realism. Maurizio Ferraris is the author of more than fifty books that have been translated into several languages, for example *History of Hermeneutics* (Humanities Press, 1996); *A Taste for the Secret* (with Jacques Derrida – Blackwell, 2001); *Documentality or Why it is Necessary to Leave Traces* (Fordham UP, 2012); *Goodbye Kant!* (SUNY UP, 2013); *Where Are You? An Ontology of the Cell Phone* (Fordham UP, 2014); *Manifesto of New Realism* (SUNY UP, 2014); *Introduction to New Realism* (Bloomsbury, 2014); *Positive Realism* (Zero Books, 2015).