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Call for Abstracts

Workshop Session: Morality and Technological Innovation

Organizers:

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Whether or not to use a digital thesaurus to write this call is primarily a matter of efficiency. We wouldn't have a bad conscience to do so. In other cases, technologies are undoubtedly intertwined with moral concerns – whether it is right or wrong, good or bad to develop and use certain technologies. Is it morally acceptable, for example, to create reproduction technologies connected to something as charged with societal values as conceiving a child? Or is it morally acceptable to employ systems of artificial intelligence in an increasing variety of social domains, a technology prone to machine bias and discrimination?

These three examples – a thesaurus, reproduction medicine, and artificial intelligence – demonstrate that technological artifacts are moralized to various extents by social groups. *Moralization of technologies* occurs when the perception, evaluation, and use of technological artifacts by individual or collective actors is structured by moral categories and standards. To understand the connections between technology and society – a topic of longstanding interest for social theory – we need to analyze the moral embeddedness of technological artifacts.

In this workshop, we wish to describe and explain how and why technologies become moralized. This can be studied from at least three perspectives: (i) to what extent do moral norms and values influence the production and adoption of new technologies? E.g., does the acceptance of reproduction medicine depend on gender ideologies? (ii) How do social actors negotiate the moral consequences of new technologies in societal fields, e.g., the moral consequences of nuclear technologies? (iii) To what extent are technological artifacts understood as having moral agency or moral patiency? E.g., when is artificial intelligence held responsible for its behavior? We place a special emphasis on *empirical studies explaining when and how* moral concerns influence or are influenced by technological innovations.

The workshop will be held in English. Please submit your abstract of max. 2000 characters (including spaces) until the 5th of January 2024 to technology_sgs@unilu.ch

Keywords: Technology, Morality, Evaluation, Agency/Patiency