



Philosophy for Artificial Intelligence Invited Lectures Series

Organized by the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts at the UWB



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AI Summers and Human Winters: Whence the Crisis of Modernity?

25/11/2022, 11:00-12:30, SP319

The recent rise of AI seems to defy an old pattern commonly known as “AI winters,” where cycles of hyped-up boom were followed by periods of decline and disappointment. This time, it seems, AI is here to stay, drawing attention and investment from a whole gamut of contemporary institutions (academia, corporations, governments, international bodies, etc.). How can we explain this state of affairs? I propose to approach this question from the perspective of *longue durée*, thinking of AI as a project that expresses the underlying predicaments of modernity. I would like to show that AI itself is the culmination of four modernist projects, each with its own underlying logic: (i) the calculative logic of rationalism; (ii) the accumulative logic of capitalism; (iii) the dominative logic of colonialism; and (iv) the delegative logic of postmodernism. The convergence of these projects in our times has brought about a global crisis of historical scale, of which AI is a vivid expression. In this light, what seems to be a hot summer for AI might, in fact, promise a long winter for the global humanity. Refusing to take this as an indispensable destiny, I explore alternatives, inviting collective action to avoid it.

AI and Future of Work: Economic Crisis and Technological Mediations

30/11/2022, 11:00-12:30, RJ209

The adoption of AI techniques and technologies in various domains of work has raised questions and concerns about the changing character of jobs, skills, and careers. Many such concerns are driven by particular assumptions about technology as the driver of social change, about automation as the determinant of the job market, and about growth and productivity as the ultimate goals of economic activity. The disruptions of Covid-19 unsettled many of these assumptions. In particular, standard notions of work are questioned by millions of people who are driven to the edge, facing dilemmas between job and safety, income and security, and wellbeing and mortality. The dilemmas are pushed to the sidelines by dominant players who see the disruptions as an opportunity for intensified exploitation, appropriation, and wealth accumulation. In between, we have a group of hot-skilled individuals who find partial comfort in having the option of teleworking, while adjusting their family and social life. These disruptions have reconfigured modern societies, dividing them into social worlds that are driven further apart through technological mediations. Such mediations have deep roots in the capitalist modernity, which has persistently shuffled social relationships based on social, economic, and spatiotemporal differences among communities. In this talk, I will examine these mediations, exploring other alternative futures.

Artificial Intelligence: The Possible, the Impossible, and the Real

7/12/2022, 10:00-11:30, Keynote at the PFAI2022 International Workshop

<https://pfai2022.zcu.cz>

AI, for most of its history, has been dominated by a paradigm driven by the question of what computers are capable of doing or not doing, of what is possible and what is impossible. This paradigm has given rise to two very distinct discursive, social, and cultural universes: one where the sky is the limit to AI magic, where all the predicaments of humanity can be resolved by the invisible hand of AI, offering us full lives of leisure and creativity; the other a world where AI is nothing but snake-oil alchemy, where our problems will be exacerbated by techno-scientific hubris, leaving us at the mercy of bots, deep fakes, and other unseemly creations. The borderline between these two worlds is moving, murky, and mysterious, giving rise to confusion and uncertainty about our future horizon. In this talk, I explore a different paradigm, seeking practical ways to distinguish between the possible and the impossible in pursuit of the real in science, technology, and policy.