

Preface

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Conference on Technology Ethics is the fourth event that the Future Ethics research group have organized to promote technology ethics research and networking. The first two were national events, but last year we expanded the forum to international level. This year we changed the name of the event to the conference on technology ethics to represent better what this event has become.

This year has been – once again – a turning point for digitalization. As Covid-19 hit us, we were forced to implement tools for virtual communication and remote work. These tools have existed before, but not used in such a scale –as people have preferred face-to-face interaction before the pandemic. However, this was not possible this year. Therefore we organized the conference as a virtual one. It was pleasant to notice that people have adapted to use these digital tools fluently during the last months. Thus, it seems that these tools will be an integral part of our lives, and there is no going back. By adapting these technologies in future conferences, we can reduce unnecessary travelling and reach audiences that cannot participate physically.

However, we notice that this situation underlines, even more, the need for ethics. Technology changes our world so fast that legislation and regulation cannot keep up. It will have consequences that we are not yet fully aware like Moor (1985) already noted in his seminal article with title Computer Ethics. It is evident that we, as people, also need in-person communication with other people. During this pandemic, when we have forced to work at home, people have faced different kind of challenges than before.

People tend to believe that technology is the answer to different kinds of problems, while it usually is the source of new concerns and issues to be dealt with. During this conference, we heard several of those issues that are ethically related to use of technology. The proceedings contains 9 articles that were accepted after double peer review. In total, we had 16 submissions. The published articles of this conference include topics covering artificial intelligence, data economy, learning technology, games and health technology. All of those are inventions that are developed to solve problems in our world. However, those also bring forth new ethical problems and challenges – as well as old ones.

We should be careful that we do not fall under the essence of technology, which is an issue that Heidegger warned us about in his famous essay Questions Concerning Technology (see Heidegger 1977).

First, we need to understand that the essence of technology is not technological at all – it is deeper and hidden at first glance. The essence of technology is that it reveals

everything as a standing reserve – including humans. It is a worldview that is technologically deterministic and tempts us to believe that technology could solve everything.

We believe having control over technology, but actually, technology controls us by giving us this technological worldview. The essence, which technology has set in the world is a belief that we should be more efficient and develop new technologies to keep up with the competitive world.

However, we should ask ourselves; why would we need to be more efficient? What is the final goal of being so efficient? Do we need to produce more technology so we could produce more technology or what we should aim in the end? Heidegger noted that we can not evade the essence of technology. If we turn our back on technology, it controls us by forcing us to evade it. Thus, the essence of technology reveals the world through the lenses of efficiency and technological determinism, and we start to see the world as a standing reserve. While we can not change the essence of technology, we can change our worldview and the role that technology has for us. We should question the role of technology when we aim for good, ethical lives. What is so beautiful in our lives, that we should reach for instead of being efficient?

We see that technology ethics is all about that! People should question technology and emphasize human needs behind the technology. We are – or at least should be – here for that.

References

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