Can Machines Save the World?

The Digital Humanism Fellowship Conference - Day 1 of 2

This event is organized by the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM) and the Vienna University of Technology (TU Wien) as part of their Digital Humanism fellowship program.

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16 and 17 November 2023, 09:00–17:30

Helga Nowotny
AI as an Agent of Change

Can Machines Save the World?
Annual Conference of the Digital Humanism fellowship program
Vienna, 16-17 November 2023

A historical glance back

- Technologies shape societies and are shaped by them

- A good reference point:
  The printing press as an agent of change (E. Eisenstein, 1980)

- History as a lens: similarities and differences

- The role of social media

Who is an agent of change and what is agency?

- The larger picture: cultural, political, social change

- The outsourcing of knowledge operations

- Digital infrastructures

- Who controls agency? The necessity of regulation

Technology and shifts in power

- The centralization of power in the Nation State

- The concentration of economic power today

- Challenges for governments

- AI/ML as a GPT/ Systems Technology

The transfer of human agency to the machine

- Automation of cognitive tasks

- Predictive algorithms and decision-making

- The deep-seated fear of losing control

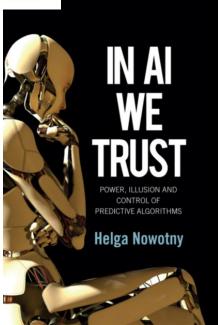- Anthropomorphic tendencies

The long road ahead: AI as a public good

- Between techno-utopian and dystopian views

- Where are the voices of citizens?

- The imbalance between public and private funding

- Can digital humanism save us?

Where are we today?

- Enormous potential (and uptake in science)

- Fascinating new research questions

- The illusion of control

- The role that science can play

Thank you!