Call for Papers

Artificial Intelligence and Religion – AIR2020
International Conference
3 - 5 March 2020

Centre for Religious Studies
Centre for Information and Communication Technology
Fondazione Bruno Kessler (FBK), Trento

Artificial intelligence (AI) technologies are having a significant impact on contemporary societies, and it is a widely held belief that their societal impact will become disruptive in a not too distant future. Religion has proved to remain a salient and determining feature of human societies, with an estimated 84% of the global population in 2010 identifying with a religious group, according to the PEW Research Centre. The goal of this conference is to explore current interactions between the religious sphere (widely construed in terms of diverse communities, institutions, practices, precepts, beliefs, and rites) on the one hand, research and innovation in the field of AI on the other. AIR2020 will bring together researchers and scholars in artificial intelligence, religious studies, economics, legal studies, science communication, narratology, philosophy, and sociology. While covering the more obvious and researched topics, such as the role of religious vocabulary in popular AI narratives and techno-utopian or dystopian visions of human futures, the conference will also focus on less researched areas, such as the involvement of religious actors in shaping current debates over AI governance, the impact of AI technologies on freedom of religion or belief, the value alignment problem for AI with regard to religiously grounded values, and the discrepancy between non-expert perceptions of AI and the current state of the art in AI research, development and innovation.

AIR2020 is embedded in the mission on religion and innovation of the Centre for Religious Studies, as articulated in our 2019 position paper Religion and Innovation: Calibrating Research Approaches and Suggesting Strategies for a Fruitful Interaction. Our position paper proposes a set of eleven recommendations concerning action research in religion and innovation that can benefit societal actors in their attempts to strengthen the interaction between religion and innovation. For an account of FBK-ISR's work on religion and innovation please consult our booklet Religion & Innovation at FBK.

AIR2020 continues the 2018 workshop and lecture series Religion and Innovation, with a specific focus on innovations in AI and their impact on religion.

The conference is organised by the Centre for Religious Studies (FBK-ISR) in collaboration with the Centre for Information and Communication Technologies of Fondazione Bruno Kessler (FBK-ICT).

Scientific Committee FBK

Marco Ventura (Director of the Centre for Religious Studies, FBK), Paolo Traverso (Director of the Centre for Information and Communication Technology, FBK), Oliviero Stock (Head of the Research Area Artificial Intelligence, Centre for Information and Communication Technology, FBK) Boris Rähme (Researcher at the Centre for Religious Studies, FBK)

Abstracts and submission

The organisers welcome abstracts for 30-minute papers which engage with contemporary interactions between religion and artificial intelligence, in particular regarding – but not restricted to – the following topics:

(1) Involvement of religious actors/stakeholders (institutions, religious leaders, communities) in public debates over AI governance (e.g., analysis of soft law initiatives)

(2) Artificial intelligence and freedom of religion or belief (case studies of digital tools, strategies and trends promoting or impeding freedom of religion or belief)

(3) Value alignment: religiously grounded values and utility functions (quantifiability of religiously grounded preferences)

(4) The current state of AI research and development vs. non-expert perceptions of extant AI technologies (popular AI narratives and their relation to contemporary AI research and development)

(5) Religious imagery in AI narratives (in science communication, media, popular culture, academia, religious commitment or mere rhetoric?)

(6) The role of AI topoi in epistemically possible and/or merely speculative scenarios of humanity's future(s) (transhumanism, posthumanism, techno-utopias and techno-dystopias)

Abstracts, **max. 750** words in length and **formatted for blind review**, should be emailed to **AIR2020@fbk.eu** by Monday, October 21, 2019. Please include your name, institutional affiliation, email address, and paper title in the email body, use "AI and Religion 2020" in the subject line of your email, and indicate which of the above topics your paper will address. Acceptance notices will be sent out by Thursday, November 7, 2019.

For further inquiries about the conference, please contact Dr Boris Rähme (**AIR2020@fbk.eu**).