

Information Overload, AI and Responsibility

26-28 February 2020, Lviv, UKRAINE

In 2019, the International Institute for Ethics and Contemporary Issues (IIECI), the Faculty of Social Sciences, and the Analytical Center at the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) launched an Annual International Conference Series within the framework of a broad theme titled *Integral Human Development in the Digital Age*. The underlying aim of the series is to bring diverse fields of study into a fruitful multidisciplinary dialogue on matters of public relevance with special reference to 'Integral Human Development' (human ecology); such a topic cannot be effectively dealt with by any one specialized domain of knowledge and thus demands a multidisciplinary approach.

The context of such an approach is Catholic Social Teaching (CST), wherein 'Integral Human Development' is employed as a key concept for facing the complex challenges and opportunities involved in dignified human development and social progress. It offers an important and rich perspective on the unity of human life and experiences, significance of the authentically human relationships, and the meaning of responsibility in the context of a rapidly emerging digital world.

The **first** conference of the series, *Friendship in the Time of Facebook*, took place in February of 2019; it was dedicated to a critical reflection and articulation of the underlying anthropological intuitions and 'visions' of human beings who increasingly tend to think of themselves as immigrants in a new 'digital land' due to rapidly emerging modes and codes of behaviour and communication.

The **second** conference of the series, scheduled for 26-28 February 2020 in Lviv, Ukraine, will focus on issues related to 'Information Overload, AI, and Responsibility' since although new scientific discoveries and technologies have always impacted culture and self-perception, the rapid advance of the digital technologies at the beginning of our present century presents unprecedented challenges. The complex processes involved in attempting to integrate these new technologies into the world of human culture, communication, and relationships, is daunting and demands a sustained multidisciplinary approach.

In the past, technologies have functioned as helpful tools at the service of human beings who have controlled these technologies to promote culture and civilizational progress, but due to the novel nature and power of 'digital-ity', this relationship is in danger of being reversed. The social, economic, and political turbulences are just now beginning. The digital reality empowered by AI control and management of big data has become so powerful that the distinction between virtual reality and 'real reality' is blurred. It is not only that we are able to digitize reality and construct its digital representations, but we are now able to convince masses of people, through information overload and the constant dissemination of 'facts' and 'fake facts', that what is real is virtual, and that what is virtual is real. Needless to say, this threatens every genuine democracy and can even lead to unjust wars.

Although vulnerability has always been a part of what it means to be human, digital reality has introduced a new and particularly pernicious kind of vulnerability that prevents us from detecting how, through the power of invisible digital algorithms, our thought and decision-making processes are influenced. Often times we make the very decisions that are not good for us, unaware of the fact that we have been manipulated. At other times, our genuine needs are not being met because our illegitimate wants have been transformed into needs through digital deception. This confusion of wants and needs in turn changes the very meaning of what it means to be human.

The complexity and novelty of these and so many other ethical and metaphysical questions and issues shall be at the heart of our planned conference. Through presentations offered by experts working in social theory, philosophy, anthropology, digital technologies, media theory, journalism/communication, political science, law, management, cultural studies, theology, and history, it is our hope that we may stimulate meaningful and fruitful conversation that sheds light on these all-important issues.

Venue:

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