

AI Hopes, Fears, and Realities: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue

1st – 2nd July 2025

Hybrid Conference

MEEET-Lab, University of Zurich

Zurich, Switzerland



Digital
Religion(s)



Call for Papers: The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been perceived as marking a turning point in technological advancement, has triggered global ethical debates, and reinvigorated questions about the nature and purpose of humanity. AI is seen as having the potential to not only reshape economies and societies but also transform our fundamental understanding of intelligence, consciousness, and human existence and meaning. The supposed promises of AI - its potential for salvation, progress, and transformation - are constantly juxtaposed with fears of unintended consequences, loss of human agency, and moral dilemmas. Our conference, "AI Hopes, Fears, and Realities: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue," aims to explore these sometimes-conflicting ideas and offer a platform for interdisciplinary debate.

To expand our understanding of AI's role in society, we aim to bring together technologists, theologians, scholars of religion, anthropologists, linguists, sociologists, ethicists, philosophers, and scholars from other related fields interested in this topic.

We invite you to join us in exploring and concretizing AI hopes, fears, and realities. We are looking for papers that will materialize individual approaches, as well as connecting specific empirical findings with a more systematic reflection – including perspectives for interdisciplinary research and discussion.

Four Main Topic Areas:

1. Technological Realities:

- The current state of AI
- AI as a tool for progress: What notions of 'progress' are prevalent in AI discourse, and what do they imply about what it means to be human? Are we looking for AI to solve humanity's greatest challenges, or are we relying too heavily on it?
- The promises and pitfalls of AI in society: How close are we to realizing AI's full potentials? Or are we instead realizing AI's inherent reductionism and limiting effect on our own potentials?

2. Narratives in Society: Histories, Arts, and Media:

- The role of storytelling and imagination in shaping our perceptions of AI: Are there new stories? What accounts dominate the discussion? Who gets to be a storyteller about AI?
- AI in art, literature, and media: What does the portrayal of AI in popular culture tell us about societal hopes, fears, and ethical concerns?
- The role of media in shaping our views of AI: How do films, literature, and popular culture influence our collective imagination about AI's place in the future?

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3. Ethical and Philosophical Reflections:

- Ethics and morality in the age of AI: How do we build responsible, ethical AI systems that reflect human values, and can these systems ever truly embody these values? How do we hope to gain consensus on these values?
- Exploring the ethical frameworks that govern AI development: How do we address potential harms such as surveillance, bias, and autonomy? On what basis do we intend to respond to these harms?
- The human-machine relationship: How is AI reshaping human morals, interaction, and identity? What is being gained and what is being lost in the increasing interactions of humans with AI?

4. Theological and Religious Insights:

- AI and salvation: Can AI offer a path to salvation or transcendence of the human condition? What models of salvations are people working with, and who is included and who is left behind?
- Religious responses to AI: What do faith traditions say about machines, consciousness, and the future of humanity? How do religious teachings frame the possibilities and dangers of AI? What wisdom already exists to think through the issues raised by AI?
- Creation, free will, and AI: How do theological narratives shape our hopes and fears surrounding the creation of artificial life? Will we see a similar shaping effect of AI on our theological narratives?

Date of the conference: 1st - 2nd July 2025

Abstract deadline: 31st March 2025

Abstract Length: 250 words

Contact for submissions: fabienne.greuter@uzh.ch

Format: Hybrid

Location: University of Zurich, Switzerland

Organizing committee:

Prof. Dr. Thomas Schlag, Prof. Dr. Beth Singler, Dr. Yves Mühlematter,

Dr. Fabian Winiger, Dr. Kristina Eiviler, Katharina Yadav, Fabienne Greuter