Professors versus Robots: Is There Value in Being Human in an Automated University?

Thursday 4th October 2018   16.00 -17.30

The Edge, School of Management Executive Suite, University of Bath

Professor Steve Fuller, University of Warwick

Many of the drivers of an 'automated academia' are subtle and more or less already accepted by the academic community. Here are two wide-reaching examples, one drawn from teaching and the other from research: First, consider 'student-centred learning', which amounts to 'empowering' students with various visual aids that reduces the instructor to an ad hoc presence who comes into play only once the Powerpoints and videos fail to meet the student's learning needs. Second, consider the increasing weight given by publishers, editors, as well as academic administrators, to 'meta-data', ranging from search-friendly abstracts to various metrics of reception. These serve as an additional layer of regulation on the research process beyond the standardization already imposed by academic jargon and normal peer review. Where is the human dimension in this increasingly mechanized world of academic knowledge production? I shall suggest a hopeful answer to this question, in the full knowledge that 'automated academia' is reasonably portrayed as a force for 'epistemic democracy', as it effectively -- for better or worse -- levels the difference between the producers and consumers of knowledge.

Steve Fuller holds the Auguste Comte Chair in Social Epistemology in the Sociology Department at the University of Warwick. He is a graduate of Columbia, Cambridge and Pittsburgh and a Fellow of the UK Academy of Social Sciences and the European Academy of Sciences and Arts. He is also a Senior Research Fellow at the Breakthrough Institute, the leading 'ecomodernist' think-tank. His most recent work has been titled 'Humanity 2.0' and is concerned with the future of humanity. He has spoken in more than 30 countries and his writings have been translated into more than twenty languages. His most recent books include *The Academic Caesar: University Leadership is Hard* (Sage, 2016) and *Post-Truth: Knowledge as a Power Game* (Anthem, 2018).

All welcome. Refreshments served between 15.30 and 16.00

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