CfP Jahrbuch Technikphilosophie 2020: Autonomy and the Uncanny

Does technological control take the place of what appeared uncannily uncontrollable? Or is it itself becoming uncanny? Two seemingly contradictory narratives shape the history and theory of technology. The narrative of disenchantment describes how nature, experienced as foreign and dangerous, was tamed by becoming scientific and mechanized. Second the narrative of (re-)enchantment recounts how artifacts and technological possibilities become uncanny, especially by way of their seeming independence and by confronting us with an »autonomous« logic of their own. In today's debates about self-learning, ubiquitous, invisible and opaque technologies, the uncanny moment resonates of a technology with »a life of its own«. Following upon the mechanization and automation discourses of the 20th century, this contributes to the »demonization« of technology. On the one hand technology makes the world familiar and comprehensible, e.g., by equating understanding with technical reconstruction. On the other hand, the technical reproduction of the world – or its radical transformation into an alienated one – is experienced as something disturbing. When artifacts appear to do »what they want« or when large technical systems shape the world according to their »own logic«, a limit is reached that was already mentioned by Freud – we become uncertain whether we are still living in the modern world at all.

To be sure, the linkages between technology, autonomy and the uncanny are not limited to the strange or frightening appearance of artifacts. »The chasm between knowing something and being able to do it is perhaps even greater and more uncanny than it is generally thought to be«, wrote Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil*. Günther Anders extends this to the gap between what can be imagined and what produced, according to which what is actually produced can fall behind the imagination - and vice versa, imagination can fall behind production. How even sheer, blind capability can be uncanny is demonstrated in films and literary works, as in Stanisław Lem's technology-philosophically inspired novel *The Invincible* (Niezwyciężony, 1964). Moreover, both the perfection of the means and their excess can seem uncanny, see the myth of Prometheus or the choral song in Sophocles' Antigone: »Manifold is the uncanny, yet nothing / beyond the human being prevails more uncannily«.

Finally, technology is meant to be »innovative« and thus promises unheard-of novelty, subscribing to the notion of an inherent tendency toward ever more autonomous (and thus ever more disruptive, transformative) technologies. Claims of novelty are interesting in this matter – maybe there is something to them? At the same time, alarmist narratives of novelty serve to produce, perhaps strategically, uncanniness and uncertainty. In the name of autonomy, allegedly threatened by technology, we engage – especially as critics of technology – in ›uncanny reflection‹ and conceive of action from there.

The title words *Uncanniness and Autonomy* stand for this thematic constellation of the special issue of the *Jahrbuch Technikphilosophie* 2020 (JTPhil). It will be coordinated with the *Zeitschrift für Technikgeschichte* which will announce a corresponding call in autumn 2018. On the part of JTPhil, systematic and historical approaches from a philosophical point of view are welcomed. Manuscripts in German, English or French can be submitted until **15 January 2019** and should not exceed 33,000 characters (including spaces and notes). A double-blind peer review process ensures the quality of the papers. Before submitting a manuscript, please send us a short abstract by **October 1, 2018**. This is followed by initial editorial feedback.

Please send your submissions by e-mail to the editorial office: **jahrbuch@phil.tu-darmstadt.de**.