

# Reflections on AI

Q&A with  
Marisa Tschopp

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The TUM IEAI had the pleasure of speaking with Marisa Tschopp prior to her Speaker Series Session on 22 October 2020 on *Three wrong questions about trust and artificial intelligence*. We were able to ask her some brief questions about AI ethics, the role of academia and research institutions in creating AI frameworks, the role of trust, and why asking the right questions is so important.

## 1. What is the biggest misconception about AI?

The biggest problem is that we are not going too deep when we ask such questions. We are kind of caught in extremes when we talk about misconceptions between the killer robot scenario where "an" AI is destroying the world and another extreme where "an" AI is healing cancer or saving the world. We are caught in these extremes, and we have to find the middle ground and get better, or more precise conceptions about artificial intelligence.

## 2. What is the most important question in AI ethics right now?

From my research perspective, one of the most critical questions is the controversial and very critical relationship between the topic of trust and AI. So basically, in one question: how does trust influence the way we rely on or use certain AI-based systems. However, it is critical for everyone to be aware of the multitude and variety of important questions in AI ethics right now.

## 3. Who should be in charge or involved in developing ethical frameworks and standards for AI?

A more interesting question is who shouldn't. In general, we have all the classic answers from policy, tech, academia, practice, etc. There are a lot of good frameworks and people who have great ideas about who has to be involved. With the very nature of the problem being in dispute, in artificial intelligence, the most important thing is that we are taking a transdisciplinary approach, which helps to determine which are the most relevant problems and relevant research questions, because we have a wicked problem where there is no fixed solution. Transdisciplinarity and smart stakeholder management is key to solving various problems and this includes, and I want to point this out, also the people affected. This is one of the perspectives, which has been too much in the background. So, taking a very smart stakeholder management approach and transdisciplinarity is key.

## 4. In the AI context, why has trust become such a popular research topic?

It all goes back to uncertainty. Why? There are so many things happening and at such a great pace that most people do not have the capacity to follow. And what happens is, if you do not have a lot of knowledge, we are going to a place of uncertainty where there is a high risk, where there is not much knowledge. From a psychological perspective, trust is one of the most important coping mechanisms to deal with

uncertainty. Otherwise, humans would go crazy. Without trust they could not work with each other; there would be no collaboration; we would not be able to invent rockets and go to the moon etc. The question we have to focus on is how we can build good, accountable and explainable AI. Trust is maybe even counterproductive. As Joanna Bryson for example says: nobody should ever trust AI and we should only build AI to make it accountable. Trust in the AI ethics context, is actually a very dangerous topic, and especially psychologists should be trained in ethics in this environment.

#### **5. What is the role of academia, research and other types of centers when it comes to the ethics and governance of AI?**

We must do a better job especially in teaching the next generation. We have started doing a lot of ethics courses for technology and computer science students. They are getting all these tech philosophy courses now. But psychologists should have that too. I haven't had that in my curriculum. Psychologists, for example, do a lot of research in the tech field, but they are missing the frameworks of the consequences. When psychologists do trust in technology research or trust in robots research, they often don't understand the consequences. They don't understand that their research will be used in a negative human-unfriendly way to manipulate people to use systems that are not good for them, for their health, their privacy and so on. I have seen this problem a lot, especially in our field, which actually has been quite surprising.

#### **6. In AI, why is asking the right questions so important?**

Take the trolley problem for example. Many people in the past three years have asked us if you are on the road with an automated vehicle, who would you have to kill, the child or the grandma? Or the question of man versus machine: who is better, who is smarter, who is going to overtake (whom)? Comparing humans and machines is just complete nonsense. All these questions lead mostly to fear and overblown expectations. These questions are just very unproductive. They don't help make better, deeper and more concrete discussions. They don't really elevate the field, our minds, and how we want to cope with these developments.

#### **7. We often say that AI is changing or transforming our world. To what extent is AI changing us as humans?**

Obviously, we don't really know. We only know bits and pieces, but this is also more an opinion or my personal fear or concern. What scares me most is that these changes within us as humans are creeping in subconsciously, very subtly. If you take the example of Social Media, we are very concerned how these algorithms change our behavior, our attitudes, how they are built to foster radical opinions, radical groups. Take for example the leadership behavior. How does AI curate or support HR or financial decisions? How does it change our leadership behaviors and the way we make decisions? How does it influence our decision-making in the long term, but also in the short term? We don't know these things, and this has great consequences on the way we lead, on the way we build our organizations and on the way we develop. This is something that is racking our brain.

## 8. As an Ambassador of Women in AI, how big is the diversity crisis in the AI sector, and what does it mean to be a woman in tech?

The diversity crisis is big enough that we probably will not see a change within the next 30 to 40 years. But, it does not mean that we should not do it. It will just take longer time, much longer than we expect, and it is going to be a lot of hard work, which is sometimes frustrating being a Women in AI Ambassador and working in this global NGO. We are working hard and there are hundreds of women in our NGO who work really hard to make a change. But it can be frustrating to see that nothing is happening. Maybe it is even getting worse due to crises and pandemics. We don't even know how this will also change the diversity crisis in AI. As for the question, what does it mean to be a woman in tech, I don't know to be honest. I have a company that supports me from the beginning to the end and I have the luxury of living that way. But, in general, working as a woman in a male-dominated field is challenging, but it is also rewarding, and in the end, it is worth it. Nothing worthwhile comes easy.

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## Meet the expert



*Fotoshooting scip AG 2017*

**Marisa Tschopp** is a researcher at scip AG and the Women in AI Ambassador for Switzerland. She is researching AI and technology from a psychological perspective, with a wide range of questions related to psychological phenomena, governance, and ethical implications. Her research focuses on trust (What does it take to trust AI?), behavioral performance measurement of conversational AI (How smart is Siri?), leadership and lethal autonomous weapons system (killer robots and how to ban them!). As an organizational psychologist, she has experience in social and educational institutions with a specific passion for digital teaching-learning trends. She has taught in several higher education institutions in Germany and Switzerland. She has published various media articles, books and papers and is a frequent speaker at conferences and events worldwide. Marisa holds a Master's degree in Psychology of Excellence in Business and Education from the Ludwig-Maximilians-University of Munich, Germany, as well as a BA, focusing on market and consumer psychology.