Position title: AI ethics: powers and democracy

Characteristics of the position: post-doctoral contract

Functions/ features	
Employment type (referens III)	
Category	
Body	
Quotas	1 year (12 months) / full-time employment (100%)

Assignment:
Chair "Ethics and AI", MIAI and IPhiG, UGA

Context and work environment

Structure description

1) IPhiG

The Institute of Philosophy of Grenoble (IPhiG) is one of the research units of the University of Grenoble Alpes. It is composed of 11 statutory members, from various components of the UGA, more than 20 doctoral students, and several post-doctoral students. It is a member of the regional doctoral school ED 487 "Philosophy: history, representation, creation". Its activities are organized along three axes: "Practices: values, norms, institutions", "Mind and cognition" & "History of philosophy".

2) Chair "Ethics and AI", MIAI

The "Ethics & AI" Chair is one of the chairs of the multidisciplinary Grenoble Institute of Artificial Intelligence (MIAI). It aims to develop over a period of 4 years (2019-2023) a philosophical understanding of Artificial Intelligence both through a conceptual and normative approach and by reference to various "terrains" of observation. It reflects the activities of the Institute of Philosophy of Grenoble (IPhiG), a research unit of the University of Grenoble Alpes. Its activities include meta-ethics, normative ethics, applied ethics, political philosophy, philosophy of law. This variety of points of view gives the Chair a potential for in-depth research on topics to which the relationship between ethics and AI is giving rise today. The scientific director of the chair, specialized in political philosophy, public ethics and philosophy of innovation, ensures the productive interaction of this variety of perspectives. The Chair contributes with 3 others to the "AI and Society" axis of MIAI, and maintains a close relationship with the research conducted on the other axes of the institute. Through the initiatives and projects it develops, the chair currently brings together 5 PhD students in philosophy and information and communication sciences; it also brings together 12 contributors, researchers from other disciplines, such as robotics and among the humanities and social sciences, clinical psychology, information and communication sciences, management sciences and marketing.

Team description (N+1 and colleagues) : under the authority of …. Team composed of X agents (X A, X B, X C…)

The position offered is directly related to the research activity of the chairholder, as well as to that of his contributors and the 5 current PhD students.

Position's mission and main activities

Precise formulation of the project:

AI ethics: powers and democracy

Summary description of the project:

The current developments of artificial intelligence (AI), i.e. both the technical progress made in the last ten years and the rise of these techniques in society, call upon philosophy and invite it to express itself in three dimensions. Firstly, they lead it to reflect on the modes of regulation (at the same time social, legal, ethical and political) adequate to adjust these developments to the human being, potentially in the process of no longer practicing many of its traditional activities, or at least of being dispossessed of their mastery. Secondly, they push it to observe the transformations currently underway for the human capacity to act under the effect of the increasing automation of these activities, that is to say, to take note of these transformations, to be vigilant in the face of the perspectives to come (for example, according to the double scenario "weak/strong AI") and probably already to work on reformulating the notion of responsibility in front of the open possibilities. Thirdly, they question it on the ethical and political aims called to orient the future of society, which are defined according to the values desirable in a democratic framework (inclusion, equity, dignity of living beings, sustainability, etc.).

While computers have been part of the tools that support human activity in many fields for more than fifty years (and algorithmic calculations for much longer), new learning systems (deep learning), the systemization of algorithms and the emergence of "AI systems" (AIS) are now producing tangible threshold effects in terms of the automation of activity, which translates into new situations experienced in many important sectors. If, for the activities concerned, the massive contribution of AI solutions is presented as a considerable increase in efficiency, these situations can sometimes appear radically original for the people involved in the activity, to the point of making them lose sight of the traditional points of reference on what is good, right and good, so that ethical and political reflection is called for.

This proposal for a post-doctoral contract invites candidates to formulate a more precise subject of study that invites research whose purpose will be to problematize the ethical and political stakes in the possible transformation of private and public liberties, and possibly to redefine the latter in the context of the various transitions underway. It will also aim to philosophically thematize new forms of power and to evaluate the risks of control of individuals and populations, notably in the economic dimension of the market via the "economy of attention" [Citton 2014] or in terms of "algorithmic governmentality" [Rouvroy & Berns 2013]. It will question the possibility of the emergence of a new form of totalitarianism under the effect of the "weapons of mathematical destruction" that algorithms can apparently represent [O'Neil 2018], and then it will be a matter of inventing philosophical categories to adequately describe this new form and counter its harms for democracy. In this philosophical research, all the research fields envisaged, intended to be observed, described, analyzed and/or modeled are welcome among contemporary technological and social emergences: facial recognition, smart cities, blockchain, military and civilian drones, Internet of Things (IOT), conversational agents notably developed by institutions, algorithms for Justice, etc.

Scientific disciplines: philosophy (17th section French CNU), political science (4th section), Public law (2th section).

Sub-disciplines/research areas (*in no order of priority*): political philosophy, philosophy of technology, ethics of AI and robotics, fundamental rights, theories of democracy, theories of justice, digital and environmental humanities.

Keywords: ethics, AI, robotics, digital, institutions and organizations, innovation, autonomy, trust, public and private liberties, powers, democracy, human rights, justice, transitions.

Terms of the competition: Candidates are invited to propose to the Jury a personal research project (10 pages maximum), including a description of their future activity within the "Ethics & AI" Chair that falls within the strategic orientations of the latter. If the position concerns philosophy, the multidisciplinary aspects of the candidate's profile and the multidisciplinary perspectives of his/her project will be highlighted, in dialogue with the disciplines of the contributors of the Chair.

Fluency in French and English (oral and written) is a prerequisite for applying, as the admission interview will be conducted in both languages.

References will be appreciated (maximum 2 letters of recommendation per application).

Start date: January 1, 2023.
End of contract: December 31, 2023.

Missions / duties performed:

The purpose of the postdoctoral contract offered to the competition is:
- To contribute to the advancement of scientific knowledge in the field of AI ethics (as defined above) in practical philosophy, political theory and public law, notably through new conceptual and normative approaches, which can be anchored in study fields.
- To maintain the dialogue between philosophy, the social and human sciences disciplines developed in the chair (social and clinical psychology, management sciences, information and communication sciences) and the scientific and technical disciplines developed within the MIAI institute (computer science, robotics, cognition), as well as with the academic world (research laboratories in Grenoble), institutions, associations, and companies.
- To feed the IPhiG's axis 1 while possibly interacting with the two other a

Main activities (in order of importance):
1.   Publication in academic journals, especially in English language.
2.   Contribution to the scientific animation of the "Ethics & AI" chair: organization and intervention for conferences, seminars.
3.   Setting up scientific projects (ANR, European programs, etc.).
4.   Contribution to the outreach of the "Ethics & AI" Chair: oral intervention in front of non-academic audiences (health care personnel, patients, students, etc.).
5.   Invitation to participate occasionally in training sessions (doctoral training on the Grenoble site, MIAI continuing education), without obligation.

Event - Objective result(s) by the end of the contract:
- At least 2 research articles in English (published or submitted) over the duration of the contract,
- Contribution to the organization and animation of the program "Etats généraux de l'éthique de l'AI".

Level of remuneration: to be determined from the reference salary scale for the corresponding professional category at Grenoble Alpes University as well as the experience of the candidates.

Evaluation and control of the achievement of the result(s):
A multidisciplinary jury will evaluate and select the applications received. Then, the candidates selected at the end of this first round will be invited to attend an admission interview, conducted by videoconference.

Restriction or constraints related to the position

Physical presence at the University of Grenoble Alpes for the duration of the contract is a necessary condition, as the position to be filled includes the coordination of a scientific team as well as scientific animation functions on the campus and in the Grenoble area, and in the Auvergne-Rhône Alpes region. An explicit commitment from the candidates will be required during the recruitment interview.

Desired profile

Expected skills (priority) :
- Academic excellence
- Relevance of the research project to the strategic orientations of the "Ethics & AI" Chair
- International research experience: publications, participation in seminars and colloquia, stay in research units
- Ability to engage in multidisciplinary dialogue as demonstrated by previous activity

• *Trade skills/ expertise*

Expression in French and English language, written and oral.

• *Personal skills*

- Autonomy,
- Ability to lead a small scientific team,
- Ability to mobilize the right interlocutors in an academic and peri-academic environment (scientific, technical and industrial mediation fields).

Supervisory mission: ☐ Yes ☒ No
Number of agents supervised per category: ….. A, ….. B, …… C

Desired professional experience: ☐ beginner   ☐ 2 to 5 years
Experience in setting up research projects (national and European) is a plus in the file.

Previous formation, diplomas:
PhD required in philosophy, political science or public law.

General information

Contact for the questions related to the position:

First name, LAST NAME, position:
     Prof. Thierry Ménissier

Head of the Chair « ethics & AI », MIAI/IPhiG

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