

Mastery through Calculation – The Pleasurable Lives of Science and of Technoscience

Where: Universitätszentrum I, Althanstraße 14, 1090 Wien, Hörsaal II

When: February 17, 2017, 18:00 – 19:30

Abstract: In 1919, the German sociologist Max Weber famously characterized the vocation of the modern scientist. He promoted an ascetic ideal of scientists whose main pleasure is to be hard on themselves – as they advance the disenchantment of the world, they must hope that their own ideas will be superseded and resist the temptation to lead and inspire, to pursue social values or to make sense of the world.

Weber's view has proven immensely influential on conceptions of scientific objectivity, on the so-called Mertonian norms and the ethos of science. Not quite a century has passed, and a very different picture emerges when sociologist Steven Shapin portrays the life of contemporary technoscience. His account is most provocative when he attributes to technoscientists not the virtues of the modern intellect but the magic qualities of pre-modern, charismatic leadership. The lecture will pursue this provocation.

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After receiving his Ph.D. in Hamburg (1986) Alfred Nordmann served on the faculty of the Philosophy Department at the University of South Carolina where he remains affiliated. Since 2002 he is Professor of Philosophy and History of Science and Technoscience at Darmstadt Technical University. He explores the formation of conceptions of scientific objectivity as well as epistemological, metaphysical, aesthetic aspects of technoscientific research.

Public keynote organised by
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