

May 24th, 2024
11:00



Gaston Meskens

Science, Technology & Society
Research Unit, SCK CEN, Belgium
Centre for Ethics and Value Inquiry,
University of Ghent, Belgium

BACKGROUND

Gaston Meskens holds master degrees in theoretical physics and nuclear engineering from the University of Ghent (Belgium) and works part-time with the Science, Technology & Society Studies group of the Belgian Nuclear Research Centre SCK CEN and with the Centre for Ethics and Value Inquiry of the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy of the University of Ghent. At the Centre for Ethics and Value Inquiry, his research focuses on a human rights perspective related to intellectual capacity building in the interest of global sustainable development governance. At SCK CEN, his research and outreach is concerned with the ethics of science and technology in general and with the ethical aspects of dealing with nuclear technology in particular.

Seminar on Ethics of Science and Technology

Abstract

Science and technology have dramatically changed our world in the last centuries, albeit in conflicting ways. On the one hand, they have significantly contributed to the improvement of our individual lives and our collective well-being. On the other hand, they have resulted in various threats to our environment and the future of mankind. Looking at societal impacts of science and technology, nuclear technology probably represents the most extreme case of how science and technology can serve both cure and destruction. While medical applications of nuclear technology save individual lives every day, nuclear weapons have the potential to destroy humanity as a whole. Nuclear energy is a low-carbon source of electricity, but a nuclear accident can have dramatic impacts on the environment and on the physical and psychological health of a whole population for a long time. In addition, disposal of radioactive waste unavoidably requires taking responsible action towards future generations, thereby taking into account time dimensions longer than ever faced before in human history...

The overall aim of the seminar is to inquire into the complexity of dealing with risk-inherent technologies (such as nuclear technology) and to discuss the moral foundations of risk governance as well as the ethical values relevant in governance. In a special focus, participants are invited to reflect on the special challenge for scientific advice when science needs to deal with uncertainty and value pluralism, and on the ethical consequences and the practical implications thereof for research and policy.

The approach taken in the seminar unavoidably inspires reflection with respect to specific 'ethical competences' required to deal responsibly with risk inherent technologies such as nuclear technology, and one can understand that these competence requirements apply in the same way to anyone concerned with risk-inherent technology applications, being it nuclear workers, scientists, engineers, radiation protection officers, medical doctors, managers and policy makers. As a consequence, the seminar becomes self-reflexive in the way it invites reflection and dialogue on the specific role, expertise and responsibility of all participants.

Academia C²TN

SEMINÁRIOS · Workshops · Ações de formação · Mesas redondas

