

Automating Care? Feminist Ethics and the Politics of AI-Mediated Care Work

Mojgan Haji

Independent Researcher, Iran

Abstract

Recent developments in artificial intelligence have transformed care work across healthcare, eldercare, childcare, and emotional support systems. From robotic caregivers to AI-driven companion technologies, different forms of care work which has been traditionally feminized and at the same time socially undervalued are increasingly being automated. Ongoing debates on AI and care often focus on technological efficiency or questions of whether machines can provide “genuine” care; this paper, however, argues that such discussions are mostly confined to human-centered frameworks that position AI either as a threat to human labor or as a neutral technological tool. Drawing on feminist ethics of care, posthumanist theory, and xenofeminism, this paper examines how AI-mediated care reshapes gendered labor, relationality, and social reproduction under contemporary technocapitalism. It engages with thinkers such as Rosi Braidotti, Donna Haraway, Helen Hester, Nancy Fraser, and Ruha Benjamin, to explore how AI systems reinforce feminized forms of emotional and reproductive labor while intensifying surveillance and inequality, thereby reproducing patriarchal and neoliberal structures. This paper also argues that AI should not be understood simply as a mechanism of replacement or domination. It reconfigures AI technologies through feminist and posthumanist frameworks in order to support more collective, relational, and non-exploitative forms of care. This paper brings feminist technology studies into conversation with posthumanist ethics and political economy in order to rethink the future of caregiving; a future beyond both techno-utopianism and technological pessimism. This way, it contributes to contemporary debates on AI, gender, and care.

Keywords: AI ethics; automation; gendered labor; posthumanism; social