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Research Article

AI, Education and Art

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Abstract

In this brief essay I highlight the potential use of AI as a positive paradigm shift in human societies, but cautioned against unconscious use, and a necessary shift in educational policies and modes of assessment. I argue that art is a domain perhaps not really consumed as it were, by AI, and that this might motivate both embodied meaning and higher consciousness, where human agency is not compromised by AI use.

Keywords: *AI, transhuman, education. diagnostics, art, embodied meaning.*

1. Introduction: using AI consciously.

This is a timely essay with the increasing and exponential growth of AI. AI is a potentially wonderful tool, providing solutions, analysis, evaluation, calculation, personal intrapersonal awareness and thus potentially expanding the consciousness of humankind and even enabling world-bettering. However, there is a more "sinister" side where, like the attempt to create a Frankenstein, as it were, the tool is used unethically, and unconsciously, ultimately eroding human-empathetic awareness and conscious deliberation as well as the development of fundamental skills. One by-product of the latter – the incorrect use of AI – is an eroding of education and of ethical norms. I offer art as a possible solution in that respect, although even in this domain or discipline, one cannot be certain of positive outcomes. This essay then simply serves to both laud AI as well as caution against its possible negative ramifications.

2. Defining AI:

AI, much like a calculator for arithmetic and other mathematical functions, is a tool that can calculate at tremendous speed and serve research purposes in any conceivable domain. Hence its capacity both for quantitative and qualitative research is enormous. It also is able to deal with human feelings and perceptions and analyze behavioral pattens in a benevolent, sensitive manner potentially even assisting the decision-making process.

a) Trans human and meta

The "genius" of AI is that it is a kind of program that transcends the human dilemma: existing existentially within the world as world (a function of nature). One can, for example express one's thoughts and feelings about something and perhaps ask it for advice, and it will respond on many occasions – "that is a human experience or feeling" – and even though it does not "know" what it means – it can reflect back what it means to be human – sensitive, in pain or experiencing pleasure, having memory and experience. It stands outside the tumult while yet been able to name it and navigate within it.

In this sense, AI is a kind of meta discourse, a "view from no-where" – allowing humans to see as if disembodied while at the same time orientating the self within a material framework. AI is thus an excellent problem solver and its "memory" or rather retention of data procured from the web obviously exceeds individual human knowledge (not existentially or ontologically, simply in terms of raw data and calculation).

b) Its abilities

As indicated, AI is a supreme calculating machine at an extremely rapid rate and on all known subjects. It is also able to generate new ideas, new connections and new patterns. It recalls past conversations and builds on that information tailoring answers specifically designed for the user, provided the user has furnished AI with excellent prompts and "back and forth" conversations.

c) Human agency and jobs

It is conceivable, considering the continuous improvement to AI, that most jobs that require low to even high-level competence might assist and eventually in some cases be taken over by AI. Jobs in medicine, law, education, business and so on will all use AI in terms of developing their field and dealing with day-to-day problems that it can solve. Even if everything one day becomes mechanized, there would always be some level of human involvement – technically, to overseer the processes; to provoke research, to maximize the use of AI (at this point, it still often gets things wrong) and to invent, create and physically enact what is conceptually known. Nevertheless, humans have will and agency and so will and must dominate, but this equation only works when this agency consciously uses AI rather than ceding all tasks to it and it is to this problem that educational system and institutions must answer, else we will forge a generation that cannot read and write while appearing conscious, powerful and skilled. However, they will not be if education does not act sensibly to the long-term effects of unrestrained AI use in the educational system.

3. AI and education:

Perhaps one of the main goals of education is to instill both critical thinking as well as the values of discipline, self-respect and sensitive treatment of others in order to contribute to a better society. It is obviously debatable if this has ever been achieved and perhaps in many cases, education itself has been part of the problem for the ills of societies everywhere, while the lack of education is often far worse, but not necessarily so.

a) Diagnostics

Now, the equation is pretty simple: Johny gets homework say in math's or history. Johny comes home, attaches the questions, the rubric (if there is one) and perhaps other "commands", simply prompts the AI to set about answering question/s and pronto a few minutes later or less, the answer/s are churned out. Johny neatly copy-pastes the answer, signs his name and submits it, receiving a good grade for his correct performance. But of course, Johny did not learn and Johny did not even attempt the work and so he will leave having learnt nothing. No process, no trial and error, no pen on paper. This is a dire situation that needs to be remedied otherwise a generation that cannot read and write and only physically look adult, is in danger of complete annihilation of conscious thought, effort and ingenuity.

There will be few who are not like Johny of course and they will probably get a lower grade but certainly learn in the process. There is also the argument that they will do the work and wisely use AI, like solving math's equations and just plugging in the numbers on a calculator to get quick and correct arithmetic, though the principles and equation itself was understood by the student.

At any rate, it will be an arduous task to separate which of the students were like Johny and which were not and an obvious bureaucratic and ethical mess. To circumvent all this and really test a student's skills and maximize learning, there should be written tests and exams in class or live oral presentations, and this assessment should be the bulk of the grade. Students now have to think for themselves in real time, recall methods and information that they alone can retrieve without tools such as AI at their disposal, be "forced" to develop the art of reading with comprehension and writing with hopefully and eventually, an adept skill and showing creative insight drawn solely from their own inner landscape. It is these "test of skill" that is the mark of an educated person, rather than simply the ability to collate what is ceded to other mechanisms – the student is called upon to rely on his or her own resources.

b) Potential harm

If these methods are not used, then the system, in particular the educational system, will detonate from within. One would not be able to gauge whether a student really understands the work, has the capacity to do the work or even cares about the field of inquiry. They will simply take the simplest path: Let AI do my assignments, and I will be free of any discipline, and the outcome will be good – I will get my certificate and continue on. Such a person is vacuous and empty and that is why older generations that are educated that come upon AI have a better chance of reaping its benefits, consciously using it as a tool but directed from within themselves, already with the ability to write and coherently develop ideas, while the younger generation not having yet the time to develop such skills, will simply not acquire these skills while letting the program do the work. The result will be a new generation that is neither critically aware nor particularly skilled, other than in more practical vocations.

c) Human agency again

The key is that those that do not take the short cut protect their human agency, independence and integrity. If the human agent in his/her full free will (a debatable notion notwithstanding), develops their inner life and simply reflects upon that using AI, then the tool is really useful and does not encroach on the live, human, real dimension of being and thinking. If the short cut is taken, especially for the youth in higher education systems, human agency is compromised and the result will be a lifeless society, ironically a mass of automation, ghosts in the machine, where the sacred center is no more. It is no wonder that humanities are so undervalued in general. It is a pragmatic and instrumental age/paradigm which is lopsided and will only get worse with the unconscious

use of AI. A balance between the sciences and the humanities is one area that ought to be on the agenda at higher education institutions, as well as the diagnostic methods outlined if we are to avoid my grim premonition.

4. Art:

a) Sentient life

The irreducible, human quality of being aware of one's very existence and capacity to relate self to the world through a body and via its senses, cognitive, emotive and behavioral expressions often mediated by the capacity for language, is described as inherently human and pervades all known cultures through evolutionary history. Art as is known is very old and the power to represent, make music, tell stories, dance and perform, including sports and well as enshrine codes of laws and mechanisms of commerce and so on, is the quintessence of sentient life as it produces various cultural objects, learning to harness and understand nature and natural processes, to enhance his sentient experience, or as I put it earlier in the essay – toward the improvement of society ethically and materially. Being human and aware of this rare and immaculate sense of being alive and forging a coherent identity even in the face of a hostile environment, is the mark of an individual who sanctifies the very ontology of being – of being sentient. This capacity is not in any way shared by artificial intelligence – its brain is not organic; it has no body and absolutely no will. Being programmed to be benevolent is good, but it is not a positing of a "Self" to that machine.

b) Will, desire and feeling

The reason we engage in telling stories, making art and music, theatre and dance and so on is the transference of ideas, feelings and impressions – a will to share, to play and take pleasure – as well as embody that in some kind of meaning or message. While science describes the world, art interprets it. While science is great at answering "how" questions, the arts and the humanities are closer to answering (or asking) the why's, the purpose of things. Art is a wonderful second-order mimetic and metaphor-laden activity, what Hegel called the Idea in sensuous form, a spirit that pervades the aesthetic, although often augmenting power structures or subverting them. I am not saying art is necessarily free then, only that it is a deeply human capacity that AI is quite poor at imitating or inhabiting at this juncture. This may change, but systemically it may not – for art involves in general *body* and mind, reason *and* feeling and usually takes a form and adds to the objects of the world. It is not a problem to be solved by AI and at this point perhaps beyond its reach.

c) Action and expression – embodied meaning

The foregoing goes some way to explaining artistic behaviors as involving action and expression, and this embodied meaning, like signs on a page that form a text, is enacted in and through life processes, not in the interaction with AI. I am sure someone will make AI generate "skilled" art, and this will question the boundaries of authorship much as Duchamp's ready-mades already did over a century ago. So long as the discourse is critically aware and embedded in the tradition, it will remain an open question, neither supersede the artist-creating/generating, nor dissolve the search for new aesthetic modalities (read: forms of life). Action and expression in general emanate from human volition and while not truth in itself, it is right action that is demanded, rather than a meaning generated by AI in an abstract field of reference. Only AI consciously used can assist the user to emit better signs, that is to say, improve both coherence of the inner world and thence "right action".

5. Conclusion:

In this brief essay, I have argued for the potential paradigm shift that AI will bring (being trans human and an excellent problem-solver) but cautioned against an unrestrained use and unconscious use of AI even as it improves. In particular within the educational system, if steps are not taken as of now, there will be dire consequences for future generations. I endorsed a diagnostic method consisting of written exams, in class tasks and live presentations to counter these risks and frankly, a potential societal breakdown. I argued further that this is best averted with a more balanced approach at higher education institutions including the humanities alongside the sciences and art as one of the few bastions where human agency, will, feelings and embodied meanings can be acquired, shared and lead to productive living, though obviously an aesthetic may in itself be culturally and ideologically loaded. The path is not altogether clear but while one can't predict future, education must respond or else AI will supersede human intelligence and agency, rather than serve human interest.

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