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Mind, Language, Work: Thinking Beyond AI Ideology

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AI ideology, critique, emancipation, idealism, Descartes, mind, language models, automated work

Abstract
If AI is to emulate the language, mind, and work of humans, what remains of being human? One scenario is that humans are at risk of becoming robots of AI-powered systems, serving the interests of a few global corporations. We have already reached this stage of transformation. Given this predicament, the issues concerning the capacity of AI beyond the human should be addressed through a critique of AI ideology. Methodically, this would imply a shift in perspective, from the subject of AI to the function and deceptive power of its intelligent devices. Do they serve us or do we serve them? Here, it is important not to follow the standard approach to AI as the prospect of creating super-human intelligence, to avoid the trap of basing the critique on the discourse of AI ideology. The goal, rather, is to revive the strength of philosophical critique and reestablish a certain idealism.

Um, jezik, delo: misliti onkraj ideologije umetne inteligence

Ključne besede
ideologija umetne intelligence, kritika, emancipacija, idealizem, Descartes, um, jezikovni modeli, avtomatizirano delo

Povzetek
Če bo umetna inteligenca posnemala človeški jezik, um in delo, kaj bo ostalo od človeške biti? Po enem od scenarijev lahko ljudje postanejo roboti sistemov, ki jih poganja

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umetna inteligenca in služijo interesom par svetovnih korporacij. To stopnjo preobrazbe smo že dosegli. Glede na to oceno, je treba vprašanja, ki so povezana z sposobnostjo umetne inteligence preseči raven človeškega, obravnavati skozi kritiko ideologije umetne inteligence. Metodološko to narekuje premik perspektive, in sicer od predmeta UI k delovanju in zavajajoči moči njenih inteligentnih naprav. Ali one služijo nam, ali mi njim? V tem oziru je pomembno, da ne sledimo standardnemu pristopu k UI kot obetu stvarjenja nadčloveške inteligence, da se tako izognemo pasti utemeljevanja kritike na diskurzu ideologije UI. Cilj je raje oživiti moč filozofske kritike in ponovno vzpostaviti nekakšen idealizem.

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AI Ideology

AI is the main player in the global capitalist arena, offering rapid means of securing global dominance to Big Tech corporations. While in the eighties the application of AI was delimited to closed systems, for instance in finances, today AI solutions permeate every segment of life on a global scale. The hype around AI is part of the game. Another name for this hype is AI ideology. Consider the following description of AI from IBM: "Artificial intelligence (AI) is technology that enables computers and machines to simulate human learning, comprehension, problem solving, decision making, creativity, and autonomy."[1] This description conceals the foundational principle of AI technology. What this "technology" is remains to be discussed. At the same time, the description reveals its function and the target. The concealing and revealing at play in the description provides the starting point for delineating the task of philosophical critique here. The philosophical critique lacks proper means to approach AI on the level of its technological design: *what* "enables computers and machines to simulate." However, the critique is in a position to attack the target, the "human learning, comprehension, problem solving, decision making, creativity and autonomy"—the target of AI ideology. Thus, the task at hand here is to provide a philosophical critique of AI ideology. AI ideology is an orbit around AI as a buzzword operating in the discourses about AI. Often directly inspired by science fiction, AI

[1] Cole Stryker and Eda Kavlakoglu, "Artificial Intelligence," IBM, updated August 16, 2024, https://www.ibm.com/topics/artificial-intelligence.

ideology promotes obscure rhetoric of radical transformation: the ways of life and the modes of thinking aligned with the interests of Big Tech corporations.

The current AI ideology consists of at least the following discourses about AI: the science fiction-inspired scenarios about what AI is or may become; the false or sincere good intentions of Big Tech corporations investing in AI; the popular and academic reception with little or no knowledge of the principles underlying the design of AI, and its meaning and use; the qualified AI creator's attempts to explain AI to the broader audience without accounting for the real principles of its design and use; the intended or unintended deception and confusion underlying the terminology operating in AI discourses beyond the principles of its design, such as the very (vague) concept of "artificial" and "intelligence"; the comparison with human abilities and capacities and their subversion by means of AI; the discourses on the future of AI such as the visions of AGI (Artificial General Intelligence) and ASI (Artificial Superintelligence). The list is not exhaustive but it provides enough to ascertain an ideology at work.

This article examines the alterations of the concepts of language, mind, and work in AI ideology. By the power of AI to manipulate, generate, and transform, these and other concepts will evolve within the limits of algorithmic reason in AI systems. They will become AI concepts. How can we continue to think philosophically about these concepts beyond their current optimization and evolution as the functions of AI? This is not to exclude AI from the human existential prospects in which it inevitably participates, but to insist on the continuity of the philosophical exploration of creativity and inventiveness beyond the apocalyptic, imperialistic, and totalitarian visions of AI ideology. Thus, the purpose of this article is to challenge the predominant idea of AI as an unbounded and superhuman salvific force, the most brilliant achievement of the human mind, which is also said to surpass the intelligence of its creators. The aim is to take the initial steps towards reclaiming and rethinking the concepts of the mind, language and work operating in AI ideology today, to retrace, repeat, and rehearse a certain *idealism* as a basis for a philosophical critique of AI ideology. In this way, the emerging philosophical concepts of the mind as the site of truth and knowledge, language as a phenomenological dimension of *jouissance*, and work as the mode of critical thinking, may provide a basis for unfolding the emancipatory strategies for going beyond AI ideology.

The human dimension transcends AI ideology's reductionist and instrumentalist view of the human and provides the natural conditions for transformation and flourishing of human life. As the human dimension provides a model for AI (to a certain extent), it is understandable that one has to radically downscale its complexity. However, it is inadmissible to (re)model the understanding of the human dimension on the basis of this simplification. An AI system lacks ontological access to the whole of the human dimension. In a sense provided by the insights of Georges Bataille, extending to Henri Michaux, the human dimension is constantly emerging from the ever-unformed and constantly reforming. These existential dynamics do not fit within the limits of algorithmic reason. In any case, striving to dispatch the human dimension to the algorithm is ignorant and evil. However, that is impossible. Although AI is complex and modeled on human capacities, it does not provide a model of human complexity. Rather, it (re)models its own complexity. No claims about the human dimension can be made or taken seriously from the example of AI. Given this ontological obstacle to "humanlike" or "superhuman" AI, why are we constantly led to believe that the signifier human has anything to do with AI, except for the human as the subject of AI *inquiries*—if not for the manipulation of knowledge about the human dimension and devaluation of its real complexity? Who earns from this manipulation a large amount of money from keeping people ignorant (this is a rhetorical question)? The idea of superhuman AI amounts only to dehumanisation. AI does not have its own opinion about us except for what it learns from us about us. A superhuman AI is a perverse fantasy of a totalitarian personality dreaming about a superpower to subdue others for his (*sic*) own personality to emerge as great as his phantasms. AI has no personality and could not care less for domination. It does not understand submission either.

What is targeted here is precisely this kind of fantasmatic content of AI ideology. The worst thing is that these fantasies blind us to the beneficial aspects of AI. AI is perhaps the most *practical* of human inventions. In itself, it is a specific kind of code, mathematics, and statistics. Like any other code, it is a *writing*. It can fit on a piece of paper or in a book. Of course, it is *inscribed* into a machine that still requires the industrial production of hardware. AI is a perfect and attentive spy or attendant, invisible and integrated with the environment it monitors (the screen), always alert. This is also why the image of AI as a machine or a robot is beyond stupid. But AI is not stupid. It is advanced. A beautiful invention of *computing*. That is AI in its nakedness. Why, then, all this *counterintelligence* of AI

ideology? This charge is the sole reason why AI ideology should be subjected to the hardest critique, that is, philosophy.

AI ideology is certainly obscuring public access to knowledge about AI. At the same time, we witness increasing political and economic interests in the development of new applications of AI, especially in the war industry. Technophobic approaches are not adequate to address the problem, simply because technology is not the proper context to address questions concerning AI. Rather, the critique of AI on the level of its ontology would amount to a discipline corresponding to critical text studies. AI is a special kind of text and the most effective critique should target the grammar and syntax of the code, the form and style of its writing. The methods of the Old Testament and New Testament exegesis are perhaps more suitable for such a task than the critique of technology.

Today, AI ideology is at the center of all relations. However, in the neural networks distributing AI there is no center. Also conceptually, nothing is to the point. The conceptual basis of AI, including the very notions of "artificial" and "intelligence," is unstable and obscure. AI ideology promotes an unsophisticated view of the human being and generates pseudo-philosophical problems that mystify the corporate genesis of AI and the established principles of its engineering. In this vein, the discourses promoting a larger-than-life vision of AI, almost as a divine power capable of delivering both curses and blessings at whim, are no less laughable than the exaggerations in classic marketing trying to persuade us of a product's unique value, properties, and efficacy. These discourses are nevertheless responsible for seeding not only positive expectations but also fear, suspicion, rejection, conspiracies, and apocalyptic sentiments, likely among millenarians and technophobes, who take upon themselves the duty to spread the news and words of warning. Thus, bringing the affects in play gives rise to AI regulations, however, not to prevent the apocalyptic and conspiracy scenarios. They engage in corresponding typically non-technological instances of government and society to recognize AI as the force of some radical transformation on the way. This, in turn, initiates the process of establishing AI as the lifeblood of society and the growing demand for AI solutions is only a click away. Not to mention the prospect of profit on a global scale that motivates Big Tech to respond to this demand and deliver all kinds of AI solutions we do not know that we want. What this short genealogy of the infiltration of AI in every aspect of life seeks to sketch out is the suspicion or doubt that we have good

reasons to believe that AI is a true revolutionary force of emancipatory transformation. The global success of AI, like any other, lies in marketing and its exaggerations. Proceeding from this premise, there is no reason why we should not try to retrace and repeat the philosophical insights on existentially important issues beyond AI ideology. For, once AI becomes human, too human; another ghost will pop up in the machine to guide us in life and into death. We have to rediscover what we always already have access to intrinsically but deviate from in search of more advanced alterity. In that vein, the critique of AI ideology involves the emancipatory task of (re)discovering and (re)experiencing the human dimension beyond the artificiality (not by way of becoming artificial) of language, mind, and work.

Language

The capacity of AI to emulate language challenges us to seriously rethink the following scenario proposed by René Descartes in *Discourse on the Method*:

> For we can certainly conceive of a machine so constructed that it utters words, and even utters words which correspond to bodily actions causing a change in its organs (e.g., if you touch it in one spot it asks what you want of it, if you touch it in another it cries out that you are hurting it, and so on). But it is not conceivable that such a machine should produce different arrangements of words so as to give an appropriately meaningful answer to whatever is said in its presence, as the dullest of men can do.[2]

Descartes was right that mechanistic principles do not allow a machine to speak like a human. He could not have predicted the *software* and generative AI. Generative AI has nevertheless developed the capacity to recreate language and speech outside the human body, as pure digital/virtual phenomena. "Generative AI, sometimes called *gen AI*, is artificial intelligence (AI) that can create original content—such as text, images, video, audio or software code—in response to a user's prompt or request."[3] While it seems we will have to wait to encounter

[2] Descartes René, *Discourse on the Method*, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984–91), 1:140.

[3] Cole Stryker, Mark Scapicchio, "Generative AI," IBM, updated March 22, 2024, https://www.ibm.com/topics/generative-ai.

Artaudian bodies without organs on the streets, we are certainly witnessing the age of disembodied, inorganic language generation.

Generative AI indeed produces "different arrangements of words so as to give an appropriately meaningful answer to whatever is said in its presence"—at least "as the dullest of men can do" but also above the average. Today, "machines" are processing language. Large Language Models (LLMs) certainly prove Heidegger's almost banal but profound insight that "language speaks" (*die Sprache spricht*). "Large language models (LLMs) are a category of foundation models trained on immense amounts of data making them capable of understanding and generating natural language and other types of content to perform a wide range of tasks."[4] Recent developments in multimodal AI and Large Multimodal Models (LMMs) bring into question also the longstanding belief that speech and voice are intrinsically human. "Multimodal AI refers to machine learning models capable of processing and integrating information from multiple modalities or types of data. These modalities can include text, images, audio, video, and other forms of sensory input."[5] For instance, VALL-E 2, "a neural codec language model for speech synthesis" has recently "*(achieved) human parity for the first time*" but its creators "have no plans to incorporate VALL-E 2 into a product or expand access to the public."[6] Against this background of language generation in AI, we are offered a possibility to redefine the human relationship to language, and to reconsider the preconceived identity of language as intrinsically human. This is not a transhumanist proposition but a call to rethink and (re) discover human nature in the light of artificial evidence of what we are *not*, unless we have no objections before the prospect of automated existence dictated by language models.

Furthermore, the possibility of text-to-image generation in AI questions the understanding of the relation between language and image, and also the understanding of imagination as intrinsically human. Let us pause here and examine what is at stake. To begin with, the text does not appear in the text-generated image. However, the image invites interpretation. There is a message in the im-

4 "Large Language Models," IBM, accessed September 16, 2024, https://www.ibm.com/topics/large-language-models.

5 Cole Stryker, "Multimodal AI," IBM, published July 15, 2024, https://www.ibm.com/think/topics/multimodal-ai.

6 "VALL-E 2," Microsoft, accessed September 14, 2024; italics in the original.

age. It can be understood intuitively or esthetically, affectively, and so on. It can also be (re)articulated in language. Can we speak here in Freudian terms of the repressed—the fact that the generated image is not a representation but content generated entirely based on a text structured on a language model; the primordial form of language as the empty structure that underlies the generation of the image; the Lacanian *real*? Is not the language model underlying generative AI an empty structure, the imaginary-real of the generated image? In trying to outline some understanding of this question, let us retrace the process of generation from text to image employing the notions offered by theoretical psychoanalysis.

First, the image is generated from the language basis, in the case of generative AI, the basis of Natural Language Processing (NLP) underlying the LLM. "Natural language processing (NLP) is a subfield of computer science and artificial intelligence (AI) that uses machine learning to enable computers to understand and communicate with human language."[7] Second, the message in the image is articulated through the discourse about the image. What remains hidden in the discourse while it speaks of the image as a representation is the language basis of its generation. The image does not represent anything beyond its *presence*. The real source of the image is the generative model *structured like a language*. The image is a *semblance* penetrating through the imaginary into the symbolic, where it comes into being through speech and signification. Thus, the image fully remains in language but this actuality is repressed, namely that the *phantasm* of the image is generated by language, through language. It never really becomes other than language. There is no other (image) outside language. No other meaning, it is just empty, with no representation. However, this empty meaning is properly true. It remains in and returns to the same place, at its source in the real: the empty structure of the language model. Assuming that the language model in AI repeats the structure of (natural) language and ontologically, language as structure, it demonstrates empirically the fundamental insight of psychoanalysis, from Freud to Lacan: *the unconscious is structured like a language*. The text generates image because the real as the basis of the generation of semblances of strictly real "text" and "image" cuts through the imaginary and the symbolic. There is no text and no image as such beyond the gen-

7 Cole Stryker and Jim Holdsworth, "Natural Language Processing," updated August 11, 2024, https://www.ibm.com/topics/natural-language-processing.

erative operation within the real (primordial) structure of language as a model; the model (of the real) is structured like a language.

Continuing in this direction, perhaps it can be demonstrated that the structural/unconscious ontology of language underlies or at least cuts through the principles of NLP and language models in AI applications. Also, the critique of language in AI could revive and stimulate philosophical thinking about the nature of language. The ontological condition of language as the structure of the *unconscious* was most probably neither thought of, desired, nor intended by its developers, and this is also the point. The research on NLP and its applications in language models does not seem to account for any ontological (pre)condition of language but simply trusts the reliability of its naturalness. This gives a new perspective on "biases" in the outputs of generative AI; the x-phobic stereotypes, culturally shared prejudices, and so on, namely that they are structural and not cultural. This means that they are not removable by way of moral interventions. What this points out regarding the nature of language is that language is deceptive, manipulative, abusive, and delusive. Thus, the prospect of regulation and censorship—even on the level of the obedient algorithm—is doomed to fail, because *structurally*, language is a traitor. Language speaks for us what we do not want to say, because we want what we do not say. Language *generates* what comes out through speech, not only within the language models of generative AI. Modifying Heidegger's insight, *structure speaks*.

Thus, language is not an accommodating, functional, and instrumental medium, with controllable input and output dynamics, as the behavioristic-cognitive approach views it. What happens in between, in the "black box," which behaviorism refuses to open but what has been clear in psychoanalysis since Freud, is that the unconscious underlies the articulation of language through speech, or what is inscribed in writing. This brings us to a practical issue regarding the status of natural language and the question of its suitability as a model and object of artificial generation. Because we do not know what we say while we speak—this is a natural trait of language. At the same time, language seems obvious ("natural"). We seem to have a sense of its mastery, sometimes a sense that it dominates what we "actually" want to *express*.

But the nature of (natural) language is more alien to us than the real—*mathematical*—language of AI. Perhaps the most important discovery of psychoa-

nalysis is the (in)experience of the fundamental alterity of language (and language as alterity)—the genesis of the Freudian unconscious and the Lacanian Other. On that note, we could posit that LLMs are an uncanny ontological site of language generation. LLMs ultimately confirm the fundamental otherness of language, beyond (speaking) being, the distinction between language and being. At the same time, as Descartes points out regarding the distinction between mind and body, the mind and the body are also joined (in the pineal gland). Can we posit *speech* as a (vanishing) point of enjoyment between being and language? To put it with Lacan: thought, language, and meaning are the enjoyment of the speaking being. Being becomes the subject of language, "the discourse of the Other"— dare we say, the discourse of generative AI? Still, AI is not the Other. The unconscious (structured like a language) is. Always and everywhere where language speaks, in this text, and in AI generations.

Should we seek an existential liberation from language as a basis for knowledge, for which Wittgenstein says that it is a "cage"?[8] As the structural enclosure of the algorithm demonstrates, *language is a cage*. In AI this means a (re)reading of a writing, the input and the output, in between a process of a generation of being confined to language. LLMs clearly and distinctly demonstrate that language is fundamentally artificial. However, it cannot *speak* without a speaking machine or a speaking being. It needs a *speaking body*. Risking the revival of pseudo-mystical elaborations of Lacan's pun on the real/unconscious as "the mystery of the speaking body" in Seminar XX, perhaps we should trust the body more.[9] Sighs, grunts, screams, moans, laughter, breathing; the language of the insane, those inspired by the divine madness, those burning with passion . . . On the other hand, in the language of "mystics" and Wittgenstein, we are always already free from language in *what cannot be said*. Thus, the body is the natural site of language but also of a primordial silence, that is, the absence of words. Silence is not the absence of *sound*. As John Cage demonstrated in his *4'33''* silence can be *heard*. The sound (of silence) comes into being in silence and disperses in silence, an inner energetic vibration in the body, a dimension of sensuality. This dimension cannot be recreated artificially (in a machine) because it

8 Ludwig Wittgenstein, "A Lecture on Ethics," in *Philosophical Occasions, 1912–1951*, ed. James Klagge and Alfred Nordmann (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), 44.

9 Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge: Encore, 1972–1973*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 131.

is interior to the body of *jouissance*. The speaking being does not know anything about *jouissance* except, as Lacan puns it, when it "comes." *Jouissance* knows itself when it gives itself to the intrinsic silence of the speaking body. Breath, sighs, moans, screams, and laughter are the phenomena of silence—*what cannot be said*. Silence is inherent in language. Recall Lacan's (half-)statement that truth can only be half-said. The other half is drowned in the silence of the speaking body of *jouissance*.

Fundamentally, the speaking body is a living expression of *jouissance* beyond the creation of meaning through the articulation of words. Instead, *jouissance* resonates through the phenomenology of *voice*: the language speaks through the body through the enjoyment of the vibrating sensation of the breath moving through the throat, the tickling sensation of the tongue moving up and down in the wet cavity of the mouth, out of which it comes out as a sigh or a moan or a scream or laughter. Words fail to describe this sensual dimension of the body as they create only what is outside the domain of the body and its entanglement with the world. In our lived experience; however, this subtle enjoyment of the voice is unconscious, repressed by our daily attachment to the signifier. We lose the sense of the ground of our being and we derive thought and meaning from the signifier. Silence becomes unbearable and we fall into the existential neurosis of obsessive-compulsory concealment of the emptiness of the signifier. What if acknowledging this emptiness may be liberating? On that note, the opening lines of the Book of Genesis offer a scene of a primordial silence: the Spirit (*ruach*) hovers over the Abyss (*tehom*), the primordial silence out of which the Word emerges and simultaneously, with the Word, the Creation. Nothing is just said. Things come into being through the Word. In this sense, one of the gods in Genesis is indeed a Demiurge, a creator-god. However, unceasingly, words, like creation, are swallowed by the abyss, the primordial silence which is also the abyss of the signification-generation. More words! Hence, language is not a primordial condition. Should we strive to recover the "spiritual" state of being-hovering over the abyss?

Mind

The recent concept of AI Theory of Mind promotes a vision of AI capable of emulating human thought processes and emotions. The notion of "mind" in this context is not drawn from philosophy but from developmental psychology and from there its significance goes straight to AI Theory of Mind. However, the en-

visioned application of AI to the "mind" not only reduces the philosophical notion of the mind to affects but establishes a dangerous reduction of the human mind to the patterns of behavior. What would be an ontological grounding of AI "mind"? (A)I assimilate? (A)I surveil? This is why we need to revive the most experientially pregnant philosophical notion of the mind, that offered by Descartes. It does not consist of a formal definition but *trust* that, despite the possibility of thinking of going astray, there is a fundamental dimension of groundedness beyond words and thoughts, a dimension that will remain simple, basic, clear and distinct even if we do not think about it or try, for some reason, to think beyond it or to deny it. Its phenomenological dimension, in the First Meditation, is the consciousness "that I am here."[10] *Here* is not a location delimited in space and time but includes everything in an instant: sensory perceptions, sensations, thoughts, smells, the sky and the stars—everything available to my consciousness here (and now). However, already this notion exceeds the here-beingness and instigates a deviation that hands over to thinking the task of complicating what is at hand: "How often, asleep at night, am I convinced of just such familiar events — that I am here in my dressing-gown, sitting by the fire—when in fact I am lying undressed in bed!"[11] The first philosophy unfolds through meditation, ascertaining eventually that "*I am, I exist*."[12] Descartes tirelessly goes on: "But what then am I? A thing that thinks."[13] The concepts that go beyond the initial simplicity of being here are created, and so on, up to demonstrating the existence of God and the distinction between mind and body. However, nothing changes on the fundamental level of being here. Always already, the space of the mind is here, and here is in the space of the mind. The mind is an open space where thinking proceeds beyond being here, while "I am here, sitting by the fire, wearing a winter dressing-gown, holding this piece of paper in my hands, and so on."[14]

Moreover, the search for "certainty" in the *Meditations*, as I see it, is a specific project aiming to demonstrate "once and for all" the mind as a givenness beyond the body and the limit of death.[15] Hence the soul-like status of the mind in

10 Descartes René, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in *Philosophical Writings*, 2:13.

11 Descartes, 2:13.

12 Descartes, 2:17; italics in the original.

13 Descartes, 2:19.

14 Descartes, 2:13.

15 "Nevertheless, I think there can be no more useful service to be rendered in philosophy than to conduct a careful search, once and for all, for the best of these arguments, and to

the *Meditations*, a smart way to inscribe philosophy in the apologetic context, however, more as a Trojan horse than as a handmaiden of theology.[16] The confusion that resulted was and still is condemned or accepted in the experience and understanding of philosophy as an emancipatory or even salvific practice, often in conflict with religion, and since Descartes, also with modern science.

In the *Meditations*, Descartes provides a metaphysical recantation of the previously articulated project of "directing the mind and the search for truth in the sciences" in *Discourse on the Method*. Hence, approaching the scholastic questions of the existence of God and the distinction between soul and body completely based on the meditation of the mind alone; by way of withdrawing the mind from the senses and meditating on the mind reflecting on itself, Descartes ascertains the ontological status of the mind in correspondence with the truths of the Catholic religion. However, also, based on the mind itself, Descartes provides the ground for the trustworthiness of the epistemological functions for the examination of the truthfulness of whatever comes to mind. Thus, Descartes in *Meditations* proceeds with the task already instigated in the *Discourse*, an orderly examination of the "physical things" and the conditions of knowledge about the world. Already before, or at the time of the *Discourse*, Descartes envisioned scientific knowledge as a process of observation and transcription of the extension of physical things into a mathematical system of description, and calculus as the basis for invention and its technological applications. Although Descartes effectively opened the door for mathematization in modern science, it gradually developed far from Descartes's ethics of scientific work, which he spelled out in Part III of the *Discourse*. Also, departing from Descartes's notion of the mind, modern science has decided upon the brain as the site of consciousness. The result is a tragic loss of Descartes's intellectual and spiritual sensitivity to the mind. This strain continued nevertheless, in different formations of thought after Descartes, in Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, Bergson, Freud, Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Lacan, to name a few. In line with this reception, reconsidering what, in opposition to the neuroscientific notion of the mind in philosophy, can only be termed "idealism" in the broadest sense, will inevitably

set them out so precisely and clearly as to produce for the future a general agreement that they amount to demonstrative proofs." Descartes, 2:4.

16 "And it follows from this that while the body can very easily perish, the mind is immortal by its very nature." Descartes, 2:10. And editor's note: "'. . . or the soul of man, for I make no distinction between them' (added in French version)." Descartes, 2:10n3.

lead us back to Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and then, via Thomas Aquinas, Ficino, and others, forward to Descartes. Moreover, we will find fine-tuned sensitivity to the mind in the philosophical traditions of South East Asia, especially in Buddhist philosophy, which is entirely a "philosophy of mind."

The mind is beyond calculation. Like AI systems provide the space (and "architecture") for calculations between input and output, the mind is the space in which calculation takes place. But far from being delimited to calculation, as in AI systems, the mind is also the space of birth, life, death, thinking, language, knowledge, desire, madness, love, sensation, embodiment . . . the space of being and non-being. In light of the plethora of philosophical insights into the nature of the mind—even if it is a product of philosophical speculation, or spiritual obscurantism even—the current reduction of the mind in (AI) Theory of Mind to patterns of behavior and responses is philosophically disappointing and therefore, unacceptable. It disposes of the philosophical experience of the mind and clears the slate for the age of AI-powered transformation of the human animal into a behavioristic bot. The simplicity of the discovery and experience of the mind—simply by being here—holds onto the infinite potential of knowledge through direct experience. The mind is an enlightening light, for some divine, for some God. This is the prospect of the mind, the basis of Hegel's insight and experience of Absolute Knowing.

If thought is an activity of the *mind*, how come AI generates *deceptions*? What processes are involved in this? For example, in chase games such as Pokemon Go, we are deceived that the figures projected through the screen are a natural part of the physical environment. Their ontological status is that of *specters*, and this is a part of the game. The game brings deception into play. The fact that these specters are not real does not contradict the *unreal* nature of the specters. What is targeted here is precisely the *deception*. In that vein, it is interesting to note that deception has been historically inscribed into AI design since the epochal days of the Turing test. The Turing test boils down to a process of deception. The human subject exchanges written pieces of conversation behind a screen with a machine and another human. When the subject is convinced that they have been communicating with another human even though the message was produced by the machine, the machine has passed the test: to deceive. Thus, the adaptability of the machine to the human receiver is not based on its acquisition of human thought processes but on deception as the condition of human-machine interac-

tion. On this basis, there is no AI "mind," because, as we should know since Descartes, the mind is *trustworthy*. Not only for metaphysical reasons (God is not a deceiver). The mind does not deceive even when we proceed by way of hyperbolic doubt, exaggerating (metaphysical) reasons as a mode of thinking. Descartes's conclusion at the end of the Sixth Meditation is that these doubts "should be dismissed as laughable."[17] Because: "If, while I am awake, anyone were suddenly to appear to me and then disappear immediately, as happens in sleep, so that I could not see where he had come from or where he had gone to, it would not be unreasonable for me to judge that he was a ghost, or a vision created in my brain, rather than a real man."[18] Despite this Cartesian certainty, in the world generated by AI, there are specters everywhere. There is no substance beyond virtual transparency of AI generations. Virtuality becomes a basis for belief. Based on this belief, AI imputes/computes the spectral existences into our daily reality. In this sense, AI trains our senses to believe in deception.

The nuances here are delicate but decisive for establishing the difference between the deceptive operations of AI and the ontological orientation. From Descartes, we learn that deception is not ontologically inscribed in the mind. I am deceived, and I can also choose to deceive myself, for instance, by way of hyperbolic doubt. The mind is the unshakable site of truth, and therefore trustworthy. However, the tendency of AI is that it imposes itself as a model for thinking. Since it is based on deception, are we not constantly deceived by it? Therefore, we should not take AI as the model for thinking about the mind.

It is well known that GPTs (Generative Pre-Trained Transformers)[19] "hallucinate" when pressed to generate complex reasonings. "AI hallucination is a phenomenon wherein a large language model (LLM)—often a generative AI chatbot or computer vision tool—perceives patterns or objects that are nonexistent or imperceptible to human observers, creating outputs that are nonsensical or al-

17 Descartes, 2:16.

18 Descartes, 2:62.

19 "A transformer model is a type of deep learning model that was introduced in 2017. These models have quickly become fundamental in natural language processing (NLP), and have been applied to a wide range of tasks in machine learning and artificial intelligence." "Transformer model," IBM, accessed September 16, 2024, https://www.ibm.com/topics/transformer-model.

together inaccurate."[20] The phenomenon is probably not only computational. In human thought processes there is an intensity of certain insistences, or "insanity" in the classical sense of the word: "they firmly maintain they are kings when they are paupers, or say they are dressed in purple when they are naked, or that their heads are made of earthenware, or that they are pumpkins, or made of glass."[21] Descartes refuses the "insane" "as a model for myself," that is, to deny the obvious fact "that I am here," and in order to develop hyperbolical reasoning he refuses manic insistence as a mode of thinking that things are as they are not. In a certain sense, AI is insane because it lacks an understanding of reality, and therefore it hallucinates it. Unsurprisingly, the notion of *understanding* is lacking in the vocabulary of AI ideology. In combination with deception through which it operates, it can be said that AI is self-deceptive without being aware of it, without being a self that can be deceived by itself or some other. It lacks the capacity for a Hegelian experience of self-understanding. This generates insistence in its behavior, a kind of madness structurally transmitted through the structure on which it is modeled. AI is strictly *mindless*. Thus, the prospects of integration of AI and the mind are less than zero. On this point, also, AI lacks the basis for surpassing the human mind.

GPT cannot *meditate*. Not only because it lacks mind, sense, and therefore also understanding. It operates within the limits of a model of linear word prediction, no reflection, no retroactive insight, no introspection, no *res cogitans* inside. A pure behavioristic machine, an impenetrable "black box." Behavior is input and output, stimulus and reaction. Brainless and senseless entities have it. If we push a stone, it will behave according to the intensity of our force. In the end, there is no communication with GPT, because communication is relational. There is no relation because nobody is there, on the other side. A screen, the unbearable flatness of unbeing. The automatic execution of the algorithm, the input of data (prompt), and the output of data (generation).

If we methodically distrust the behavioristic reduction of the mind operating in neuroscience and cognitive science we should return to Descartes and proceed to rediscover the mind as the site of truth. Descartes discovered the mind

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20 "AI hallucinations," IBM, accessed September 16, 2024, https://www.ibm.com/topics/ai-hallucinations.

21 Descartes, *Meditations*, 2:13.

through *meditation*—the mind reflecting on itself, seeing/understanding with the "eye of the mind." What this means is possible to understand only through meditation, indeed to see how the mind is through the experience of the mind. To do that one has to have a mind. Descartes poses a radical challenge to the attempts to equate the achievements of AI with the mind: *the mind exists without the brain*. The mind properly *ex-sists*.

Hence, drawing on Descartes's notion of the mind, we have touched upon the reasons why the current ontology (or model) underlying AI does not provide a basis for anything like the mind. Thus, the discourse of AI and the mind is purely ideological. Still, AI operates beyond AI ideology. The real basis for its operation is *computing*. Ideologically, however, AI is a smart concept. It assimilates "intelligence" and proposes artificiality as its ontological condition. Thus, to risk a tautology, the true basis of AI consists of artificiality and intelligence. The basis of AI is AI itself beyond itself. Are we moving in circles? It seems that there is no such entity. In this sense, AI can claim absoluteness on the same premise as the mind can claim it—no such entity. It is an *activity*. Hence, we should move to the question of the artificiality and intelligence of AI. As we will see, this circularity of the concept is particularly significant for understanding why AI is a smart (deceptive) concept, and why it operates as the signifier of a new (totalitarian) world order.

Intelligence *is* artificial, both as a concept and as a function. Indeed, intelligence is nothing beyond the *function*. Fundamentally, the root of the function of AI is *lexical*: "intel." "A short form of intelligence: secret information, for example for another country's government, an enemy group, or criminal activities."[22] Moreover, AI is *artificial* because it operates based on the input and output of the intel, that is, the harvesting and generation of *data*. It does not generate anything new but recycles what it steals. The process is handled through the *artifice* of technology, the claim that its function is "technological." Rather, its function, intel, operates through being applied *to* technology. Thus, AI is not a technology but an operation of *espionage*. If there is a secret code of AI, this is the one. But this is also an "open" code. The legal regulations online are constantly reminding us of this, for instance, to consent to "cookies." However, the combination of gath-

[22] *Cambridge Dictionary*, "intel," accessed September 9, 2024, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/intel.

ering, surveillance, and generation of data is also beneficial, enhancing technology, for example, in health care and security. Although AI ideology tirelessly motivates the AI domination of our lives, it has a true potential to benefit humanity. The problem is its current applications for the benefit of Big Tech corporations and their notion of humanity as users of AI systems. This said, "humanity" today excludes the growing *dehumanized* population, the subjects of the dictate of the algorithm. There are (in)human masters and dehumanized robots.

Work

Descartes hints in the Second Meditation at the possibility that looking at the people in the street he may be seeing only "hats and coats which could conceal automatons." However, Descartes "judge(s) that they are men," "grasped solely by the faculty of judgement which is in my mind," and rejects the "ordinary ways of talking as a basis of doubt."[23] An automaton is a self-moving machine. Even if automatons happen to roam the streets, we would not notice this and not care, as is usual when passing people on the street. No automatons are roaming the streets. Our problem is worse because it does not derive from a paranoiac scenario. Today, the people on the street are *automated* by various intelligent artifices that animate their minds. As opposed to automatons, these people have minds but their mind is automated. We live within the limited space of technological commodities that harvest our data. The use is also limited to the function and content offered by these artifices. They are intelligent because the moment we use them, we do not think beyond what we see on our screens and hear in our earphones. Their intelligence comprises, on the one hand, the manipulation of how we use them and, on the other, how they optimize our production of data for specific purposes. The people on the street are humans but they are also automated by intelligent devices. While today our intelligent devices learn from us and integrate our data within the limits of their models, at some point, trusting and relying on them, we will come into a position to learn from them, and it is we who are going to mimic their modes of representation of language and knowledge. Then, our way of life will become the subject of *automation*. We are becoming an *automated human*, inscribed in AI systems. Through interaction via intelligent devices, the models learn from us and we from them. There is an equilibrium, not far from singularity. Or imprisonment.

[23] Descartes, *Meditations*, 2:21.

How does the automated human operate within AI systems? It thinks and speaks limited combinations of thoughts and sentences. It performs a repertoire because it is programmed, and enclosed within an algorithm. It does not think or speak beyond what it reads, the algorithmic inscription. In short, the automated human cannot go beyond the enclosure of the algorithm. Most importantly, it is incapable of metaphysical thought, that is, the activity of exploration and experience of the mind. Automated humans are addicted to intelligent devices. The ideology of integrative AI, where AI resources collaborate with human resources, is beneficial only for specialists. The collaboration stops when the masses become automated user-producers of data for Big Tech and their monetization of this use-production. The automated human operates within the limits of AI systems. Its intelligent artifices think and speak for it, providing it with the function of user-producer. This is an operation of work, more precisely, *automated work*. The automated human is a dehumanised servant of AI systems, working within the limits of algorithmic inscription of its function as a generator of data. Thus, the "transformation" that AI ideology promises to bring to the world is a process of the automation of work. AI is the latest but it probably is not the final stage of automation. When the Big Tech bubble bursts, there will be another technological "revolution," another corporate formation, another strategy of financial domination. We need an emancipatory strategy for thinking beyond the enclosure of the algorithm.

In the section on language, we touched upon the ontological conditions of text-to-image generation, their non-relation to presentation, and the language generation powered by the language model as their real genesis. From this follows a caution to be aware of the falsity of images, and here we should add, especially those that make us "react," not only deepfakes but all generated content in general. The reactions are another mode of the automation of work, in this case the work of amusement and perplexity. There are numerous videos on streaming channels where a person "reacts" to various content such as music and movies. Why people watch this? Are we so alienated from our ability to form a judgement and engage emotionally and intellectually in what plays out? These are not the right questions. It looks like nothing is getting done, but "leisure" time and the mindless consumption of streaming entertainment are nothing but a form of automated work. The fruit of this work is the data generated after such a work session. As with any other form of automated work performed by an automated

worker, it is freely done—never has the illusion of freedom and free choice been more at work.

Moreover, besides reactions, there is also "explained" genre of videos targeting a perplexed audience looking for an explanation of especially difficult-to-understand movie endings, or trying to get how something like x is even possible. The amazing. These "explanations" do not aim for *Bildung* or *Aufklärung*. Rather, everything must be explained to fit the flat and dull rationality of mainstreaming reason—since it is "common" to all it does not look like manipulation. In Descartes's *Meditations* is there not an implicit critique of "common sense" (*sensus communis*), the consensus on a certain mode of production and use of knowledge, as opposed to *bon sens* from *Discourse on the Method*, the art of conducting the spirit, and the search for truth in the sciences? However, let us use this distinction at hand to try to outline the condition of thinking in the age of mainstreaming reason. On the one hand, the mainstreaming reason is a state of non-involvement with or trivialization of difficult issues—a consequence of human learning according to the curriculum of political correctness and cancel culture, i.e., to avoid, exclude and erase certain words, expressions, and concepts. This false premise of critique undermines the labor of critique, as the problem effectively becomes inexistent—the point often repeated by Slavoj Žižek. When we do not use the excluded and unacceptable words the problem seems to disappear but the unresolved tensions remain and nurture conflicts. There are no traces of the cause of provocation but the problem remains and pops up unexpectedly—the good old Freudian return of the repressed. The need for a new unity becomes urgent at the cost of those excepted from it. On the other hand, the mainstreaming reason provides material for the transformation of human perception within the limits of the algorithmic cage to delimit the potential of human creativity and serve the perverse dispositions of the few. What remains when the accumulation of capital at hand is far beyond reasonable but the megalomaniac idea of disregarding the death of oneself and others as collateral damage to generate profit at all costs? Immortality for the few?

Everything online, including reacting and explaining videos, generates (big) data. On the same platforms and media, AI returns what it learned, the generated content that teaches the automated workers how to behave, think and react within the limits of ones and zeros. The zombai (*sic*) apocalypse is unleashed, connected through a global interface to the One. The army of losers, hungry for

brainy explanations, how to understand and react. AI could be used otherwise. The current AI ideology replicates the strategies of manipulation of totalitarian regimes, of all under one vision (and gaze), however, only because it is optimally designed to serve and secure the power, domination, and profit of the few investors and makers. The possibility of losing control, articulated in AI ideology, of AI leaping from being a tool, to making tools outside "our" control, may not be an expression of uncertainty regarding the future behavior of AI but a desired outcome: a mobilization of free workforce available to the tech-giant masters' greed and mad demand for power—it demands only attachment to their devices.

Also, in social media and one-to-one digital messages, we assist machine learning by (mis)using emojis, the symbol repeating and formalizing emotions and reactions expressed in digital text messages. "Machine learning (ML) is a branch of artificial intelligence (AI) and computer science that focuses on the using data and algorithms to enable AI to imitate the way that humans learn, gradually improving its accuracy."[24]

Meanwhile, we are unaware that by using digital platforms, glued to our screens, like the people in Plato's cave seeing only shadow-play, we work for free as machine learning assistants. Then the "machine" learns to sell us stuff based on our "reactions" and search history on the Internet. There is a deception in the term machine learning, however—as in other instances of AI ideology, a confusion of the language *use* masking the real operation at stake. The "machine" is not a computer/machine but an algorithmic/computational/statistical assemblage of computing operations, that is, as pointed out previously, writing and calculus. In turn, on this *mathematical* basis of "learning," that is, *calculus*, based on our data (history) we get customized ads offering products and services in exchange for our money. Our data has a price and *we* are paying it. AI manipulates and streamlines our consumption habits, and surveils our electronic devices and online behavior. It is enough simply to go online or walk around with a smartphone in one's pocket. Our seductive electronic devices betray us. Each time we are online and use our devices, we work for free. We are

[24] "Machine Learning," IBM, accessed September 16, 2024, https://www.ibm.com/topics/machine-learning.

servants of the AI systems. Of course, the owners of Big Tech corporations are the masters.

Reactions are automatic and therefore compatible with automatism as the *modus operandi* of the machine and automated worker interaction. But we also learn the habit of automatic reaction, adding emojis rather compulsively in text messages. Emojis provide a clear and distinct sense of what we want to communicate. If the message is "happy" it is followed by a happy smile. This is not without consequences for our speech. Speech becomes plain and without subtext. We speak, insensitive to the intent of complex and underlying meaning. We react plainly and automatically, "emotionally," without a sense of irony, sarcasm and exaggeration. These and other intellectually advanced thought forms and figures of speech are difficult to translate into the emoji. We tend to take what is said at face value. We are losing a sense for what is fake, or are falsely convinced that we are exercising critical thinking, we believe that all facts are fake. Conspiracy is lurking everywhere. Communication is a paranoiac activity.

What can be done to unlearn the idiotic (re)education in reactions and explanations, and online expressions of emotions? Perhaps the solution lies in the liberating potential of everyday banalities that go unnoticed—no reaction, no need for explanation—precisely because they are so quotidian. For example, straightforward motives such as those in traditional Japanese haiku poetry. Haikus are songs of experience of going beyond the effort to complicate what is here and now. Haikus intend to stimulate remaining in a state of direct experience. Reaction and explanation are redundant. It is evident. In this sense, there are no substitutes—ideological explanations and manipulations—for suffering, joy, life, and death, the existential limit-experiences beyond understatement and exaggeration. Of course, here is an example of AI-generated haiku created in response to my prompt "mind":

Mind races like a storm,
Thoughts swirl in chaotic dance,
Seeking inner calm.

Clouds part in my mind,
Light of clarity shines through,
Peaceful thoughts emerge.

> Mindscape vast and deep,
> Endless labyrinth of thought,
> Find center of self.[25]

It is not surprising that the site of this "haiku generator" is called "bored humans." Even boredom is automated work. It cost me some time and a few strokes on the keyboard. I will not get paid. Did I enjoy the free product? I may find out soon when my social media feed starts offering poetry for me to buy.

Although there is no reward, except on a libidinal level, the automated work within AI systems is surely *noticed*. For this reason, it is misleading to approach AI as a system replicating human thought processes, emotions, and so on. Rather, the function of AI is to *read* thought processes and monitor, manipulate, control, and optimize them by employing the methods of behaviorism and cognitive science (operant conditioning and cognitive behavioral therapy), which in the context of AI ideology is called neuroinformatics. Of course, AI also facilitates our choices and decisions through recommender systems based on the view of the individual, the consumer. "A recommendation engine, also called a recommender, is an artificial intelligence (AI) system that suggests items to a user. Recommendation systems rely on big data analytics and machine learning algorithms to find patterns in user behavior data and recommend relevant items based on those patterns."[26] Recommender systems integrate and delimit choices and decisions within the sphere of AI, creating dependence and patterns of neurotic surveying of the products of "choice" provided by it. This circularity is a trap. With AI systems embedded in nearly every human activity, or vice versa, there is no place for creativity and invention, except within the sphere of AI-powered systems. As the platitude goes, creativity happens outside the box, even if its tools are limited within the box. Consequently, the inevitable reduction, optimization, and instrumentalization of human behavior, and its enclosure within the algorithm, is beneficial only for the goals that motivate a violent suspension of what is outside the AI sphere. To this end, "artificial intelligence" is the mode of transformation of humans into products that are then offered back to them as a matter of choice for which they pay.

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[25] Made with "Haiku Generator," BoredHumans.com, https://boredhumans.com/haiku.php.

[26] Rina Caballar and Cole Stryker, "Recommendation engine," IBM, published June 19, 2024, https://www.ibm.com/think/topics/recommendation-engine.

Who is the "servant" and the "worker" in the famous line in Russian employed by Kraftwerk in the piece *Die Roboter*: "Я твой слуга. Я твой работник." (I am your servant. I am your worker)? Kraftwerk's live performances from the nineties featured a figure of a cyborg, a human-machine assemblage. On stage, we see four science fiction-type robot torsos with keyboards in front of them. On the robot's necks there are artificial heads of the Kraftwerk members. The robots move slowly and graciously to the soft electronic beats and sounds. While this childish and entertaining element of Kratfwerk's stage performance does not move beyond a science fiction-type of fantasy, it also exposes the compulsion, stationarity and repetition of the algorithmic programming, organization, and monitoring of *work*. Especially the line in English—"we are the robots"—rendered in a machinelike voice, does not simply explain the obvious. The serious side of the line is perfectly illustrated in Kraftwerk's 1978 video for Die Roboter. The video takes place in a minimalistic studio that looks more like a laboratory. The faces of the band members are expressionless and styled to maximal artificiality. Their bodies are stiff. The movements of their arms, hands, and mouths are entirely dictated by the music they produce themselves on various electronic devices. They are uniformed in orange shirts, grey pants, and black ties, a combo of white collar and construction workers, and the military. They do not even blink out of sync with the music. Simultaneously, they are the programmers and slaves (robots) of the programming sequence. Thus, unlike the real robots on stage, the "robots" in the video play on the *dystopic* notion of the robot as a *dehumanized human*, recapturing the meaning of the Czech word *robotnik*, a "forced worker."[27]

The fear that AI-powered robots are taking over and infiltrating our lives on all levels is overshadowed by a situation that still has to be given critical attention, namely that we are in the same situation as the members of Kraftwerk in their video. *We are the robots*—the automated servant-workers—the producers and the consumers of data that animate our lives and keep us inseparable from the beat of Big Tech pulsating our lives. We love their devices and AI solutions and they love us—following Serge Gainsbourg, it is "love on the beat."

[27] Online Etymology Dictionary, "robot," accessed September 11, 2024, https://www.etymonline.com/word/robot.

Conclusion

Today "AI" is the signifier from which we derive the most fantastic notions. In the spirit of Lacan, we could approach AI as a mathème, a "lesson" beyond the signifier. It could provide an understanding that has nothing to do with AI as a signifier of "artificial intelligence" but may reveal the processes it imposes on our thinking and imagination, i.e. AI ideology. Here, it is interesting to note that we lack a precise definition of AI. Of course, many different AIs are being developed for different purposes. Notwithstanding what AI is, it works (in mysterious ways). It is also the buzzword around Big Tech corporations. It insists and demands to be a semblance that feeds fantasy and stimulates thinking. Can we speak about AI in terms of *objet petit ai* (*sic*), the object cause of desire for AI-powered transformation? To transform desire by offering a supplementary intelligence to the artificiality of the good old *objet petit a*? As with any other ideology, AI ideology is yet another way of monitoring, regulating, and controlling desire and its objects. That said, Big Tech dominates our lives with its regulative/manipulative applications of AI across the range of society, where life is spent on social media, and teaching machines how to learn and learning from machines. If we cannot speak about AI beyond these totalitarian operations, and about the possibilities of life beyond AI, we must conclude that, at best, we are elaborating science fiction stories and "thinking" wild critique that one of the GPTs could generate even wilder. Or worse, we could speak about AI beyond being. Superhuman, worthy of worship. In those times, if they are to come, lost for words and lacking sophistication, let us hope sarcasm will still exist in the hearts of the incurable extravagants and that both will retain the strength of critique. However, let us exercise suspicion. If AI is said to have the power to become a new form of life that exceeds human ability to understand its mode(s) of being, and if it is given power over human life, then it is a no-brainer that what lurks behind this scenario is AI ideology.

The totalitarian reduction of every segment of life to AI-powered systems of control and manipulation and the radical centralization of socio-economic power to Big Tech corporations inevitably provoke the phantoms of liberty and roaming specters, as is usual in similar situations in history. Here, philosophy has a role to play in providing a critique of the dominant AI ideology by (re)viewing the insights from its resources, offering itself as a mode of thinking beyond the current order. Philosophy balances between the eccentric ways of life and the

various domains of the regulation of life, in politics, spirituality, and so on. Finally, as an intensity whose strength is to remain in the same place of trust in the power of its insight, philosophy, as Plato shows in *Phaedrus*, is the only human endeavor in a position to play with madness, and by going through it, elevate spirit above it.

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