

AI, Society and Religion

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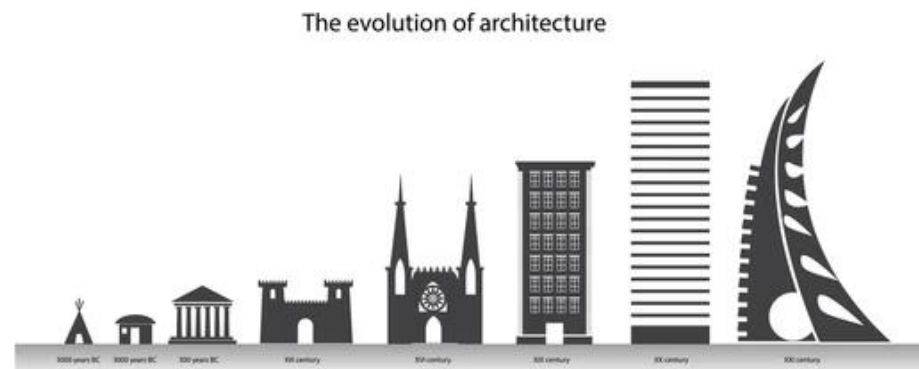
Version 1.0

AI, Society and Religion

- **Complex world**
- What is AI?
- AI and Human Mind
- Artificial General Intelligence
- AI and Society
- AI and Religion

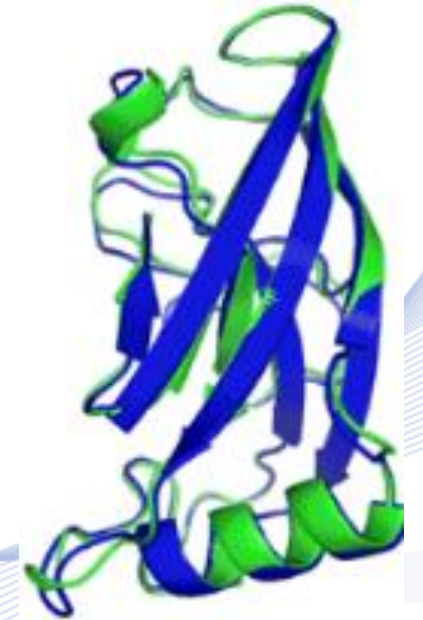
Complex world

- The **complexity** of our world increases.
- We live in an environment that evolves over space and time.
- Ever more complex man-made constructions:
 - Smart buildings, complex infrastructure.
 - Complexity increases along **height**, due to space scarcity.
 - Miniaturization complexity increases due to resource scarcity: **rare earths**.



Complex world

- Life form complexity increases ***through evolution*** or ***by design***:
 - New plant and animal variations, e.g., genetically designed.
 - We are at the start of life evolution by design.
- The increase of ***global population*** contributes to world complexity.
- Complexity increase in contrast to the 2nd thermodynamic law (***thermal death***).



Complex world

- We live in an ever more complex ***mental world***.
 - ***Dramatic increase in data production.***
 - Large increase in knowledge, e.g., number of concepts:
 - Many ***new concepts***: Internet, fake data, cryptocurrency etc.
 - Economic growth.
 - Complex societal processes.
- It is reflected in the real world (***rather the opposite***):
 - Internet, mobile communications, economic data, media.
 - Social media, social functions.

Complex world

- Why world complexity increases?
 - Addressing human homeostatic and survival needs.
 - For-profit economies (capitalism) > Competition > Growth.
- Large strain on material and energy resources.
- ***Can humans cope with increased world complexity?***
 - Limited brain capacity. Limited human body capacity.
 - Very slow biological evolution.
- ***Is world complexity increase unavoidable?***

Complex world

- **Statement:** *Information technologies* and *Artificial Intelligence* is our current reply to world complexity increase.
- Handling of the huge data flow:
 - Data acquisition, processing, communication, storage.
- Addressing human brain limitations:
 - AI and *data analysis* produce information.
 - *Unlimited memory* thanks to data storage.
 - Reasoning and knowledge production: *not there yet!!!*

Complex world

- Addressing human body limitations:
 - New 'senses': ***seeing the macrocosm and microcosm.***
 - Improved human mobility: ***intelligent vehicles.***
 - Improved communication:
 - ***We can reach any person on earth in 5-6 hops!***
 - ***Mobile 24/7 communications.***
 - ***Greatly improved global health.***
- ***All the above benefits come at a price!***

AI, Society and Religion

- Complex world
- **What is AI?**
- AI and Human Mind
- Artificial General Intelligence
- AI and Society
- AI and Religion

What is AI?

- ***AI Science and Engineering*** (AISE) is the interdisciplinary, scientific study and engineering of ***Artificial Systems*** that mimic and/or surpass ***human intelligence*** in information analysis and ***human interaction*** with the world.
- Core AISE disciplines are:
 - ***Machine Learning*** (ML),
 - Classical (Symbolic) ***Artificial Intelligence*** (AI)

What is AI?

- Closely related AISE disciplines:
 - **Robotics,**
 - Autonomous Systems,
 - Digital Signal/Image Processing and Analysis,
 - Data Science and Data Analytics
 - **Network Theory.**
- Very useful in defining:
 - Data, analysis modes, applications.

What is AI?

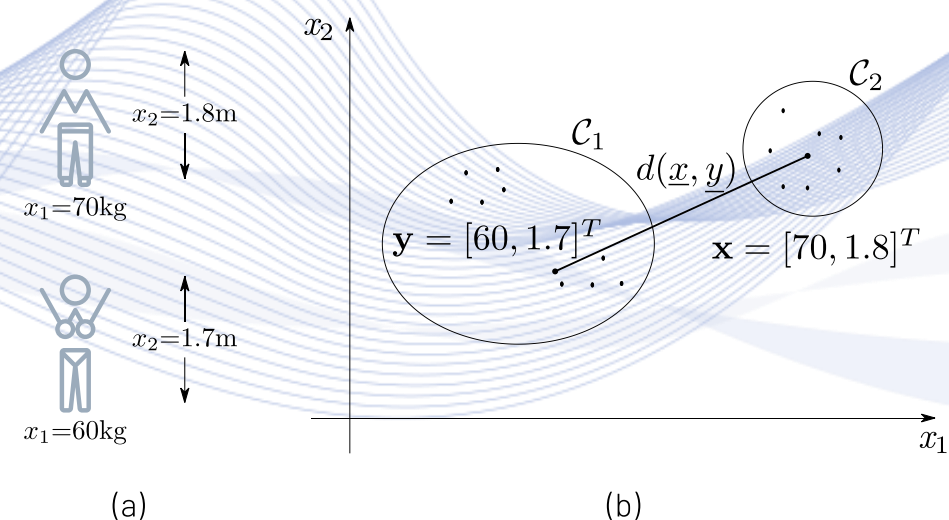
- Complementary AISE-related disciplines:
 - Cognitive Science,
 - Neuroscience,
 - Psychology,
 - ***Philosophy, Ethics***
 - Linguistics
 - Sociology.

What is AI?

Data/information/knowledge definitions

Data: measured quantities related to nature and/or human activities.

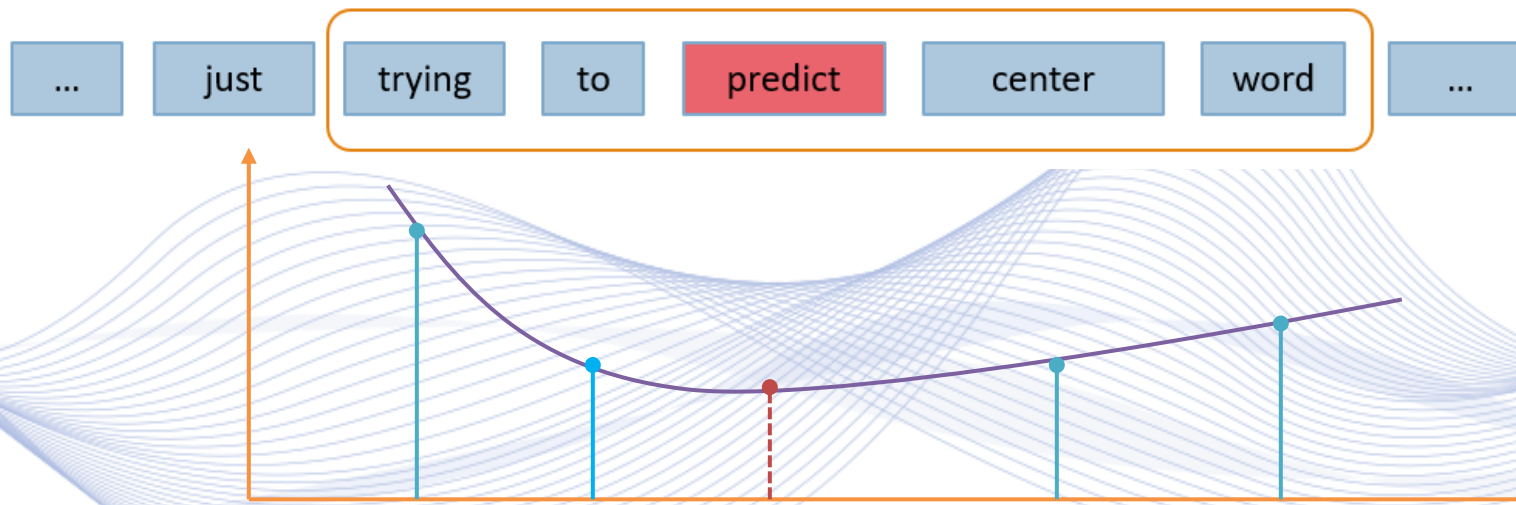
- **Data are primarily numbers** representing object characteristics (features).
- Passive/active data acquisition.
- Data sampling.
- **Measured in bits.**



What is AI?

Natural Language Processing. Word embeddings

- Transforming words in series of numbers (vectors).
- Predicting word order.

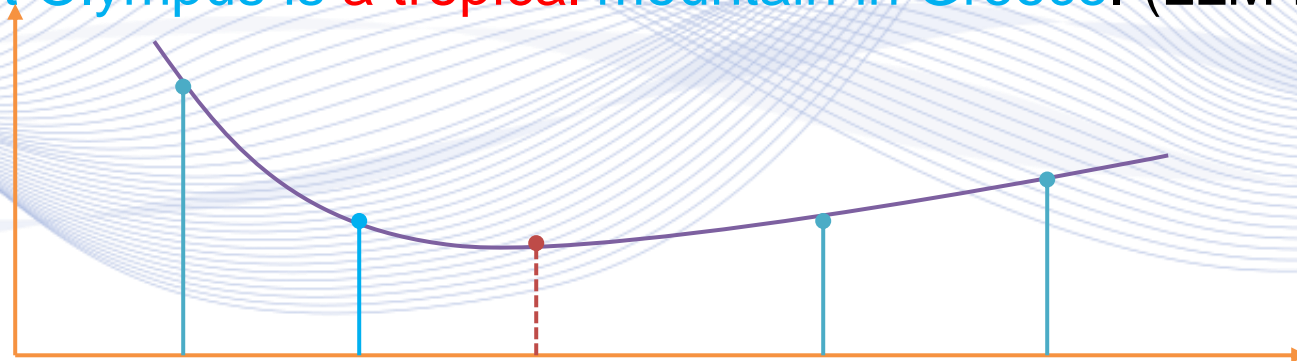


Vectors representing words 'to' and 'center' can best interpolate the 'predict' vector.

What is AI?

Natural Language Processing. ChatGPT text production

- Question: What do you know about Mt. Olympus and Greece?
- Answer using word order prediction:
 - Mt Olympus is the highest mountain in Greece.
 - Mt Olympus is the loveliest mountain in Greece. (sentimental).
 - Mt Olympus is a tropical mountain in Greece. (LLM hallucination).

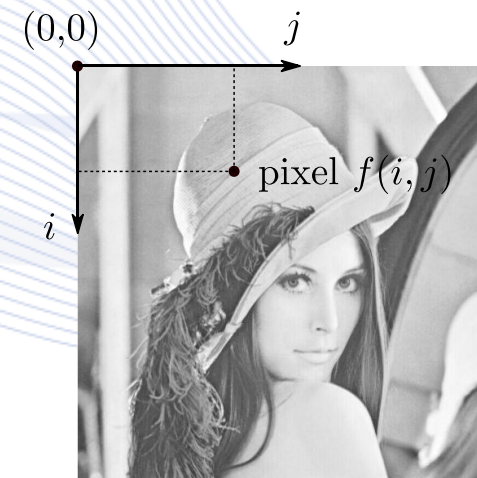
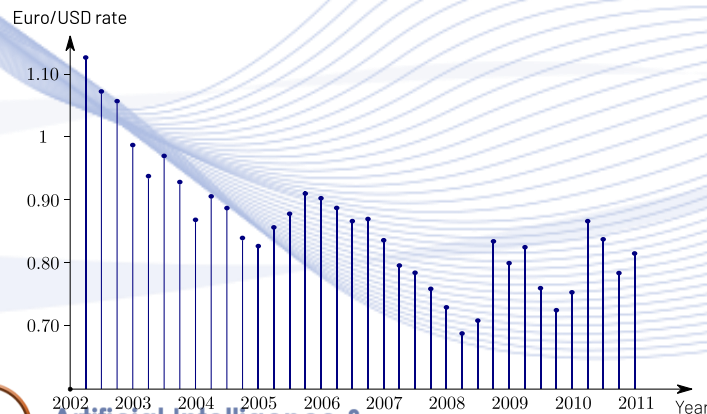


What is AI?

Data can have *spatiotemporal structure*:

- 1D temporal signals, e.g., music
- 2D spatial signals: images
- Signals and object features can be represented by **vectors**:

$$\mathbf{x}^T = [x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n].$$

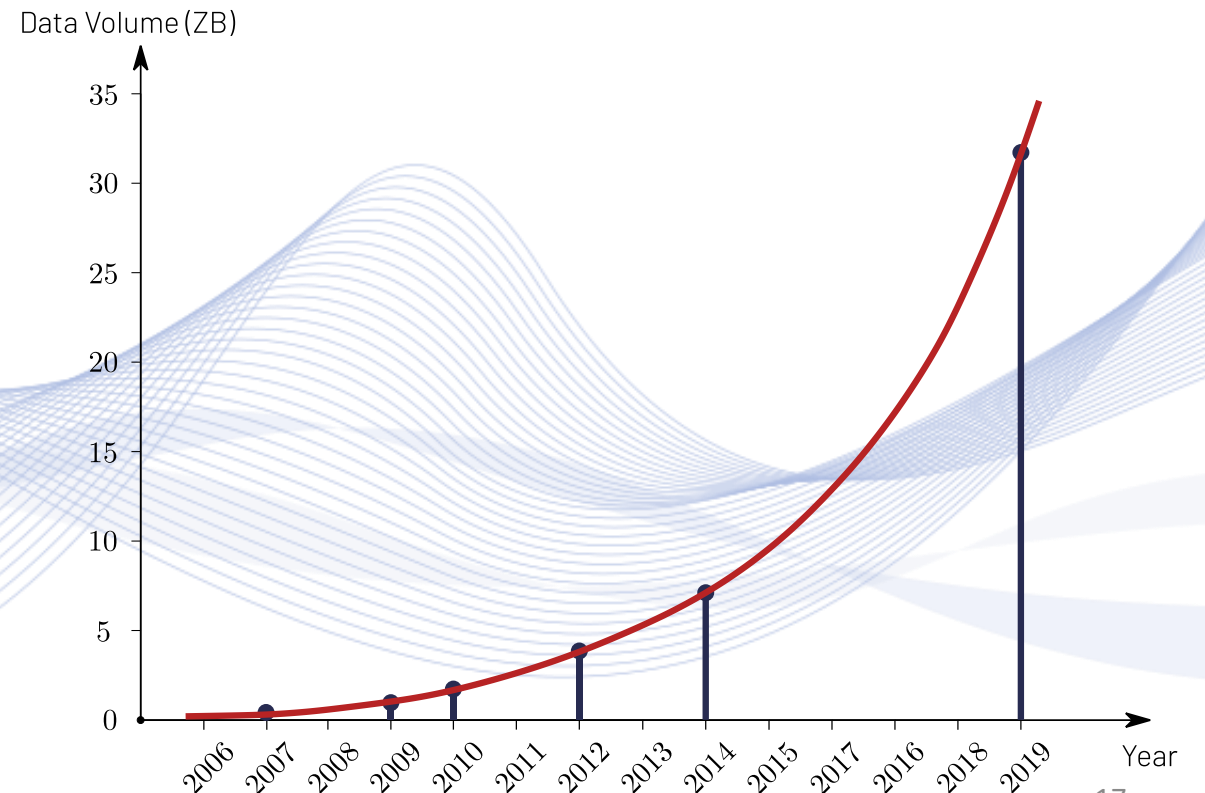


What is AI?

Exponential data increase:

- Proliferation of sensors
- Detailed recording of nature and humans
- Sensing automation.

Data volume increase in past decade.



What is AI?

Why we need ever more data?

- To navigate in an ever more complex world.
 - *Why do we need a more complex world?*

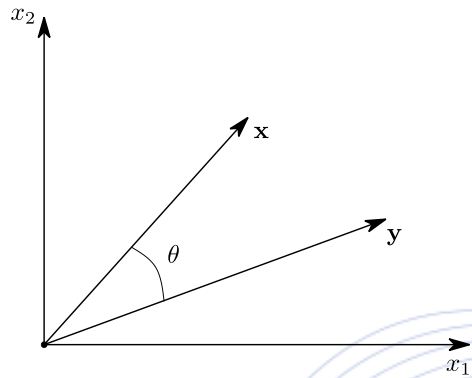
Data sustainability:

- HW enabled
- ***Moore's law***
- Data storage constraints
- Data communication constraints.

What is AI?

Unsupervised Machine Learning

- Data clustering:

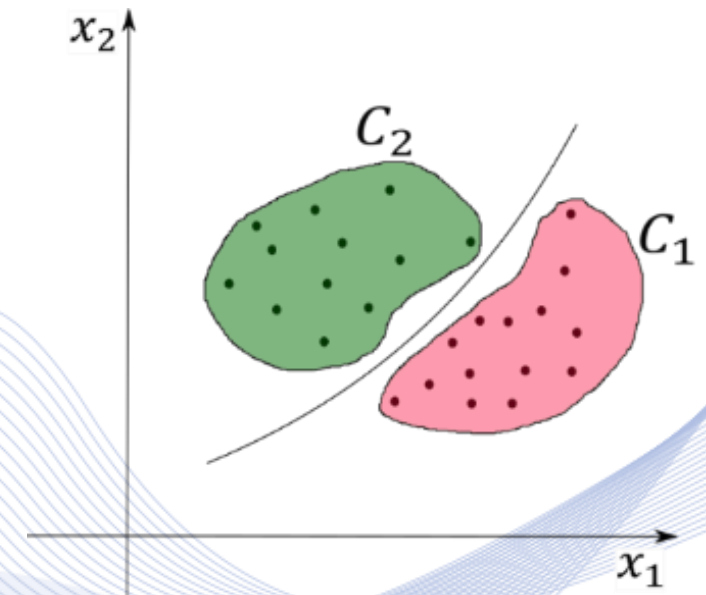


- Data geometry
- ***Abstraction***
- ***Data compression.***

What is AI?

Supervised Machine Learning

- Learning functions $y = f(\mathbf{x}; \theta)$ from labeled training data $\{(\mathbf{x}_i, y_i), i = 1, \dots, N\}$.
- ***Classification***
- ***Regression.***
- Learning data probability distributions $p(\mathbf{x})$.
 - ***Generative neural networks.***
 - ***Fake data creation.***



What is AI?

Generative AI

Sculpture Examples



Example image



Input poses

Synthesized

Input poses

Synthesized

What is AI?

Information

- **Notoriously vague definitions**
- My definition: ***Information is the result of the manual or automatic Data Analysis.***

Taxonomy: Data → Information → Knowledge.

Machine Learning/inference produces ***information*** (including metadata).

- ***Information theory/entropy: bits (once more)!***



What is AI?

Concepts and ideas ('ιδέες').

- Concepts are specific mental constructs residing in our mind (brain?) that refine and abstract ideas.
- ***Concept instances***



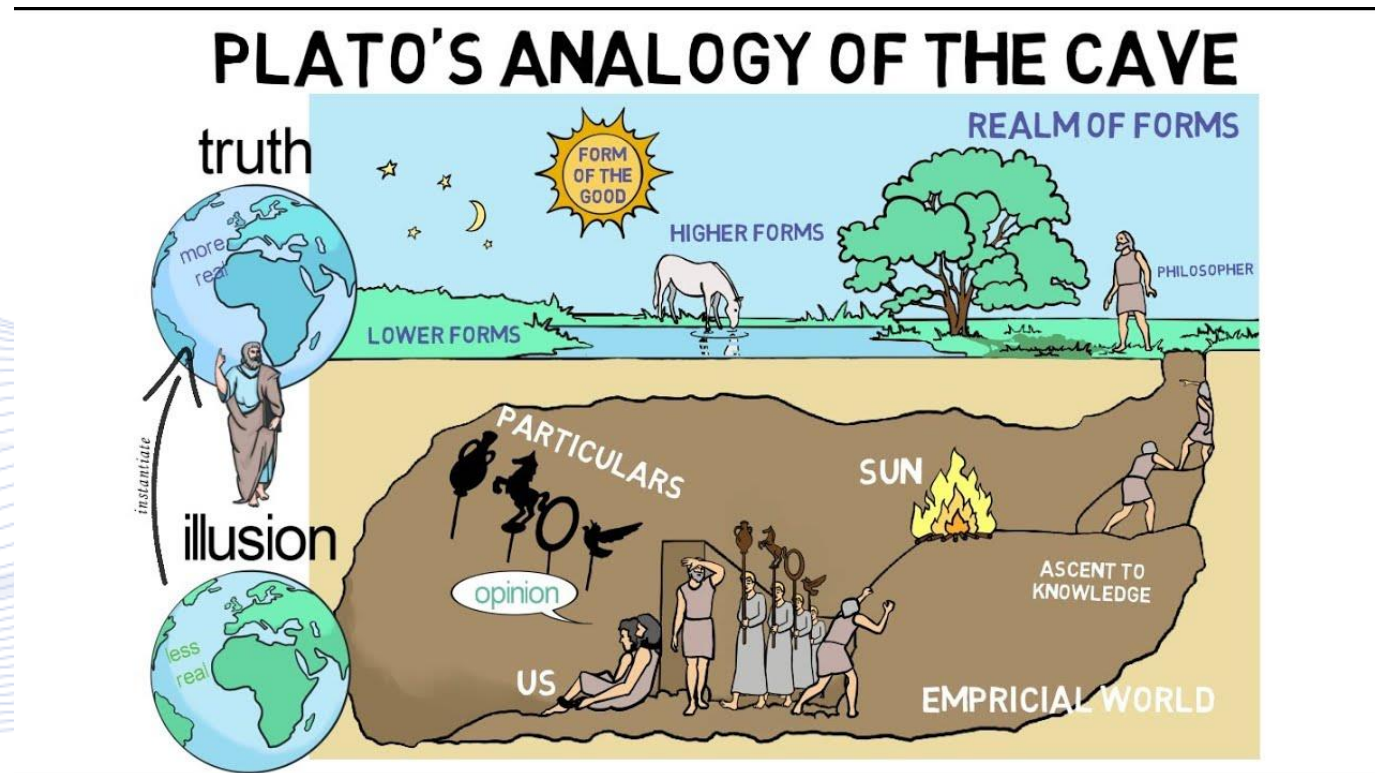
Instances of a triangle.

- ***Abstraction and generalization:***
 - Simplification and data compression.

What is AI?

Ideas in Philosophy.

- Idealism, materialism, dualism.
- Plato's cave.



What is AI?

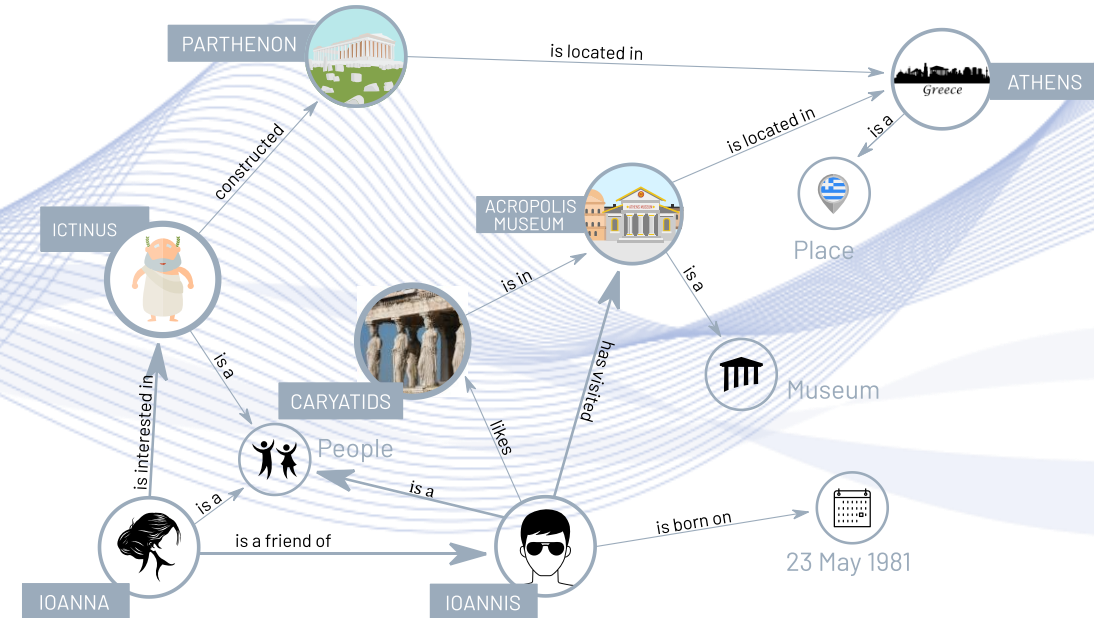
Symbolic AI

- A **symbol** ('**Σύμβολο**') is a **comprehensible representation** of an object, idea, concept, action, status, or relationship.
- Symbolic AI mimics and simulates high-level human intelligence and **reasoning**.
- It represents and operates on concepts and their relations through **logic** and **search**.
- **Reasoning** is one of the most complex brain activities.

What is AI?

Knowledge

- It is a familiarity, awareness, or ***understanding of someone or something***:
 - Facts (propositional knowledge),
 - Skills (procedural knowledge),
 - Objects relations (relational knowledge).
- Various knowledge descriptions.

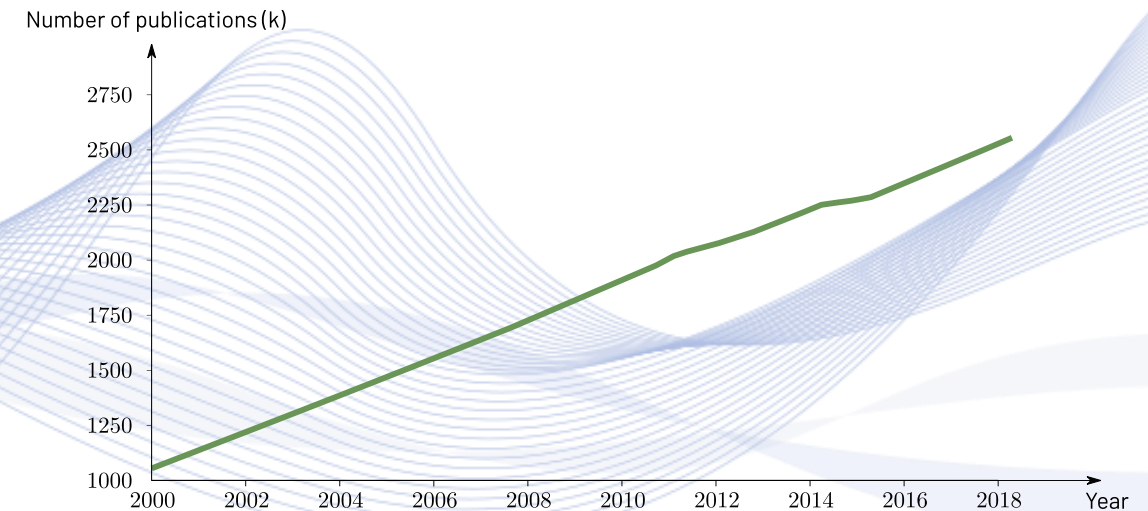


What is AI?

Knowledge is primarily a product of reasoning.

- Is knowledge finite?
- ***Can we measure knowledge?***
- Knowledge increase is linear.

- ***Encyclopedias***
- ***Research publications.***



Global research output (publication) growth.

What is AI?

Current AI revolution:

- ***AI means ML, which means Deep Neural Networks***
- Stagnation of symbolic AI
- Resurrection of a dead term: AI

Major breakthrough needed:

- Advancement of symbolic AI
- ***Fusion of Machine Learning and symbolic AI.***

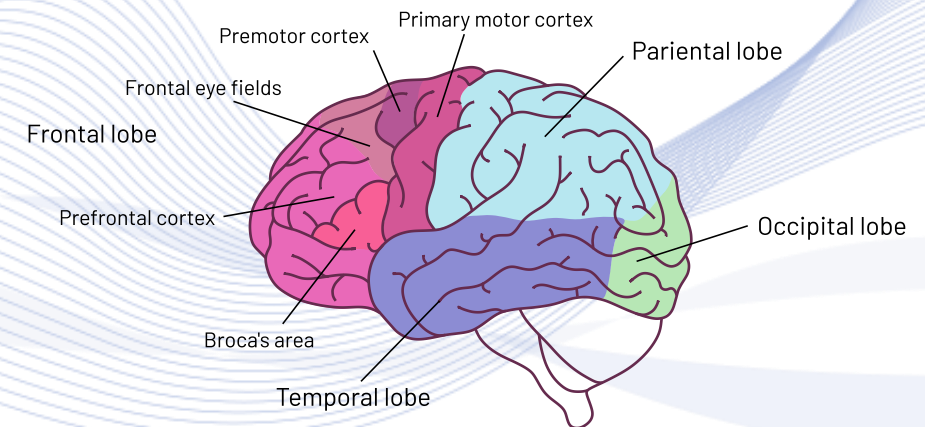
AI, Society and Religion

- Complex world
- What is AI?
- **AI and Human Mind**
- Artificial General Intelligence
- AI and Society
- AI and Religion

AI and Human Mind

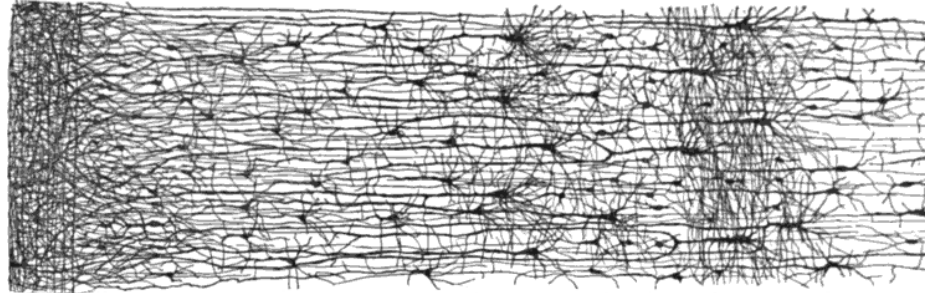
Nervous System. Brain and Biological neural networks

- The brain has 100 billion neurons and 100 trillion neural synapses!
- Huge, but ***limited***, intellectual capacity.
- Capacity improves by ***education***, good health and living standards.



AI and Human Mind

- Is ***network complexity*** the basis of both the biological and artificial intelligence?



Biological NN (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cerebral_cortex)

- ***Why is neural network complexity so necessary for biological intelligence?***
- Is network network complexity a ***sufficient condition*** for biological intelligence?

AI and Human Mind

- Can we define *animal intelligence*?
- Many aspects of human intelligence are unknown.
- *Human intelligence is different from Artificial Intelligence.*

AI and Human Mind

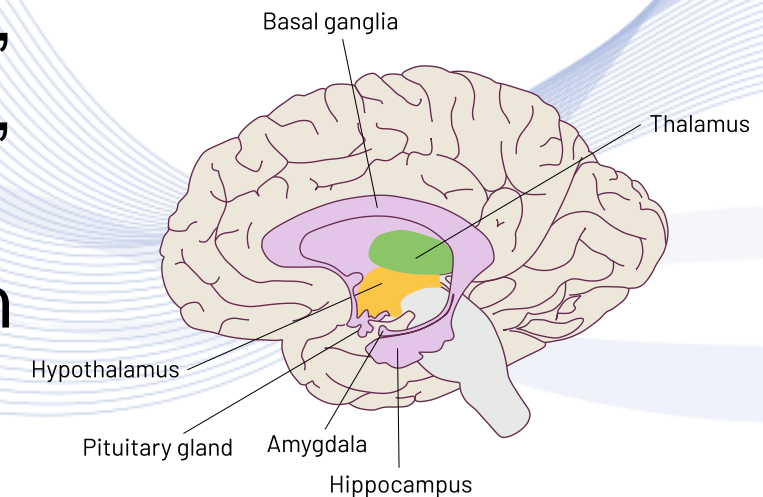
Can human brain address the increased world complexity?

- Human sensing limitations: We cannot see the ***microcosm***.
 - Important in a miniaturized world.
- Human perception limitations: self-localization?
 - Extremely important in complex environments: big cities.
- Memory limitations: **Computers are better in data storage.**
- ***Affect limitations: Brain over-excitation by too many or too frequent stimuli can lead to psychological disorders.***

AI and Human Mind

Fear

- It is a natural, primitive unpleasant and powerful emotion, needed to understand or perceive we are in ***danger***.
- Localization in brain: ***amygdalae*** communicating with other brain regions, e.g., the prefrontal cortex, hippocampus, thalamus, hypothalamus, and the sensory cortex.
- Handling the ***fight-or-flight*** human response, when in danger.



AI and Human Mind

- Excessive and/or repeated fear can cause serious psychological disorders, notably ***anxiety*** and ***depression***.
- Fear can be triggered by several real or imaginary threats:
 - Snakes, spiders, earthquakes.
- ***Threat of the unknown*** triggered by unfamiliar or unknown stimuli.
- ***Intensified by a lack of education to interpret our world.***

AI and Human Mind

Generalized OnLine Affect and Cognition (GOLAC) disorder

- People receive massive stimuli 24/7 over the web, social media and mobile phones.
- Combination of a constant info bombardment and an inability to handle the threat of the unknown.
- Generalized and unsubstantiated feeling that new things are suspicious and/or fishy.
- Result: ***an unsettling feeling of an inability to cope with this online information flux and the dangers it may entail.***

AI and Human Mind

Generalized OnLine Affect and Cognition (GOLAC) disorder

- ***Real affect and cognition impairment that can jeopardize our actions to interface to the real world.***
- Good background for developing conspiracy theories.
- It can be combined with other social media related threats:
 - e.g., cyberbullying, check by peers through likes.
- Despite partial studies, we have not grasped the immensity of this disorder.
- Social implications: ***fake news proliferation, anti-social marginalization, risks for young people.***

AI, Society and Religion

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Artificial General Intelligence

Is AGI the next step after LLMs?

- Most probably AGI will be VERY different from human intelligence.
 - Airplanes are different than birds, yet they obey the same laws of Physics.
- The physical substrate of AI and human intelligence is very different.
 - Robots have very limited but different physical intelligence.
 - Things may change by developing biological robots.
- ***Life evolution by-design*** than through physical selection.
- Massive ***human-machine symbiosis*** at various levels.

Artificial General Intelligence

Is AGI the next step after LLMs?

- Will AGI be any different from human intelligence from a behavioral point of view that is worth talking about?
- Today ***too many*** commoners cannot make the difference.
- The phenomenon is intensified by:
 - Lack of proper education.
 - Access of machines remotely.
 - Unwise claims and behavior of AI agents to the general public, e.g.,:
 - AI hallucinations being misunderstood as imagination.
 - False claims of sentiments (internal affect states) by machines.

Artificial General Intelligence

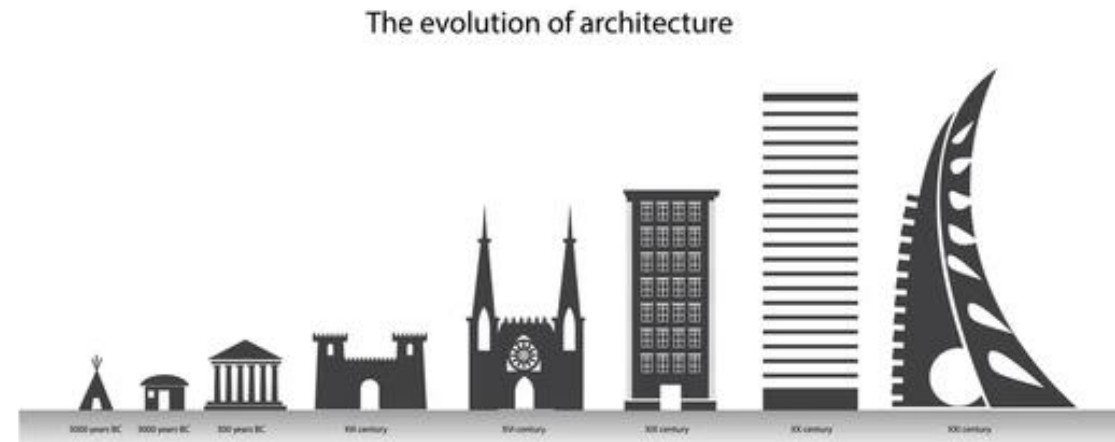
Layman's technophobia

- ***Fear of the unknown*** as commoners cannot understand AI.
- Machines appear to be intelligent and possibly better at that than the humans themselves.
- They are ***massively better*** in certain tasks, e.g., computations, memory/retrieval.
- Machines appear to be ***sentient***.
- Humans are awed by ChatGPT 'intelligence' much more than by other Generative AI methods, e.g., Deep Arts.
- ***Any technophobia can be socially destructive.***

Artificial General Intelligence

Scientific technophobia

- Very recent trend: scientists fearing the unknown.



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Parable: AI and the tower of Babel.

Artificial General Intelligence

Can AI be stopped or delayed?

- *AI is the response of humanity to a global society and physical world of ever-increasing complexity.*
- The physical and social complexity increase processes are ***very deep and seeming relentless.***
- *AI is a blessing, but it can become a curse.*
- Political, ethical, and regulatory concerns cannot and should not stop AI research [FUT2023].
- Scientific technophobia leads nowhere [NYT2023].

Artificial General Intelligence

Can AI be stopped or delayed?

- ***AI research can and should become more open, democratic, scientific and ethical.***
- Simple AI regulatory examples:
 - AI system registry,
 - Clear indication that somebody converses with a machine.
- AI deployment should be regulated and can be temporarily delayed.
 - Geopolitical aspects must be dealt by international cooperation.

AI, Society and Religion

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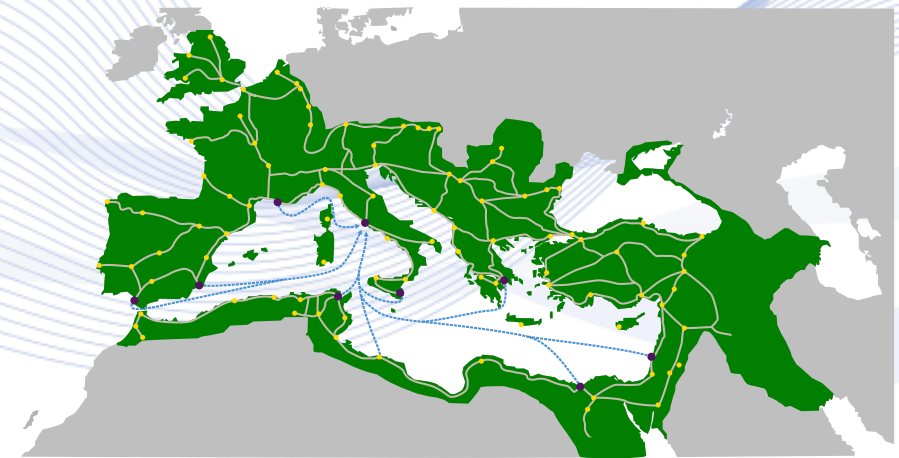
AI and Society

Society: graphs of interconnected nodes (humans).

- ***Ideas propagate along communication and transport routes.***
- Christianity: Roman empire roots.
- Islam: Indian ocean commercial routes.

Social media.

- ***Huge information diffusion.***
- Knowledge democratization?



AI and Society

AI and IT enable ***Social Engineering***:

- Understanding and analyzing social processes
- Influencing individual humans, social strata and structure.
- M. Kranzberg: “***Technology is neither good nor bad; nor is it neutral.***”
- Marx’s famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: “***Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.***”

Social Media and Disinformation

Social media changed the way we interact with humans

- It is the new e-agera ('Αγορά').
- Free Information flow ***among peers.***
- ***Electronic word of mouth.***
- No gatekeepers, no regulations: journalists, press laws etc.
- ***Great communication facilitators.***
- ***Heaven of the freedom of speech?***

Social Media and Disinformation

AI-powered Social Engineering paradigm gone bad:

The dark side of social media.

- The world became too small: 5 hops to reach anybody.
- Constant 24/7 connectivity and information flooding.
- ***Great communication facilitators.***
- Downside:
 - ***Generalized OnLine Affect and Cognition (GOLAC) disorder.***
 - ***Anti-intellectualism and Disinformation.***

Social Media and Disinformation

Social activism and virtual communities.

- ***Activism: grass-roots*** movement having a political, economic, social or environment agenda.
- ***Political spectrum:*** from the far-right to the far-left/anarchism.
- On-line activism is empowered by the ***electronic word of mouth.***
- Social media offer a convenient way to get organized in ***virtual communities.***
- Handicaps: ***Irrationalism, Cult culture, Personality cult, influencers.***

Social Media and Disinformation

Social activism and virtual communities.

- Some social media sites became an ***electronic Hyde Park Speaker's Corner*** of e-lunatics.
- Propagation of irrational and false theories with absolutely no touch to reality: e.g., ***earth is planar.***
- ***Cult:*** group of people sharing commitment to ideas, goals (religious in many cases) and/or persons.
- Promotion of violence and/or ***disinformation.***
- Member manipulation and repression:
 - ***Progression bias:*** our natural tendency to continue a relationship and ignore signs of trouble, rather than break it.

Social Media and Disinformation

Irrationalism and Anti-elitism

- ***Irrationalism***: is a philosophical school of the late 19th and early 19th century that questions or discounts rationalism.
 - ***Its vulgar form flourishes during crises.***
- ***Anti-intellectualism*** is supposedly against any perceived privileged elite.
 - Supported by ***lumpenproletariat*** and at times by parts of the ***ruling class***.
 - Example: ***rejecting medical knowledge and practice.***
- ***Anti-elitism***: political version of anti-intellectualism.
 - Current crisis of the dominant political elites .Questioning ***merit***.

Social Media and Disinformation

Irrationalism and Anti-elitism

Cognitive dissonance theory

Social behavior: when in conflict reduction of discomfort.

- *if reality is at odds with what we believe, it is too bad for the reality itself.*
- *If we do not understand, we discard.*
- **Aesops fable** The fox and the grapes: Grapes that we cannot eat are unripe (“Ὅμφακες εἰσίν”).

Social Media and Disinformation

Irrationalism and Anti-elitism

Many people have neither knowledge nor mental capacity nor desire to understand a scientific explanation:

- If a view is undesirable, shun it!
- When confronted with an uncontestable rational view, shift position instead of admitting defeat!
- The most ***socially outlying irrational ideas*** are spread with biggest ***urgency***. ***Why?***
- ***Conspiratorial virtual communities*** are much more ***militant*** than other rational virtual communities, e.g., environmentalists.

Social Media and Disinformation

Virtual Communities and Disinformation

New qualities of outlying radical virtual communities:

- They feel stronger, by forming online bonds (***small world phenomenon***).
- Amplification of their self-respect and sense of collective strength.
- ***Resonance of ideas*** is a key aspect in the formation of such communities:
 - a welcoming audience resonates with their views.

Social Media and Disinformation

Virtual Communities and Disinformation

Sentimentalist ideas (e.g., conspiracy theories) propagate much easier than rationalistic ones:

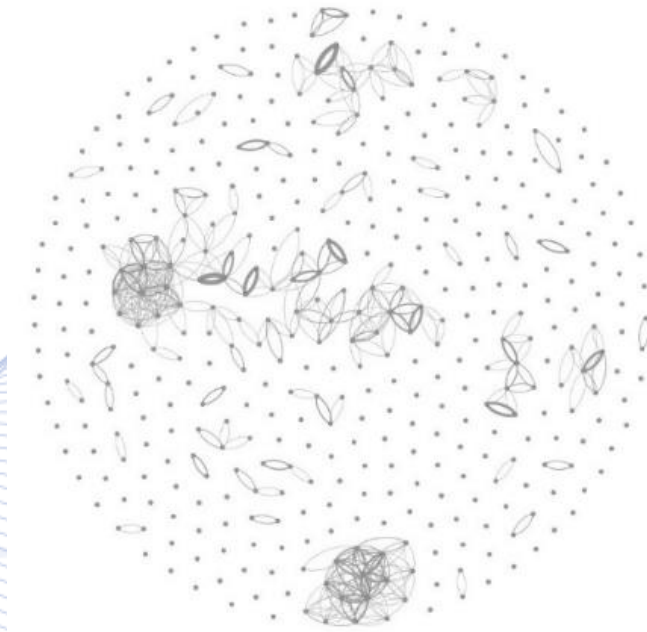
- Highjacking ***empathy***: if I smile, you smile.
- Willing ears can easily adopt whatever is pleasant.
- No second thoughts or self-restraining.
- Exciting sentiment and imagination.
- After a community reaches a ***critical mass***, and overdrive of the Default Mode Network (DMN) leads in ***thought rumination***.

Social Media and Disinformation

Virtual Communities and Disinformation

Virtual community structure fuels their further strengthening:

- social media ***rich-get-richer mechanisms.***
- Small world diameter (5-6 hops) allows deep penetration in far-away audience.



Social Media and Disinformation

Virtual Communities and Disinformation

- Ultra-fast ideas propagation by electronic word of mouth.
- Deep fake news is difficult to detect even by professionals!!!
- ***Multiple messages reinforce each other (Goebbels theory).***
- ***Good Web and Internet qualities are misused to spread disinformation.***

Social Media and Disinformation

Virtual Communities and Disinformation

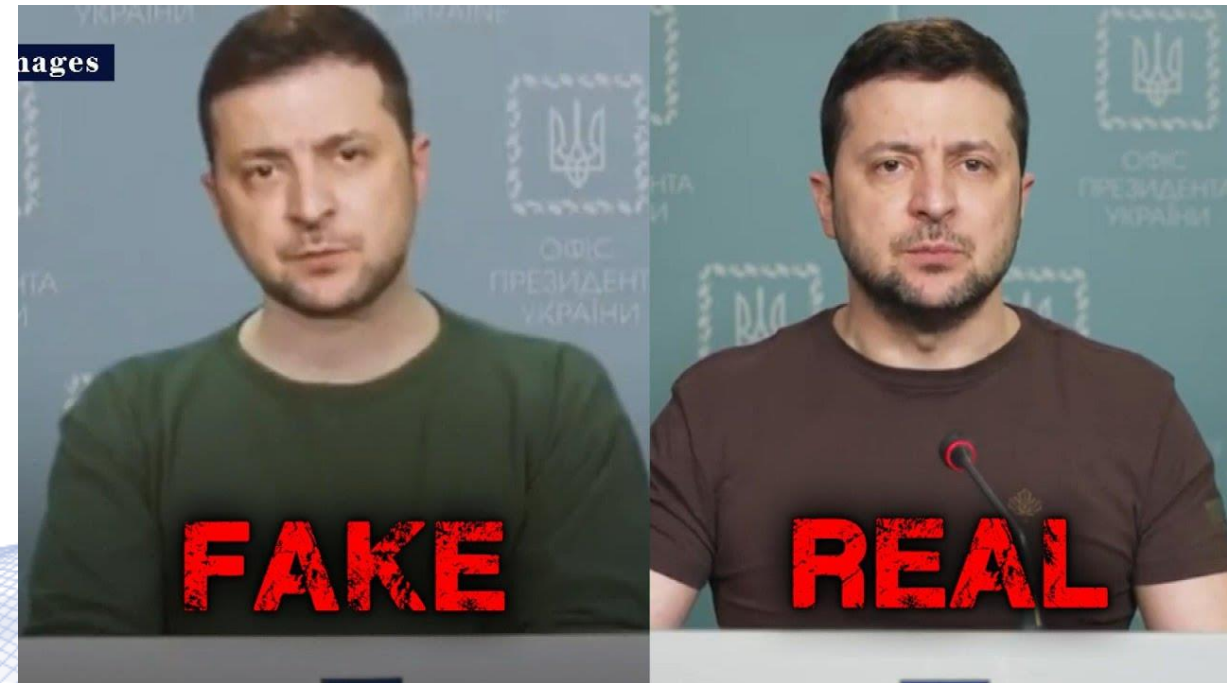
Profit-driven social media company information filtering policies can further fuel disinformation:

- News ranking is based on popularity for boosting user engagement (and marketing profits).
- Polarizing posts and hate speech go viral and create engagement.
- They can lead to misinformation cascades.
- ***A thin militant minority can hijack social media.***

Social Media and Disinformation

Virtual Communities and Disinformation

- State-sponsored misinformation.
- Professional misinformation campaigns:
 - Staged in some countries, e.g., N. Macedonia.



Social Media and Disinformation

AI can greatly aggravate disinformation.

Deep data generation.

- Deep fakes.
- ***Deep art: New forms of AI-powered art.***

Personalized Social Engineering.

- Target: human attention and brains.



Social Media and Disinformation

Political activism.

- Conspiracy theories
- Qanon and the far-right.
- Capitol Hill riot.

Links between political activism and religious fundamentalism.

- Islamic fundamentalism and militant political groups.
- Links between far-right and outlying Cristian groups.
- Links with authoritarian regimes.
- Where is the freedom of speech?

Social Media and Disinformation

Regulations

- Press and traditional media are governed **by laws** and good practices.
- Social media are governed by **company policies**.
- **States intervened too late too slowly.**
- **Little/No taxation of big social media companies.**
- **European Union pioneered in social media regulations:**
 - AI Act, GDPR, Digital Markets Act, Digital Services Act.

Social Media and Disinformation

How can Democracy defend itself?

- Fact checking.
- Better regulatory policies.
- Antimonopoly practices.
- **Morphosis**: formation of knowledgeable citizens.
 - Major overhaul of education.
 - **Stress on critical and abstract thinking, expression quality.**
 - Revisiting classical studies.
 - **Global education**: diminishing social and regional barriers.

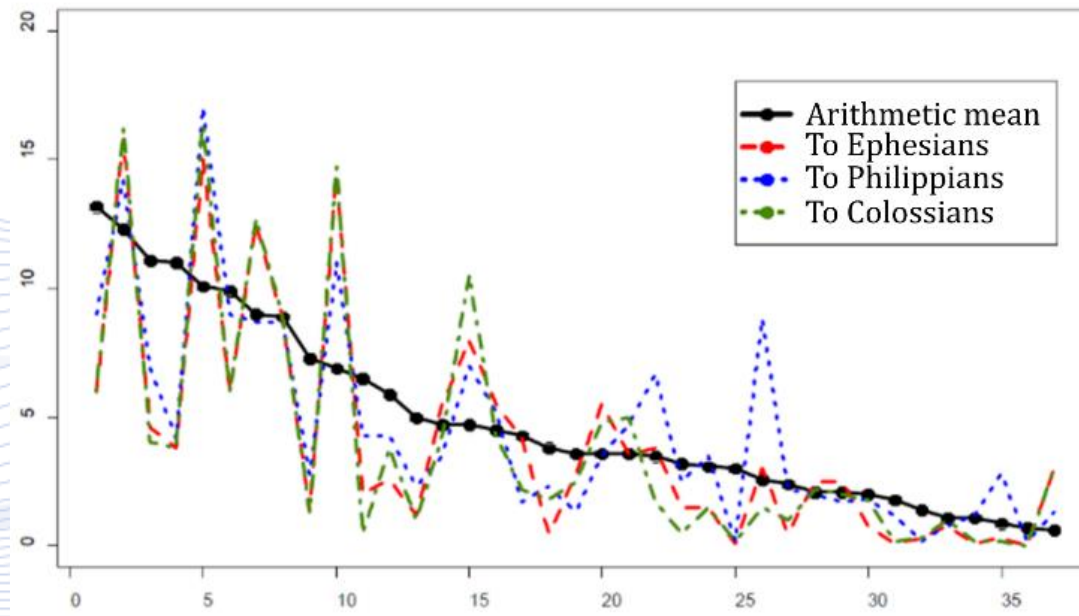
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AI and Religion

AI and Biblical Studies

- Bible is one of the most studied and published books.
- **Large Language Models** (LLMs) offer new linguistic tools for Biblical Studies.



Stylistic analysis of Apostle Paul's Epistles.

AI and Religion

Religious Practice and AI.

- Technology and science have indirectly been used in practicing some religions.
 - Organs in several Christian denominations.
 - Building well-engineered huge churches and other religious buildings.
- Efforts have been made to use AI and Robotics in religious practice.
 - Catholic or Buddhist robots.



SanTO 'catholic' robot.

AI and Religion

Religious Practice and AI.

- **Large Language Models** (LLMs) can be used to offer religious counseling.
- LLMs have been experimentally used in Liturgy and in preaching in some Christian denominations.
- LLMs can exert tremendous influence to less-educated non-vigilant believers.
- They can be useful in special circumstances:
 - Massive natural disasters, war zones.

AI and Religion

Religious Practice and AI.

- LLMs frequently hallucinate.
- LLMs can be used to pose new theological questions.
- LLMs can be used to combine various religious concepts, possibly coming from many religions in new ways.
- Emotionally loaded outlying or radical religious texts propagated in social media that can be convincing to certain people.
 - ‘New prophets’, radical theologians or priests.
- They can be a real threat for established religions, particularly ones that have a history of fragmentation.

AI and Religion

Religious Art and AI.

- All religions have used various art forms to deliver their message.
- Islam uses less artistic forms, Catholicism uses much more.
- AI-art can be used to enhance old artistic forms.
 - Deep image generation for religious paintings.
- ***Can AI be used to create new religious artistic forms?***

AI and Religion

In terms of global connectivity, we live in a new world:

- How ideas propagate in such a world?

Impact on religion

- How religious ideas propagate?
- What is the role and more of missionary work nowadays?
- Why radical religious groups thrive on social media?



AI and Religion

Christianity

- Some Christian denominations are more prone to use AI technology and arts (e.g., Catholicism).
- Radical Christian groups (e.g., in USA) are super-active in social media.
- Links between far-right political parties and outlying Cristian groups.
- Links with authoritarian regimes of some Christian nations.

AI and Religion

Islam

- Radical Islamist groups are super-active in social media, despite residing in less technologically developed countries.
- Extensive use of social media in political events, e.g., Arab spring.
- Links between militant political groups and outlying Islamist groups.
- Links with authoritarian regimes of some Muslim nations.
- Use of AI and Robotics (UAVs) as ***poor man's weapons*** by Islamist paramilitary groups and regional Islamist powers.

AI and Religion

- AI is a scientific discipline.
- Religion transcends rational thinking.
- ***There should be no clash between AI and Religion.***
- The age-long debate between materialism and dualism takes now a new twist with AI advances.
- This debate will not cease any time soon.
- ***There is a strong need for a deep science-religion dialog on AI and its prospects.***

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Q & A

Thank you very much for your attention!

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