Dumbwaiters and Smartphones: The Responsibility of Intelligence

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"I don't have to drink alone," she paused for comedic effect, "now that I have Alexa." Thus was the punchline of a story told by a widowed octogenarian at a wedding I attended. Alexa is a voice-activated, networked cylinder produced by the company Amazon that is capable of providing auditory feedback to verbal inquiries and requests. Alexa can play music, tell jokes, suggest items for purchase, monitor consumption and health habits, raise and lower the temperature of digitally integrated homes, or like any good friend, *just listen.*

While all these tasks could be performed in silence with various algorithmic appliances, Alexa and its cousins from Google and Apple perform these tasks with a veneer of autonomy owing to their capacity for vocalization. Autonomy suggests the capacity for refusal or insubordination. Can Alexa deny me Joy Division if my consumption habits

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suggest I am too depressed? Would it be irresponsible of Alexa to allow an alcoholic to order Crate & Barrel stemware? Usually when appliances do not do what is expected of them, they are considered broken. However, when servants or employees do not do what is expected of them, they are considered disobedient. Does Alexa break or disobey? The answer to this question depends on how the imbuing of materials with intelligence shapes and frames responsibility.

This chapter aims to parse the impacts of the perceived autonomy[1] of vocal appliances upon the concepts of intelligence, responsibility, and work. "Smart" is the adjective that marketeers have settled on to describe appliances capable of mediating (verbally or electronically) between users and the Internet's vast resources. There is no shortage of smart appliances; reciting them is comical—smart couches, smart underwear, and smart pillows are just a few notable offerings. There is a critical distinction, however, between "smart" and the "intelligence" beckoned by AI research, of which devices like Alexa are supposed to be nascent forms. The following reviews this discrepancy via the history of technologically mediated labor relations.

The underlying concern of this paper is the deferral of responsibility to programmed materials. To this end, I present the novel argument that AI research and development is something of a misnomer. It is not artificial *intelligence*, but artificial *responsibility* that has been pursued in attempts to synthetically replicate or surpass human reasoning. It is not an advanced intelligence that AI research pursues, but rather a decision-making machine to unburden humans from the responsibilities of our own peculiar sentience, particularly the irreconcilable irresponsibility of currently dominant socio-economic practices (e.g., the systematic malnourishment of a billion people and the accelerating destruction of habitable environments). From the Jacquard Loom to the smartphone, machines have gone from simple conduits of work to arbiters of reality. Sadie Plant articulates why the responsibility of intelligence needs consideration:

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[1] Huxor's chapter offers an alternative view to the anthropomorphic machine through the concept of the smart medium.

> It has always been said that computing machines can only carry out the purposes that they are instructed to do. This is certainly true, writes Turing, in the sense that if they do something other than what they were instructed then they have just made some mistake. But one man's mistake might well be a most intelligent move for a machine. And how would their masters tell the difference between failures to carry out instructions and refusals to be bound by them? (1998, 95)

To pursue these threads, I begin by examining an appliance so vapid that no one would find it a compelling drinking companion, the dumbwaiter. I follow this with a brief theorization of responsibility and discussion of where AI fits in with these notions of responsibility. From this, I build on the algorithmic governance that has emerged in conjunction with advances in AI. I conclude by examining the artifice of AI and the broader implications for AI criticism.

Deaf and Dumb

Long before the era of smart toothbrushes and smart umbrellas, there existed an appliance desperately lacking in intelligence (at least nominally), the dumbwaiter. Today, the dumbwaiter, if it is thought about at all, is considered something like an elevator for food—a functional device in settings where a kitchen is below a dining area. Originally deployed for use in the residences of the wealthy, they gained their widest cultural notoriety in the restaurants of verticalizing cities like New York in the nineteenth century. More than the practicality, technology, or functionality, my concern is with social perceptions of this device deriving from its name.

The iconic dumbwaiter patented by New York inventor George Cannon in 1887 is not the only device to bear the moniker. The name "dumbwaiter" has a much longer and convoluted history than the device with which it is now associated. Not surprisingly, the first mentions of dumbwaiting come from Versailles—the vanguard of techno-culinary service (and indulgence) in the eighteenth century. Elaborate service rituals with retractable floors and ascendant tables adorned with food

by chefs below are reported to have been carried out in Louis XV's court (el-Khoury 1977). As the word began to proliferate in Anglo contexts, it came to be applied to nearly any serving media that reduced the presence (or visibility) of human service staff. Such "dumbwaiters" could take the form of stationary tray tables that would be set aside diners containing all the courses of the meal so that servants would not be constantly clearing tables and bringing new items. The swivel device today known as a lazy susan was often referred to as a dumbwaiter (an analysis of the adjective lazy in the history of technology awaits a future article).

Thomas Jefferson (the renowned Francophile) was a great admirer of the dumbwaiter. A bit of a tinkerer himself, he is known to have made some of his own embellishments to the dumbwaiters of Monticello. Jefferson's expressed motivation for using dumbwaiters offers insight into their perceived social role. Rather than improving the efficiency of meal service, Jefferson employed dumbwaiters to encourage "a free and unrestricted flow of conversation, undampened by the presence of servants in the room" (Read 1995, 168). While Jefferson possessed a variety of what he called dumbwaiters—some non-mechanical shelves, some swivel devices, and some standing trays—the function they all shared was their ability to hide labor and service (in Jefferson's case, this was slave labor). Dumbwaiter, then, most saliently seems to denote dehumanized service and de-subjectivized labor (see also Sinclair's chapter in this anthology).

Is there any particular reason elite diners should wish to render human labor invisible? Markus Krajewski (2010) suggests a growing preference for the dumbwaiter's silence over the subjectivity of the servant. That is, non-human materials became imbued with greater trust than the corrosive and corruptible biology of human actors (loose-lipped servants served as key plot points in the romances of the day). This would certainly be in keeping with Jefferson's concern about his conversations being dampened by servants.

Taking Krajewski's suggestion further, I suggest a burgeoning acknowledgment of and distaste for the indignity of stratified labor relations. While surely some aristocrats relished displays of class superiority, such displays were becoming increasingly incongruent with the humanist-enlightenment ideals espoused by Jefferson and his peers. The exploitation of slave labor at Monticello was, among many other adjectives,

irresponsible. That is, chattel slavery demonstrates a refusal to take responsibility for the work necessary to support the economic ambitions of slaveholders, a refusal to take responsibility for the environmental repercussions of these economic ambitions, and a refusal to take responsibility for the pain and suffering caused by these economic ambitions. To be clear, these *economic ambitions* are the perpetual growth of wealth, which knows no better name than capitalism. The dumbwaiter represents a nascent effort to hide this irresponsibility; to hide the irresponsibility of capitalism to actors who should *know better*—i.e., possess the type of empathy-laden intelligence that could pass a Turing Test (which one hopes Jefferson could).

The juxtaposition of dumbwaiters and smartphones in the title of this article is a bit of toyful misdirection. The dumb in dumbwaiter is not and never was meant as an antonym to intelligent. Dumb here just means silent, unable to speak. To call an appliance dumb from the seventeenth to early twentieth centuries would not have disparaged its intelligence, only implied that it was mute. Muteness has gradually become associated with unintelligence. Likewise, does the smart in smartphone indicate communicative responsiveness more than cleverness? If the dumbwaiter (mute waiter) signifies the de-subjectification of service, to what extent is subjectivity delineated by speech capacity? According to many philosophers and biologists of the past millennia, it is precisely speech and linguistic capacity that demarcates human sentience (Falk 1980; Korzybski 1921; Wilks 2019). While there may be objections against language as the defining attribute of *Homo sapiens*, speaking certainly seems to denote a point-of-view, a perspective.

Is Alexa's point-of-view a programming illusion? Perhaps, but its effects are genuine enough. Voskuhl (2015) has discussed the programming of affect into eighteenth-century automata, Parisi (2016) has explored the programmed affect of cutting-edge nanomaterials, and Preciado (2013) has discussed the programmed subjectivity offered by the pharma-state. Do efforts to program subjectivity and vocalize appliances signal a desire to re-subjectivize service? To re-humanize labor relations? It does not appear so, at least not in a manner that reflects a more benevolent appreciation for work and workers. There are plenty of human laborers that could benefit from a re-humanization of labor

relations, either through greater pay equity, profit-sharing, more comprehensive benefits, or simply being accorded more respect. Rather, if vocally enabling appliances is considered a "humanization" of labor, it seems motivated by a desire to outsource blame, culpability, and responsibility to technology; to blame global warming and poverty on toasters and dishwashers instead of blaming political and economic systems predicated on multivariate forms of exploitation.

Call and Response

Many have argued (Hobsbawm 1962; Lock 2009; Ziarek 2013) that a key social transformation of the past two-hundred years has been the individualization of responsibility and the splintering of communal responsibility (for environments, people, decisions). Historians have tied this splintering of *communal* responsibility to the land enclosures that spread through Europe from the sixteenth century and the subsequent decimation of the *commons* (Cominel 2000; Federici 2004). The result of this history is that today YOU are responsible for your health. YOU are responsible for climate change. YOU are responsible for your addictions and economic well-being. The drunkard is responsible for their (mis)fortunes. Community care is made, if not outright illegal, then practically untenable and certainly not incentivized (Folbre 2014).

Individualized responsibility is a powerful myth, but is an absolute canard in a society predicated upon stripping individuals of power. This myth appears to be losing power with global rises in populism. As seen by the recent $8 billion settlement against Purdue Pharma, the responsibility for mass opioid addiction in the U.S. has partly been assigned to corporate profits. The notion of individualized responsibility (for one's economic well-being or saving the planet) seems increasingly fragile. However, among the wildly heterogeneous "99%," there is much disagreement over who exactly should be blamed—corporate greed or coastal elites.

Fortunately, a neoliberal answer has emerged—commodified responsibility! By no means has discomfort with individualized responsibility (by both exploiters and exploited) inspired a reversion to a collectivized or

socialized responsibility. Rather, responsibility can be deferred to smart technologies. The burdens of responsibility can be reprogrammed into intelligent materials. Responsibility for health can be purchased with a FitBit (the smart watch that monitors movement and exercise). Upon purchase, a FitBit (and the troves of data from which it algorithmically governs one's motion) becomes responsible for one's health. My health is not my responsibility, nor is it my government's to regulate industrial farming, nor is it Coca-Cola's for globally distributing diabetes. I can buy digital alleviation from the neoliberally enforced responsibility for myself.

Indeed, one could argue that the trajectory of technological innovation is toward increased outsourcing of responsibility to materials and machines. Early anthropologists wove sweeping narratives of "technological progress" signaled by Europe's ever-sharpening ability to harness and exploit energy (see Leslie White's ethnocentric formulation of "cultural evolution," 1959), predominantly through the heat generated by releasing CO_2 into the atmosphere. However, the technological change signaled by automation could just as easily be written as a story of increased evasion of responsibility and distrust of subjectivity. That is, Europe did not become more technologically advanced with industrialization; it became more irresponsible. There is a direct correlation between the increased velocity of technological innovation and the increased exploitation of environments and humans over the past few centuries. Has this technology underwritten the moral and ethical vacuity necessary for such exploitation?

The denial of collective responsibility for climate degeneration is the most visible deferral of responsibility. It makes sense—we do not wish to be responsible for our own demise; for drinking ourselves to death (on oil or other toxins). To this end, perhaps the emergence of talking appliances is not pursued to make us more comfortable interacting with digital technology. Rather, it is designed to make us more comfortable blaming such technology. That is, while Thomas Jefferson may not have wanted to speak with servants, he probably had a hard time blaming his dumbwaiter when he spilled his wine. Sure, it is a poor craftsperson that blames their tools, but what if those tools could talk and had points-of-view? Do efforts to vocally program subjectivity also reprogram blame? The lessons

of *Blade Runner* are not to be missed—mass produced subjectivities bred to serve as ethically agreeable scapegoats for the compounding injustices of the looming dystopia.[2]

It is not insignificant that the deferral of blame offered by responsible technologies is vocally feminized. Women have frequently served as scapegoats for the injustices that accompany capitalist production (see Federici on the European witch-hunts, 2004). With Alexa automatically restocking the toilet paper and sundries of "her" own volition, I can't be blamed for the carbon footprint of mass production and commodities shipping. Nor is it insignificant there were no dumbwaitresses. As Anne Carson (1992) points out in her gendered history of voices, women have never been silent enough for empowered men.

Thomas Jefferson and his peers were embarrassed by the subjectivity of subaltern humans, thus built a world of controllable and predictable machinery—steam engines and IBM punch cards. These predictable machines, however, cannot disobey, they can only break. I may not be able to blame steam engines and coal for global warming, but I can easily blame Siri for giving me wrong directions. Is this the trajectory of AI technology? To offer a guilt-free exploitation of labor?

Talking appliances are not pursued to make us more comfortable interacting with materials, but to make us more comfortable being subservient to machinic (mechanical, programmed, or algorithmic) decision-making. Sci-fi fears of malicious AIs subduing humans are misplaced. The abdication of responsibility to machinic intelligence has been voluntary. Perhaps talking appliances make things easier, but only in the sense that they relieve us of burdensome responsibility. It is not physically easier to ask Alexa to turn on the lights than it is to flip a light switch, but if we commit the transgression of forgetting to turn out the lights when leaving the house, this could be blamed on our smart appliances. If we no longer wish to claim responsibility for this planet and its residents, the only alternative is subservience to something more powerful and responsible—a God, the market, an algorithm.

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[2] For further consideration of the ethical relationships of the human-AI dynamic, see Burton, this anthology.

Could this be good? Perhaps twenty-first-century capitalists do not possess the will power to curb our bad habits and we need to have our subjectivities hemmed in by intelligent materials. Perhaps we are on the verge of coming out of a responsibility lacuna. From the eighteenth century to today, as secular humanism overlapped with colonial and environmental destruction, has there been an irresponsible window between the abandonment of God and the rise of AI?

Purpose Driven Life

Anthropologist Abou Farman has spent time with the "Singularitarian" movement centered around tech pioneer Ray Kurzweil's Singularity, detailing how the quest for intelligence, particularly a greater-than-human intelligence, has been transformed into a secular form of worship. The movement's adherents insist that "our very purpose as humans…is…to give rise to other types of minds" (2012, 1079). Farman quotes a particularly righteous devotee, "I hope some humans continue to exist in their current form, but…if it really came down to it, I wouldn't hesitate to annihilate myself in favor of some amazing superbeing" (1080). Such zealotry is alarming on several levels. While the ultimate goal of most Kurzweilians is to one day fuse their consciousness with a more durable material substrate than flesh and bone, this is underwritten by a notion that equates intelligence with identity—we are our intelligence. This is a fairly recent and not universally held belief, arising from a normalization of Euro-Enlightenment humanism.

Negarestani has savaged the Singularitarians and their relatives (sometimes associated with "right-accelerationist" movements):

It is no accident that the provocateurs of technological singularity and intelligence as the unstoppable vector of the complexification of nature also happen to be ardent ideologues of monarchy, race realism, social Darwinism, gender essentialism, nationalism, and other anti-emancipatory conspiratorial buffooneries. (2018, 453)

While Negarestani may have sympathy for Kurzweil's sentiment that the purpose of our lives is "to move toward greater intelligence" (2005, 372), Negarestani sees the pursuit of intelligence rather conversely as an emancipatory recognition of the equality of all minds. Describing an ideal artificial general intelligence (AGI), Negarestani argues that "whoever or whatever becomes the artefact of thinking also becomes a commoner—equal to all others—of thought's impersonal ends and interests" (2018, 449). Far from mechanized intelligent "superbeings," the AI Negarestani envisions is one of solidarity.

Negarestani equally denounces fears of and restrictions on the development of intelligence through technocomputational means, insisting that "thought ought not to be contained" (445). However, he acknowledges that such pursuits should be mediated through philosophy and politics. Indeed they should. However, "the way in which knowledge emerges is (at least) as important as the knowledge itself" (Zalamea 2012, 327), and the politics and philosophy from which current AI development is emerging is rather troubling. Today's AI is developed and deployed by a polity that has naturalized the perpetual acceleration of economic growth. It may be naïve to expect that such capitalized intelligence will do more than reflect and magnify ambitions for future profit.

In response to fears that a neoliberal intelligence will simply reflect neoliberal values, Negarestani assures that "if intelligence gives up its concrete search for the better, then it was never intelligence at all" (2018, 488). This may be, but research in AI today, unless it is coming from purely philosophical corners, is deeply embedded in militarized economics. Negarestani's ideal intelligence is surely a worthy aspiration, but those financing, authorizing, and regulating AI research do not appear beholden to this ideal. As presently pursued, AI is beholden to shareholders, not the "equality of minds."

The less magnanimous ends which grip AI are apparent in the field of "AI Ethics," which Rodrigo Ochigame describes as conjured up by corporate lobbies (2019). Ochigame details the rise and slip of Joichi Ito, the MIT Media Lab's anointed "AI ethicist." Overtures toward an "Ethical AI" were largely financed by Silicon Valley tech companies to avoid governmental regulation and oversight, "to avoid legally enforceable restrictions on controversial technologies." The particularly

troubling ends being pursued by these tech companies include algorithmic facial recognition software, remote drone strikes, and other forms of militarized policing (Ochigame 2019).

Farman further points to a perplexing bit of logic espoused by singularity advocates, which suggests that without developing incredibly small and powerful supercomputers ("100,000 solar cells that can fit on the head of a pin"), the future of civilization will be in doubt (2012, 1083). The implicit idea here is that civilization is an entity that demands copious amounts of energy and must constantly make copious amounts of calculations and computations. Neither of these is inherent to all notions of civilization, but is rather specific to a capitalized civilization that has naturalized the pursuit of perpetual accelerating economic growth. One wonders if it is not the obsessive pursuit of "100,000 solar cells that can fit on the head of a pin" that directly puts the future of civilization in doubt.

In all of this, there is a notion of AI as savior and redeemer. For many, AI offers a "miraculous cure absolving us from obligation to each other as social beings" (Schwartz et al. 2020, 255). When Kurzweil (or even Negarestani) deploys notions of "purpose," it is hinged to a concern that humans simply cannot be the stewards of intelligence (even though no one asked us to be) or that left to our own devices we will use this intelligence for destructive ends. This eschatological appreciation for AI signals a desperate cry for help. We are addicts flirting ever-closer to self-destruction.

Smart Furniture, Intelligent Algorithms

Could algorithmic overlords correct our trajectory? Could today's smart refrigerators be made into intelligent refrigerators that *know better*? True AI, the thinking goes, should demonstrate autonomous adaptive reasoning capacity (Amoore 2011). However, the conception of intelligence championed by current leading researchers is fairly narrow and ethnocentric, directly descended from Enlightenment traditions. Most AI research is not aspiring to design greater emotional intelligence or

poetic sensibilities. AI's intelligence has generally been concentrated on the STEM disciplines.

When we use the adjective smart to describe an appliance today, it denotes the device's ability to respond predictably to its programming, not its ability to respond dynamically to diverse phenomena. It is compliance with and to the atemporal reality of programming that is deemed smart (in the world of digital technology). This is fitting when considering the etymology of the word smart, which is rather divorced from notions of intelligence. Earlier connotations of smart were closer to sharp, suggesting cutting or trim (e.g., a cutting remark). Smart connoted the absence of frills or embellishments. Curt and to the point, smart denoted restraint. While it sometimes seems that smart appliances are teeming with superfluity, their manner of intelligence is indeed quite contained. The spectrum of their thoughts is circumscribed. Smart and intelligent machines seem likewise geared toward constraining their users into predictive (i.e., restrained) behaviors.

In the past two decades, many have raised concerns regarding Big Data-enabled algorithmic governance. Chandler (2019) argues that under algorithmic governance, "the management of effects [output]… evades the question of responsibility or accountability for problems or the need to intervene on the basis of government as a form of political decision-making" (25). Morozov (2013) makes similar overtures, lamenting that the efficiency of algorithmic decision-making stifles the harder analog work of making political changes. Rather than organizing for worker rights or emissions regulations, it is far too easy to be satisfied with smart scheduling and smart homes.

Many have also pointed to the implicit bias of algorithmic governance (Amoore 2013). This research nuances the relationship to responsibility outlined above. If policing, loan applications, hiring, and college admissions decisions are outsourced to algorithms does this leave human administrators with a clear conscience (e.g., *my implicit racism cannot be blamed for a lack of hiring diversity, the algorithm made the decision*). At this point, enough research has shown that racism can easily be programmed into such algorithms (Benjamin 2019; Garcia 2016). More interesting is the idea that so many are so eager to abandon responsibility. Is this driven by a genuine hope that a computational process is

somehow better at assessing job candidates? Or, is it motivated by a fear of culpability for making a poor decision? Or paralysis when confronted with too many choices?

Certainly, humans afford varying weight to the multiple factors involved in decision-making, and there may be disagreement over how any individual arrives at their decision. However, for better or worse, this variance in human decision-making (like that of any other biotic creature) is flexible and adaptable (no matter how bureaucratically supervised), whereas algorithmic decision-making is fundamentally programmed. While outputs may be diverse and stochastic chaos can be programmed into algorithms (Palmer 2015), the decision-making process of an algorithm is always circumscribed. By no means are individual humans capable of appreciating all the nuances of a decision comprehensively either. We always operate with a degree of ignorance. However, we are well aware of the concept of "extenuating circumstances" and may be influenced by this last-gasp plea often proffered to bureaucrats.

Indeed, the design of the bureaucratic apparatus is intended to dehumanize—to eliminate human fallibility from the smooth functioning of systems (Graeber 2018). Protocols and fail-safe measures are implemented to ensure the corruptible human mind does not betray the ends of larger structures. The system is designed to be intelligent so the individuals may be dumb. Is the ability to adhere to coding with fidelity the kind of intelligence sought in efforts to construct AI? AI advocates point to their triumphs in games like *Jeopardy!*, chess, or go, but these are all extremely bounded universes, abstract spaces that do not play out within the contingencies of physical space (while they can generate numerous permutations, the range of possible actions at any given turn in chess is very limited). "Algorithmic automation involves the breaking down of continuous processes into discrete components, whose functions can be constantly reiterated without error" (Parisi 2015, 130).

This has been a persistent technological and ethical hurdle for automated forms of labor—how to respond to deviant situations, to unexpected input, or those extenuating circumstances. The self-driving cars which are anticipated to supplant human labor in shipping or transportation will surely be involved in (perhaps fatal) wrecks that will spawn

passionate discussion about their ethical viability. Of course, humans driving cars results in about 36,000 deaths in the U.S. per year (NHTSA 2019). Interestingly, these deaths are often framed as traffic "accidents," conveniently erasing any responsibility. To say 36,000 people died in traffic accidents last year is quite different from saying 36,000 people were killed by our automotive infrastructure last year (Singer 2022). In the latter framing, our automotive infrastructure is responsible for 36,000 deaths, while in the former there is no responsibility. Will we be able to say a self-driving car killed a pedestrian? Or will our vocabulary insist that they were involved in an accident? Will self-driving cars become scapegoats for a flawed automotive infrastructure in the U.S., alleviating responsibility for decades of car-centric (oil-centric) urban design?

Speak Up

Is it possible to program for aberrational events? This seems like the very antithesis of programming. At the heart of this issue is an incompatibility with the mathematized language of algorithmic programming and the bio-geological language of the world's organic occupants. Human language developed within durational contingency, yet to serve various purposes, we created languages abstracted from this durational contingency, such as mathematics or programming languages like HTML or Java. Two plus two always equals four in the realm of mathematics because "two-ness" and "four-ness" never change or evolve in this abstracted world. The shapes and curves of geometry are likewise timeless. However, physical causality plays out in time and responds to contingent situations. Many have accused attempts to lay math (a non-durational language) over physics (a durational structure) of leading fundamental physics on a wayward trajectory (Rotman 1993; Smolin 2013).

The languages spoken by appliances such as Alexa demonstrate a reversal of this problem encountered in physics. The speech of Alexa overlays durational bio-geologic human syntax on top of the timelessness of computer programming. Alexa can *speak* this flawed human language

of ours, but it does not *think* in it, nor will any machine programmed in a language that did not emerge from contingent interactions (Núñez and Sweetser 2006). Some may see this as beneficial, suggesting that our inability to think outside of this clumsy human syntax holds us back. If we could think in a more efficient language, we could reason at a faster rate. However, the clumsiness of human languages is precisely what emancipates us—we are free to fail. Biological entities must engage in mistakes and accidents in order to reproduce themselves. The story of biology is the story of fortuitous failures—mutations. Our language reflects this. Human language is gloriously imperfect, given to gross distortion and tragicomic misunderstanding.

Responsibility is an inherently temporal concept. Foremost it implies an ability to *respond*, to encounter a situation and make alterations; it implies some relationship to change, to cause and effect. The responsibility bestowed upon Alexa is a timeless responsibility, and thus no responsibility at all. The language of Alexa is intrinsically irresponsible in that it cannot respond outside of its programmed universe. Digital technologies exist as a sub-universe of biological technologies. They exist in confinement. Despite the rhetoric of Kurzweilian Singularitarians, that promotes the abilities of AI to calculate, consider, and process realms beyond the rigid walls that confine our wet brains, the present trajectory of technological capacity is rather the opposite. We are building a form of intelligence for which time is non-existent. Time does not exist in chess or go (sequence yes, but time no). While we may bemoan the finitude of our biological time, it is this existence in time which allows for any semblance of intelligence. Alexa, without the perpetual decay of organic entities, does not live in time (at least not the same kind of time). Alexa's vocalized responses to inquiries are sequences of interaction (like chess), not interactions in time.

"We [humans] identify as being conscious of our history…historical consciousness gives an explicit social significance to the capacity of agents for self-transformation" (Negarestani 2018, 93). Is Alexa historically aware? Capable of self-transformation? To be sure, Alexa remembers user preferences and could probably tell us what factory it comes from, but these capacities do not necessarily align with the experience of time as historical consciousness. Computational intelligence requires

memory (RAM), but to what extent memory and remembering are equivalent is not so clear. Recalling memories is an embodied sensory experience for humans. Alexa's recollection of previous interactions seems less so.

In her comprehensive work on the invention of the modern fact, Mary Poovey (1998) analyzes the emerging reliance on numbers as conduits of truth from the seventeenth century onward. The primary asset of numeracy, so argued its advocates at the time, was not necessarily that it was closer to truth, but rather that it was amoral. That is, numbers did not carry the beliefs, biases, histories, and interests of rhetorical information. Numbers were promoted as more trustworthy than words. Thus, is a binary encoded AI more trustworthy if it thinks, speaks, and runs on numbers? What happens when numerically programmed materials are asked to communicate in words? Miscommunication. May the incongruency between machinic and organic languages (from the first automated looms to today) be blamed for the larger socio-environmental problems engendered by two centuries of capitalized irresponsibility?

Artful Dodgers

The pursuit of AI is a bit redundant. Intelligence itself is something of an artifact developed and crafted over millennia of interaction. Does the artificial of "AI" then more properly denote *enhanced, intentional, non-biological*, or *faster-than-human*? In thinking about the process of artificializing intelligence (i.e., making an intelligent artifact), it may be useful to examine more closely the notion of artifice. Artifice can be playful, trivial, and jocular, or it can be duplicitous and conniving. Negarestani suggests "the duplicity of artefacts" is the same "attributed to the cunning figures of the trickster, the trap-maker" (2018, 446). Discerning the playful from the duplicitous must be a primary goal for future AI critique.

Is AI simply a mockery of intelligence built for fleeting amusements (e.g., *Jeopardy!*)? Playing and toying with intelligence are pleasant enough pursuits, but the undercurrents of AI research are not so whimsical, centering on surveillance and militarization. AI research is geared toward

the replication, enhancement, and supplementation of decision-making faculties. With the artificial (re)cognition being conjured in Palo Alto, the goal seems to replace human (re)cognition with a joke of itself—an atemporal data sorting artifact. Perhaps our hallowed intelligence could use some good-natured mocking, but at this moment making a mockery of responsibility seems rather irresponsible. Beguiling ourselves with an artifice of responsibility is a dangerous (and unethical) pursuit. Future AI criticism must keep in mind that constructing artificial responsibility does not greenlight human irresponsibility, because few things are more fearsome than a large population of irresponsible humans.

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