Artificial Intelligence, Creativity, and Autonomy of Mind

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After a software update, my notes app began auto-suggesting words with great enthusiasm. The first time this happened I noticed the word ‘end’ had appeared. Although this was what I had intended to write, I couldn’t remember typing it and wondered if I had briefly entered a fugue state. Feeling slightly disconcerted I deleted the three letters and typed them in again. Nothing happened. However, when I continued writing and typed ‘of the’ the word ’spectrum’ materialised. It was at this point that I realised it was a new predictive feature in the application. In the context, ‘spectrum’ was actually a pretty good option and I had to admit that maybe it was even better than what I had originally intended. Unfortunately, I couldn’t compare because whatever I had been thinking was lost. It had retreated into the mysterious mind-field where words spring from. In the end, I never finished that sentence because what began to spill through my fingers were a lot of thoughts about automation and AI. Some of that content is here.

The potential impact of AI on human development

In this brief reflection, I will explore how outsourcing our cognitive and creative processes to artificial intelligence is not only a matter of whether the output has substance but a technology that could inadvertently lead to fundamental changes in our development. I have a lot of questions about what AI means for the creative dynamism of the human mind; for research rooted in unpredictability, novelty, and new connections, for researchers developing and maintaining critical thinking, for autonomy of thought, and ultimately for meaning and purpose. I also acknowledge that AI has enormous potential and there are many things that it may be able to assist with.

The literature on AI is exponentially increasing with diverse discourses, philosophical positions, and theories emerging. In an engaging article, Creely et al. (2025) use the lens of theatre to introduce three characters: *Gatekeeper, Evangelist,* and *Diplomat,* who present diverse views on the potential benefits and drawbacks of AI in education. While the

gatekeeper is concerned about the possibility of diminishing creativity and meaning, the evangelist advocates for a future driven by advancing technology. The diplomat proposes that a meaningful collaboration between humans and technology is possible. Hellström (2024) could be seen as a gatekeeper. He is less optimistic than the previous authors about the impact of AI on our cognitive abilities and writing skills, ending his article with several possible outcomes on an 'apocalypse scale'. One of Hellström's (2024) arguments is that our ability to write and communicate will atrophy as we enter a hall-of-mirrors type situation where knowledge development is mediated by AI and content is continually recycled. This potential future is at least somewhat backed up by experimental research by Li et al. (2024), demonstrating that while AI-assisted writing can increase productivity and improve grammar, the writing is less varied and unique.

This debate is likely to be ongoing but as individuals and organisations increasingly embrace AI, we need to learn how we can navigate the thin line between delegation of tasks that are well-suited to automation and complete surrender to external algorithms. We are living in a world that is changing so fast, and the evidence is everywhere. My electric toothbrush has built-in malfunctioning when it decides the brush head needs to be changed. When I had to say goodbye to my reliable decade-old printer, the new wifi-enabled replacement began sending me emails demanding to be switched on. Mindfully engaging with advancing technology is essential, otherwise we may end up working in service of its progress and development at the expense of our own.

Thinking and writing as a creative unfolding

The AI revolution has been compared to the industrial revolution. The transition from a life in close connection with the natural world (as challenging as that life may have been at times) to toil in service of a world of machinery brings to mind my ancestors who left a crofting community in the 1800s to live and work in an industrial area. I feel echoes of that same unrooting now, except it is not the land beneath my feet but my mind that feels at risk. What does it mean to think in service of big tech? What are the consequences if AI is anticipating and potentially replacing our thoughts? Our words and thoughts co-exist in a complex relationship and influence how we move in the world. In the process of writing we are often clarifying what we are thinking or could be thinking and it is often through this creative unfolding process that we can glimpse the edges of new possibilities. Sometimes that process is a struggle, and yet process is also how we grow and develop and refine ourselves through whatever we are working with, or on, or through. It is often almost physically painful to weave the flowing tanglewire of thoughts and images in my mind into something that has a linear flow and coherent structure. However, at the end of that process

the change is not only on the page, but also somehow within my being. It feels like this struggle facilitates an internal restructuring that helps me to communicate in a more organised way. Given the research into neuroplasticity the process of streamlining thoughts into words on a page could be linked with neurological rewiring. Rossi and Rossi (2009) propose that engaging in meaningful activities can lead to new connections in the brain, creating shifts in consciousness.

From a creative perspective, process can be seen as the magical dialogue between the left hemisphere and right hemisphere of the brain that supports the cycle of input, incubation, and insight. A tolerance for uncertainty often seems at the heart of creativity and inspiration. This is not the production of binary code. It is an act of embodiment, receptivity, and exchange - dynamic kaleidoscopic patterns forming and collapsing in the background of awareness until something new takes form. According to Jung's concept of the transcendent function, it is the tension between the unconscious and the conscious that offers new possibilities and the potential for transformative change (2004). What does it mean to delegate process? What does it mean to delegate the struggle?

How AI could change our thinking and who we are becoming

Our thoughts and metaphors and bodies are deeply intertwined. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) proposed that that our relationship with our environment is mediated by metaphors that store complex information derived from our sensory engagement with the world. When our words are replaced and our metaphorical landscape is altered, does the knowing that is embedded in our cells and our viscera change too? Much in the same way that the foods we eat are assimilated into our bodies, the words we use and read and hear might influence our becoming. The powerful influence of language is evidenced in the long history of propaganda, including more recent efforts at social engineering via digital means including censorship and content regulation (Hutchens & McLure, 2024). While writing in my notes app, I defiantly pressed delete to remove the autosuggestion even if it was exactly what I was going to write while realising that it was counterproductive, especially since my fingers could use a break from repetitive stress. Yet, when typing quickly and defiantly, my thoughts were braver and my free flowing sentences were more purposeful. I felt a compulsion to write more stream-of-conscious content as a tiny act of resistance against the ownership of mind by big tech or other spurious influences.

As early career researchers seeking to make a meaningful contribution, how can we nurture an embodied and creative relationship with a world where the possibilities cannot be modelled or predicted? How can we navigate this transition with our minds, our bodies, and our souls intact?

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