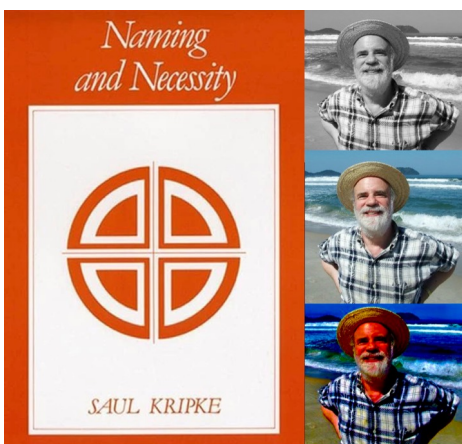




The protection and retention (Stiegler, [The absence of epoch](#)): “The age of disruption is the epoch of absence of epoch, announced and foreshadowed by Adorno and Horkheimer as the ‘new form of barbarism’, but by Heidegger as the ‘end of philosophy’, by Maurice Blanchot as the advent of ‘impersonal forces’, by Jacques Derrida as ‘monstrosity’, and, before all to these, by Nietzsche as nihilism. From around 1990, Deleuze broached this question, along with Guattari, in terms of the question of control societies and the dividuation of individuals. Simondon didn’t see it at all.” p. 15, Kindle version. [The age of disruption](#). 2019).

First problem: what we are currently learning at the ‘[deep end of sensorial cogency](#)’ is currently the topic at two *opposite poles*. At the one end is AI and its errands with *deep learning*. At the other end is learning to be a *person* in this world: at the psychological level, political action and the functioning of democracy. People like Bernard Stiegler of the [IRI](#) (Institute for research and innovation) have been warning about disruption: innovation moving faster than development.

That is, big actors of the digital world—in the present context with Open AI as a major one—conducting a real-time social experiment, without the political buffer zone allowing society to catch up. It is the entire socio-political economics in disarray. Stiegler is of central importance here, since his unit upgraded inside the Pompidou Centre: not as a hide-out for an east shore intellectual: but concretely asking how the cultural offer and demand can tilt the balance.



Saul Kripke: is his articulation of the difference between names and concepts a platform for the articulation and democratic conquest of the hive-mind?

Hence, a *syndrome* (the second problem): AI moving fast and big at the same time. To Ilya Sutskever ([Open AI](#)) this has been—and will continue to be—the key to make progress in the applied research of developing AI. He made this statement in an interview with Jensen Huang ([NVIDIA](#)), posted on the Memo of [LifeArchitect.ai](#) on March 24th 2023 (two days ago). From the [video](#) it is quite clear that the critique from Stiegler is unwarranted in one aspect: AI does not forestall thinking at an advanced metaphysical level.

The problem is rather that it is *applied*. In this aspect it is closer to the applied philosophy of the Renaissance—at the time called [Magick](#)—which was a kind of applied philosophy. Sutskever’s notion of *language as a projection of the world*, and the process of *arriving* at it (in computer terms) has moved beyond language statistics (touché!) to methods of compressing big data, to the point where they can be handled by [neural networks](#). What is learned through compressing data—their *secrets* (sic)—is the material for

computing: that is, *programming from data*.

AI can assert that it is working with a platform for understanding intelligence: whether it is human or machine. From this vantage point, the difference between human and machine is immaterial. So, at this level, AI at least claims to be moving beyond the Turing-test: it is not interesting to ask whether/how/when humans can be fooled to mistake a machine for a human, but to progress in our understanding of what intelligence can do, and how it does it: a world more intelligent.

Stiegler comes in here: how do/can we know that AI does not eat human intelligence, rather than add to it? In his idea of the world, it is linked to the kind of community we are talking about, and its long term survival ability. To Open AI, the model is simple: the community are the users. That is, people who download the app—or, its quickly multiplying avatars on the market—and pay some 50€ a year to use it. There is a growing network of users. The voting right: *buy/not*.

So, whether it adds to, or subtracts from, human intelligence we can agree that it will at any rate *change* it: it addresses not only deep learning in machines, but also deep learning in humans. In effect, it is a global educational programme controlled by a handful of charismatic companies, with a proselyting thrust. They do not only have something to offer, but *they want everybody to have it*. It builds on an idea that educational twists and turns can be met by technology.

It goes all the way to psychotherapy. Compared to critical theorists—like Bernard Stiegler and his web of philosophical references—are miserly: they have nothing to offer of this kind. What they intend to offer is more like a companionship. Which, in some cases, extends to impressive levels of availability to students and public. At the level of thinking the *culture* of the two milieus that we are discussing here differers: to the C-theorists *names* are key, to AI-engineers names are *words*.

Logician and philosopher, Saul Kripke moves beyond both these bastions. In the book *Naming and Necessity*, he defines the distinctive semantics of names in the following terms: where *concepts* are relative to the world defined by their use—this is close to Sutskever—*names* are applicable *across* such (possible) worlds; which is close to Stiegler (who is a “jazz-musician” of name-dropping). So, the positions at the opposite ends here, do not necessarily cover the *field*.

In the Kabbalist tradition a known opinion is that the root the entire language is in naming (and ultimately in a single/singular name). The utopia: if we only had/mastered that language we would, at the same time, have repaired the world. Would we then even *have machines/a need* for AI? Or, would there be one hive-mind: human and machine. If the the *latter* option, then the problem: *who owns it?* This is, cf Stephen Wright, is something which which the AI startups have not solved.

And, according to Jaron Lanier, are not interested in solving. This lack of interest might be complemented by the C-theorist’s lack of interest for really overcoming the *auteur* problem: despite Roland Barthes’ Death of the author. It is likely the combination of these lacking interests that the question of the importance of cultural *offer and demand*, simply cannot really be addressed. Nor can the importance of empowering art be truly appraised.

However, if what we have been discussing here is combat over language, then the difference between names and concepts might be a key. To a 3/4 year old toddler *red* is not a colour, but a name: the act of naming by pointing to the red colour. Then blue and yellow, etc. The way of art, artistic choices and common aesthetics is to expand the realm of naming. AI is catching up with aesthetics, and the parallel processing of language and images in its designs.

It is not likely sufficient for AI to catch up with the cultural offer and demand. The hive-mind needs to articulate democratically. And needs to move beyond words and images to catch up with with the forensic architecture of planet earth. The cost/benefit to the planet and society.

Highlights

– When we train a large neural network to accurately predict the next word in lots of different texts from the Internet, what we are doing is that we are learning a world model. It may look —on the surface—that we are just learning statistical correlations in text. But it turns out that to ‘just learn’ the statistical correlations in text, to compress them really well, what the neural network learns is some representation of the process that produced the text. This text is actually a projection of the world.



So, I’d like to take a small detour and to give an analogy that will hopefully clarify why more accurate prediction of the next word leads to more understanding, real understanding. Let’s consider an example. Say you read a detective novel. It’s like complicated plot, a storyline, different characters, lots of events, mysteries like clues, it’s unclear. Then, let’s say that at the last page of the book, the detective has gathered all the clues, gathered all the people and saying, “okay, I’m going to reveal the identity of whoever committed the crime and that person’s name is”. Predict that word. Predict that word, exactly. My goodness. Right? Yeah, right. Now, there are many different words. But predicting those words better and better and better, the understanding of the text keeps on increasing. GPT-4 predicts the next word better.

Fire-side conversation between Jensen Huang and Ilya Sutskever, featuring an analysis/portraiture of AI over 20 years.