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The Restriction of Artificial Intelligence on Human "Species-Life"

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Abstract: The nature of human life as being human lies in the possession of a second life that animals lack, known as "species-life." Artificial Intelligence promotes the liberation of human "species-life" by constructing an environment for the harmonious development of humanity and nature, enriching social relationships, and fostering creative activities that express human free individuality. Simultaneously, AI also presents issues such as environmental destruction, alienation in interpersonal relationships, and the loss of human free individuality, thereby tightly constraining human "species-life".

1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a new technological science that studies, develops, and applies theories, methods, technologies, and systems to simulate, extend, and expand human intelligence. In today's era of the digital economy, AI, as a "catalyst" for advancing human societal development, is a crucial driving force behind the new wave of scientific, technological, and industrial revolutions. The widespread application of AI in production and daily life has propelled the process of human liberation, yet it also constrains the essential nature of what makes a human being. Only by dialectically viewing the liberating and constraining effects of AI on humanity can we better understand the state of human existence in contemporary society and propose practical and feasible methods for human liberation.

2. The Life Nature of Being Human

The inscription "Know thyself" on the ancient Greek Temple of Delphi proves that, at all times, humanity has continuously sought various ways and methods to understand itself from different levels, attempting to identify the most fundamental difference between humans and things. Reviewing the entire history of philosophy, both Western and Chinese philosophy have revolved around humanity. The philosophical perspectives on the world are, ultimately, perspectives on humanity itself. The emergence of different philosophical schools stems from the contradiction between the physical and spiritual aspects of human life. The contradictory relationship between the natural physical body and the supernatural spirit has triggered a series of debates throughout philosophical history. This contradiction cannot be reconciled, and people cannot truly grasp or

explain it, ultimately leading to a definition of humans as "half beast, half angel."

It was not until Marx discovered the secret of what makes a human being—productive practice. Marx stated, "As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, with what they produce and with how they produce."[1] "Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence..."[2] (p. 290) The nature of being human is not predetermined innately like that of animals, but is instead generated a posteriori. It is not a "nature-in-itself" but a "nature-for-itself." Practical activity is both an activity through which humans transform nature and an activity through which they create and realize their own nature. Through practice, humans achieve the unity of physical and spiritual life. In the process of practice, the human physical body differentiates itself from nature, and nature becomes an extension of the human body. Simultaneously, this process is also the realization of humanity's subjective spiritual world in the objective material world. Marx's perspective on "human" transcends the previously abstract "species" view of humanity, shifting towards a realistic "species" view.

Mr. Gao Qinghai inherited and developed Marx's view on "species." He proposed, "As a human being, a person is no longer a single existence of life but has transcended species life, possessing a dual existence of life."[2] (p. 129) Mr. Gao Qinghai believed that human life consists of a "dual life," namely the "first life" and the "second life." The "first life" refers to the "species life," similar to that of animals—the natural, physical life bestowed by one's parents. The "second life" refers to humanity's supernatural life, created by humans through conscious practice on the basis of natural life. It is the part of life that humans create through conscious, free labor and practical activities, representing the value goals that humans pursue. Mr. Gao Qinghai termed humanity's "second life" as "species-life." "Species-life" is the true nature of what makes a human being, the greatest characteristic distinguishing humans from things. Unlike objects, humans cannot be considered complete upon acquiring the "first life." They must learn to be human in the a posteriori practical process, forming individual personality; only then can they truly become a "human" and genuinely master their own lives. The nature of human "species-life" requires the individual self, humanity and nature, and humans and others to integrate through the mutual exchange of essences. The powerful creative force of "species-life" manifests itself in the relationships between humans and nature, among humans, and between humans and their own essence.

"Species-life" is "life beyond life"; it transcends finite species life, guiding human life towards infinite existence. The human physical life is finite; regardless of one's will, life will ultimately reach its end. However, "species-life" is different. It originates from finite life, aiming for infinite, eternal value existence—all science, technology, and culture created by humanity. It can be said that the entire history of human society is an eternal, infinite value existence created by individual lives in the process of pursuing and creating their "species-life." As long as humanity does not perish, the footsteps of human self-transcendence and development will not stop, and "species-life" will not reach an end. "Species-life" bridges the living and non-living realms, not only making life diverse and colorful but also enabling non-living existence to realize immense value that is difficult to achieve on its own.

3. The Restriction of Artificial Intelligence on Human "Species-Life"

While we recognize AI's role in liberating humanity, we must also pay attention to its restriction on human "species-life."

3.1. AI's Restriction on the Relationship Between "Human and Nature"

3.1.1. AI Separates Humans from Nature

The widespread application of AI, on one hand, fosters the harmonious development of humanity and nature, but on the other, brings more and greater environmental problems than before.

As an extension of the human body, AI helps people better understand nature while also deepening human destruction of nature. The greater the scope of nature humans can comprehend, the larger the range of natural resources they can exploit. AI assists humans in more quickly discovering previously unknown mineral resources, such as the abundant oil and gas reserves in the deep sea. To utilize these resources, humans have constructed offshore drilling platforms. While plundering deep-sea oil and gas, this also causes significant damage to the marine ecological environment. The explosion of the "Deepwater Horizon" drilling platform leased by British Petroleum led to a continuous oil leak from the wellhead, causing extensive pollution in the Gulf of Mexico. It is estimated that 18 to 40 million gallons of crude oil spilled, causing catastrophic harm to the local ecosystem and forming a pollution belt 100 kilometers long.

While AI can help humans conserve energy, it also leads to substantial resource consumption and waste. In modern society, the widespread use of AI conversely drives enterprises to accelerate the R&D and innovation of AI products. In this process, humans inevitably extract more natural resources from nature. Moreover, due to the rapid iteration of AI products, when new products are launched, those that are not yet obsolete but somewhat outdated in functionality can only be replaced, leading to even greater resource waste. Simultaneously, the operation of AI products consumes more energy resources. Taking the large language model GPT-3 as an example, training it once requires up to 1,287 megawatt-hours (1 MWh equals 1,000 kWh, i.e., 1,000 kilowatt-hours), equivalent to the total electricity consumption of 3,000 electric vehicles driving around the Earth's equator eight times. Furthermore, according to a report in The New Yorker, the chatbot model ChatGPT responds to approximately 200 million requests per day on average, consuming over 500,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity, which is 17,000 times the average daily electricity consumption of an ordinary household.[3]

3.1.2. AI's Restriction on Human Natural Life

The application of AI in fields like healthcare extends the limits of human natural life, providing more time for productive practice. However, conversely, this also constitutes a restriction of AI on human natural life.

As an extension of the human body, AI may not always obey human commands as reliably as the natural human body itself. Although the probability is extremely low, AI can still potentially malfunction or act out of control. As an extension, when AI disobeys commands, the first to be affected is the human natural body. In recent years, while self-driving and autonomous vehicles can assist drivers with poor skills, there have also been numerous examples of accidents involving cars using autonomous driving features. The application of AI in the medical field can assist surgeons and provide targeted prescriptions to patients through AI consultation, but it also faces issues like surgical failures and incorrect prescriptions caused by medical AI.

The use of AI technology quantifies the human natural body, turning it into cold numbers. While it seems that people can more intuitively perceive bodily changes and better protect their health, in this process, the real physical body becomes abstracted into virtual digital representations. The real natural life is constrained beneath a virtual digital life. Furthermore, the development of virtual reality technology blurs the line between the virtual and real worlds. It may seem that humans can achieve immortality in the digital world, but in reality, we face the "brain in a vat" dilemma more

directly than ever before.

3.2. AI's Restriction on the Relationship Between "Human and Others"

3.2.1. AI's Restriction on Social Material Relations

First, the use of AI in the production process shifts the cooperative relationship between people in labor production towards a "human-machine" cooperative relationship. In labor production, relationships between individuals become increasingly isolated and separated. The changes in social division of labor brought by AI also bring about the problem of human isolation. The refinement of the social division of labor means that workers in different specializations focus only on their own tasks, interacting with others in the same field, reducing direct contact with workers in other areas, and increasing alienation between people.

Second, AI creates inequality in distribution. AI creates more job positions, allowing more workers to participate in distribution. However, the widespread application of AI also causes unemployment for some workers engaged in simple labor. These unemployed individuals cannot participate in social distribution, leading to alienation and intensified conflicts between the unemployed and the employed. Moreover, AI widens the social wealth gap. Social distribution tilts towards enterprises and individuals mastering cutting-edge technology, and unfair distribution further intensifies conflicts between people.

Finally, the use of AI in consumption and exchange leads to more severe human isolation. The traditional "person-to-person" relationship in consumption and exchange is gradually being replaced by a "person-to-machine" relationship. While AI provides more services and emotional value, real interpersonal interactions are decreasing, and people are gradually becoming isolated and separated from others.

3.2.2. AI's Restriction on Social Ideological Relations

The use of AI in the process of ideological and cultural exchange between people restricts the social ideological relations between individuals and others.

First, while the use of AI enables people to form universal connections with others, the close ties between individuals are also broken. "Person-to-person" communication becomes "person-to-machine-to-person" or direct "person-to-machine" communication. The social relationships formed between people through ideological and cultural exchanges are disrupted, and individuals become isolated entities.

The use of educational robots breaks the traditional "teacher-student relationship." The close interpersonal connection in the traditional relationship is replaced by a "person-to-machine" relationship. The availability of different teachers for learners on educational platforms also breaks the traditional fixed "teacher-student relationship." Relationships between people can be established and terminated at any time, which is not conducive to the formation of stable interpersonal relationships.

Second, the application of AI can lead to a widening class gap between people, increasing inequality in social, political, economic, and other relations. The digital platforms underpinning AI control vast amounts of information. The process of information screening and push notifications creates "information cocoons." Platform controllers hold large amounts of information, while users only receive filtered information. This information disparity leads to inequality in social, political, economic, and other relations. Those with more information gain greater discourse power and seize more opportunities, placing them in a dominant position within social relations.

Finally, the use of AI can lead to a narrowing of social circles and a decline in individual social

skills. With the application of virtual reality technology and digital platforms, more young people opt for online virtual socializing. Offline social interactions among young people decrease, and their social circles shrink, which is not conducive to making new friends from different circles and forming social relationships. Moreover, online social interaction mainly relies on text and emojis. During such interactions, individuals cannot obtain the same bodily gestures and facial expressions as in offline interactions. Individual social skills decline, and more young people feel at a loss in face-to-face social situations. The use of AI greatly contributes to the isolation and separation between individuals and others.

3.3. AI's Restriction on "Human Free Individuality"

3.3.1. AI's Restriction on Human Freedom

While the widespread application of AI liberates human freedom, it also constrains it under machine algorithms. First, AI replaces humans in dirty, toxic, and heavy work, liberating people from simple, monotonous labor and providing more time to engage in work of personal interest. On the other hand, the use of AI leads to the permanent disappearance of certain professions. The job market increasingly demands highly skilled talents, forcing workers to enhance their abilities to meet market demands to avoid unemployment and survival crises. In job seeking, individuals must present themselves in the job market like commodities on a shelf to be selected by enterprises. It can be said that AI's encroachment on professions deprives people of the freedom to develop themselves and the freedom to choose and obtain employment.

Second, the widespread use of AI in production transforms the human-machine relationship from the era of large-scale machinery production. Humans become the masters of machines. However, simultaneously, when operating AI for production decisions, humans rely on the so-called optimal solutions provided by big data algorithms. In essence, all decisions made by humans are still under the influence of AI, resulting in a loss of freedom in decision-making and action. For example, in stock investment, AI analyzes vast amounts of data, such as company financial reports, market data, and analyst views, to predict stock price changes. Investors use the information and analysis results provided by AI to formulate investment strategies.

Third, although the widespread use of AI in daily life provides people with more free time than before to develop their human essence, correspondingly, people also lose more free leisure time in this process. People in the intelligent age, outside of productive labor, become addicted to leisure activities facilitated by AI, such as algorithm-driven online shopping addiction and video browsing addiction. While consuming significant time and money, this deeply reflects control and dependence. As people indulge in technology, free time meant for self-improvement slips away. Moreover, the use of algorithm-based online platforms during free leisure time blurs the boundary between work and leisure. User experiences and interactions on online platforms are designed to meet the proliferation needs of capital. From the like and share mechanisms on social media to personalized recommendations on e-commerce platforms, every user interaction is transformed into a tool for capital appreciation. This control forces the purpose of individual activities to shift from personal development and interest to satisfying the needs of capital accumulation.[4]

Finally, the application of AI in daily life greatly restricts freedom of thought. Whether in production or daily life, people reap benefits from optimal solutions derived by intelligent algorithms. Human thinking and decision-making increasingly rely on solutions provided by these algorithms. This dependence may lead to a gradual loss of independent thinking ability, thereby limiting the capacity and space for free thought. The use of AI navigation allows people to smoothly reach their destinations based on route planning reminders, without questioning why to take a certain route or planning the route themselves. Real individual needs and preferences are

masked by intelligent algorithms. Moreover, AI algorithms collect and push different information based on different users, creating "information cocoons." The information people receive on big data platforms becomes increasingly one-sided, and thinking based on this information is also confined by these "cocoons." At this point, human thinking may seem free but is actually guided by AI or the groups controlling it.

3.3.2. AI's Restriction on Human Individuality

First, when using AI, humans must follow its operation manual, input specified algorithms or commands for it to work as required, and adhere to lengthy and rigid procedural flows dictated by AI algorithms. Violating algorithmic requirements causes AI to cease functioning; intelligence becomes non-intelligent. In this process, individual human activities are constrained by the fixed activities of algorithms.

Second, the application of AI is gradually eroding the space for individual creative activities. In the field of creative work, individuals not only compete with others but also with AI. AI is not only replacing humans in non-creative, repetitive tasks but also in fields rich in creativity that allow the expression of human individuality, such as painting, singing, teaching, medicine, and writing. The space for individual creative activities is further squeezed by AI.

Finally, the application of AI in the field of individual creativity significantly reduces human creative capacity. AI makes thinking increasingly reliant on conclusions drawn by intelligent algorithms, and individual activities become homogenized. Faced with the same problem, humans before AI use would arrive at different solutions, but the use of AI leads to homogenized answers. Individual creative activities tend towards the same outcomes. Moreover, people overly dependent on AI increasingly lose their unique creativity. It may seem that by inputting commands aligned with individual needs, AI can create new paintings or poems. However, AI lacks the ability to think. What it produces can only be considered a compilation based on collections of past human creations assembled by algorithms. It is not a new work nor the result of individual human practical activity.

4. Conclusion

Human liberation and development drive social progress. This process is irreversible and inevitable. As humans gradually achieve liberation, society has evolved from a natural economic society to the current digital economic society. The widespread application of AI in our production and daily life has become an irreversible trend. We must recognize AI's role in promoting human liberation and development, while also paying attention to its deepening constraints on humanity. While propelling the liberation and development of humans and society, it also brings numerous issues that require our attention and resolution. We must not only use AI to liberate human "species-life" but also be aware that if weak AI surpasses the "singularity" and transforms into strong AI, with AI superseding human intelligence, the subjective status of humanity will vanish, and "species-life" will be tightly constrained under AI. Therefore, independent individuals must continuously enhance their abilities in all aspects, ensuring that the power of natural life does not degenerate due to AI use, while also improving the creative capacity of "species-life" and free individuality. This alone is insufficient. Humanity as a connected whole must act as a community with a shared future, leveraging the collective power of "species-life" to address this issue, establishing ethical and legal norms that align with common human values and interests.

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