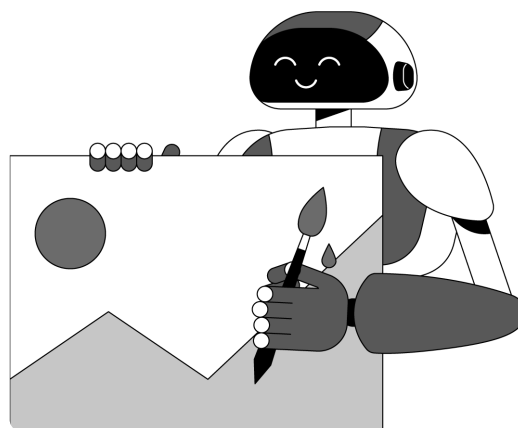


ChatGPT, DALL-E 2 and the creative process

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(1) In 2022, OpenAI – one of the world’s leading artificial intelligence research laboratories – released the text generator ChatGPT and the image generator DALL-E 2. While both programs represent monumental leaps in natural language processing and image generation, they’ve also been met with apprehension. Some critics have even proclaimed the death of art. But to what extent does this technology really interfere with creativity?



(2) After all, for the technology to generate an image or essay, a human still has to describe the task to be completed. After a result is generated, some further human tweaking and feedback may be needed – touching up the art, editing the text or asking the technology to create a new draft in response to revised specifications. Even the DALL-E 2 art piece that recently won first prize in the Colorado State Fair’s digital arts competition required a great deal of human “help” – approximately 80 hours’ worth of tweaking and refining the descriptive task needed to produce the desired result.

(3) It could be argued that by being freed from the tedious execution of our ideas – by focusing on just having ideas and describing them well to a machine – people can let the technology do the dirty work and can spend more time inventing. But in our work as philosophers we have come to believe that AI art devalues the act of artistic creation for both the artist and the public. In our view, the desire to 10 ideation and execution is a chimera. It is the work of making something real and working through its details that carries value, not simply that moment of imagining it. Artistic works are lauded not merely for the finished product, but for the struggle, the playful interaction and the skillful engagement with the artistic task, all of which carry the artist from the moment of inception to the end result.

(4) But what about the perspective of those experiencing the art? Does it really matter how the art is produced if the finished product 11-1 delight? We think that it does matter, particularly because the process of creation adds to the value of art for the people experiencing it as much as it does for the artists themselves. Part of what gives art its power is the process of witnessing natural gifts playing out. People enjoy and celebrate this talent because, in a fundamental way, it 11-2 the paragon of human achievement – the amalgam of talent and work, human gifts and human sweat.

(5) Might ChatGPT and DALL-E be worth keeping around? Perhaps. These technologies could serve as catalysts for creativity. It's possible that the link between ideation and execution can be sustained if these AI applications are simply viewed as mechanisms for creative imagining. They can generate stimuli that allow artists to engage in more imaginative thinking about their own process of conceiving an art piece. 13, if ChatGPT and DALL-E are the end results of the artistic process, something meaningful will be lost. But if they are merely tools for fomenting creative thinking, this might be less of a concern.

(6) Still, even if AI systems are used only as catalysts for creative imagining, we believe that people should be skeptical of what these systems are drawing from. It's important to pay close attention to the incentives that underpin and reward artistic creation, particularly online. Consider the generation of AI art. These works draw on images and video that already exist online. But the AI is not sophisticated enough – nor is it incentivized – to consider whether works evoke a sense of wonder, sadness, anxiety and so on. They are not capable of factoring in aesthetic considerations of novelty and cross-cultural influence. Rather, training ChatGPT and DALL-E on preexisting measurements of artistic success online will tend to replicate the dominant incentives of the internet's largest platforms: grabbing and retaining attention for the sake of data collection and user engagement. The catalyst for creative imagining therefore can easily become subject to an addictiveness and attention-seeking imperative rather than more transcendent artistic values.

(7) It's possible that artificial intelligence is at a precipice, one that evokes a sense of “moral vertigo” – the uneasy dizziness people feel when scientific and technological developments outpace moral understanding. Such vertigo can lead to apathy and detachment from creative expression. If human labor is removed from the process, what value does creative expression hold? Or perhaps, having opened Pandora's box, this is an indispensable opportunity for humanity to reassert the value of art – and to push back against a technology that may prevent many real human artists from thriving.

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