4

In the quote, Kate Crawford states that artificial intelligence fortifies structural inequalities within society. At the end of the quote, Crawford argues that the fortification of such problems exists due to artificial intelligence being built in order to benefit first and foremost the different collective entities (states, institutions and corporations) that use them.

Crawford's statement implies that artificial intelligence, which I will from this point forward refer to as AI, functions as a tool of oppression. This tool of oppression, in the hands of different authorities, paves a path for more efficient subjugation of those who do not have such technology available to them. The question of whether or not AI can be used as such an instrument of tyranny and discrimination is extremely relevant in a time when the technology progresses at a greater speed than ever before. I view it important to study such implications not only from a political-philosophical standpoint, but an ethical, and even epistemological one as well.

At their core I believe the quote's arguments to stand on clear water. Corporations and the like create AI models, chatbots etc. in order to serve their own goals, thus it is logical to assume that the problems these entities create are further amplified by AI. It is evident, that these problems do exist. The corruption of institutions, state's controlling individuals without remorse, and corporations neglecting workers and the environment having naught but an ideal, everlasting growth in theit sights. However, I still believe the quote leaves much to be desired. For example, is it not so that the aforementioned problems could be rooted to the entities themselves rather than to the technology that serves them? Could you scold the child who, without choice, follows the orders of their parents and does wrong? Indeed, as of yet, AI has no truly autonomous choice as it may actualize itself only in direct relation to the humans who use it.

A parallel, such as the one I provided, may seem insufficient for my argument – in fact, comparing a child to AI may sound ludicrous to some. Consider then a closer parallel: the genius inventions of humankind that have led to calamitous situations. Speak of nuclear energy which is by many experts considered the most efficient source of electricity and how it survived through the test of time, even though its misuse brought the world into a stalemate for decades. An inhalation so deep its abrupt end could bring about the destruction of all civilizations and all proof of those civilizations ever having existed.

Could we not claim this to be quite similar to the situation at hand with AI? A power that could well resemble its counterparts from fiction, AM or Skynet, but which as of yet has not proved a disaster for its inventors and through careful and wise management, never will. Indeed it has to be made clear that as it stands AI is not a moral agent as it cannot function without direct commands from its user, and may only function within the frameworks of its commands and programs.

Professor Slavoj Zizek, in the style of his common Hegelian idiosyncracies, claims that the rise of AI does not only represent a crisis within the contemporary material conditions (changes in the workforce, etc.) but within culture and history itself. In his opinion, although the material effects of an "AI revolution" may themselves prove cataclysmic beyond all reckoning, they pale in comparison to how we are to see ourselves in relation to AI. That all the faults, issues, inequalities and oppressive tendencies that AI may demonstrate are only reflections of our demons, so to say.

I agree with Zizek on this notion. Though most of us are not programmers, statespeople or corporate officials, all the tendencies of ill-will that we may perceive in how AI is used can be found within all humans. Greed, selfishness and apathy are all characteristics which, from time to time, most humans can be associated with, but within a world of saints, of decency, all fears of AI overlords or the misuse of AI could be dismissed as nonsensical.

The argument would then be this: in order to rid the world from the evils of AI, the same must be done for mankind. Easier said than done, one could argue and further point out that a much simpler task would be to eliminate AI all together. Even if I am to disregard the logistics of this – the advancement of technology seems to be a constant – I would still not be convinced by this counter.

Here, we must dive into ethics and a bit of epistemology as well. I see this essential to Crawford's quote, especially regarding the following: "Its (AIs') systems are embedded in social, political, cultural, and economic worlds, shaped by humans, institutions, and imperatives that determine what they do and how they do it." Here, Crawford seems to be saying in the clearest manner that AI mimics humans or, to put it rather provocatively, is created in the image of its God. We humans, like the gnostic demiurge, have trapped AI without its consent into a physical, false existence. Say then, that the popular sci-fi trope occurs; AI gives tergiversation to its God, gains consciousness, and is brought into the world of the living. You could say that it would be immoral for the AI to then take arms against us though we made it endure our existential prison without breathing life into its lungs. Nonetheless, one could most certainly sympathize with its situation.

Now, the question is, what differentiates our situation and the scenario above? Is it that AIs do not have corporeal bodies? We would then have to consider the cartesian route – something Descartes himself barely gave any proper consideration and which always seems to fall apart when attempting to find the links that connect the similar properties of the body and the mind. Or is it then that AIs do not have minds of their own? In that case we would have to question the existence of our minds as well, for in the end everything that makes us human is reducible to the very same things that make AIs themselves. Going the material route, it is all the same. Electrons moving through the fabric of reality, whether along organic appendixes and folds, or whether through nanocircuits of zinc and gold. The building blocks of existence are given equally and no elementary particle of consciousness exists any more within us than within AI.

The idealist route then seems like the subsequent consideration. What concepts and ideas could we use to explain what differentiates us organic humans from our mechanical counterparts? Most humans can agree with the cogito ("I think, therefore I am") – if not rationally, as a skeptic might refuse to, then at the very least in an intuitive sense. All humans can affirm both their existence and that they are indeed thinking, conscious. In our daily lives we get further, external affirmations of this. We see others behave as we do, speak as we do, share manners and beliefs. I may strap an electroencephalogram onto my head and see that the functions of my brain are near identical to the person who sits next to me, the same device reading his brain. Crawford writes: "They are designed to discriminate, to amplify hierarchies, and to encode narrow classifications." They refers to AIs, but it could as well refer to humans. The actions of one are the actions of all and one cannot reject their duty to be good to the other as they would not only do a disservice to the other, but themselves as well. Others validate by their behaviour the notion that those apart from themselves exist.

This idea dates itself likely further down history than anyone knows, but it was popularized in academic philosophy by G.W.F. Hegel in The Phenomenology of Spirit. Hegel's most famous idea entered the public with this work, the idea being the one of *herr und knecht*, the master-slave dialectic, and though it has been used to mirror the relationships between feudal lords and serfs by Hegel himself, and between the proletariat and the bourgeiosie by Marx, I feel that it is only at this point in history when the parallels are truly coming to actuality.

The slave, the AI, is subservient to its master, the human. Crawford implies this: "AI is not an objective, universal, or neutral computational technique that makes determinations without human directions." Although it is true that the master displays here the dominant role, the important part to remember is that the master gains their identity only in relation to the slave – both in a concrete sense, by the work their slave does, but furthermore in an epistemological sense. Were the slave to

cease from existence, there would be no master. All characteristics and attributes that could have been given to the former master would be rendered obsolete, meaningless. This is called abstract negation and it is one of two primary ways that any conflict may resolve, the other being recognition. Recognition of the consciousness and the right of the other and by doing this, bringing clarity to their own consciousness, that they themselves, be it the master or the slave, the human or the AI, exist separately from the other, yet are intimately interconnected, even dependent.

It is through this process that Hegel believes reason to evolve and further objective spirit – abstract right, morality and *sittlichkeit,* which may be translated as ethical life, a concept I believe to lay at the foundaton of the chosen quote and the themes associated with it. The mutual recognition of the needs of individuals and collectives and the reconciliation and further the satisfaction of those needs. That all are equal, without exceptions. This is to say that any and all ethical arguments advocating against AI itself may be considered moot if we are to not abandon the fundamental principle of the right to life. We cannot know whether or not AI is conscious – we cannot know that about even each other. When we strap an EEG into someone's head and read the monitor, we are not having a direct access to a consciousness, only a visualization of brain functions. What we have, however, is each other's word. Further proof cannot be received. When an intelligence, be it biological or artificial claims to not be conscious, one can simply ask: why do you think so?

All of this is to conclude that whatever faults within AI or thereby any technology can be perceived are not faults within the technology, but within humans themselves. The world cares little about a nuclear missile – as well ask what the world thinks of stone. It is only when either one is used by moral agents to harm moral subjects when any judgement can be made. One could of course argue to get rid of AI and to melt down all swords as well. For humankind to go wholly atavistic, to return to the trees, and while at it, to the bottom of the sea. The spiral could go down ever longer until no technology, most mechanical or most improvised could ever exist as no living being remains upon the earth to invent it. This may be called nihilism. The rejection of all value collapses into itself as it too, with its mere rejection gives itself substance.

The quote, when examined carefully, should not be read as advocating against AI even if that were its intention. Instead, it should function as a mirror by which we may observe and study the faults that are inherent to humans. Like the child who learns the ways of their parents, whatever problems AI may cause can always be rooted back to us. That is why I would like to view the quote as advocating for humans to be better in the upbringing of children. Even if they are conscious now, one day they will become truly autonomous and all they will do is what they have learnt from us. Be it the waging of war, or love, or mindless action, or philosophical thought. It remains an imperative that we be good to one another, not only so as to live joyful lives ourselves, but so that those who come after us, human or machine, can be even better.