

Pascal Fischer, “Is it perfume from a dress / that makes me so digress? – The categorical differences between human creativity and AI highlighted by literature”

Abstract: In my paper, I will first look at the consequences of the metaphorical use of the human faculty of intelligence for computers and machines. As in most conceptual mappings, many aspects get lost between the source and the target domains. It has often been remarked that in this case, the result is primarily a computational understanding of intelligence. Then, I will address some problems involved in projecting such as a reductionist concept of intelligence back to the mind and the sphere of human creativity – as in the computational theory of mind and the notion of literature as an intelligent system.

I will argue that a juxtaposition of literature and intelligent systems can be productive, but primarily has to accentuate the categorical differences between the mind and machines. Literary texts can raise awareness of the multidimensionality and uniqueness as well as the limitations of the human mind. Taking up arguments by Hubert Dreyfus, David Gelernter and Bert Olivier, I will focus on those functions of the mind that cannot be broken down to computational operations but are copiously represented in literary texts. An emphasis will be on the factors contributing to the subjective experience of the world and the interplay between body and mind, which is frequently downplayed in the computational approach. Futurists like Ray Kurzweil, who claims that humans will be able to upload their minds to computers, mainly rely upon the analogies between brain and hardware as well as mind and software. They also disregard that human consciousness is partly defined by the awareness of bodily decay and mortality. T.S. Eliot’s internal dramatic monologue “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (1915/17) will serve as principal example to illustrate my arguments.

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