The Book of Humankind –
What Technology Could Teach Its Creator

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Abstract

From the era of the industrial revolution, humans were fascinated, felt threatened and looked with envy and subsequent shame at the capabilities of machines – as the European philosopher Günther Anders stated in his antology "the antiqueness of Humans". When marvelling at the possibilities of Large Language Models (LLM) like ChatGPT, we think about a restructuring and new-distribution of work in our time. Will the AI serve the human society as a free brainforce and relief humankind from the "burden of work" (a term that could be found in the political programs of socialist parties some decades ago). What would this mean for our social construction of sense and purpose of humans?

Our contribution will look on the prospective possibilities of AIs searching for structure in 'messy' (i.e. not organized and cleaned) data. AIs such as LLMs technically understand the world as data dots and the correlations connecting them. With a continuously growing amount of computable data, when will the AIs be in a position, by analysing correlations, to "know" more about the world we are living in, than the humans with their search for causal connections?

In his major work "Tristes Tropioues" the French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss (1955) reasoned about the advantages and disadvantages of modern life in comparison to hunter and gatherers societies. He dreamed about a gigantic matrix, that covers all societies and their behaviour. He thought it to be a "Book of Peoples". Through the expanding capabilities of AI, we might write a 'Book of Humankind' to understand more about our world than ever before.

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