

Disparity and AI-Arts: A Conscientious Example from the Global South

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This paper explores the intersection of AI and art specially in the context of peripheral and non-occidental societies of the global south. The fundamental hypothesis is that AI, despite its technological potential is likely to exacerbate inequality and technocratic discrimination because of pre-existing economic blocks on access to computation and ancillary industries. Arguments from existing AI applications in media, arms industries and related capital productivities demonstrates the discriminatory role and reinforcement of AI. An example of algorithmic formations by Mexican AI artists Malitzin Cortes and Ivan Abreu demonstrates how AI simulations of barrio or slum housings' architectures (in Mexico, Brazil and India) reify advanced virtual cities bearing same problems of living conditions that are intrinsic to living in such poor conditions. The art elevates human consciousness of technospheres for an anti-posthuman future.

Key words: *AI, underprivileged, art, south, posthuman*

Introduction: AI and its human Context

Chomsky wrote a general but trenchant essay on *Chat GPT*, in the *New York Times*, calling it plagiarism of data, and the most massive depredation of humanity since the conquest of Americas by European settlers.¹ Perhaps, Chomsky's most insightful moment came when he said:

“Human-style thought is based on possible explanations and error correction, a process that gradually limits what possibilities can be rationally considered.”²

¹ March 8, 2023

² Ibid.

Overall, the epistemic -or technological claims for the dystopian future of AI is all subsumed by an aphorism that Chomsky used, namely that “AI is not “true intelligence.”

Opinions against Chomsky’s censure of *ChatGPT* was voiced in Shkliarevsky, Gennady’s counterarguments in "The Emperor with No Clothes: Chomsky Against *ChatGPT*." Other good claims like creativity, knowledge acquisition and so on are now tested and clichéd in criticism of AI. American scholars, mostly reacting to Chomsky, have not gone further either in their clichéd reassurances of the efficacy of AI; in their avowed vision, as Susan Schneider says, of a future when no human would have to work etc., (Schneider, 2019). These are examples refuting Chomsky’s plagiarism claim of AI, the greatest since the settlement in the Americas. Robert Rohan (2023), who writes on AI art - against the grain of the Chomskian argument - saying that AI-art builds and assembles like a Lego and does not steal chunks of information for generation of pattern, and that AI coding continues to appropriate closer to design replication. In the celebrity zone, and contrasted to Chomsky’s faded academism, Elon Musk comes forward with his haloed knowledge and immense fortune, and his hold on media to declare shockingly innovative visions almost every day, in agreement with a bunch of AI specialists who have not actually gone beyond creating successful Apps, and publishing research of no real consequence (Kulshreshth 2019). Here, if the examples were made specific, the climate of opinion seems already too palpable, and resembles in various ways what media outreach, founded on vested interests in media investments and misinformation strategies is already demonstrating in the public sphere’s encounter with such bizarre propaganda. Suave extremism in politics goes hand in hand with suave extremism in AI propaganda such as Musk’s. One broad effect of education on a global scale is the growing importance of publicly flouted debates - or better still arguments, quarrels, package news, and telecasts through cable or satellite or arms of communication - of social corporations that control, market, sale and provoke emotional reactions in people by dividing and strengthening political preferences.

The other bad effect of AI propaganda is a product of democracy, but in its misuse. Education, and educated discourse on the one hand and democratic debate practices on the other, have had an unpredicted outcome. We can describe this outcome an unwanted culture of divisiveness. The media, which is an instrument of vested interest, now re-groups and reinforces divisive allegiances in order to sell itself as a commodity of hatred. We have already seen data on hate messages through school curriculum (in such Applied Psychology information bases which offers), and also its converse, in identity neo narratives that impose themselves on open societies; thereby creating models of stress and reaction for citizens. Hate-mongering, hate-messaging, hate-subtext are democratically tolerated strategies: a mechanics of the same discourse that argues both in favor of or against a set or standard social thesis of either progressive reforms or fascist reinforcement.

Propositions for or against AI, belong to an inflationary economy and has little to do with reality - the reality attached to AI today is affiliated to the market's decisions, or consumer choices. The buyer's prerogatives in retail market are narrowed down by AI guided selections.

AI and the Circle of Hardcore Poverty

Technology is a vague, indifferent and abstract term; it refers to a set of machines in the world at a given instant of time, but only as they are connected to human use and its consequential evolution. Technology is concerned. Primarily with the growth of industry in one particular direction – with innovative manufacturers and their instrumentation of energy use in patterns of production and consumption. In any sector AI is coupled with internet use and development of enormous network architectures called DAI (Distributive AI) systems -that feed into the infrastructure. Although this generates work, skills, and employment at some level, it leaves out unskilled or skill-specific labor and is a formula of disaster for populations where exposure to electronic economy or governance is under-achieved. The Digital Arts programs at schools, even when they are tailored to commercials and media, function as DAI systems for the larger industry, which includes manufacture of cars, material and energy infrastructure, public communications, food and distribution of resources etc., but DAI does not address poverty issues, except indirectly, and in a world where the myth of manufacture and petro-industries has proved to be no more than a mythical fantasy of real poverty alleviation. Poverty cannot be tackled by the character of industry alone, especially as it exists today (O'Hare et al, 1996).

Even if we were to accept that human language or “linguistic articulation” need not be necessarily linked to economic reality, the hardcore architecture of its ecosystem, and the reality of human demands and supplies of resources, complexified by the intervention of temperamental propensities and above all - the incarcerated consciousness created by components of traditional modes of control, power, exercise of political will or its distortions through exploitation of segments of population - that experience of non-linguistic hardcore human existence and the supposedly distinctive and detached semiotic expressions of AI coding or AI self-coding (in an undecided future), under whatever rules of neural network, only exacerbate two different levels of signaling and emotional reflex. Poverty is a hardcore problem. Its mechanical functionality cannot be either touched, engaged or modified by AI semiotics in any tangible way. The reason is very subtle and needs to be grasped with utmost analytical sensitivity for the issues involved. The stakes are high. the AI controlled infrastructure is reinforcing a method of productions and distributions (as in the automotive industry), and an entire ecosystem of consumption which has not eliminated poverty and is neither concerned with the problem. Therefore, any extended application of AI semiotics for a rehabilitation of populations suffering under the hard variants of a natural or social order, in the determined or predetermined existential paradigm that we now have, is not feasible.

The philosophical recognition of the necessary detachment of poverty as a modular fault in the natural ecosystem of which humanity is a component, can only be resolved in terms of a curative formula that addresses the hardcore problem of poverty. I am even inclined to argue that there is an emotional epistemology at stake here. There is a need of either prosocial emotion, or a need for an orientation of the consciousness of the *self* and its separation from its other. A reflective aporia in natural life and its discourse must somehow also be countered in any kind of AI semiotics, with an emotion semiotics of some kind, perhaps of a Buddhist provenance, oriented to self-reflection, and denial of self-enhancing technologies, and instead with the help of appropriation of the value of others over self, collective identity over individual liberty, neo-democracy over neoliberal freedom. Questions which are at stake here are of grave and imminent concern as far as the evolution of AI systems are concerned, both in industry and human discourse. Where the database does not have such binaries of a restorative self in its linguistic appropriation, or its semiotic could not be assumed to be related to the most important questions of human survival, especially where it comes to the question of those who do not have the means to ensure their own future.

A second danger to this fallacy of lop-sided growth of economy, the domain or targeted growth of the internet-based sector and electronic communications - dotes on the theory of recombinant art, involving digital composites, AI feedback for CGI, achieved through GAN or CNN manipulation of data sets and algorithms that regenerate intelligible formations. But a majority of discussions are either blind or immune to the level field, and never sensitive to the ontological character of art-experiments. For an exception we can consider in some favorable light the kind of theories propounded by Verdicchio (2024) for example, but this is a more skeptical though sensible claim within AI literature - the fact that AI, being what it purports to be, brings forth a flimsy unsubstantial layer of formations. Chatterjee (2022) suggests: “I argue that AI need not understand ideas or experience emotions to produce meaningful and evocative art. AI is and will increasingly be a powerful tool for artists. The continuing development of aesthetically sensitive machines will challenge our notions of beauty, creativity, and the nature of art.” Critics are in the grip of a seductive AI temperament. In Aris (2023) we find a reassessment and assertive claim of this same nature: the fact that: as far as the nature of art and its authenticity in the era of AI engages us, scholars like to assert that the computer monitor now serves as a canvas, a brush, a musical instrument, and even an art tutor” (Aris 2023).

Thus, the literature on AI suffers from a deliberate or foolish amnesia in such easy acceptance of the efficacy of computer platforms as is claimed by Aris’ unthinking and irresponsible, or insensitive attitude to people without such access.

Computer driven art and its social future is already contaminated by the massive division of wealth, and the concentration of wealth, taste, and the aesthetics of *nouveau riche*, who are acquiring their

wealth in different parts of the world by different means, in the individual countries of the global political map, like the succubus of an imminent though locally manipulated digital evolution. Technology is visible to engineering science but in society it is an invisible, immanent, and like an innately organic limb of the social collective and is continually fed by the flourishing, young human intellect and its innovative life. Unfortunately, even in its most benign and beneficial aspect, technology as applied to medicine and rehabilitation, is not progressing in one direction beyond a certain limit - because the end of life is death and extinction, and thus technological advancements, comforts, biotechnological progress etc., all remain a Faustian pipedream for immortality. Most of that technology returns in the form of toys and entertainment - in imperialistic economies, nurtured by imperial ambition, vision, suprematism and defiance of natural limitation - that spirit of the empire of cartography, and the cartography of the mind, involuted and folded in the spirit of its origin, like a lotus with its thousand essences – and is reduced to the spectacle or the human circus: the grand biennial of technological art and innovation, the childish fantasy of sports cars and future generation vehicles, the change of fuel and energy, and the false assurances of green technology. These are all similarly, children's narratives meant to rock humanity to sleep, or where it fails, only to rise up in conflagration of war, dominion, control, possession and tribal wail of material and natural benefits held as a matter of right.

The message is simple and clear. The technological industry, because of its greater reliance on specific epistemology of skills, its knowledge, like that of mechanics, or mechatronics, coding, networking and now finally with its flimsy AI, is at once depriving the older industrial layer with the advent and invasion of a newer industrial layer. The benefits of consuming this technology are manipulated by the market and the legislative structure in such a manner that the profit of the sales, the cost of the conversion of humanity with gadgets, is flowing in a certain direction and is getting dissipated without coming back to redress the system from inside, by negating imbalance, economic disparities and ruling out all possibilities of efficacious distribution of wealth and consumption. A whole cascade of stops and gaps, through VISAs, frontiers, taxation, political allegiances and above all the flouted ignorance of people who are endowed with political responsibility by an innocent populace - are impeding a true and good technological medication.

The role of AI in this context is clear. Those without access to money, work, education will continue to facilitate this division as technological access gets limited and prepossessed by a defined segment of the game. Mhlanga who tries to analyze the effects of industry 4.0 offers no more than contradictory inferences between self-congratulatory efforts of AI-generated poverty alleviation research by Google and Stanford, and the failure of digital inclusion in other locations of the world, both close at home to Google and Stanford and abroad in economies connected to the fray (Mhlanga 2020). There can be no AI influence on humanity without humanity ever

changing its targets of application. This is a near impossible task in which the language of people, combined with the language of science is already in possession of the skills of that trade, and is interested in preserving itself against a barrage of impossibilities. Some of these impossibilities are: (a) the evil of man - the greed and self-obsession and (b) the culture of self-glory and exclusion and (c) the clandestine and secretive nurturing of technological programming, code, hardware, construction of mobile devices that empower one wave of humanity as it depletes the other wave in the sacrifice of its near and distant companions. The most glaring example of the impossibility of a sustainable AI is evident in the discourse of ChatGPT which continues to reify, redefine and regurgitate the same discrimination that is loaded in post-imperialist hegemony.

When ChatGPT is asked: *Where in the world can we find the best solutions for poverty alleviation?* The answer it generated is as follows:

“The most effective solutions for poverty alleviation are found through a combination of policies, community-driven initiatives, and economic models that are customized to the specific contexts of different regions.....

Here are some regions and countries that offer leading approaches:

1. Scandinavia (Denmark, Norway, Sweden).

- Universal Social Welfare Systems: These countries have robust social safety nets with universal healthcare, free education, and strong unemployment benefits. Their models emphasize equitable distribution of resources, which reduces poverty levels.
- Progressive Taxation and Strong Labor Rights: High taxation rates fund welfare programs, while strong labor unions ensure fair wages.
- Countries with significant rural populations, like Bangladesh and Rwanda, have shown how localized interventions, like microfinance and community empowerment, can be transformative,”³

So, despite such answers there is no quantum change in the state of the world’s violence. The daily news also reflects the turbulence and the ineptitude of the human system. ChatGPT’s answer to the question of poverty alleviation *does not surprise us*, as it appears to us to be consistent with the circulated thesis (mediated and sanitized by language) of a self-perverted humanity on the march, in words which resonate in the heart of material seekers and opportunists of the modern world, as it induces amnesia in the mind of actual agents who are meant to change a part of the system, instead of following orders from the above. The better ChatGPT is able to answer this

³ ChatGPT <https://chatgpt.com/c/04c012d4-238a-4999-a741-7f8141ce8cf1> retrieved 25 /08 / 2024.

question therefore, the more clichéd, far-fetched and ever satisfactory appears to be the failure of AI.

AI, Art and Recycled Poverty

A question has been repeated in technological contexts of artmaking: now in the world of a progressivist and post-Marxist AI generated designs in particular - the fact questioned being if art is meant to have a conscientious or sensitizing role as was famously said by Walter Benjamin, “for the formulation of revolutionary demands in the politics of art.” (Benjamin, W. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*) - a recommendation which was taken up in later historical writings on the functions of art, by both Marxists (like Adorno, Lukacs and Horkheimer) and non-Marxist authors (like Ranajit Guha and Abdul Jan Mohamed). In some way or the other art shall assume a socially responsible character and emerge as media of awareness: this was precisely also a concern of the *avant-garde* in the fin de siècle 19th-century. The need for ascribing a socially sensitizing role to both individualistic and collective art experiences and objects has been considered with a renewed interest in the late 20th century especially in the context of the survival of such socialist and communist entities as the Soviet Union or the then dormant Chinese Communist Party. The latter has indeed taken up a more proactive and global role in 20th century politics and history. Yet it is nonetheless a truism that the culture of art in emerging international museums announces the same project of divisive political realities. A gradually anesthetic and de-sensitizing objectivity in art, the benumbing of the senses, the gradual separation of art from ritual *vis-à-vis* of art from the ethical consciousness of humanity has only resulted in the increasing production of art-objects, that can neither be related to human concerns nor to the concerns of global poverty. Therefore, the entire question of the relationship of the new technologies, specially design technologies, to the specifically known functions of that art have to be either discarded or revised for a better future. As far as the literature is concerned, we can do no better than to revisit the questions of both subalternism and gender inequity, as much as left-wing activism - namely, from the commonly accepted forms of critical thinking but also revisionism as is seen in relation to orientalism in the colonial context, and a voice of nativist new narratives.

Hence, the structure, architecture and programming in AI programming for AI has to be re-considered in this context of continuing and unremitted global poverty. In the approach of certain post-Keynesian scholars to the question of poverty and the method of statistical analysis of models which predict poverty, the formation of art and the formulation of algorithmic parameters for newer innovative designs will have to accommodate a moral or ethical view of the technological future. In this version the algorithm itself must in some way initiate re-fixation of ethical architecture. Henceforth we might define AI art as a kind of making or activity of self-replicating expressions based on reconfiguration of a pre-existing amount of data that qualifies the form and

purpose of an object of art as the art of object-making. And finally, in this context we may consider an example from the world of artistic or aesthetic programming in order to establish our point of view about the nature of arts in the future, especially all those new aspects displayed on the screen of the computer or the processor - that apparently are seen as aspects of the new computer generated arts or complimentary modular forms, such as those intrinsic to programming of images or dimensions of (3D) printing. In fact, we would have to justify not only the figurative innovations of digital art and technology and especially AI, but also – as the Olympics or biennales demonstrate –the industrial delusions and extravagance that have come to be called art. Industrial design has influenced art to such an extent that ethical responsibility of artists are now sidelined. Human technology has to be morally sanctioned, and by morals we mean those values that give priority to human rights and needs, and not to innovations without human content just as much of the biennials are now doing and are culpable of for this moral offence against humanity, a large part of which lives in poverty. Poverty itself cannot be an abstract property of economics, it is not deprivation or absence or lack of facilities, incentives - it refers to *an* actual people living with their fellow humanity. Poverty is a physical reality - a hard mathematical and cultural problem.

When we renew our faith in the idea of art - of art as a speculative moment - and as true, purposeful, divine art - we would have to consider AI generated art objects as not like AI objects in general - but as humane objects, which directly affect the human condition. But since this kind of art or the practice or collection of arts, is not usually, and indeed quite never related to art of ritual life, forgiveness, kindness and self-effacement it is never indeed possible for that kind of art to become a kind of votive art, the best art of humanity - the art that has been wiped off by the bourgeoisie culture. First of all, we can begin to reference a general context of media arts - the presence of the public. Normally generated on a public platform, artworks constructed by AI remain aloof from the viewer because it follows the path of the new post-enlightenment aesthetics - without taking account of emic concerns of fellowship, family, community, altruism. Wherever these elements are discarded for spectacle, flashiness, exhibitionism and extravagance, art is already left out of the game plan, this inadequate character of AI is difficult to eradicate because AI applications are bound to remain domain specific market of consumers. AI always thus suffers from lack of humanity.

One good artwork which does spring to mind in this context is the art of Malitzin Cortes and Ivan Abreu's arts. Like many other like-minded artworks, that already explore this connection between automation and the changing paradigm of human social life, Cortes and Abreu's simulations appear as meaningful as and as restive as the new residential architectures in an imaginary online world. The houses they simulate on the screen are not unexpected or unlike the ones seen in the low-income, poorer housing zones of big cities, like the Ecatepec municipality of Mexico City, or the barrios of Brazil's Rio de Janeiro metroplex - it may be also true of poorer slums and urban

housings in cities like Mumbai India. The view of houses from an aerial vantage point is simulated on a computer screen to create hypothetical house designs that are generated by an AI algorithm. The authors speak of these simulations as a semblance of:

“... a video game animation executed by algorithms in real time. The AV concert narrates with fictions of speculative architecture, the phenomenon of informal housing in countries like Mexico, the United States, Latin America, Asia, India and some European peripheries. We are interested in the ability of writing and live editing (coding) to enunciate, create and tell audiovisual stories in a liquid and granular way. Self-construction represents the most real option for most of the popular classes that inhabit megacities, defying the rigid limitations imposed by traditional architecture, real estate speculation and the economic crisis, transforming their living spaces into a constant work in progress, giving rise to new forms of self-expression, where flexibility, informality and pragmatism reign, reflecting the true essence of humanity.”¹

These houses are raised on imaginary frames on the computer screen rather than on the multiplicity of levels that one anticipates in such usual visual frames as that of science-fiction cities and urban zones. An infinite number of combinations and recombinants generate the inferior level as static figures of urban housings and from a base of houses that Cortes and Puig garner from all over the world. The final effect of such recombinant simulation is spellbinding. The model deserves to be considered as the one true art that gathers the sensations or sensibilities of human existence in the barrios into a transcendental climax. The world of family, scarcity, affection and suffering that humans constructed in the barrios, and the world that the AI generates on the monitor, are indifferent, apocalyptic, unforgiving edifices of human survival that are transitioning between planes of reality, and planless causality, and abruptly rhizomatic symbols in which human economies are constantly marginalizing population. Perhaps this is the only shame and the only glory that are due to the perception that Cortes and Abreu generate in the continuum of a game animation. What, therefore, is ultimately the only available model for critical exploration of the link between AI and questions of poverty? The answer to this query lies in the incessantly changing but realistic scenario of urban poverty that the AI art of Cortes and Abreu generates and is itself incapable of liberating from its matrix.



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