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AI and the Ethics of Fairness

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While the use of artificial intelligence in forming databases, modelling and even for creating culturally relevant depictions or images provides several advantages, it also raises several ethical and political concern. This paper aims to discuss and question the potential of AI tools in the process of the democratization of knowledge. On the one hand, such tools can democratize the access to vast amounts of information which enables a much broader participation in research and scholarship. As well-known examples, AI can process large datasets which can uncover certain patterns and provide insights. Such tasks would be so impractical and burdensome for human researchers without AI assistance (Noble, 2018). As a result, it can be argued that the use of AI in humanities research not only accelerates the pace of analysis but also makes previously obscure knowledge more accessible to a wider audience.

On the other hand, the use of AI in humanities research leads to serious ethical concerns. One key concern is about the possible biases and representational unfairness that is caused by AI tools. Such tools are based on algorithms which are mostly sourced by present datasets that are formed by already existing cultural biases (O'Neil, 2016). As a result, AI serves to perpetuate the biases and even to deepen the current inequalities, which undermines its promise of the democratizing of knowledge. In addition to that, AI technologies are generally controlled by a few powerful entities which have a certain dominance over their applications. Obviously, this situation also raises several concerns about the accumulation of reliable and fair knowledge which does not marginalize (and even demonize) certain cultures and identities even further (Zuboff, 2019).

Accordingly, while AI promises to democratize the knowledge in the humanities, it is vital to critically examine and address the ethical and political concerns it carries through. It is necessary to ensure that the ethical principles such as fairness, pluralism and transparency are guiding the practical uses of AI in humanities research. As a result, it can be concluded that rather than a naïve optimism regarding the democratization of knowledge, the use of AI in humanities demands continuous attention and ethical sensitivity to balance innovation with ethics.

Key words: Fairness, ethics, knowledge, AI, democracy

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