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AI Vigilance: A Civic Virtue Perspective

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Developments in AI technology and the recent cases of bias and discrimination in AI-produced outcomes (e.g., Amazon's algorithm discriminated against women, and COMPAS miscalculated the reoccurrence of crime due to racial bias), the circulation of deep fakes (AI-generated fake news, images, voice recordings, and videos), and, most importantly, the ease of reaching AI technology for such deceitful purposes point out the importance of supporting the cultivation of vigilant and responsive citizens. In this paper, I will argue that in addition to legal and political measures against such misuses, education policies for reforming/restructuring current curriculums to develop the necessary critical skills in students (such as including compulsory AI Literacy courses), we should be seeking ways and policies to cultivate in citizens the required civic virtues—broadly understood as desired character traits and dispositions—that will be crucial for living in the age of AI. Like free republics need vigilant citizens who are alert against the danger of domination and corruption, AI societies require AI-vigilant citizens who are aware of the risks of AI misuse (especially in socio-political contexts) and have acquired/developed the necessary character traits and dispositions (and not only the formal skills) that are crucial to keeping their democracies and political culture intact. The complete list of virtues should be developed, yet in the face of the unprecedented threat of d/misinformation, one is unquestionably related to citizens' attitudes toward the information they receive. The required character dispositions are but are not limited to truth-seeking, conditional trust (trust that is not readily given but guaranteed in time), critical stance, responsible sharing on social media—not spreading without checking, etc.). The corresponding skills needed are, to name a few, fact-checking, source-checking, ability to evaluate biases, etc.). Cultivating such virtues is indispensable for our societies, especially given the limits of legal measures.

Keywords: AI bias, deep fakes, AI vigilance, civic virtues, virtue ethics, republicanism

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