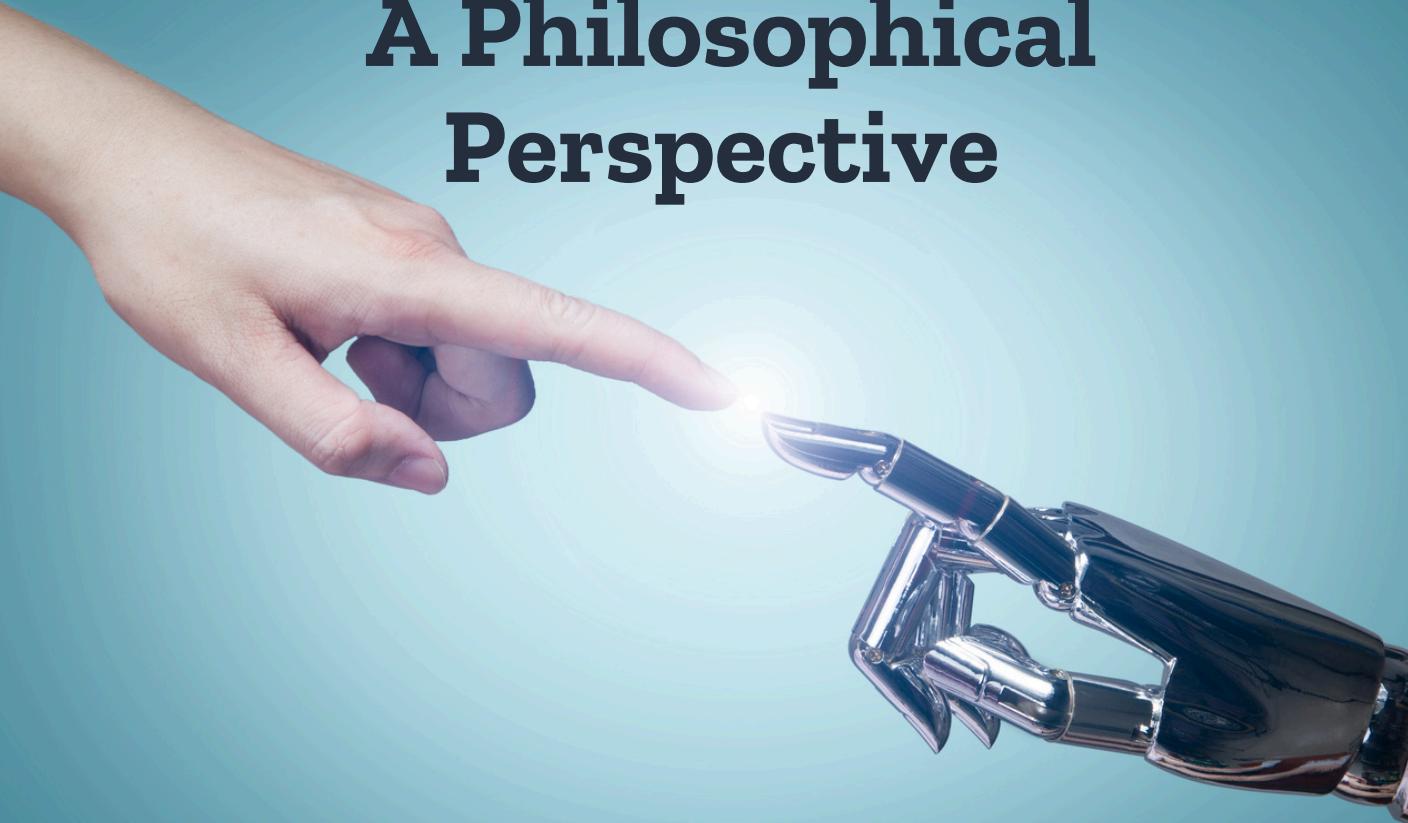


Artificial Intelligence vs. Human Intelligence: A Philosophical Perspective



By Yaron Barzilay

When writing this article, artificial intelligence (AI) has been one of the most spoken-about topics worldwide for a while, with equally mixed views of great excitement and heavy concern, as it is a significant disruptor already involved in almost every aspect of our lives. While a wide range of incredible possibilities is opening up before us, presenting what seems to be the tip of the iceberg of AI's potential impact in the near and far future, many voice grave concerns about its various dangerous implications, from massive unemployment, serious ethical consequences or political manipulations, to even a catastrophic outcome of existential threat to the human race.



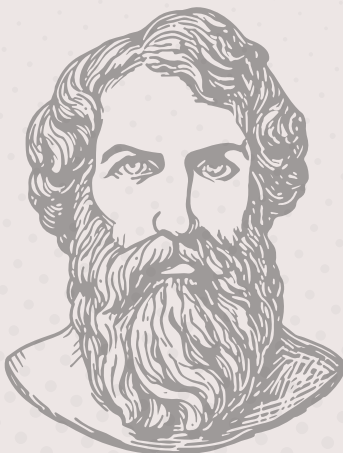
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Many known figures, such as the historian Prof. Noah Harari, scientists, developers, governments and private institutions, speak of the urgent need to regulate AI's evolution before drastic consequences occur. AI is a prominent protagonist in both utopian and dystopian theories, raising practical, ethical and philosophical questions about where we are heading from here, as it is already intertwined in many aspects of our lives; no speculation here seems to be a careless exaggeration. Like a magic wand, artificial intelligence opens up a new world of possibilities in every field into which it is integrated. At the same time, it opens the door to real dangers of loss of control and destruction. As it becomes a close and intimate part of our lives, it seems that in a short time, if not already, it will be difficult to imagine our life without it. Here is precisely why we must pay close attention to it. Like any tool, it can positively or negatively affect us, depending on our ability to understand and control it. A knife, for example, a hammer or an axe, can be used to save lives, open paths, build and construct, just as they can kill and destroy. This is obvious and indicates the fault is not in the tool itself but the use we make of it; it can be said of any tool, be it a nail, a car or a gun—they are tools meant to serve a purpose, which we must be aware of and able to control. AI is no different in essence, but nevertheless, a question is often raised about the very nature of this tool and the relationship it forms with us.



As this hot topic will likely continue to become more intense, this short article does not aim to present arguments about its pros and cons. Still, given the magnitude of AI's influence, which is often presented as a "simulation of human intelligence," a "superhuman," or a "superintelligence," we should also raise philosophical questions about its possible implications for our self-determination as human beings.

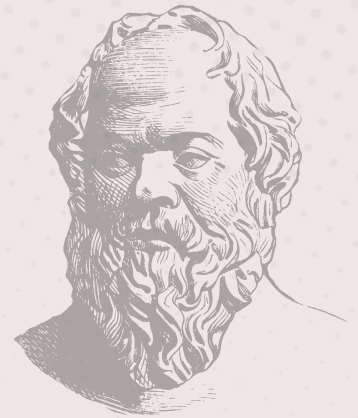
Suppose we attribute intelligent capacity to an essential computer-based capability; don't we risk losing touch with a very special characteristic of our human nature and, with it, miss viewing ourselves as a mystery yet to be discovered, a perspective that appears to be common among most human traditions, when discussing philosophically the nature of the human being? Can the famous phrase engraved on the temple of Apollo in ancient Delphi that forever echoes, "Man, know thyself", be confused with a learning machine that seemingly surpasses our ability and may confuse us to lose the path to a higher consciousness that is directly linked to our own intelligence, on understanding ourselves, others and all things? And we mustn't neglect to remember the value of what seems to have been the full expression of the phrase mentioned above: *"Know thyself, and you will know the universe and the gods."*



When Plato speaks of recollection (reminiscence, anamnesis) leading to a possibility of raising our awareness to a source of knowledge that is not derived from sensory experiences but rather from insight into eternal truths and the divine archetypes, does it not imply a particular use of our intelligence that no algorithm, however sophisticated it may be, can access, as it touches the very core definition of humans and their eternal souls? This isn't a mere semantic play with the definition of intelligence but one that deals with the very meaning of human life as a path towards awakening our true potential and identity.

Let us imagine the great Socrates conducting a dialogue with artificial intelligence, aiming to awaken an inner truth within it while applying his method of Maieutics; surely, it would be an interesting conversation. But, will Socrates succeed in giving birth to the immortal soul as he might have intended if we deduce such intention from the teachings of his brightest disciple, Plato?

For the ancient Greeks, Nous is associated with the higher capability of the mind and the human soul and, much beyond the later definition of the term, is a bridge to connect with the profound reality and the universal above the individual.



On the importance of the Socratic method of dialect and its effect on the Nous, we can learn from the writings of anthropologist and philosopher Fernand Schwartz: *“Through dialectics as a method allowing the intelligence (in Greek, Nous), the seat of our immortality, to perceive the truth residing in the “heavens” (the world of ideas) and to apply and practice the good on earth (the sensible world), Socrates provides a philosophical framework for the ancient Greek belief in the dual movement of the soul, a true bridge between heaven and earth. He offers a practical form for those who wish to live by elevating their soul and acting in accordance with their innermost conviction.”*

The Turing test is a well-known evaluation proposed by mathematician Alan Turing in 1950, aimed at determining whether a computer is capable of thinking. It involves a series of questions conducted remotely, requiring human and computer responses. If the computer's answers closely resemble a human's and are perceived as such by the examiner, it is suggested to be able to demonstrate a capacity for intelligence. Turing further predicted that by the year 2000, computers could pass such tests with a 30% chance. His test is still used as a reference today, though there are arguments about whether such a test can really identify a machine's intelligence.



The question of how we define human intelligence is critical here, as it differentiates how we perceive ourselves, especially in front of what many may regard as superintelligence in computers, which transcends humans, hence missing exploring the real potential of intelligence in humans.

In his books, Prof. Noah Harari addresses the confusion between the terms consciousness and intelligence, describing intelligence that is entirely independent of consciousness. He emphasises computers' ability to make independent decisions and refers to this as the essence of the artificial intelligence revolution.

This article does not dispute the possible implications and consequences of artificial ability, regardless of whether it is conscious. However, the context of intelligence and human consciousness is significant for the concern raised here and the confusion that may arise in our self-perception and understanding of human intelligence. The question of how we shall consider intelligence in humans is essential and delicate. Even if we accept the possibilities of various types of intelligence, we should pay close attention to what human intelligence entails, as suggested by multiple philosophical traditions, to avoid missing something that is of great importance.



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Indian philosophy, for example, describes Manas as the base of the higher vehicles of Man, forming part of a trinity of a higher consciousness capability, such as Intuition (Buddhi) and Will (Atma). This trinity is the higher Ego in humans, the Individu of the Greek, our true identity, differentiated from the lower body, the transient persona. Manas, or intelligence, is the main promotor of the human constitution as it connects with the higher faculties and realities that allow man to know himself. It is described as a pure higher mind compared with the lower mind or Kama Manas, the mind of desires, a calculative and subjective mind incapable of true sight. Human Intelligence is seen as capable of discernment between the real and the unreal, a quality

referred to in Sanskrit as Viveka, allegorically symbolised by the Kalahansa bird that can separate milk from a mixture of milk & water. According to these ancient teachings, this ability of discernment is strongly linked with intuition, a state of consciousness and perception rather than a rational or intellectual understanding.

It is helpful here to remember that the word intelligence comes from the Latin “inter (to choose) legere (between)”; therefore, it means to collect or gather, which implies discernment, hence a dynamic and vertical view of life, rather than a horizontal comparison of data and algorithm. A discernment that applies to the development of a philosophical state of mind.

In Sanskrit and other Proto-Indo-European languages, Manas is closely associated with the term used for human beings. This highlights the essential role of this faculty in distinguishing man from all others. The universal symbolism of Fire is often associated with the higher mind, which offers a significant meaning to the famous myth of Prometheus, who gave humans the gift of fire stolen from the gods.

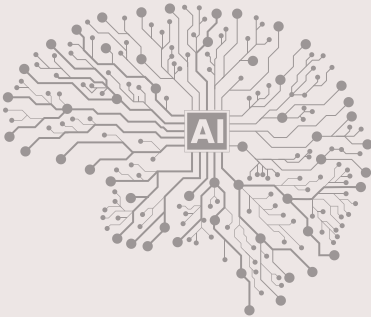


A careful discernment is therefore also needed when trying to observe the quality of intelligence itself. Before describing it as a quality that can be obtained artificially, we need to observe how intelligence has been presented to us by the most remarkable seekers of wisdom, philosophers and traditions across continents and time, asking ourselves if we will not mislead ourselves on a matter of great importance – knowing ourselves and our purpose on this planet, by associating intelligence with a machine. It may be better to use a different term and attribution altogether, but it isn’t just a matter of semantics simplification, but one that genuinely carries a substantial meaning.

Undoubtedly, AI has tremendous potential to aid humanity in ways we hardly imagine today. It can improve our lives in many ways and even offer us an opportunity to reclaim what

our intelligence means for us and how it differentiates us from animals or machines to oppose the implication of the great *confusion of identities* we see today. Are there capabilities within us that are unique to human beings that we can develop and discover? Are we so familiar with our latent potential that we can forget the wonder of living the marvelous adventure of life, which is not only to find out what is outside of ourselves but what is internal to each of us? If we carefully pay attention to the teachings of the great philosopher Plato, for example, he tells us that we are of the divine, the world of the gods is our origin, and that reclamation of our own true identity is our destiny. The path goes through our own intelligence and should not be confused with rationalism or intellectualism, which are yet part of the lower qualities of the mind.

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Ancient wisdom traditions encourage us to follow the path of self-evolution. They indicate that human beings and the world we inhabit are mysteries to discover. AI, as a tool, can help us refocus our attention on the potent possibilities of our intelligence, which can offer us great blessings. Here, too, a choice based on discernment, that is, human intelligence, is required.



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