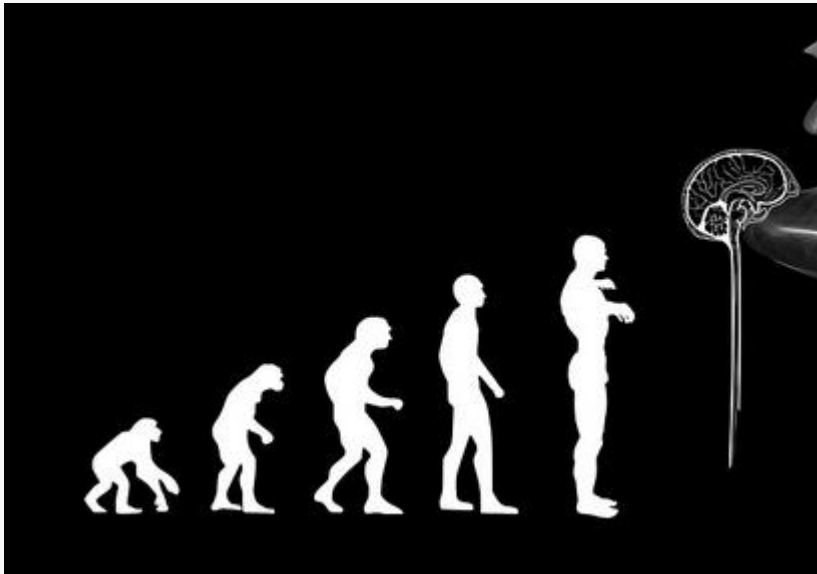


ChatGPT May Have Irreversible Consequences for Learning and Decision-Making

written by GEG | March 16, 2023



ChatGPT is an artificial intelligence-driven chatbot built on a language model that can answer questions and is the fastest-growing consumer app in history. It has more than 100 million users. The author of this article warns that, due to reliance on technology, daily tasks have become more mechanistic that has atrophied thinking and crowded out creativity. A recent survey found that most teachers (51%) are already using ChatGPT in schools and a number of students are using it for assignments. ChatGPT has passed many high-level exams, including the Wharton MBA exam, US medical licensing exam, several law exams and a final at Stanford Medical School.

Applications in other sectors such as government also present cause for concern.

Mankind's modern trajectory has been defined by several inflection points. The invention of electricity, light bulb, the telegraph system, computer and the Internet, among others, signalled new irreversible milestones in our modus vivendi. The recent introduction of ChatGPT may, however, prove to be more than an inflection point. It may be a permanent disruptor to our way of life; its **bloopers** and **Wokist tantrums** notwithstanding.

ChatGPT is now the fastest-growing consumer app in history. Within two months of its launch in November 2022, ChatGPT managed to garner more than 100 million users. Its developer OpenAI, which began with 375 employees and thin revenue, is now valued at **\$30 billion** and counting.

How does it work? Broadly speaking, ChatGPT aggregates data from online sources and synthesise answers to a query *within seconds*. It is currently the most versatile of a stable of new artificial intelligence-powered large language models. It can compose musical notes, write software codes, solve mathematical equations, write novels, essays

and dissertations, among a host of other tasks. It can be used by scientists to translate their original works – written in a native language – into English. As AI tools like ChatGPT evolve, they may supplant human activity across a wide, yet incalculable, spectrum. Hundreds of millions of jobs may be at stake.

Its most immediate impact however will be in the area of human learning and decision-making.

Human Learning

Human learning is a lifelong process shaped by myriad factors. These include (but are not limited to) experience, instinct, interactions, mistakes (and corrections), introspection, personal angst, boldness, tutelage, textual data and individual psyche. Most of these prerequisites are alien to ChatGPT and this includes the “no pain no gain” axiom for human learning and development.

AI tools are also unaffected by human limitations such as time constraints, fatigue, “off days” and ailments. Over time, these limitations have prodded humans to delegate their *existential requirement to think and learn* to machines. Inexorable digitization has also made us adept at *knowing where or how to seek information* instead of *learning how to retain that same information*. How many of us memorize the phone numbers of our family, co-workers and friends these days? A digital crutch is now a must-have for navigating roads (e.g. Waze, Google Maps), cooking (video channels), mending appliances (DIY channels) and a host of other mundane activities. Our daily tasks are rapidly becoming more *mechanistic*, crowding out our ability to create something new or game-changing. We are becoming extensions of our machines instead of vice versa. As a result, mankind is now facing an era of collective stupor and conformity.

There is no better way to gauge how AI tools may affect our faculties of thinking and learning than by observing ChatGPT’s impact on the global education sector. Students and educators alike are now using ChatGPT as an educational supplement, a cheat tool, or as a digital crutch.

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