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Artificial Intelligence and Data Privacy

Is artificial intelligence less than our intelligence? Director Spike Jonze raises concerns about Artificial Intelligence (AI) by questioning its necessity and the potential dangers of relying too heavily on its guidance. The key question remains: if artificial intelligence becomes essential, how much control can we afford to cede in exchange for its benefits? Unveiling the true nature of artificial intelligence and its influence on our lives is the key to unlocking the answer to this critical question. With AI poised to become an ever-present force, a deeper exploration of its nature and its potential influence on our lives is essential.

Demystifying the fundamentals of AI

At its most basic, AI is about programming computers to perform tasks traditionally associated with human thought. The concept of AI came into existence in the 1940s and gained wide audience with the development of “Turing Test”, a test named after Alan Turing. The test aimed to determine whether the computer can mimic human responses under certain conditions. The test acted as a catalyst, unlocking the limitless potential that lay dormant within computers. Algorithms form a part of structure of AI, where simple algorithms are used for simple applications while complex are used for strong artificial intelligence which brings us to three types of AI – Narrow (or Weak) AI, General AI also known as AGI or Strong AI and Superintelligent AI. Applications in mobile phones like Chess, Voice recognition like Siri, Alexa are examples of Weak AI which pre-dominantly work in limited pre-defined range or set of contexts. Strong AI is actually not in existence and there is still a long way to go but GPT-4 and MuZero, a computer program designed by Google DeepMind has come somewhat closer to it. Lastly, the true power of ASI, beyond the realm of current technology, holds untold possibilities waiting to be explored. Furthermore, huge datasets forms an integral part of machine learning. It refers to information that has been converted into a form that is more efficient for processing and transfer. Data may be structured or unstructured, and is often collected to be measured, reported, visualized, and analysed. This approach to AI development fosters the creation of diverse applications that can be seamlessly integrated into our daily routines.

Rise of AI as a companion in our lives

With technology and innovation going leaps and bounds in its endeavour, AI is no longer just a machine doing calculations. Infact, the uses of artificial intelligence are endless. AI applications can be applied in many different sectors and industries to generate the maximum output out of the operational front. E-commerce websites leverage AI to personalize the online shopping experience. By analysing user’s browsing history, these platforms recommend similar products and curate product lists specifically for them, making shopping faster, easier,

and more user-friendly. Social media is the age we are all living in and a lot of data is generated through various social media applications. Take for example, Instagram – a social media app which designs our feed based on our recent interests and searches making it possible through machine learning algorithms. In addition to this, it is crucial to understand a huge impact that AI has shown on the agriculture industry. Automation technology is being used to find more effective and efficient ways of improving yield, looking for some possible threats to crops, weather forecasting etc. which further enable farmers to obtain a more realistic approach and helping them to increase their income. The most recent example is that of Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) which is being set up at Krishi Bhavan in New Delhi which is a big-screen dashboard providing plethora of information every second. It is a tech-based solution involving multiple IT applications, which is designed to help in making informed decisions. It is responsible for legislation, policy formation, and implementation of initiatives in the agriculture sector. Furthermore, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) collect and process large amounts of granular data — on temperatures, rainfall, wind speed, crop yields and production estimations — and presents it in graphical format. Perhaps, the most fascinating aspect is that it can create an ecosystem based on which individual farmer-level advisories can be generated through apps like Kisan e-mitra, a chatbot developed for PM-Kisan beneficiaries. It is also capable of generating a customised advisory in the local language of farmers using Bhashini platform which is capable of translating into several languages. This ability to overcome language barriers makes AI a powerful tool for agricultural development.

Potential downsides of AI

There are some known and unknown risks of using AI. The information generated by AI may sound convincing at times but it may be entirely wrong provided it is based on several biases. At times, it may be manipulative based on huge amounts of data that goes in the algorithms which might be unethical or not relevant to the subject matter. Hence, Potential bias is created where AI algorithms can perpetuate or even amplify existing biases, creating a more unequal and divided society. Secondly, AI has given rise to a situation of joblessness leading to widespread economic and social disruption as people lose their livelihoods. The rise of AI in customer service centres exemplifies the potential job displacement anxieties. Tasks once handled by human representatives are now increasingly automated by trained AI models, leaving some workers to face unemployment.

Data Privacy and AI: A Critical Intersection

The definition of what constitutes ‘personal information’ acts as a gatekeeper to the legal protections offered to individuals. The definition of personal information can vary between jurisdictions and evolves alongside legal and societal norms. The increased emergence of AI is likely to lead to an environment in which all information that is generated by or related to an individual is identifiable. This further poses a big threat to common man’s data and privacy. The Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights, prepared by the US government in 2022, provides a framework for how government, technology companies, and citizens can collectively ensure more accountable AI. As AI has become more ubiquitous, concerns have surfaced about a potential lack of transparency surrounding the functioning of gen AI systems, the data used to train them, issues of bias and fairness, potential intellectual property infringements, privacy violations, etc.

Way forward

It must be noted by companies that collection of personal information should be limited to only what is necessary; personal information should only be collected by lawful and fair means; and where appropriate, should be collected with the knowledge and/or consent of the individual. At the same time, the purpose of collecting personal information should be specified to the individual at the time of collection. Once collected, the use limitation principle endeavours to ensure personal information is only used for the purpose for which it was collected. If such clauses are put in place, it might lead to an ethical and effective governance of AI and Data Privacy.