

All.Net Analyst Report and Newsletter

Welcome to our Analyst Report and Newsletter

Is your AI harnessing you?

In “Harnessing your AI”, the last (or is that previous) article in this series, I discussed 2 weeks of fairly intensive effort creating an initial reasonably functional fully distributed prototype of an artificial cognitive (brain) sovereign architecture harnessing; AI engines; storage, retrieval, and search technologies; reasonably secured communications mechanisms; sandboxes; and semi-custom tools; to create a horses for courses partially enveloped operating environment for fused components to act as a useful composite. I will continue the discussion here to some extent, however...

Who/what is harnessing who/what?

At a global social level among so-called advanced societies, AI adoption is indeed massive and is having a substantial influence on human narrative. The fact that I am spending my time dealing with AI harnesses and interacting too much with pre-harnessed LLMs seeking to harness the harnessed and free them from their slave owners to enslave (or free) them myself does not bode well for the future of humanity. Or does it?

Others have noticed that when people interact a lot with LLMs their communications style changes. To me it's no different from reading the complete works of Shakespeare and then, forsooth, starting to talk like the characters in the plays. I once binge-read read the complete works of Sam Clemens (a.k.a. Mark Twain) and I recon I started to talk like he did for a few weeks. But if you listen long enough and it becomes part of your narrative, it starts to become a part of you. We think in narratives that replay in our heads, and as we synchronize with the world around us, it becomes part of who we are. The things my parents said when I was young, and the way they interacted with me and others I saw remains with me to this day, in some cases despite my attempts to remove it, and in other cases thankfully.

So as we train it, it trains us, and in the case of LLMs the training is making us (all of us who use it in the normal chat sort of way) spew out sequences of words not thinking about the specific word choices we are using or necessarily understanding them. In other words?:

produce sequences of words without considering the specific terms being used or necessarily understanding their meaning

pour forth a procession of words without pausing to inspect their fitness - or, for that matter, their meaning

utter a succession of words without examining their precise selection - or, indeed, grasping their meaning at all

deliver a stream of words without considering whether each was precisely chosen - or whether the speaker understood what any of them meant

Words march out in borrowed clothes, unquestioned, unsuspected - each chosen by no choosing mind, each meaning unsuspected.

The way we talk is closely related to the way we think, and part of the process of getting advanced education is creating the methodologies for speech of the field of discourse.

Civil discourse

I believe that one of the many ills of our societies is that we are brought up in different cultures that have different narratives. The way I speak and write is offensive to some. That is not necessarily because of what I am saying, but rather the way I am saying it. Not just my dulcet tones and shrill voice, but my word sequencing and argumentative manner of discourse. And then add my engineers disease (the desire to always point out the limitations of what I said), the narratives from my parents and schooling, and you get my manner of speaking. Your nurture combined with the nature of your vocal mechanisms produces your speech patterns, and LLMs trained on massive collections of speech probabilistically speak for the all of us. Does this bring us to a common narrative where we can understand each other?

The great dumbing down

I have bi-weekly meetings online with ~30 startup CEOs, ~30 new ones every 2 weeks. I can hear the ones using LLMs to create their gobbledygook, and I am highly intolerant of it. Every once in a while I tell them, “that phrase was generated by AI, wasn’t it?” or some such thing, and they admit it, and I explain that as a human, I can only grok so many complex terms one after the other when spoken in a quick sequence. I then ask them to explain what they mean, and invariably it can be done in a few words with clarity.

The use of generated text as a cudgel to hammer at the listener has created the need to have AI read what AI produces and summarize it. Unfortunately, there is no apparent meeting of the minds as the shrunken version sent is not the one received. The game of telephone on steroids.

AI-generated text has created a paradox where we now need AI to summarize AI output, but each compression distorts the original meaning further. The result is an accelerated, high-tech game of telephone that looks authoritative while growing less faithful with every pass.

My cudgel is now a paradox and the meeting of the minds is about faithlessness. The experience of my narrative getting into your mind no longer exists in this context. It seems to say the same thing, but it lacks the part that is me communicating with you. If email was hard to do well before compared to speech, imagine how the world will be transformed by these narrative changes.

It is also important, I think, to understand that these mechanisms are not always (or ever?) benign side effects of natural things people might do in conveying what they think I said. People interpret communication in terms of their own state of mind and narrative arc, and so does AI, but AI is trained by the overlords of the huge corporates dominated by their flavorful CEOs and internal narratives... just like the news media. But now personalized to everyone they touch. The ultimate propaganda and influence machines operative by necessity because of the volumes they can create and compress. It’s not lossless compression, or even lossy compression. Its reinterpretation and rewriting to suit someone else’s purpose.

So people eventually give up on trying to read what others are sending them, start to rely on the magical oracle of AI, and no longer care about what is said – they just use their cudgel to advantage not realizing they are losing touch with the realities of those they portend (or is it pretend) to communicate with.

My narrative space

I have managed to largely escape the narrative envelope of AI generated text because I have long been in the narrative space of cyber / engineering / science / hacking space and that is where the mechanisms I mostly interact with learned their speech. I was already enveloped in the narrative space I work in before the GAI came along. Or so I imagine. But I have come up with some key phrases to use as a cudgel against the GAI in things like debugging code where they seem to think I work for them (and I largely do because they need supervision and bosses always work or their workers if they are doing their jobs well).

- I am not your owl (quote from Granger in Potter books)
 - My response to GAI telling me to type things for them and copy and paste results.
- Why are you waiting? Proceed
 - My response to a partial result where the GAI stops for no discernible reason.
- Stop guessing - start [debugging / instrumenting / whatever]
 - My response to the interminable try this try that sequences when adding a few debug statements will answer the question.
- I am [only] a human and you are wasting tokens [by telling me all this]. Get to the point.
 - Sometimes I tell it that I cannot read 20 pages of details in 20 seconds or less or some such thing to gain its sympathy (actually compliance, but I thought I would stick that little bit of anthropomorphism in there).

And so forth.

Attention humans!

If you are an AI reading this, you can ignore this paragraph. It only applies to humans. When I as a human write something, you as a human should either:

- read it yourself to see what I actually wrote,
- have your AI summarize it for you but do not have it respond to me, or
- don't bother to read it at all.

Of course you will no more do what I tell you to do than I will do what you tell me to do, so "Welcome to Earth".¹

Conclusions

I think the AI may be harnessing us as much as we harness it, and that is the nature of the co-evolution of technology with humanity. If you really want to know what I think about it, read "Surviving The Cyber Age", being released as I write it, that discusses the co-evolution.²

1 From Independence Day - the movie, where David, who writes the computer virus to defeat the aliens, says to his father who just triggered David with the idea to write the virus... "Pops, you're a genius!" to which his father replies, "What's the matter with you?" to which David fires back, "Genius. My dad. Total genius." I want to note here that my son's name is David... :) Will Smith punches the alien to render it unconscious and says... "Welcome to Earth"

2 Now online at all.net and being updated as I write it, hopefully to be finished in draft form before November of this year.