ONLINE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY
WITH *PEER REVIEW*
WWW.METABASIS.IT
May 2025 year XX n. 39

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND CREATIVITY: A MATTER OF STYLE.

DOI: 10.7413/18281567278

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Abstract
Text-to-Image (TTI) models – such as OpenAI's DALL·E, Stable Diffusion, and Midjourney – that generate images from natural language prompts have immersed us in an unprecedented iconic landscape, where a fundamental question in the field of aesthetics has resurfaced: can machines truly be said to possess creative capacities? This paper approaches the issue from the perspectives of image theory and visual culture, before turning to the ongoing debate over whether AI should be considered as an autonomous creative agent or merely as a tool. The answer I propose here is grounded essentially in a phenomenological framework. Rather than asking whether AI is capable of creating genuinely creative artifacts, I suggest shifting the focus toward those who deploy these systems in the creative process, asking whether the people behind them are truly creative. The more pertinent question, then, becomes: Are our creatives truly creative? This way of framing the question ultimately leads to a discussion of the problem of style in the wider context of the history of representation.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, creativity, TTI, phenomenology, style.

Introduction

> "With recent advances in methodology and technology, we are now able to build machines that can paint original artwork in a given style, write coherent paragraphs with long-term structure, compose music that is pleasant to listen to" (…). This is just the start of a generative revolution that will leave us with no choice but to find answers

> to some of the biggest questions about the mechanics of creativity, and ultimately, what it means to be human."[1]

Since we are discussing intelligent machines[2], they are expected – among other capabilities – to perform tasks typically associated with human intelligence, such as the production of creative artifacts. Positioned at the intersection of AI and aesthetics, this contribution seeks to investigate what ultimately defines creativity by examining the continuities and differences between machine and human creativity[3].

To date, the dominant approach in the field has been significantly shaped by the work of Margaret Boden – especially in *The Creative Mind*[4] – which has lent a particular orientation to the debate, framing creativity in different categorization. I will first introduce these categories and then examine them in more detail. Boden introduces two categories of creativity: psychological creativity (P-creativity), referring to the production of novel ideas relative to the individual creator, and historical creativity (H-creativity), which denotes absolute novelty within a cultural or historical framework[5]. Boden further distinguishes three modes of creativity: combinatorial, exploratory, and transformational. Combinatorial creativity consists of combining known ideas in unusual ways, i.e.,

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[1] D. Foster, *Generative Deep Learning. Teaching Machines to Paint, Write, Compose, and Play*, O'Reilly Media, Sebastopol (CA), 2019, p. 4.

[2] Not to mention the ongoing challenges associated with defining the very concept of intelligence. "Intelligence is not about being human, but about being able to behave effectively in new situations. This ability does not require a brain: we can find it also in plants, ant colonies and software. Different agents can display this ability to different extents in different tasks: there is not a single general way to be intelligent, nor a secret formula or a single test. It is misleading to attribute human qualities to all intelligent agents, and when reflecting on the intelligences we encounter in our browsers we would do better by comparing them with the snails and herbs in our garden, rather than with us". N. Cristianini, *The Shortcut. Why Intelligent Machines Do Not Think Like Us*, CRC Press, Boca Raton, 2023, p. 1.

[3] See *The Philosophy of Creativity: New Essays*, edited by Elliot Samuel Paul and Scott Barry Kaufman, Oxford University Press, 2014.

[4] M. A. Boden, *The Creative Mind. Myths and mechanism* (1990), Routledge, London/New York, 2004.

The recent debate on the relationship between art and artificial intelligence frequently responds to Boden's proposal that we use a varied version of the Turing test: "I will assume that the human carrying out the TT [Turing test] contemplates (looks at, listens to, and sometimes also interacts with) the result produced by the computer for five minutes or so, and then gives their opinion on it. And I will take it that for an "artistic" program to pass the TT would be for it to produce artwork which was: 1) indistinguishable from one produced by a human being; and/or 2) was seen as having as much aesthetic value as one produced by a human being" M.A. Boden, and M. Bishop, *The Turing test and artistic creativity*, in «Kybernetes», 39, 3, 2010, pp. 409-413, p. 409. https://doi.org/10.1108/03684921011036132.

[5] M. A. Boden, *The Creative Mind*, Op. cit., p. 2.

associating ideas that are only indirectly related to each other. For Boden, a collage would be an example of combinatorial creativity[6]. Exploratory creativity, on the other hand, is based on a culturally accepted style of thinking or 'conceptual space'. We can compare this to a drive through the countryside. You can stick to the highways on the map or take a smaller road that leads into the greenery. In exploratory creativity, the 'landscape' is a way of thinking. In this case, one explores a structured conceptual space, perhaps represented by a particular painting or musical style[7]. Importantly for Boden, exploratory creativity can also lead to transformational creativity. In transformational creativity, finally, the space or style is transformed by changing one or more of its defining dimensions. Science offers some of the best examples of transformational creativity, where paradigm shifts in knowledge can occur[8].

Despite their usefulness, these categories appear more accurately to represent strategies or modalities of creativity, rather than creativity itself. Within architectural practice, for instance, the notion of 'combinatorial design' bears strong resemblance to Boden's concept of combinatorial creativity. For architects, however, this is not a form of creativity in itself but merely a design strategy[9]. Even a design strategy does not guarantee creativity. For example, Boden claims that collage is an example of combinatorial creativity – and collage is certainly an artistic strategy, but a work created using collage does not guarantee a genuinely creative result. As Neil Leach also argues, Boden's approach seems to have a number of shortcomings[10]: a key limitation of Boden's framework lies in its outcome-centric orientation, she seems to categorize creativity based on the outcome. But shouldn't we understand creativity in terms of the creative process itself? Creativity can also play a role in design strategies, but surely, the actual creativity is what nourishes this creative process. For many designers, creativity is indeed a question of how the design process unfolds in relation to the possibilities of the

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[6] Ivi, p. 3. See also M. A. Boden, *Computers Models of Creativity*, Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence 103 (1998): 347-56.

[7] Ivi, pp. 4-5

[8] Ivi, pp. 5-6.

[9] N. Leach, *Architecture in the Age of Artificial Intelligence. An Introduction to AI for Architects*, Bloomsbury, London, 2022, p. 72.

[10] *Ibidem*
On the excessive rigidity of Boden's definition, see also C. Moruzzi, *Alla ricerca della creatività: le GAN come paradigma dell'autonomia nel software per la composizione musicale*, p. 150, in *Arte e intelligenza artificiale. Be My GAN* (a cura di A. Barale), Jaca Book, Milano, 2020.

materials and tools used. This observation extends beyond design to practices such as sculpture, where creativity is inseparable from the process: sculpture is not in the result, sculpture lies in the process[11]. Therefore, it makes little sense to assess creativity based on the outcome of this process. It would be like judging a building based on its 'style', thereby neglecting the epistemic and experiential dimensions of creative labor. So, let us instead examine the process itself and ask ourselves what makes creativity 'creativity'.

1. Text to Image (TTI)

One productive way to approach the question of whether AI systems – particularly those that generate images – can produce creative artifacts is to examine the initial stages of the generative process itself. Text-to-Image (TTI)[12] is a subfield of generative artificial intelligence where a model takes a textual description (prompt) and generates a corresponding image. The system interprets the natural language input and uses learned patterns from large datasets to create visual representations that match the described scene, object, or style[13].

Labeling is a crucial part of how TTI models are trained. TTI models rely on large-scale datasets composed of image-text pairs, where captions – generated either manually or automatically – serve as training signals. These labeled datasets enable the model to learn correlations between linguistic inputs and visual features. During training, the AI learns to associate language patterns with visual elements. Yet, currently, the cognitive world of TTI (Text-To-Image) is equally composed of its data and how they are labeled[14]. If TTI could access all images on the entire Internet in the future, the discussion might change, but right now, the situation is such that its world is much more limited than the human one. If these images associated with specific words are selected by individuals (engineers,

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[11] *Ibidem*

[12] C. Zhang, C. Zhang, M. Zhang, In S. Kweon, J. Kim, *Text-to-image Diffusion Models in Generative AI: A Survey*, https://arxiv.org/abs/2303.07909. Cfr. M. Żelaszczyk, J. Mańdziuk, *Text-to-Image Cross-Modal Generation: A Systematic Review*, https://arxiv.org/abs/2401.11631.

[13] These models are typically based on deep learning architectures such as Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) or diffusion models (like DALL·E, Stable Diffusion, or Midjourney). Cfr. S. Mansour, *Intelligent Graphic Design: The Effectiveness of Midjourney as a Participant in a Creative Brainstorming Session*. International Design Journal, 2023, 13(5), pp.501-512. DOI: 10.21608/idj.2023.231684.1090.

[14] F. D'Isa, *La rivoluzione algoritmica delle immagini, Arte e intelligenza artificiale*, Luca Sosella editore, Roma, 2024, p. 17.

designers, and other practitioners), *this means by definition that the creative possibilities are limited from the start*[15].

Let's describe more in detail the implications of this last point for creativity within an image theory perspective. First and foremost, it is essential to recognize that the images used to train TTI models are not neutral or universal, but rather deeply embedded within specific visual cultures. These visual cultures are themselves structured by what can be referred to as *visual regimes* – historically and ideologically constructed ways of seeing and making visible. Michael Baxandall's concept of the 'period eye' offers a useful analytical tool to understand how perception is shaped by the cultural and social conditions of a given historical moment[16]. In the context of TTI, we can think of the training datasets as embodying a sort of algorithmic[17] period eye – a historically contingent way of seeing encoded in digital form. Furthermore, the notion of *visual regime*, as introduced by Christian Metz[18] in the context of cinema and later expanded by Martin Jay in the *Scopic regimes of Modernity*[19], highlights how visuality is always mediated by discursive, institutional, and technical constraints. Jonathan Crary's contributions to the genealogy of vision also underscore how modern regimes of visuality are linked to apparatuses of power, surveillance[20], and normalization[21]. When applied to TTI systems, these theoretical frameworks help us understand that the generative mechanisms are not simply reflecting reality, but are actively reproducing and reinforcing the biases embedded in the datasets. These datasets – curated by engineers, designers, and other practitioners – carry with them

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[15] While some artists are pioneering the creation of personalized datasets to fine-tune AI models, tools that support such customization remain relatively limited. Even when these options are available, the fine-tuning process tends to be technically demanding and not easily inaccessible to users without specialized expertise.

[16] "A man used to fifteenth-century Italian architecture might well infer that the circle is a circular building with a cupola perhaps; and that the rectangular wings are halls. But a fifteenth-century Chinese, once he had learned the ground plan convention, might infer a circular central court on the lines of the new Temple of Heaven at Peking". M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* (1972), Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 31.

[17] On the topic of algorithm as black box, see, for example, F. Pasquale, *The black box society. The secret algorithms that control money and information*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2015 ed E. Finn, *What algorithms want. Imagination in the age of computing*, MIT Press, Cambridge 2017.

[18] C. Metz, *Le signifiant imaginaire*, in "*Communications*" 23 (1975), pp. 3-55.

[19] M. Jay, *Scopic Regimes of Modernity*, in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. H. Foster, The New Press, New York, 1988.

[20] See S. Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism. The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, PublicAffairs Books, New York, 2019.

[21] J. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1990.

the selective assumptions, cultural preferences, and exclusions of a specific visual regime. As a result, the creative outputs of TTI systems are inherently constrained by the cultural, sexual and ideological boundaries embedded in the visual material on which they were trained.

Exactly this last point suggests a broader reflection about how artificial intelligence should be understood not only as *artificial intelligence,* but just as much as *artificial imaginary*[22]. In other words, the issue of AI is no longer simply about the fact that such systems generate *images,* but about the fact that they carry with them their own *imaginaries*. AI systems do not create from a neutral or universal standpoint; rather, they actively reproduce and amplify the imaginaries embedded in their training data. What is ultimately at stake is not just the image utilize in the dataset, but the ideological and cultural construction of *visibility* and *invisibility* itself – of the imaginary that underpins and sustains it. In this sense, creativity is subject to a double constraint: first, by the images selected during the training phase, and second, by the fact that creativity becomes further locked into a specific artificial imaginary – one whose contours often remain opaque to the user. Paradoxically, the apparent advantage offered by these tools turns out to be a double-edged sword: initially valuable for simplifying the creative process, but ultimately limiting – and perhaps even detrimental – once we realize that they operate within an imaginary from which it is extremely difficult to disengage, especially when the practices in question aim to be genuinely creative.

2. Linguistic *vs* iconic

In the philosophical and image theory debates of recent decades, much has been said about the shift from the *linguistic turn* – which dominated twentieth-century philosophy – to what has been termed the *iconic turn*. Numerous scholars[23] have contributed to this shift, highlighting a renewed attention to the epistemic power of images. They have analyzed the mechanisms through which images function in relation to language, suggesting that images are not merely illustrative of words but operate as autonomous vehicles of meaning, possessing their own logic and agency. With the

[22] In the terms in which Wunenburger discussed it in *L'immaginario* (2003), tr. it. di V. Chiore, Il Nuovo Melangolo, Genova, 2008. By the same author on the topic of creativity, see the following contribution J. J, Wunenburger, *Principes et enjeux d'une morpho-esthétique*, pp. 151-163, in *Les figures de la forme*, a cura di G. Gayon, J. J. Wunenburger, Editions L'Harmattan, Paris, 1992.

[23] On this debate see A. Pinotti, A. Somaini, *Teorie dell'immagine. Il dibattito contemporaneo*, Cortina, Milano, 2009, pp. 9-35. See also A. Pinotti, A. Somaini, *Cultura Visuale. Immagini Sguardi Media Dispositivi*, Einaudi, Torino, 2016.

emergence of TTI (Text-To-Image) systems, some may be tempted to claim that we are witnessing a return to the linguistic turn, since the process of image generation is now triggered by language, that is by the carefully constructed prompt. However, such a reading risks oversimplifying the complex relationship between word and image. The fact that designers or creatives operating in the visual domain – traditionally working with images – must now engage with textual prompts is more an irony of fate related to technological development than a sign of a shift back to language. Simply put, the ability of a prompt to initiate the generation of an image does not mean that it can exhaust its meaning or visual richness. As Hans Thoma's *Auf der Waldewiese* (1876) illustrates, no prompt can truly capture the multiplicity of green shades present in the painting, which as such cannot be reduced to the language of the prompt. That's because language fails to account for the nuance of vision. What AI can certainly do is replicate the style if it has been trained with Hans Thoma's style. And it does this very well. As Lev Manovich notes, AI systems are often more competent than art students in replicating visual styles[24]. Yet this competence is rooted in statistical modeling, not in artistic intention or creative innovation. One might speak of an emerging 'AI style' (see 5.) but as with human artists who merely replicate the style of the past, we tend not to consider imitation as creative in itself. In this light, AI-generated images resemble the work of skilled draftsmen who once depicted cathedrals with more accuracy than Picasso.

3. AI as an autonomous creative

Let's look at this process in more detail and ask ourselves to what extent these systems can truly generate something creative. The debate may be framed around two principal positions[25]: one that

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[24] L. Manovich, *Towards "General Artificial Intelligence"?*, "Art Basel", 1 June 2023 www.artbasel.com/news/lev-manovich

[25] In this paper, I deliberately frame the debate in polarized terms – between AI as an autonomous creative agent and AI as a mere tool – in order to clarify the main positions currently at play within the discourse. This dichotomy serves as a useful heuristic device to map the conceptual landscape. However, such a rigid distinction inevitably begins to dissolve upon closer examination. The boundaries between tool and agent, between instrumentality and autonomy, are increasingly blurred in contemporary creative practices involving AI, suggesting that any categorical opposition must be approached with caution. See A. Barale, *Arte e intelligenza artificiale: alcune domande*, pp. 7-18, in *Arte e intelligenza artificiale. Be My GAN* (a cura di A. Barale), Op. cit. See also F. D'Isa, *La rivoluzione algoritmica delle immagini*, *Op. cit*. pp. 49-51.

regards AI as an autonomous creative agent, and another that conceives of it primarily as a tool (or instrument) in the hands of creatives[26].

AI as an autonomous creative[27]. This position emphasizes the fact that there has never been a tool with such a degree of *autonomy*. AI's elaborate data in a partially autonomous way and from this point of view, AI's are very different from a paintbrush or a piano. In fact, the concept of AI itself implies a tendence to increase the autonomy, it had never happened before that a tool was capable of such an autonomous elaboration. As evidence of this, the results are always different and never the same as the starting data. However, I find it hard to recognize this autonomy as a reason to consider the works created by AI as creative. That's because if it were truly autonomous, it would create works that we wouldn't understand, or it would take us a long time to comprehend them. It seems to me that, at the moment, there are only the two levels of creativity that Margaret Boden talks about: combinatorial and exploratory. At the first level, machines merely combine individual data points available to them, while at the second level, they also explore the space between these points, creating new data points that did not previously exist. This, for example, results in a symphony that we would easily recognize as a beautiful work of Mozart, but that Mozart obviously never wrote. By exploring a thought space – in this case, a musical style – new data points (new artifacts) in the thought space are created. Yet, we would never call them creative because they are too familiar, even to the untrained ear. Ultimately, what is missing is (paradoxically[28]) the transformative aspect, the ability not only to explore the space horizontally but to break through it vertically and shatter the patterns or schemas. In this sense, if the machine could truly break the schemas, it would probably produce something that we couldn't even understand[29].

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[26] I prefer to adopt the term *creative* rather than *artist*, as the latter often carries hierarchical implications that reinforce distinctions between high and low culture, potentially obscuring the broader dynamics at play. By focusing instead on the work of creatives operating across various domains of the cultural and creative industries, it becomes easier to understand how AI is being integrated into contemporary workflows – not only in artistic practices, but also in design, communication, advertising, and other sectors. (If I consider the example of the artist from now on, it is for illustrative reasons that will help me in the argument).

[27] For a discussion about AI autonomous Art see S. Chiodo, *What AI "art" can teach us about art*, Journal of Aesthetics & Culture, 2024, Vol. 16, 2395511 https://doi.org/10.1080/20004214.2024.2395511

[28] The acronym of GPT stands exactly for Generative, Pre-trained, and Transformer.

[29] In this context, the literature discusses about hallucination: the term *hallucination* refers to instances in which an artificial intelligence model produces outputs that can be interpreted as inaccurate or entirely fabricated with respect to the data it was trained on or the user's input. In the context of image generation, the fact that the system produces outputs

4. AI as a tool

What makes creativity 'creativity'? As previously discussed, the possibilities of the AI creativity process are already constrained from the outset by its embeddedness within a specific scopic regime of visuality (1.). However, this is not a decisive argument against the possibility that machines can be creative. After all, even within limited possibilities, creativity can emerge – just as children demonstrate imagination and inventiveness while playing with Lego blocks. What makes a person creative, which AI still lacks, is *spontaneity* – the act of doing something simply for the sake of it or for joy. *The reason it makes no sense to say that AI is creative is simply that it has no need to be creative*. For a variety of reasons, we can attribute creativity to it because it creates something that didn't exist before, but it lacks a crucial characteristic: the creative spark. That means that at some point, a creator feels the urge – which I would characterize as a kind of *fundamental passivity*[30] – to create something that didn't exist before[31]. Just like a craftsman or an engineer, the artist even more so does not create art to fulfill a specific purpose, but rather he does so purely for the sake of joy. Only afterward is this joy of creation channeled into a life that may be shaped by beliefs – whether political or religious in nature – or into a dimension of social recognition, as is often the case with young artists or writers.

The point is that if not programmed, AI has no impulse in the sense of passivity. AI does not 'play' as Kant described it; it lacks this fundamental passivity that drives us to create something simply for the sake of creating. From the perspective on creativity that I am proposing, there was no real reason

that are novel in relation to the visual data it has learned results in a behavior that, within the creative domain, is interpreted not merely as an error, but also – and perhaps more importantly – as a source of creative potential. "However, we should be conscious of the risk of anthropomorphizing computer operations by using human-centric language to describe their operations" N. Leach, *Architecture in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*, op. cit., p. 209, n. 30. See also: del Campo, M. and Leach, N. (2022), *Can Machines Hallucinate Architecture? AI as Design Method*, p. 8, in Archit. Design, 92: 6-13. https://doi.org/10.1002/ad.2807. The use of such expressions is a way for us to explain phenomena that we would otherwise struggle to conceptualize. If we were to open the machine, we would find nothing inside that corresponds to what we typically understand as a hallucination. In phenomenology, for instance, hallucination is defined as a perception without a content. This highlights that the use of the term in the context of AI is metaphorical, serving to describe outputs that deviate from expected or verifiable results, and which have nothing to do with subjective phenomena or creative experience.

[30] M. M*erleau-Ponty, Eye and Mind*, in *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. James E. Edie. Trans. Carleton Dallery. Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1964. See, M. Merleau-Ponty, *Institution and Passivity: Course Notes from the Collège de France (1954- 1955)*, tr. by L. Lawlor and H. Massey, Northwestern University Press, Evanston 2010.

[31] For another phenomenological perspective discussing the issue of creativity, I refer to B. Nanay, *An Experiential Account of Creativity*, pp. 17-38, in *The Philosophy of Creativity*, op. cit. "My claim is that in order to capture some of the crucial features of creative processes, we need to analyze them on the experiential level" (Ivi, p, 24).

why people in ancient times created the cave paintings. Anthropologists and scholars of *Bildwissenschaft* can provide various, quite correct explanations. However, what I am alluding to here is a fundamental passivity that cannot be traced back to these – albeit correct – motivations. It is difficult to find the right words to describe this fundamental passivity, but it is a kind of intolerance that people feel when they see certain things and fear they may never be seen again in the future. The artist (creator) then strives to anchor these things in the collective consciousness[32]. This fundamental passivity is an antidote to apathy. Human beings cannot bear to stand still; the mind cannot rest, and even when it does rest, it dreams[33]. The mind produces images and narratives even in sleep simply for the joy of creating. We are compelled to create, while when the machine is turned off, it is truly turned off. There are two distinct levels of "off" for a machine: first, when the machine lacks power, it does not exist at all – this state is more like death. On a second level, when no one uses it but power is present, the machine gives itself no commands. In this case, we might imagine it training itself by going through other content to learn, but that only happens because someone commanded it to. Here, the comparison with the dream is appropriate again: a dream does not materialize into a work of art; I must create something myself in reality. An AI will do nothing on its own initiative without being prompted. That is why AI cannot be compared to an artist or a creative. Instead of seeing machines as creative agent, we should understand them as tools[34].

A second point concerns the fact that it is not AI that decides what makes a work of art a work of art (or a creative product a creative product), but rather the artist, or more broadly the creatives. This lead us to the issue of authorship, who is actually the author? From this perspective, AI should be treated exactly as if it were a paintbrush or a piano*: a medium of art*. AI has further simplified the process,

[32] Something similar happens with great art and great novels: for instance, Nabokov captured something eternal with *Lolita*, something no one had seen before him, and out of fear that it might never be seen again, he wrote it so that others could see it. See V. Nabokov, *Lolita* (1955), Penguin, 2012. *A work such as Lolita remains difficult for contemporary AI to reproduce, as it requires control over multiple layers of rhetorical, stylistic, and ethical ambiguity, presupposing a level of competence and sensibility not yet attainable by generative models.*

[33] On the function of the dream within the life of consciousness, see at least: Lohmar, D., *Phänomenologie der schwachen Phantasie. Untersuchungen der Psychologie, Cognitive Science, Neurologie und Phänomenologie zur Funktion der Phantasie in der Wahrnehmung*, Springer, Dordrecht 2008, especially pp. 157-171. Sepp, H.R.,"Dream", in L. Embree, H.R. Sepp (eds.), *Handbook of Phenomenological Aesthetics*, Springer, Dordrecht 2010, pp. 75-80. De Warren, N., "*The Third Life of Subjectivity: Towards a Phenomenology of Dreaming*", in R. Breeur, U. Melle (eds.), *Life, Subjectivity and Art: Essays in Honor of Rudolf Bernet*, Phaenomenologica 201, Springer, Dordrecht 2012, pp. 457-479.

[34] Upon closer reflection: *the truly creative act was to invent these systems*.

but it lacks the fundamental drive to create something that didn't exist before. The person who writes the prompt decides whether what AI generates is interesting or not, and whether it is creative or not. Here, the dimensions of understanding and the judgment of taste of the person evaluating the result come into play. Melanie Mitchell articulates these aspects very clearly in his book, by claiming: "I believe that it is possible, in principle, for a computer to be creative. But I also believe that being creative entails being able to *understand* and *judge* what one has created. In this sense of creativity, no existing computer can be said to be creative"[35]. According to Mitchell, "creativity comes about only through collaboration[36] with a human who lends the ability to *understand* what makes [in this case] music good and thus provides *judgment* on the computer's output"[37].

Let's exemplify that with the example of writing: I must be someone who has spent hours upon hours writing and reading; only then will I have a mature judgment that allows me to select, time after time, what is good and what should be discarded. Therefore, we must ask whether the person using this tool and making judgments is competent enough to determine whether what AI has generated is sufficiently original. For example, in art cities like Milan, many cartoonists draw caricatures. The caricature can be a good example: it is very pretty but ultimately ephemeral. They have a very elusive taste, like a wine that doesn't linger in the mouth.

Artificial intelligence systems are neither capable taking *responsibility* for their creations nor of making *judgements of taste* about what they generate. Ultimately, the question of creativity lies in the hands of those who write the prompt and give the machine commands to follow certain rules in the process[38]. For these reasons, machines cannot give the rule to art – as Kant described in relation to the

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[35] M. Mitchell, *Artificial Intelligence. A Guide for Thinking Humans*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2022, p. 278.

[36] Some authors value the opportunity of collaboration between (human) artists and AI, such as Daniele, A. and Song, Y.-Z., "*AI + Art = Human*." AAAI/ACM Conference on AI, Ethics and Society, Honolulu, 155–161, 2019. Others point out the risk of replacing (human) artists with AI, such as Ch'ng, E. 2019. "*Art by Computing Machinery. Is Machine Art Acceptable in the Artworld?*" ACM Transactions on Multimedia Computing, Communications and Applications 15 (2): 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1145/3326338.

[37] Ivi, p. 279. (My italics). Lev Manovich argues in the same direction: "[a] neural network does not understand what it generates. It has no knowledge of the world, or history or contemporary culture. It can't evaluate its own creations or judge what is interesting and what is banal. Neural networks learn to extract common patterns from their training data and ignore rare artifacts, so they are better at making conventional rather than unique things". L. Manovich, *Towards "General Artificial Intelligence"?*, Op. cit.

[38] In this direction AI is nothing but a tool, and in particular a "combination of materials and procedures," through which the artist, in the present as in the past, shapes his experience of questioning human existence for other human beings,

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genius. "Genius is the talent (natural gift) that gives the rule to art. Since the talent, as an inborn productive faculty of the artist, itself belongs to nature, this could also be expressed thus: Genius is the inborn predisposition of the mind (*ingenium*) through which nature gives the rule to art"[39]. Perhaps one day a genius will emerge and show us something no one has seen before, revealing new applications of AI, as today AI is designed for very specific tasks. For now, however, this lies only in the realm of *possibility*[40]. *In reality* – and without reverting to an outdated eighteenth-century model of genius as an isolated, god-like creator – we should instead look to individuals with talent who, through years of study and critical engagement, have cultivated a refined judgment of taste, allowing them to assess whether something is aesthetically valuable or not. That is to say that the creative ones are those who guide the process, by taking responsibility for what they have written and then selected[41].Therefore, it makes little sense to ask whether AI systems can generate creative artifacts; rather, we should ask whether the people behind them are truly creative[42]. The final question, then, is: *Are our creatives truly creative?* [43]

5. AI and style

That last question leads immediately to another, which is closely related: is there a risk that the increasing reliance on technical aids might actually diminish the creativity of our creatives? The concern is that we may be cultivating a generation of creatives – graphic designers, visual

because "everything begins and ends with" the human being". S. Chiodo, *Intelligenza artificiale e destino della forma*, p. 228, in "Scienza e filosofia", 30, 2/2023, pp. 210-234. (my translation)

[39] §46 *Beautiful art is art of genius*. I. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (1790), tr. by P. Guyer, E. Matthews, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 186.

[40] Precisely because it is not bound by utilitarian interests, artistic practice has the capacity to reveal unforeseen possibilities for AI applications – possibilities that have yet to be fully explored or realized. When I state this I am thinking of the critique that Kant is making against a certain empiricism of taste judgment. See §2 p. 90. I. Kant, *Op. cit.*, *§2 The satisfaction that determines the judgment of taste is without any interest* (ivi, p. 90).

[41] This distinction between genius and talent is well summarized by Schopenhauer, when he write "Talent hits a target no one else can hit. Genius hits a target no one else can see" A, Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation, Vol* II. I believe that Margaret Boden had something similar in mind when she discussed about psychological and historical creativity.

[42] Questioning whether AI's system are able to generate creative artifacts is like asking a camera to take an artistic photo. It trivially makes no sense. Just as the advent of photography required a significant period before it was fully recognized as a medium for artistic expression (art photographs), the emergence of AI similarly demands time before we begin to see works of art that are *meaningfully* and *intrinsically* shaped by its logic.

[43] For those in the creative industries who argue that AI is taking over their work, it may be worth considering that if a machine can easily replicate their output, it means they are doing a creative work in an uncreative way.

communicators, and others – who have never drawn by hand or engaged with traditional tools prior to the advent of AI. This could potentially lead to a ‘*degeneration’* of visual representation, as foundational skills and embodied artistic practices risk being replaced by automated processes. In such a scenario, we risk an overproduction of work that feels overly common – replications of existing models rendered in static and conventional ways[44]. This is how *conventionalization* begins, much like what occurred in the transition from Greek to Roman statuary[45], or later and even more prominently, with the development of linear perspective in the Renaissance. The advent of perspective plays an eminent role in the history of representation[46], as it enabled an unprecedented increase in realism. This culminated, for example, in the hyperrealism of painters like Canaletto, whose *vedute* rendered urban landscapes with almost photographic accuracy. Yet, over time, even such technically flawless works began to feel overly familiar – predictable even to the untrained eye – because they adhered too closely to established visual codes and conventions. This excessive conventionalization, which led to a saturation of the mimetic paradigm, clashed with the need for new expressive forms, paving the way for abstractionism as a reaction, as artists sought to liberate themselves from the constraints of mimetic representation. *Mutatis mutandis*, I believe something similar could happen with the rise of AI in creative production. Just as the intensification of realism ultimately pushed art toward minimalism, AI may be prompting a search for new expressive solutions – likely, once again, in the direction of a minimal, concept-driven aesthetic. But this will happen only if AI asserts itself as a recognizable style – that is, if it becomes a widely acknowledged visual ‘language’ adopted by those working in creative industries, marketing, communication, the fashion industry, museums, institutions, or among content creators and influencers. The real danger, then, is not only aesthetic but also sociocultural: having drastically simplified the creative process, AI is empowering content creators and influencers to perform tasks traditionally carried out by artists and professionals in the creative fields, but without the fundamental passivity that compels human beings to create for the

[44] From a stylistic perspective, these technologies tend to synthesize idealized, flawless images, often exhibiting an aesthetic close to classicism. Moreover, TTI outputs frequently appear rhetorical, stereotypical, and lacking in originality, qualities that Lev Manovich associates with kitsch. L. Manovich, *Towards “General Artificial Intelligence”?*, *Op. cit*.

[45] A. Riegl, *Late Roman Art Industry* (1901), Tr. by R. Winkes, Giorgio Bretschneider Editore, Rome, 1985. Riegl does not describe the iconological transition from Greek to Roman statuary as an aesthetic degeneration of the representation; rather, he interprets it as an expression of a different *Kunstwollen*, an “artistic will” that reflects a shift in cultural values and perceptual aspects.

[46] E. Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (1927), Tr. by C. S. Wood, Zone Books, New York, 1991.

pure joy of creation. By streamlining creation, we risk transferring the (unclaimed) responsibility to define what counts within a society as artistically or aesthetically valuable to individuals whose primary motivation is social visibility or commercial gain, rather than the pursuit of aesthetic necessity. The same risk applies to literature: the novel, too, is being subjected to a kind of flattening. Many of these works are like a wine that passes too easily over the palate – pleasant, perhaps, but lacking complexity or lasting impression. If we become accustomed to these products – if, in other words, common sense will accept them as aesthetically valuable – then there is a risk that this will lead to a standardization of aesthetic judgment. Yet, in the long run, only the truly valuable creations endure, and its ultimately history that will tell us which experiences have been truly significant.

Metábasis.it
PHYLOSOPHY AND COMMUNICATION

ONLINE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY
WITH *PEER REVIEW*
WWW.METABASIS.IT
May 2025 year XX n. 39

MIMESIS
Sesto San Giovanni (MI)
via Monfalcone, 17/19

AlboVersorio Edizioni

& AlboVersorio Edizioni
di Ass. NonsoloSophia
nonsolosophia@gmail.com

Autorizzazione del Tribunale di Varese n. 893 del 23/02/2006.
ISSN 1828-1567