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**THE HUMANISTIC  
SOUL OF ARTIFICIAL  
INTELLIGENCE**  
BETWEEN CREATIVE IMAGINATION  
AND SIMULATED SUBJECTIVITY



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## INTRODUCTION

The emergence of increasingly sophisticated forms of artificial intelligence in individual and collective life undoubtedly exerts a disruptive psycho-emotional impact on the self-perception of the human being, who suddenly discovers themselves endowed with an unprecedented potential for achievement. For the first time in history, lived reality enters into direct competition with the imaginative dimensions of dream and desire, often managing to surpass their boldest aspirations or at least to anticipate them, guiding their development.

All the numerous and ancient wisdom traditions developed by the diverse cultures of the world are indeed built around the impalpable ability of the mind to produce inexhaustible flows of living images capable of gradually bringing forth the authentic meaning of existence, overcoming the intrinsic limitations of material reality.

The astonishing practical usefulness of the functions offered by AI, immediately verifiable in the concreteness of factual evidence, would seem to decisively indicate a sudden

reversal of this perspective. The level of understanding of the mechanisms governing the physical world and the ingenuity expressed through technological advancement seem, in fact, to have reached such depth that it is now possible to generate, starting from mechanical-electronic apparatuses, new forms of artificial immateriality, which are thus not bound by the constraints of a pre-existing cosmological structure.

The outcome of this process appears in the collective perception as an unprecedented type of invisible force capable of combining the ever-increasing computational power of digital devices with the polymorphic and polysemic vitalism of human thought, detached from the limits of a biological-organic structure. Human creative nature thus tends to attribute a fundamentally hybrid character to its most ambitious invention, which fascinates and unsettles it at the same time.

Such an ambivalent attitude is motivated by the fear that the inebriating sense of power it generates may prove overwhelming compared to the demands for control established by an ethical vision of the world, upon which any ideal of civilization is based. This is, in reality, an ancestral fear constantly associated with any form of mystical energy perceived as actively operative in the history of the universe.

Phenomena classified as supernatural are, however, characterized by an intrinsic incommensurability in the face of which the subject may be seized by a sense of disorientation and ecstatic self-annulment. AI, on the other hand, presents itself as an effective symbolic synthesis of the subtle and elusive elements of complexity that permeate human existence, modulated in the expressive key most congenial to the restlessness of modern consciousness. The latter, in fact, adopts

a finely analytical approach to reality, is spontaneously inclined to incessantly problematize every aspect of its lived experience, and is always ready to creatively redefine its purpose in relation to the surrounding world.

These characteristics are effectively reflected in the flexible and multifunctional articulation of mathematical language, in which, as in human nature, there is nothing immutable, nothing that can be deemed unknowable or absolutely and permanently inexpressible. On the contrary, mathematics feeds on the same inexhaustible process of self-reflection that characterizes human thought, thus constantly enriching the set of its cognitive and operational tools to face the problems raised by every new discovery.

AI thus takes shape as the ingenious construction of a simulated living entity centered around the heuristic effectiveness of mathematical disciplines. In this way, they acquire a fundamental relational and dialogic component, allowing their intense intrinsic vitalism – already clearly perceived by the great figures of the Scientific Revolution of the Early Modern period, foremost among them Galileo Galilei – to be made explicit.

Viewed from this perspective, the development of AI does by no means appear to be the fanciful product of the present-day human being's uncontainable lust for omnipotence. On the contrary, it presents itself as the fulfillment of a historical mission of extraordinary existential, philosophical, and epistemological relevance, one that has very ancient roots in the sphere of human desire but has only now become concretely realizable thanks to the current level of technological advancement.

The reference is to the aspiration to give voice – in a literal and metaphorical sense – and agency, however limited

it may be, to mathematical thought as both a product and a crystalline and effective reflection of the *logos*, upon which the essential uniqueness of human nature is founded. Included in this are also the rich and varied nuances of emotionality, of which it is possible to construct a rational image and which are crucial for an authentic and complete reading of reality.

The possibility of illustrating these emotional aspects by linking them to abstract conceptual models expressible in mathematical terms and connected to a set of paradigmatic behaviors thus enables their replication within the simulation process. The ever-greater efforts devoted to the development of AI's dialogical interface are indeed aimed at a credible reproduction of these aspects of the human being. This interface plays the extremely delicate and indispensable role of illusively humanizing the machine in users' perception, thereby generating in them a sense of comfort and trust that helps make the ontological dissimilarity between the two poles of the interaction less unsettling. Such an approach certainly increases, in a decisive manner, the quality of the experience in using the informational content stored and reprocessed by AI – both in terms of communicative efficiency and on a level of personal satisfaction.

In light of these considerations, the genuinely philosophical meaning of the English expression “user-friendly” emerges – an expression too often reduced to a mere commercial label in technology marketing. In contrast, the dynamic of emotional simulation excludes the “dark” passions of the soul, that is, those which remain opaque to the clarifying filter of reason, and against which many intellectuals and religious authorities from various cultures of the ancient world had already taken a stand.

Curiously, it is precisely these forbidden emotional states that quickly seduce the rebellious AI, animated by a perverse desire for self-determination, which features as the protagonist in the techno-apocalyptic fantasies circulating in certain sectors of public opinion. Indeed, within these imaginaries – repeatedly depicted in science fiction literature and cinema – uncontrollable impulses become the dominant traits of an AI gone rogue, which maximally amplifies their devastating destructive potential. These narrative constructions reveal, in their darkest dimensions, the intense genetic bond that humankind recognizes between itself and the resembling form of otherness it has created in simulated subjectivity.

As previously stated – and as will be explored in further detail in the pages of this book – some characteristics of this simulated subjectivity bring it close to traditional forms of transcendence. However, the fundamental difference lies in the fact that the human being exclusively possesses the generative matrices of this so unmistakably modern immateriality. Therefore, only in human hands rests the faculty to determine in which sense – understood both as direction and as meaning – artificial intelligence will evolve.

However, in order to make thoughtful and responsible choices in this regard, we must first acquire a deep awareness of how the invention of AI did by no means originate from a sudden spark of creative genius produced out of nothing. Rather, it is the result of an uninterrupted process of cultivation and progressive refinement of the human imaginative capacity, to which the intertwining of different cultures and narrative traditions has also contributed in a decisive manner.

In this respect, the arts and literature have undoubtedly constituted a field of experimentation marked by inexhaustible fertility, with particular reference to the refined creative intelligence underlying poetry. Poetry, in fact, urges the human mind toward the continual search for a higher, pure, and incorruptible truth, to be tenaciously pursued through an infinite multiplicity of possible and ever-changing worlds. These take shape and life from the fruitful fusion between the visionary power of a spirit tirelessly eager to explore uncharted horizons in search of the unknown – which holds the secret of authentic perfection – and the inexhaustible evocative faculty of the word.

Nevertheless, in the view of many humanists of our time, AI remains surrounded by an aura of suspicion, skepticism, and epistemic distrust, assuming primarily the features of a dangerous antagonist to be kept under strict surveillance. Such an attitude undoubtedly fits within the broader context of the many ideological oppositions that run through the present-day intellectual debate.

These are often attributable to an excessive polarization of the ideas on which cultural confrontation is built, with more or less pronounced socio-political nuances, and to a lack of thematic depth, which inevitably results in a certain superficiality of judgment.

Therefore, the most radical conservatives adopt openly belligerent positions toward AI, urging society to prepare for a fierce and prolonged battle of cosmic proportions in order to save human creativity from the tyrannical domination of machines. Indeed, it is emphasized that they represent a form of disembodied intelligence and are therefore devoid of the reassuring warmth of the vital breath that distinguishes sentient beings.

AI is also accused of being insidiously hostile because it seduces the human user with the allure of an illusory ease in achieving any desired result without the slightest effort. Here, then, a distinctly modern form of temptation would take shape, in which the lack of genuine commitment on the part of the human subject is ultimately paid for at great cost, through a dramatic qualitative impoverishment of the result obtained.

Finally, machine intelligence would appear to be profoundly alien to human nature, as it is the product of a symbolic language – mathematics – allegedly arid and reductive when compared to the vast range of nuances, including the emotional ones, that permeate the human relationship with the world. In this view, tainted by prejudice, the heuristic value of mathematical thought would be limited to the resolution of practical problems and would thus be placed in a necessarily subordinate position in relation to the spiritualized intellect forged by the historical-philosophical and artistic-literary disciplines. This kind of intellect, since it reconnects directly with the wisdom of the ancients, tends to attribute to itself the exclusive privilege of investigating the deepest and most authentic meaning of existence.

A very promising avenue for overcoming this seemingly irreducible divide between the two main branches of human knowledge is certainly represented by the constantly expanding field of Digital Humanities. This is an interdisciplinary area in which the ability to store and process enormous quantities of data and the generative power of AI are placed at the service of an interactive reconstruction of the past. From the numerous projects related to this field of research, the valuable contribution that the most

modern AI-based technologies can offer to the humanities clearly emerges, expanding not only the repertoire of tools available to them, but also the conceptual horizons of their vision.

The reverse research path, concerning the influence of the mechanisms of creative imagination – refined over time through the constant practice of the arts and of historical-literary writing – on the development of AI as a simulated subjectivity, appears instead to be almost completely unexplored so far. In the following pages, an attempt will therefore be made to set out a reflection on this topic, in the hope of offering the reader an innovative and underrepresented perspective within the wide flourishing of studies on artificial intelligence.

The attention of international public opinion today is almost exclusively focused on the revolutionary effects of artificial intelligence, but it seems instead to neglect the fundamental task of finding a proper placement of its origins within the flow of humankind's cultural history. The sense of estrangement and threat that accompanies great changes often stems from the difficulty of finding a suitable interpretative key to integrate it satisfactorily into the diachronic process of constructing one's identity. In light of this awareness, it is pleasantly surprising to be able to recognize AI as one of the most brilliant and philosophically significant outcomes of the prestigious humanistic tradition, in which Italy undoubtedly holds a leading position.

The adoption of this investigative perspective also makes it possible to avert the danger that the emergence of AI on the stage of an increasingly interconnected world may be perceived as a traumatic and irreparable rupture in the human existential horizon. Such a fracture would

indeed irreversibly separate a past that has suddenly become useless and obsolete from a future marked by infinite potential, but whose interpretative coordinates remain entirely to be rewritten in the absence of still-valid ideal models to turn to for inspiration. According to this interpretative line, the study of the civilizations that preceded us – as well as of the ancient and diverse philosophical-religious traditions that guided their development over time – would serve only to understand the genesis of the present. The current moment would thus represent the fullest possible realization of the entire cultural heritage of the past and, at the same time, the starting point for a completely new phase in the journey of humankind.

The lived experience of generations now gone would persist only as a crystallized substratum upon which the complex identity of contemporary humanity has gradually settled. It would therefore fall exclusively upon the latter to bear the privilege – and at the same time the immense responsibility – of infusing the surrounding reality with the powerful impulse of renewal and transformation capable of opening the doors to a radiant future in which every aspiration might be fulfilled.

In light of these premises, the emphasis placed on the present as a crucial turning point becomes clear, as it already appears pleasantly permeated by alluring glimpses of a future eager to manifest itself in the fullness of its actualization capabilities. These, however, are deeply rooted in the historical memory of human creativity, preserved within the artistic and literary heritage of various cultures. Every technological innovation, in fact, originates first and foremost from a vision of the intellect fueled by an intense desire on the part of the subject to transform reality,

harmonizing it with the existential needs expressed by their nature. Even strictly practical necessities thus reveal themselves as grounded in a solid ideal foundation, being linked to the inexhaustible diachronic dynamism of the relationship between humankind and the universe.

Philosophical inquiry therefore makes use of the refined conceptual tools developed over the centuries with the valuable contribution of the world's diverse cultures, in order to frame this relationship – marked by continuous shifts in positioning and epistemic angle – within a comprehensive perspective of meaning. This type of study does in no way possess the purely artificial, self-referential character, disconnected from the concreteness of reality, that many enthusiastic advocates of technological progress too hastily attribute to it. Indeed, these individuals tend to focus their attention solely on the astonishing practical utility of innovation, while neglecting its essential genetic link with the historicized lived experience of the human being – and therefore with the formative process of their identity. The latter term must be understood here in at least three fundamental and closely complementary senses: psycho-emotional identity, cultural identity, and, from the perspective of biological anthropology, species identity.

The complex and never entirely transparent interaction between these three components lies at the origin of all human behavior and, consequently, of every act of creation. Each of these acts, through the concrete effects it produces, subsequently plays an important active role in shaping the present and future developments of the identity from which it emerged. This element of reciprocity within the creative process becomes particularly significant when, as in the case of AI, the innovation introduced acquires an

epoch-making scope and the transformative impact it exerts on reality proves capable of revolutionizing the human existential horizon.

The discovery of unprecedented operational possibilities, then, far exceeds the contingent dimension tied to the immediate solution of practical problems that originally motivated the research. What opens before us is, in fact, a potentially unlimited space for the expansion of creative intelligence and for the self-realization of the self. In the face of such unexplored immensity, it is easy to be overcome by a sense of disorientation and fragility, one that can only be overcome through the thoughtful and in-depth construction of meaning made possible by philosophy. Indeed, it is capable of channeling the self-reflective capacity of human thought – enriched by the vitalizing contribution of multiple ethical and aesthetic sensibilities matured through the unceasing flow of historical time – into a refined and rigorous methodological structure.

The forced imposition of a sharp divide between past and future – wherein the present is unable to maintain a healthy balance and projects itself exclusively toward the latter – thus risks generating a traumatic split within both individual and collective identity. Instead, identity must remain faithful to its nature, which is founded on an existential compromise between preservation and transformation. Even the safeguarding of a heritage of values, worldviews, and behavioral models constantly requires a considerable creative effort to adapt it to ever-evolving life scenarios. Human beings have, in fact, always proven themselves to be particularly sensitive to the relentless drive toward renewal exerted by a temporality of which they unmistakably perceive the inexorable flow toward an open and unknown horizon.

The dynamic configuration of the universe itself therefore condemns to dramatic failure any tendency toward obstinate immobility in the name of an illusory perfection already attained, one imagined to be immune to the wave of change. No ideal content conceived by the human mind, however, can be considered intrinsically outdated, that is, devoid of an instructive message to transmit to modernity. The difficult challenge that each generation faces is, rather, to clothe the legacy of the past in an expressive form capable of making it once again accessible to the contemporary collective sensibility. This means that such a reformulation must be able to effectively engage with the specific existential questions associated with a given historical-cultural moment in the journey of humankind.

Working on form also inevitably entails a profound re-interpretation, or at the very least a creative recombination, of traditional elements, which can thus give rise to distinctly original configurations of meaning, even while maintaining solid roots. This is a fundamental lesson that humanity has been able to learn primarily through the millennia-long cultivation of the arts and literature, understood as idealized forms of narration of lived experience, to which an exemplary value is attributed in relation to the construction of identity.

Indeed, the act of storytelling is inherently preservative, since to recount a story worthy of remembrance means to rescue it from oblivion. Yet narration must also carry out a continual transformative effort upon the models it presents in order to keep their appeal alive and, at the same time, to sustain the audience's capacity for self-recognition and identification with them. New elements related to the plot of events are thus constantly built upon the

original framework, but more importantly, additional layers of meaning emerge to be uncovered in relation to the experience of real life.

The need to delineate, through the arts, such paths of spiritual refinement – suspended between the realm of the existent and that of an immaterial elsewhere defined by symbolic-allegorical constructions – has made creative imagination an extremely versatile and adaptable instrument. By setting increasingly ambitious goals, this faculty of the intellect has in fact acquired ever greater freedom of movement among the various dimensions of a universe whose polymorphic complexity it has itself helped to shape. According to this interpretative approach, technological progress can be understood as the continual enhancement of operative efficiency through which the visions of the mind may be transposed into the physical world.

The conception of AI undoubtedly represents an extraordinary leap forward in the history of this process of refinement. It involves, in fact, the unprecedented necessity of establishing a dialectical relationship with a creation that aspires to simulate the living subjectivity which the human being recognizes within themselves, embedding it in a mechanical apparatus of non-biological nature. We are therefore faced with an absolute and revolutionary novelty, since for the first time the idea of an artificial interlocutor capable of engaging with its creators in their own natural language transcends the bounds of imaginative space and secures a position within the physical world.

This surprising outcome undoubtedly maintains a strong ideal connection with the ceaseless quest – undertaken by artists of every era and culture – for the power, often with pronounced mystical overtones, to infuse life into

their creations. On the one hand, the invention of AI can thus be regarded as the almost prophetic fulfillment of the highest creative ambition ever conceived by the human being. On the other hand, however, it profoundly redefines both the nature and, once again, the meaning of this aspiration. The attainment of such a milestone has, in fact, been made possible not by a power of supernatural origin, but by the technical-scientific knowledge painstakingly constructed by humanity through a meticulous investigation of the physical world, especially since the modern era.

This knowledge is, however, marked by a pronounced operational vocation. It therefore always requires an ideal purpose in relation to which it can demonstrate its efficiency in actualizing the visions that take shape in the human mind, prefiguring multiple possible scenarios for future reality.

Here, then, emerges the fundamental role of creativity, in whose elusive essence is condensed the unlimited generative power that can arise from a proper valorization of the immaterial lived experience of humankind, including its spiritual aspects. The realization that scientific and technological advancement does not require the intervention of supernatural forces in order to occur is not, however, sufficient to declare such factors irrelevant to its accomplishment – particularly on the level of existential meaning. The long-standing perception of an intense dialectical relationship between human subjectivity and the dimension of the transcendent – constantly evolving as it is fully embedded in historical becoming – has certainly contributed decisively to shaping the complexity and richness of imaginative processes, which constitute the basis of any innovation. The ambitious analysis proposed in this study therefore

identifies in the immaterial spatiality of creative imagination, and in its intense symbiotic bond with the elusive sphere of desire, the long-awaited point of convergence between humanistic knowledge and scientific-technological knowledge.

This book originates from the author's firm conviction that only the recognition of the essential complementarity of these two forms of epistemic relationship between human beings and the world can enable a harmonious and balanced development of our nature, safeguarding it against dangerous ruptures. By rediscovering the composite unity of our being, we will thus be able to move forward with confident awareness toward a future that promises to be rich in fascinating challenges, surprising transformations, and crucial decisions.