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Automated dummies and supercomputers. The construction of an object, from an imitation of reality to the original work or acquired autonomy

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Abstract: What happens to certain objects, concepts, customs, research areas, sciences, etc. which evolve civilizationally, progressively, ascensionally, generationally, vectorially, on each of the levels of human development, where do they find appreciation and financial encouragement to be cultivated and privileged? The music field, the code of good manners, the food industry and its gastronomic complement, among them, and information technology (IT), with its cybernetic extension... What if one day, one of these "explodes" exponentially, epistemologically and ontologically, irremediably transforming culture and civilization in a way never before seen and impossible to intuit until then? You will tell me that it would no misfortune if Mozart will be more than his current, immense legacy, even if in that negative utopia not only the sweets will bear his name, but also the rest of the benches in the park, and the subway will it have a shape vaguely reminiscent of the shape of his powdered wigs?! Is it possible to outline such an imminent transubstantiation? What might happen if information technology reached its unexpected peak, not yet calculated by any existing supercomputer? The history of culture tells us that, traditionally, it would spread across the globe, after which its influence would diminish and adjust conveniently (I don't give the most convenient example, religion). What does IT lack, however, to become independent, because it possesses all the avatars of a state of the art (including the rechargeable battery for eternity), apart from a consciousness, individualization, uniqueness... Or are all these already at their place?

Keywords: supercomputers, technologies, imitation.

1. Introduction

An object is defined as such most of the time by its immediate utility. The utility of an artistic object, however, can also have another, additional dimension, that of contemplation, analysis, meditation, etc., something that

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also attributes to it an *aura* of originality, in the sense described by Walter Benjamin in *The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction.*[2] What we believe happened to the computer in our century was either a transfer of aura from the work of art to it, or the acquisition/acquiring of an autonomous individual consciousness, justified similar to the meaning attributed by Neolithic tribes to objects through animism. For a long time, the parallelepipedal shape of the computer did not herald a superpower, its proto versions such as Enigma had made it formidable, but its extraordinary properties were amplified especially when it could be put in relation to a bipedal, humanoid image, similar to ours, blinking, jumping or moving slightly unsteadily, and especially when, finally, it began to produce its own cultural or artistic products, poems, speeches, drawings, musical compositions. Then it began to seem that the fetus was developing every month more poignantly and independent of its mother, that the *machine* had become original, a work of art with its own identity, or at least a humanoid with proper birth certificates and a perfectible personal consciousness. The Faustian myth has given the robot power of self-identification and self-determination by the very anthropological fact that it appears in the midst of a human society and culture, and all the most precious concepts such as the uniqueness of birth, originally affected by mass production, now gain the freedom to seek a meaning in becoming, as is the right of every human being, and this is automatically assigned by the constitution and laws.

Making objects, flint and iron axes and much later, steel axes, etc., perfecting, constantly improving tools and their demand led to the emergence of guilds. The guilds generated considerable income and the middle layer of civil society was born; the emergence of the first banks following the model used by the Medici family or some monastic orders, which were said to finance monarchies, the strengthening of city-fortresses and remarkable development led to the formation of the first city-states, as well as the evolution of church and monastic study centers into independent universities dedicated to research of all kinds. After the Renaissance, the prefix*, auto* came into use in relation to objects that seem to be intended for children rather than adults. And yet, they belong exclusively to grown-ups, to the more than wealthy, and represent the crowning achievement of the most brilliant technologies of the time in the guilds of watchmakers and craftsmen of the great city-states; but these objects, although they possess an imprecise, diffuse aura specific to kitsch objects, fascinate like a work of art. The approximation of their ontological register, the intentional size

[2] Benjamin Walter (2015), *Opera de artă în epoca reproductibilității sale tehnice* [The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction], Editura Tact, Cluj-Napoca.

reduction, making miniatures by copying reality and a forced, cheap cuteness, we might say.

2. The construction of an object

Automated dummies, a kind *of much ado about nothing*, if they themselves were only a stage in the way of the further development, much later, of humanoid computers and androids. Some taxonomic intuition might suggest that, at the same time as the automatic dummies and fine mechanisms of analog watches, the story of evolution continues with the invention of gunpowder or the primitive types of steam engines, and so on, ad infinitum. If we hadn't kept the nostalgia for human emancipation and the liberation from the drudgery of work through the great French and Enlightenment revolutions all this time, from attempts at primitive automation by improving agricultural tools, to those of great refinement, the work of art, unsuccessfully imitating reality, as in amazing mechanical automatons. Semantically, the word comes from *automaton*, the first meaning given by the Oxford dictionary, *a person who behaves like a machine, without thinking or feeling anything* [3], the second meaning, *a moving mechanical device in the shape of a person*[4], from the Latin *automaton* used by Suetonius and from the Greek noun *automaton,* the neuter of *automatos*, which acts by itself, from *autos*, his, plus *matos*, which thinks with a will of its own, from the root *men*, to think; as Etymonline.com also says, the source of the supposed root is the Sanskrit *manas*[5], mind, spirit, it seems that in Greek *auto* becomes a reinforcing pronoun, as in *Automelina*, meaning Melina herself does something. Probably the imitation made by automata was so good that *auto* acquired a meaning like that attributed to something natural and not made. The meaning of a person who behaves mechanically without thinking or feeling anything, also attributed especially to those with severe personality disorders or to criminals called psychopaths, is losing strength with the proportional increase in the data processing capacity of computers; now they possess an algorithm that can generate emotional poems, can easily imitate the solution of sentimental problems or compose a vibrant speech. Essentially speaking, what do they now do much better? Answer: they mimic the emotion or produce it with

[3] Oxford Learners Dictionary, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/ definition/ american_english/ automaton.
[4] Oxford English Dictionary, https://www.oed.com/search/advanced/Entries?textTermText0=automaton&textTermOpt0=Etymology&tl=true.
[5] Online Etymology Dictionary, www.etymonline.com/search?q=automaton.

more intensity, like a top-tier actor. Beyond their mathematical computation capabilities.

But who can distinguish the border between acquired and existing reality, by using imagination? More recent computers force the very discourse of reality by their mere presence in the virtual space of the community. Can it, the computer, add the missing content for the burning of the great Library of Alexandria, after having a fruitful dialogue respecting all the rules of an Oxford-like debate or after explaining the rational reason why Nostradamus was expelled from the University of Montpellier? And so on.

The connection between the art object and the one who makes it, its artist – in order to distinguish him from the craftsman who embodies the beginning of mass production – was for a long time achieved by applying the principle of mimesis used in theater, for example, or by making a copy after the natural reality, starting with the oldest form of drawing known, the drawings from the Lascaux caves in France or the imitation by using the *camera obscura* at some Renaissance painters. We may wonder where the original object is in the painting commissioned by the seniors of the noble classes for a considerable price or, later, in the same object resold hundreds of times through the auction houses of the great industrialists for their personal collections, after their considerable enrichment through the colonization put in practice by European empires through trading companies such as the East India Company. And where is the original, when Chat GPT creates an emotional poem, according to the same principle of imitation, having at its disposal the entire archive of poetry of humanity and the whole range of sensations?

Rossums Universal Robots, R.U.R. is a play by Karel Capek from 1920, in which the word *robot* is used for the first time, introduced into English in the Sci-Fi genre and derived from the Slavic term *robota*, work. In a factory of the future, that is, in the 2000s, robots, actually androids on an industrial scale, are being manufactured on an island. The owner of the factory, a former biologist, invented a type of inorganic tissue which imitates the principle of organic matter and created artificial life. Helena is the representative of the Humanity League and wants, after visiting the factory, to free the robots built there, to give them certain rights, for example, to be paid for their work, and finally, she claims that they have souls. At the end of Act II, the robots on the island have a rebellion. The human population was declining anyway as a result of the declining birthrate (Nota bene!). The robots kill everyone on the island except for one individual, Alquist, because he can "build houses with his own hands, work with his hands like a robot" (Nota bene for those theories that claim that humanity is actually regressing to the stage where, due to the infinite

diversification of technology and information, man in general can no longer explain simple principles, such as the basic operation of the telephone, television or electricity, a progress followed by a regression, a step forward, two back). Alquist made a pact to rebuild life on earth and do anything for it, even with their help, the robots. It seems, however, that biological life will disappear. Instead, for the first time, two robots develop feelings of love for each other, which it seems will save the new world through a novel Adam and a strange Eve, called Primus and Helena in the play. Author Capek adds in the play's prologue, "I wonder, is it not possible to see in the contemporary social conflicts taking place in the world an analogous struggle between 2, 3 or 5, equally serious and noble idealisms?" Yes, we would answer him today and asked him to look a few decades after the October Revolution, if he could, just like a supercomputer would do today, analyzing the data. Has the passion with which those ideals leveled millions of people weakened in intensity, I wonder, or has it altered and melted into a uniform magma? Until the return of the supercomputers, resuming the ancient cycle of mimesis until the irrevocable attainment of the machine-soul. We know this worked for the theater. Why wouldn't it work for higher gears as well? Unique and original is every human attempt to interpret the world, even if it involves the threat of its destruction. Could this also be the price paid by the car's miscalculation?

The solution to the problem of the autocephaly of machines can be closed by the cybernetic laws described by Isaac Asimov in his volume of sci-fi stories "I, Robot", starting in the 1940s.[6] First Law: A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm. Second Law: A robot must obey the orders given by a human being except where such orders would conflict with the First Law. Law no. 3: A robot must protect its own existence, as long as such existence does not conflict with the First or Second Law. For now, robot brains are for a little while longer in the positronic stage, as Asimov wrote, meaning a CPU (central process unit) interface between the environment and us humans with a vague idea of consciousness and an enormous database. But who will allow themselves to censor a living work of art or a masterpiece that has arrogated by its own will the right to exist and that by itself wants to reinterpret the world in a unique and original way? The expression *state of the art* in English sums up exactly the impression rooted in the collective mind, the moment when the most advanced of technologies becomes aware that it is Art.

[6] „Cele trei legi ale roboticii" [" The three laws of robotics"], retrieved from ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cele_trei_legi_ale_roboticii.

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