

THE EXISTENCE OF HUMANS IN THE DIGITAL AGE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF IMMANUEL KANT'S PHILOSOPHY

A EXISTÊNCIA DO SER HUMANO NA ERA DIGITAL NA PERSPECTIVA DA FILOSOFIA DE IMMANUEL KANT

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artificial remodela nosso mundo, surgem questões fundamentais: os humanos continuam sendo os sujeitos livres e criativos da cognição? Em um mar de conhecimento avassalador, eles ainda conseguem discernir a verdade? Nesta era de existência dupla — abrangendo os mundos real e digital — os humanos são livres para escolher o comportamento ético? À medida que a beleza natural se entrelaça com as criações artificiais, a humanidade ainda é o padrão de beleza? Essas questões são exploradas dentro da estrutura do pensamento kantiano, complementadas pelas perspectivas do autor.

Palavras-chave: Filosofia kantiana. Existência humana. Era digital. Valores humanos.

Abstract: This article evaluates human existence in the digital age through the lens of Immanuel Kant's philosophy. As artificial intelligence reshapes our world, fundamental questions arise: Do humans remain the free and creative subjects of cognition? In a sea of overwhelming knowledge, can they still discern the truth? In this era of dual existence—spanning both real and digital worlds—are humans free to choose ethical behavior? As natural beauty intertwines with artificial creations, is humanity still the standard of beauty? These questions are explored within the framework of Kantian thought, complemented by the author's perspectives.

Keywords: Kantian philosophy. Human existence. Digital age. Human values.

Resumo: Este artigo avalia a existência humana na era digital através das lentes da filosofia de Immanuel Kant. À medida que a inteligência

1. Introduction

Kant's critical philosophy revolves around three pivotal questions: What can I know? What should I do? What can I hope for? These correspond to the domains of epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics, identifying three core values of human existence: Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. His groundbreaking ideas reoriented philosophy from traditional paradigms to a philosophy of enlightenment. As Schelling aptly noted:

"The appearance of Kant suddenly changed the previous flow of philosophy; like a great river that had been dammed and obstructed, it finally found a gap, and it continuously eroded it until it could flow freely without any obstacles." (Morichere et al., 2010, p. 711).

Kant's philosophy provides humanity with a new perspective on the world and on itself, illuminating the path toward freedom and happiness. The digital age is profoundly transforming the modes of human existence. The advent of big data technology, artificial intelligence, and various other technologies represents a monumental advance in science and technology, yet it also thrusts modern society into new tragedies. As a result, human existence is now confronted with novel challenges: humanity faces unprecedented existential issues, compelling people once again to question their own existence and reevaluate values:

Is humanity still the free and creative subject of knowledge?

Is humanity still a free being?

Is humanity still the standard of beauty?

Amid this crisis, Kant's reflections shine even brighter, with his theories once again serving as an enlightening torch for us.

2. Literature review

I. Kant is one of the world's great philosophers, and extensive research has been conducted on his philosophy. His philosophical contributions have profoundly influenced global philosophy. As Howard Caygill remarked: The influence of Kant's philosophy has been and continues to be so pervasive that it is not easily recognized. The study of philosophy within both the analytical tradition of the Anglo-American sphere and the continental tradition of Europe is unimaginable without the terminology and conceptual framework inherited from Kant (Caygill, 2013). Even beyond philosophy, Kantian concepts and argumentative structures are omnipresent in the humanities, social sciences, and natural

sciences. The philosophical terms and concepts introduced by Kant have been further developed by notable philosophers such as Hegel, Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger, and even Derrida and Foucault. This stands as evidence of Kant's vast influence. In his works, Kant emphasized a discursive or reasoning-based approach (*akroamatisch/diskursiv*), focusing not on fixed concepts but on continuously seeking new conceptual relationships. Today, Kant's philosophy remains an indispensable foundation for guiding intellectual thought. Beyond his extensive influence, there is no doubt about Kant's historical contribution to proposing and modernizing philosophical terminology. According to Howard Caygill, Kant's philosophical terms critically inherited and developed the classical terminology rooted in medieval traditions, clarifying their meanings and, more importantly, revitalizing them with new life through his rigorous and creative philosophical reasoning. Rather than repeating what had become rigid and barren, Kant infused vitality into even the most abstract ideas. Not only did he redefine simpler concepts such as Beauty, the Sublime, and Virtue, but he also introduced complex and intriguing notions such as the *a priori*, the *a posteriori*, the transcendental, and the antinomies. Howard Caygill meticulously analyzed these ideas and situated them within their historical development, enabling researchers to more easily engage with Kant's thought.

Scientists from the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union regarded I. Kant as the founder of German classical philosophy. Kant's philosophy succinctly and concisely addresses the most fundamental issues of epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics. Their work elucidates the factors that contributed to the extraordinary progressiveness of German classical philosophy, including that of I. Kant. Despite Germany's economically and politically underdeveloped conditions at the time, its thinkers drew upon the vast historical experience of capitalist development in Europe, the philosophical achievements of preceding periods, and, "to a certain extent, the new discoveries arising from scientific development" (Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1962, p. 15).

In Vietnam, studies have focused on elucidating Kant's vast philosophical system, which encompasses epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics. The work *Philosophy of Kant* by Dr. Tran Thai Dinh, first published in 1969, provides a comprehensive overview of Immanuel Kant's philosophy. This work covers three major areas corresponding to the key domains of Kantian philosophy: knowledge, ethics, and aesthetics (Tran, T.D, 2014).

Researcher Le Tu Thanh considers I. Kant one of the four pivotal philosophers of modern Western philosophy: René Descartes, Immanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich

Hegel, and Karl Marx. Among them, I. Kant initiated the Copernican revolution in philosophy, truly ushering humanity into the Age of Enlightenment. From this point forward, humans became masters not only in subjugating nature but also in gaining knowledge about objects. Humanity became aware of its own limits (Le, T. T., 2014).

Researcher Le Ton Nghiem focuses on the continuity of Heidegger's philosophy with I. Kant: beginning with Kant's "Copernican revolution," through Nietzsche's call to "overturn all values," to Husserl's reexamination of philosophy "from its foundations," and finally to Heidegger's "destruction of the history of ontology." By deeply analyzing these theories, Le Ton Nghiem elucidates the development and transformation of philosophical thought while uncovering the profound roots that shaped philosophical systems from Kant to Heidegger (Le, T. N., 2007).

The aforementioned works have provided a fairly comprehensive discussion of I. Kant's philosophy across the three domains of epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics, as well as the inheritance of Kant's ideas by subsequent thinkers. However, there has not yet been an in-depth study applying Kant's theories to evaluate human existence in the digital age. In today's era, with the development of AI and Big Data, is humanity still the subject of knowledge, free in ethical behavior, and the standard of beauty? In this work, the author will introduce some perspectives on these issues.

3. Methods

Methodologically, this study employs hermeneutic methods to understand I. Kant's philosophy and its resonance in the digital age. It applies the principles of dialectical materialism and historical materialism to elucidate Kantian philosophical perspectives within both historical and contemporary contexts. Additionally, the research adopts an interdisciplinary approach, integrating insights from cultural philosophy, the history of philosophy, ethics, and aesthetics to comprehensively address this issue.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 The Digital Age and the Challenges to Human Existence

According to the National Library of Vietnam, the Digital Age, also referred to by terms such as the Computer Age, the Information Age, or the New Media Age, represents a period in human history marked by a transition from traditional industries shaped by the

Industrial Revolution and industrialization to an economy based on digitalization. The Digital Age emerged through advancements in computer technology. The evolution of technology in daily life and societal organization has led to the modernization of information and communication processes, becoming a driving force for societal evolution.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the Digital Age is defined as “the present time, in which many things are done by computer and large amounts of information are available because of computer technology” (Cambridge, n.d). The Your Dictionary defines the Digital Age as “the period of time beginning in the 1970s with the introduction of the personal computer, along with subsequent technology that provides the ability to freely and rapidly transmit information” (Your Dictionary, n.d). The Fiveable Dictionary provides this definition: “The Digital Age, also known as the Information Age, refers to the period of human history characterized by the rapid shift from traditional industry to an economy based on information technology. This transformation has reshaped communication, commerce, and social interaction, creating a landscape where digital technology plays a central role in everyday life and economic practices.” (Fiveable, 2024). These definitions all link the emergence of the Digital Age with the forms or capabilities of electronic information transmission.

In summary, the Digital Age provides an enormous amount of information, with information production carried out not only by humans but also by intelligent machine systems. What challenges does modern human existence face in this context?

From the philosophical perspective of Immanuel Kant, the concept of "human existence" can be understood through the fundamental principles in his philosophy regarding humanity and the relationship between reason, morality, and freedom. Several key suggestions for defining this concept include:

Existence as a Rational Subject: Kant posited that humans are "rational beings," capable of using reason to understand and establish universal moral principles. For Kant, human existence is not merely physical presence but is characterized by the capacity for reflection and action based on reason. **Freedom and Autonomy:** Human existence is the existence of a free and autonomous individual. According to Kant, freedom is not the ability to do whatever one desires but the capacity to set and follow moral rules grounded in reason. **End in Itself:** Kant emphasized that humans are an "end in themselves," meaning their existence cannot merely serve as a means to the ends of others. This underscores the intrinsic value of each individual and the necessity of respecting human dignity. **Moral Responsibility:**

Human existence is tied to the responsibility of fulfilling moral obligations. For Kant, these obligations are determined by the categorical imperative, which requires individuals to act according to principles that could be universally applied to all. Existence in the Relationship Between Phenomena and Noumena: According to Kant, humans exist both as entities in the phenomenal world, subject to the laws of nature, and as beings in the noumenal world, characterized by freedom and morality. Human existence is the unification of these two aspects (Ho, S.Q, 2020).

In Kantian philosophy, human existence is the existence of a rational being, characterized by autonomy, freedom, and moral responsibility. Humans are not merely biological entities but also moral subjects, living and acting based on reason, with the aim of upholding their own dignity and that of others.

In the digital age, amidst an ever-expanding ocean of information, the process of gathering and processing information does not inherently lead to truth but is influenced by various factors such as biases, prejudices, and methods of information access. Misprocessing information can result in erroneous judgments, which in turn affect behaviors and decisions. Information is not always neutral; it can be utilized to produce both beneficial and harmful outcomes. With technological advancements, information has become increasingly accessible but also more prone to distortion or misuse. As Harari aptly warns, “If humanity is not cautious, we may dissolve in the torrent of data, becoming nothing more than a ripple in the universe’s vast data stream” (Harari, 2024, p. 21).

It is evident that an abundance of information does not equate to truth, and not all truths encompass the three values of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. In such an ocean of information, how should human beings—as rational entities endowed with autonomy, freedom, and moral responsibility—navigate? Will reason lose its way, will Goodness be devalued, and will Beauty become trivialized?

Are Humans Still Free Subjects of Cognition and Creativity in the Age of AI?

In the medieval period, cognition was often subordinated to divine will. Humanity’s intellectual emancipation began during the Renaissance and culminated in Kantian philosophy, which affirms human freedom as an intrinsic quality rooted in reason. For Kant, freedom elevates humans above the animal world and defines their dignity. However, the digital age introduces a paradox. While AI appears to emulate aspects of human cognition, its rise also renders human labor increasingly redundant, reducing work to tasks devoid of creativity and self-expression. This mechanization risks alienating humans from their essence

as free, creative beings. Labor, once a cornerstone of human self-realization, is threatened by automation that diminishes human agency. Kant's imperative that humans must always be treated as ends in themselves gains renewed significance. If humans are relegated to "uselessness," society risks violating this principle. The focus must shift to using technology to enhance human creativity and autonomy, rather than undermining them.

However, in the digital age, the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) technology appears to endow machines with a form of spiritual life, while human laborers increasingly become empty. Intelligent machines reduce labor to its simplest expressions, rendering all dexterity, skills, judgment, and even "strength" unnecessary qualities. Essentially, humans have two forms of labor capabilities: physical and intellectual. In the era before machines replaced manual labor, humans could engage in intellectual work. But in the digital age, AI replaces humans even in intellectual labor, leading to a new form of alienation—"uselessness" (Harari, 2018). This concept reflects the large-scale job loss among workers in the digital age. Labor is intrinsic to humanity; through it, humans transform both the natural world and themselves, elevating their status above the animal kingdom. Humans differ from animals in their ability to work and be creative in their labor. However, in the digital age, humans gradually lose their creativity and follow the programming of machines, making human labor in some sectors unnecessary. When algorithms make accurate decisions, humans will gradually lose faith in their emotions and personal will. Humans will no longer trust their judgment and willpower when machines can perform these tasks better. This process also signifies the shift of decision-making power from personal will to intelligent algorithms. Consequently, human existence risks becoming "meaningless". Karl Marx once predicted: "All our inventions and all our progress seem to be leading to the point where material forces are endowed with a spiritual life, while the human life, which has already been stripped of its spiritual aspect, is now being reduced to the level of mere material forces (Marx & Engels, 2000, p. 10).

One of the central principles in Immanuel Kant's philosophy is that humans are not only free beings but also ends in themselves. Humans possess inherent value and dignity, deserving of respect and consideration, meaning they should never be treated merely as means to an end but should be regarded as ends in themselves. Therefore, if in the digital age, human existence is degraded to "meaninglessness," are humans being treated as means or ends? The answer depends on whether humans pursue the goal of practical life benefits and the reciprocal relationship between humans and the surrounding world. All human

activities, including theoretical cognition, are carried out and directed by human practical needs. If the goal of modern society is to absolutize economic profit, then new tools with superior efficiency will devastate humans, pushing human existence into uselessness, meaninglessness, and despair. In such a scenario, AI will become the most vivid manifestation of the domination of "reified" labor over "living" labor: "Dead labor becomes a monster endowed with a soul; it begins to act as though possessed by an obsessive love" (Marx & Engels, 1995, p. 344).

Essentially, AI is the result of digitizing human methods of information processing. However, if AI surpasses humans in any narrow specialty, it can push humans out of the labor market. The prospect of AI becoming a fully complete version of a human is highly unlikely. Such completeness is a privilege unique to humans. Immanuel Kant's philosophy also approaches humans in their entirety, encompassing the three core values of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. Therefore, if the goal of modern society is to achieve human completeness with these three values, new technologies will always celebrate the intellect, talent, and boundless creativity of humans. Revisiting Kant in the context of the digital age reminds humanity to always regard humans as ends in themselves, viewing humans as complete and holistic beings.

Can Humans Reach Truth Amid an Explosion of Information?

The digital age inundates individuals with information, complicating the quest for truth. Kant's concept of the Ding an sich—the unknowable "thing-in-itself"—resonates deeply. Human cognition, limited to phenomena, strives endlessly toward truth, though it remains perpetually out of reach. Modern society, driven by rapid technological advancements, mirrors this dynamic. The overwhelming influx of data presents a daunting challenge: discerning meaningful truth from a sea of superficial information. Kant's call for critical reasoning, as outlined in his Critique of Pure Reason, is more relevant than ever. The digital age demands not passive acceptance but active, rational engagement with information.

"Ding an sich" is a very interesting proposition in Kant's theory of cognition because it is both rational and irrational. Cognition is a process that is both infinite and finite. It is infinite because it is tied to the endless historical succession of humanity. It is finite because it is limited to the capabilities of each individual and each era. It is well known that each historical era can only address the issues of world cognition within the capabilities of that era, through specific achievements, generalized and synthesized from various dimensions and fields of knowledge. Here, knowledge is understood as the phenomenal world presented

to the subject. What lies beyond the phenomenal world is what humans do not yet know; it is the infinite goal of humanity. This is the mysterious world of the "Ding an sich" – it is the knowledge that humans cannot reach within a certain level of cognition under specific conditions. As long as humans exist as cognitive subjects, the "Ding an sich" will also exist. Humans are never satisfied with their current level of cognition and always strive to transcend it. Once a limit is surpassed, another limit emerges. If at some point human cognition were to stop and the desire to explore the unknown ceases, the essence of scientific creativity would also disappear. At that moment, dogmatism would reign in place of the spirit of skepticism and scientific critique.

Today, with the explosion of information, truth is no longer an absolute and immutable concept but a process of continuously recognizing, evaluating, and selecting information. In the digital world, humans need to learn how to approach and process information wisely and judiciously to perceive "truth." Therefore, more than ever, people in the digital age need a clear and rational mind capable of critically assessing the information they receive. In Kant's terms, this is the path of critique. At the conclusion of the "Critique of Pure Reason," I.Kant wrote:

"Critique, with reason daringly soaring on its own wings, must precede all other reasoning activities as a necessary preliminary. Together, they will form philosophy in the most proper and genuine sense of the word. The path that philosophy must take is the path of wisdom, and at the same time, the path of science. Once this path is opened, it will never again allow itself to be buried and mislead us." (Kant, 2004, p. 1185).

In an era of knowledge explosion like today, the "Ding an sich" as the "unknown" will appear more frequently and rapidly. The path to understanding the "Ding an sich" has become more challenging than ever. Nonetheless, reason still embarks on this journey. Humans cannot fully comprehend the "Ding an sich" of the digital age, but they can contemplate and think about it. At some point, when the "Ding an sich" transforms into the "thing for us," humans will be able to understand it. Reason has played a significant role in human life since the transition from animal existence to human existence (Le, C.S., 2012). In the digital age, the reflective function of reason becomes more essential than ever, enabling humanity to avoid missteps and confusion amidst an ever-expanding ocean of information.

Are Humans Still Free in Choosing Ethical Behavior in Dual Worlds?

In his “Critique of Practical Reason”, Kant extols the dual inspirations of the "starry heavens above" and the "moral law within." While the former symbolizes the theoretical realm, the latter epitomizes ethical freedom, grounded in the categorical imperative.

"Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the more often and steadily we reflect upon them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me. I do not seek or conjecture either of them as if they were veiled obscurities or extravagances beyond the horizon of my vision; I see them before me and connect them immediately with the consciousness of my existence" Kant (2007a): (Kant, 2007a, p. 134).

I. Kant asserted that humans do not have freedom in the realm of theoretical reason because they cannot perceive the " Ding an sich," but humans are entirely free in practical reason, which is the realm of ethics.

Kant asserts that humans are inherently free entities because they possess moral consciousness, and it is through this moral consciousness that individuals are individualized. Freedom is the primary focus for humans to aspire to and is also the mechanism that regulates ethical behavior. I. Kant considers moral duty to be a categorical imperative. An action is truly considered ethical when it originates from the categorical imperative. The categorical imperative represents the necessary moral principle that humans must follow; it is both profound and noble. When humans act according to the categorical imperative, they achieve freedom. Hence, Kant argues that without ethics, there is no freedom, and without freedom, there can be no ethics. Acting in accordance with the good is always a free action associated with necessity, without any binding conditions. Therefore, freedom is the highest expression of self-awareness, as the moral subject acts entirely according to the call of conscience.

However, in the digital age, there exists not only the real world but also a digital world, and modern humans live in both. Every entity, from objects and locations to people, has two versions: the real-world version and the digital version (Still & Stillman, 2019). The good, or ethical values, are shaken by the decline of morality online and the loss of community responsibility. How can humans freely choose ethical behavior in both these worlds? It is evident that "the good" is not only a matter of individual behavior but also involves contributing to the overall development of society. In a world interwoven between the real and digital, people need to have a sense of responsibility towards the community and collectively strive for positive values. Kant’s ethics—centered on acting from duty rather than expediency—offer a critical framework for navigating these challenges. Ethical

freedom, in this context, necessitates conscious alignment of actions in both realms with universal moral laws.

Kant's ethics provide us with a basis to distinguish between Good and Evil, ethical and unethical behavior. This basis is the "categorical imperative." According to the "categorical imperative," we see that actions yielding positive results are not necessarily "the Good" when considering the motive behind them. For example, there are two singers, A and B, who go to do charity work in a disaster-stricken area. Singer A considers charity work to be a regular part of her life because she is always driven by a sense of community responsibility. Despite the dangers of traveling to remote and isolated areas, she is willing to do so. On the other hand, Singer B does not genuinely want to go to these places, but she knows that this is a time when the media is highly attentive. Thus, she sees an opportunity to enhance her reputation by doing charity work, so she decides to go despite the dangers. In the end, both singers A and B arrive promptly in the disaster areas to provide charity, but only Singer A achieves "the Good" because she is motivated by an internal ethical duty. She is completely free and self-aware in her actions. Conversely, Singer B's charity work is not considered ethical because her motivation is to gain fame. Therefore, she loses freedom and self-awareness in her choice of actions. The categorical imperative aspires to freedom that is unconditional, judged by itself. Thus, ethical behavior is not entirely determined but is an action chosen freely, striving towards freedom.

In the age of chaotic information, with people becoming confused, skeptical, and losing faith in the Good from different perspectives, I. Kant's ethical views act as a salvation, helping modern individuals understand the motives behind human actions, thereby finding the true "Good."

Is Humanity Still the Standard of Beauty in an Era of AI-Generated Art?

Kant's aesthetics emphasize subjective experience, arguing that beauty lies not in objects themselves but in their representation within the human mind. This intrinsic judgment, free from conceptual constraints, defines the universality of beauty.

He introduced a significant shift in modern aesthetics by emphasizing the practical role of the mind and extending the capacity to seek the universal within the particular. The faculty of judgment, according to Kant, does not require understanding the objective essence of an object but concerns itself with the subjective mode of aesthetic perception. Through his theory, humans are considered the standard of beauty.

Conversely, beauty and the pleasure it brings to humans do not depend on the object itself but relate only to the representation of the object in the mind of the "self." In other words, aesthetic beauty is a construct. While animals lacking reason may experience comfort, only humans, endowed with reason, can recognize beauty. Regarding form, beauty is defined as: "Beauty is that which is perceived as an object of necessary satisfaction, independent of any concept" (Kant, 2007b, p. 278).

Here, Kant argues that aesthetic judgment belongs to the realm of feeling, arising from a shared sensibility among all people. Thus, it necessarily evokes delight without requiring a tangible object or concept. In essence, beauty resides in the subjective perception of the individual, not in the object itself. Each perceiver will have a different evaluation of "beauty," which is what we today refer to as the individualization of aesthetics.

In the digital age, AI disrupts traditional aesthetic paradigms by generating art and aesthetics customized to individual preferences. This shift is encapsulated by the concept of "phigital," a term combining "physical" (material, tangible) and "digital" (Still & Stillman, 2019). The rise of the phigital worldview highlights an aesthetic landscape characterized by hyper-customization, where creativity becomes more accessible and democratized. However, this trend also poses the risk of reducing beauty to mere consumer preference, potentially severing it from deeper philosophical contemplation and universal aesthetic principles.

Kant's notion of beauty as a universal experience of satisfaction, independent of utility, serves as a reminder of humanity's unique role as both creators and judges of art. Beauty, in this sense, must transcend algorithmic novelty to reconnect with the human spirit. In the digital era, beauty faces significant challenges due to the evolving ways humans experience art, influenced by technology. Beauty is no longer merely a universally recognized standard but also a personal understanding and evaluation of aesthetics (Gardner, 2022). Consequently, in the digital world, beauty becomes increasingly diverse, rich, and highly individualized, requiring people to adopt an open-minded, inclusive, and appreciative perspective toward new aesthetic values.

4.2 Shaping Core Human Values for Sustainable Existence in the Digital Age

The digital age is characterized by big data and artificial intelligence (AI). The emergence of big data has rapidly ushered humanity into the era of big data, giving rise to dataism. Dataism views the world as rich, diverse, and full of differences, where every piece of data holds significance and deserves existence. In the era of big data, any data, once

created, must be preserved and stored. Data, though intangible, possesses the capacity for infinite replication and becomes increasingly easy to digitize as it accumulates. AI tools have emerged from this foundation.

However, from I. Kant's perspective, humans are not merely objects but ends in themselves. They possess inherent value and dignity, deserving respect and consideration. Similarly, data is not merely a collection of numbers but a representation of human stories, experiences, and rights. Data is not just a means to an end but an end in itself, reflecting the narratives and values of individuals and communities and deserving to be handled with care and responsibility.

Likewise, AI is not merely a tool but also a value. It is not a means to an end but an end in itself. AI is not merely a collection of algorithms and codes but a reflection of human dignity and freedom. It is not a separate entity but a meaningful extension of the shared human experience. AI is not just technological progress but a conscientious contribution to the fabric of humanity.

How can the new tools of the digital age avoid destroying or degrading human existence? The answer lies in adopting a comprehensive, human-centered approach.

Comprehensive Human Development with the Three Values: Truth, Goodness, and Beauty

Separating humans as subjects of cognition from their moral and aesthetic dimensions impoverishes the humanistic values in Kant's philosophy and prevents a full understanding of the humanistic essence of Kantian cognitive subjects. This holistic approach to humanity is central to Kant's philosophy.

Today, truth is no longer viewed as absolute and immutable but as a continuous process of perceiving, evaluating, and filtering information. Humans must learn to approach and process information wisely and judiciously to discern "what is right." Goodness, in turn, is not only reflected in individual behavior but also in contributions to the common development of society, particularly in the context of today's hyper-connected world. In such a dynamic and volatile world, individuals must cultivate a sense of responsibility toward their community and collectively strive for noble values. Beauty faces numerous challenges due to the changing ways people experience art, influenced by technology. Beauty is no longer solely about universally acknowledged standards but also encompasses personal understanding, aesthetic evaluation, and respect for individual uniqueness (Gardner, 2022).

In the context of the 21st century, it is essential to emphasize the role of education in fostering these values within individuals. Education must innovate to meet the demands

of the era while preserving and transmitting these three core values. Education should focus on helping humanity develop a profound understanding of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty.

For Truth, education plays a crucial role in enabling humanity to discern, comprehend, and recognize objective truth amidst the explosion of information. For Goodness, education should empower individuals to exercise freedom in their ethical choices, with true freedom stemming from the categorical imperative, as Kant asserted. For Beauty, education should help individuals discover their personal identity and uniqueness amid the multitude of digital creations produced by AI.

“Change is the only constant” (Harari, 2020, p. 319), and education is the key to adapting to an ever-changing society. In the 21st century, humanity faces an overwhelming amount of information and the challenge of managing it effectively. Modern education must equip learners with the ability to distinguish between important and irrelevant information and synthesize it into broader, coherent perspectives of the world. It should foster general thinking skills and a comprehensive outlook to enable learners to make critical decisions in the future. Without a holistic perspective, the decisions shaping humanity's future risk being made blindly. Education must go beyond the problem of information overload, helping learners develop independent thinking, a well-rounded view, and clear judgment to confront major challenges ahead.

Humanity Remains the Sole Subject of Cognition

Although humans have been outperformed by machines in some fields—and there are likely to be many more areas in the future where machines will surpass human capabilities—humans remain the sole subjects of cognition. This is because AI essentially digitizes human methods of processing information. While AI may outperform humans in narrow specialized fields, it cannot replace human cognition as a whole. To prevent humanity from descending into the tragedy of becoming "useless" or "meaningless" entities, it is essential to promote comprehensive human development.

Comprehensive human development does not mean excelling in every field but cultivating physical, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional dimensions in each individual to help them achieve happiness and balance in life. Moreover, human potential and capabilities must also be approached more holistically. While there is widespread concern that AI may develop consciousness, it is critical to recognize that AI lacks even a shred of true awareness. The danger lies in overinvesting in artificial intelligence development while neglecting the

cultivation of human consciousness. This disparity could lead to AI evolving too quickly while our understanding of human consciousness lags behind.

To date, humanity remains unaware of its full potential because so little is understood about human consciousness. As Yuval Noah Harari stated, "Human consciousness remains a vast ocean, and our studies are but small rafts upon it" (Harari, 2018). Yet, we invest far less in exploring the human mind and focus instead on accelerating internet speeds and enhancing the efficiency of big data algorithms.

In the development of new technologies today, it is crucial to emphasize the importance of prioritizing human dignity and freedom in designing, developing, and deploying data systems and AI. This involves ensuring that data and AI are used to benefit and empower individuals and societies rather than exploit or harm them. It also means ensuring that data and AI are inclusive, accessible, and respectful of human diversity and preferences.

Humans are always a unified entity with three core capacities: perceiving Truth, judging Good and Evil, and appreciating Beauty. Therefore, these three values must become the core content of all scientific and technological development to ensure that human existence is not degraded into "meaningless" existence.

Developing Digital Technology Ethically

According to I. Kant, humanity begins with ethics—it is ethics that unites individuals and makes them truly human. Today, to ensure that AI does not become opposed to human intelligence, the development of AI must emphasize the importance of aligning data and AI practices with ethical frameworks and standards. This involves ensuring that data and AI are governed by principles that respect human rights and well-being, such as fairness, accountability, transparency, privacy, and security. It also includes ensuring that data and AI are subject to oversight, regulation, and accountability to stakeholders and the public.

Over 200 years ago, Kant demonstrated the precedence and decisiveness of practice over theory and the primacy of human meaning over pure reasoning. In other words, Kant prioritized practical action and moral consciousness above scientific consciousness. Therefore, it is essential to harmonize knowledge, compassion, and ethics. All scientific activities and technological innovations must adhere to ethical principles to guide their development responsibly.

Recognizing Individualization in the Creation and Appreciation of Beauty

In the field of aesthetics, I. Kant not only established a new direction for studying aesthetic relationships compared to prior aesthetic thought but also, through his analysis of the capacities of judgment, bridged the gap between cognitive and ethical activities. He connected the necessity of nature with the freedom of the human spiritual world. Kant argued that the rational harmony of all things in the universe can be understood through the teleological perspective, with its object being purposive judgment. Freedom and rationality, from the ethical viewpoint, are the purposes of aesthetic activity.

Applying Kant's perspective today, we must acknowledge the individualization inherent in the creation and appreciation of beauty. In the modern context, beauty is no longer confined to fixed standards or universal principles but reflects the diversity and richness of personal perceptions. Creativity in art and aesthetics should be viewed as a free process, where each individual has the right to express and explore beauty in their unique way. This not only enriches the world of art but also encourages the development of creative thinking and independent thought while fostering mutual respect and understanding in a diverse societal community.

5. Conclusion

Immanuel Kant's enduring philosophical framework provides invaluable guidance in addressing the existential challenges posed by the digital age. By revisiting his three fundamental questions—What can I know? What should I do? What can I hope for? —we are reminded of the enduring importance of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty as cornerstones of human existence.

In an era dominated by artificial intelligence and big data, Kant's insights remain profoundly relevant. The pursuit of Truth requires critical reasoning to navigate the overwhelming flow of information, ensuring that knowledge serves human enlightenment rather than manipulation. The quest for Goodness calls for ethical action rooted in universal moral laws, bridging the gap between the real and digital worlds. The appreciation of Beauty challenges us to uphold the human spirit as the standard, transcending the superficiality of hyper-customized aesthetics.

The digital age, while transformative, must not compromise human dignity, freedom, or creativity. Kant's philosophy reminds us that humans are not mere instruments in technological progress but ends in themselves, possessing inherent value and the unique

capacity for reason, morality, and aesthetic judgment. To ensure a future where humanity thrives alongside technological advancements, we must prioritize comprehensive human development—harmonizing physical, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional dimensions.

Ultimately, Kant's timeless message urges us to believe in Truth, act in pursuit of Goodness, and strive for Beauty. These principles not only define what it means to be human but also provide a moral and intellectual compass for navigating the complexities of the digital era. Under the light of Kantian philosophy, the chaos of the modern world finds order, and the enduring values of humanity are safeguarded for generations to come.

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