



Welcome to the Apocalypse

Description

Not everyone is averse to the prospect of a global AI-induced apocalypse. Catastrophizing circumstances and events carries a certain appeal to some, in particular those who identify with the status of a powerless underclass. Let social, political and economic systems fall! Let AI take over! I think here of those who identify as dispossessed, who think they gain nothing from institutions, governments, political parties and society at large. They think they have little to lose from an AI apocalypse, even if it includes the annihilation of our species.

There are also those intellectuals who identify with the putative concerns of the underclasses, and choose to support options with marginal and objectionable outcomes for their potential to disrupt and challenge the status quo. I think of Slavoj Žižek's initial support for the election of Trump as US president. See post: [What a calamity!](#)

There's also a perverse strand to human logic that benefits from such "moral panic" in relation to particular technologies. The threat of catastrophe from the uncontrolled distribution of pharmaceuticals, chemical pollution, the risks associated with radiation leaks from nuclear waste dumps, and the increase in atmospheric CO2 from petrochemicals amplify the consequentiality of those industries and activities. Such concerns invite monitoring and control, but also funding and they inform pricing strategies.

AI as "existential threat" moves it from the margins to the centre of global concern. This agenda elevates the allure of AI. For some, that AI might enter into such risky territory ("the end of human civilization") demonstrates that it is something with which to get involved, not least, commercially. As indicated in an [earlier post](#), the Open Letter by the *Future of Life Institute* provides evidence of this sense of self importance. The letter offers directions for AI research.

AI research and development should be refocused on making today's powerful, state-of-the-art systems more accurate, safe, interpretable, transparent, robust, aligned, trustworthy, and loyal.

That's effectively an appeal for more funding. Apart from instituting these and other measures to soften the dangers of AI, there's a further potential response to the prospect of general AI.

As I observed in a [previous post](#), "apocalypse" simply means "revelation." To reveal is to show, as a sign. Though natural and human made local and global catastrophes provide a foretaste, AI apocalypse is at present in the realms of prospect: it's a problem statement, a story, a series of scenarios. It's a call to action, though as yet ill-defined as such.

In the meantime, the narrative and communicative aspects of AI urban apocalypse serve to reveal, not just what the future might hold, what actions we might take, but of the current situation: of language, human sociability, urban existence, meaningful places, responses to environment and human anxieties. Rogue general AI serves as an intellectual sounding board, a thought experiment that tests theories and propositions about humanity, society, and technology.

Bibliography

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Category

1. Artificial Intelligence

Tags

1. AI
2. catastrophe
3. GAI
4. general artificial intelligence

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