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False dilemmas and real challenges: GenAI and the algorithmization of experience

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Introduction

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), which emerged just a few years ago with ChatGPT at the forefront, is causing an epistemological shock. This, in turn, is translating into transformations across the social, cultural, political, and legal spheres. Most analyses cast GenAI in one of two roles: either as a nearly magical tool that will solve all problems with speed and efficiency, or as the destructive tool that will erase creativity, imagination, and ultimately the humanity in what we create. In any case, what we should not do is fall into the trap of competing with large language models (LLMs). To do so would be to assume that human intelligence is an accumulation of information, and that creativity can be reduced to the most probable response. What we are looking for is not always found on the internet; often, it must be invented. “A plausible way out of this debate is to acknowledge the paradox that current artificial intelligence is simultaneously very intelligent and very stupid; its stupidity lies in the fact that, when it makes an intelligent decision, it has no way of knowing it (Dessalles 2019). What we would have, then, are “idiot digital savants” (Carr 2014; Domingos 2015)” (Innerarity, 2025, p. 37, my translation).

Perhaps this is a false dilemma, a revival of the technological determinism that typically accompanies the emergence of each new technology. Like writing or printing, GenAI is a medium that extends language, in other words, a form of encoding. The LLMs that fuel this technology expand human encoding capacity, conceived as the ability to construct textual, auditory, and visual representations. Moreover, we consider GenAI as a new form of cultural and social technology that enables human beings to harness the information accumulated by others over time. In this sense, GenAI opens new possibilities for creativity, collaboration, and access to knowledge, allowing social actors to engage with accumulated human understanding in ways that were previously unavailable to them. As a medium of language extension, GenAI has an ontological character (Aguado-Terrón and Grandío-Pérez, 2024), that is, it affects how we construct a shared world. As Cassirer observes, “language converts chaos into form... it articulates chaotic reality into a world of relations from the very first moment” (1973, p. 15, my translation). This determinative and discriminating function of language in the construction of our world cannot be understood as an instrument of communication, but rather as the very condition of possibility for a shared world.

Algorithms: the invisible factory of realities and desires

According to [Petricini et al. \(2025\)](#), historically, meaning-making, from oral traditions to print culture, was rooted in human agency, with communities actively shaping narratives and controlling the flow of ideas. Nowadays, algorithmic systems not only dictate which knowledge is surfaced but also reconfigure the conditions under which meaning is produced and interpreted. Petricini notes that “these systems, often designed with efficiency and engagement as priorities, operate through opaque mechanisms that obscure their influence on our perceptions and interactions” (2025, p. 1306). It is no longer only laws or institutions that structure social life, but code as well. These algorithmic systems play an increasingly significant role in shaping cultural, social, and political consumption. This shift can be understood as a movement from mere information filtering to a deeper form of epistemic mediation, in which algorithms do not simply select what we see but progressively shape the frameworks through which we interpret and desire. “Therefore, in order not to become algorithmic illiterates, we must, in some way, become aware of how all these systems operating behind the scenes work, and also avoid falling into a kind of algorithmic colonization. Today, the algorithm not only recommends things to us or decides for us, but also edits the realities, desires, and even the beliefs of what we are experiencing” ([Cwaik, 2025](#)).

Citizens’ handling of algorithms in social media appears of essential relevance, as algorithmic filtering is shaping their information landscape via curated contents and, in turn, their political attitudes and actions. In this context, it is necessary to rethink the notion of agency.

In this regard, GenAI introduces a reorganization of the epistemic agency architecture within hybrid cognitive environments, the new everyday settings taking shape between humans and machines. It is possible, then, that agency has not diminished but has instead been relocated. “As interaction has shifted from command and feature-based paradigms toward conversational, generative, and agentic AI, human agency migrates from interface affordances to interaction itself: articulating goals, evaluating outputs, and negotiating outcomes” ([Mengke and Mike, 2026](#)).

In this scenario, we need to remain aware of the constant tension between the delegation of thought and the recovery of critical will. It is not simply a matter of being an expert prompter, but of critically interrogating the algorithmic structures that drive information flows, influence perceptions, and shape social narratives.

This critical demand finds theoretical support in what recent literature calls algorithmic literacy. In this new environment we now inhabit, algorithmic literacy ceases to be a technical option and becomes a political imperative and a form of resistance. A critical competence that “... challenges the binary of human vs. machine, instead proposing an understanding of how algorithms act as mediators of meaning and power. This deeper, more systemic approach to literacy is essential for navigating an era where algorithms are not just tools but active participants in the creation of meaning and the construction of our shared realities. Algorithmic literacy can address the profound epistemic shift in how knowledge is produced, distributed, and consumed in an algorithm-driven world” ([Petricini et al., 2025](#), p. 1306).

Recommendation and personalization algorithms fragment the collective cultural experience that once bound societies through common references, shared narratives, and simultaneous media consumption. The influence of GenAI and algorithms raises new questions about the role of shared cultural experiences in an increasingly individualistic social landscape ([Toledo and Comba, 2025](#)).

Discussion. AI among us: the question of agency

So far, we have seen how AI is transforming our consumption patterns and influencing the realities we create, almost without noticing. This process has its origins in the moment when users began leaving behind digital traces on platforms. Searches for information related to travel, shopping, work, study, and entertainment became increasingly digitized. Corporations subsequently recognized that this data, left behind by users, could be readily collected and held significant market value. This dynamic gave rise to the now widely recognized notion that, on the internet, users themselves are the product. The consumption of information became platformized, giving rise to new phenomena. Algorithms gradually construct, almost without our noticing, a version of ourselves that does not quite correspond to the one we recognize. This version, sustained by automated processes, ultimately accompanies, and at times guides, the decisions of our everyday lives.

[Couldry and Mejías \(2019\)](#) refer to this phenomenon as data colonialism. They define it as an emerging social order for the appropriation of human life. This allows data to be continuously extracted from it for economic gain.

At this stage of capitalism, current datafication is not simply a technological advance, but rather a continuation of the historical processes of colonialism, where the conquered territory is no longer geographic, but human experience itself. Couldry explains that “what really matters is not so much whether generative AI’s outputs plagiarize the content of famous authors owned by powerful media groups. The real issue is a whole new model of profit-making that treats our lives in data form as its free input. This profitable data grab, of which generative AI is just an egregious example, is really part of a larger power struggle with an extensive history” (2025).

As we can see, AI possesses a clear ideology that responds to the interests of the few owners who monopolize this technology. Today, developing AI means holding the power to regulate markets, perceptions, and even conflicts. One illustration of this is the emergence of projects aimed at creating non-human corporations.

Today, companies are run by people. Even when they make use of software, algorithms, or AI, there is always a human director, manager, shareholder, or officer who makes the final decisions. But will this remain the case in the near future? The proposal consists of creating a new corporate entity operated by AI agents or robots. Its most novel feature is that human shareholders could exist, but they would not be required. In other words, the law would allow for organizations whose ordinary administration is carried out by autonomous systems. The project does not entail an AI becoming a human person or acquiring political rights. Rather, what is sought is to grant the entity its own legal personality, similar to that which companies, foundations, or associations currently hold. The entity

could accumulate capital, make investments, and expand over the years without there being any person collecting dividends.

A fully autonomous corporation raises liability problems that are difficult to resolve: if an AI causes significant harm, who is to be sued? The risk is that these structures could become mechanisms for diluting liability or making it more difficult to identify the true beneficiaries. There are also concerns regarding fraud, money laundering, financial manipulation, civil liability, and regulatory oversight. What is at stake is the possible emergence of a new class of social actor: autonomous entities capable of operating within the economy in a manner relatively independent of human beings.

When AI makes thousands or millions of decisions per day, a difficult question arises: Who is responsible for each of these decisions? What happens when an AI makes significant economic decisions without human oversight?

For this reason, Innerarity (2025) argues that, before considering the legal, financial, and political ramifications, the fundamental problem posed by AI is the growing externalization of human decisions onto the machines we create. This raises the question: what place remains for human decision-making? Is it a matter of complementing it, modifying it, or replacing it? Every time we accept an algorithmic recommendation without questioning it, every time we delegate to a system the task of deciding what to watch, what to buy, or what to believe, we have already been ceding a fragment of that decisional sovereignty. The corporation without human shareholders does not inaugurate this problem: it formalizes it.

In 1995, Windows (with the Start button of its iconic graphical interface) ushered the computer into millions of households. That same year, Aníbal Ford wrote in the prologue to the book *Cyberculturas: En la era de las máquinas inteligentes*: “The monsters are already loose. And they configure unprecedented problems. Neither is the human/machine relationship shaped like Frankenstein or its Barbie version—the bionic woman—, nor does power, which grows ever harder and more implacable, take the form of Big Brother or the Panopticon. It is less visible, more intelligent, and has no fixed centers. But that does not stop it from acting, from privileging and excluding. And this is no simulacrum, even though the relations between the factual and the symbolic must be rethought” (Ford, 1995, p. 15).

Thirty years later, the monsters are still loose and they have learned to be invisible: they are called feed, recommendation, optimization, efficiency. The first step, then, is to understand how GenAI works, since technology has never been neutral. The question is what worlds we can co-create with the technologies we continue to invent.

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SC: Resources, Supervision, Methodology, Conceptualization, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Funding acquisition, Visualization, Writing – review & editing. ET: Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Supervision, Investigation, Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Resources, Writing – original draft.

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The author(s) declared that generative AI was not used in the creation of this manuscript.

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