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Extended Aesthetics: Art and Artificial Intelligence

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ABSTRACT. In this paper², I will argue that developments in machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) applied to aesthetics have relevant implications for philosophical aesthetics, in particular concerning the discussions about the nature of creativity and authorship. The automatic generation of aesthetic artifacts, as well as the development of software increasingly supporting the work of artists and designers, call into question the uniqueness of individual creativity and artistic imagination in an unprecedented way. Moreover, in a scenario in which formal properties of artifacts seem to be easily replicable by machines, the debate on the relationship between aesthetics and the nature of art seems also revitalized. Overall, diverging positions on this issue oscillate between the view of the machine as an Other competing with human capabilities, and, on the contrary, an interpretation of technology as an extension of human potentialities through the externalization of mental processes. AI and machine learning would be in this sense a direct practical manifestation of an *extended aesthetic mind*, in which traditional cognitive limits of the biological mind can be overcome also in areas related to aesthetic creation.

1. Introduction

Since the beginning of the 21st century, computation, data analysis, and artificial intelligence have gradually entered the aesthetic realm. We see this first in what we could call consumer aesthetics, where algorithms are increasingly able to predict what we like and recommend in accordance with our taste, like in music streaming services such as Spotify, or video platforms

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² Parts of this contribution anticipate an in-depth investigation of the relationship between computation and aesthetics with the provisional title *Artificial Aesthetics* (forthcoming), by Lev Manovich and Emanuele Arielli.