Writing Machines: J. G. Ballard, Gertrude Stein, and the poetics of AI fiction

Proposal

Thomas Hainscho (University of Klagenfurt, Austria)

In this paper, I want to explore the distinctions between texts produced by machines and texts written by humans. I show that a prerequisite for such a distinction is the assumption of genuine human properties such as *genius*, *soul*, or *intentionality*. These properties, however, do not allow to differentiate between products of humans or machines, such as texts. The information about the author reps. writing procedure of a texts allows to raise certain questions concerning interpretation but I suggest to refrain from a strict distinction between "AI fiction" and "human fiction".

For doing so, I discuss J. G. Ballard's short story "Studio 5, The Stars" (1961) and classical philosophical arguments. Ballard's story gives the account of poetry machines that produce poems and have mostly replaced human poets because of their efficiency and productivity. The story raises doubts that it is possible to automate the human ability to create poetry by an artificial construct that lacks that human emotional capability.

The classical Cartesian distinction between machines and animals resp. humans relies on genuine human properties that are essential for a human being in order to be human. This prerequisite is also to be found in 20th century philosophy, as e.g. John Searle's Chinese Room Argument as given in "Minds, Brains and Programs" (1980) and reappears as the argument in Ballard's fiction: Without a particular non-reducible property, it is not possible to create text that are as poetic as human texts are. Texts that are created by machines therefore lack some kind of quality.

In the next step, I present an analysis of Gertrude Stein's fiction and show that her use of language suits to the text produced by machines. Literary criticism and text interpretations of Stein's work could heavily benefit from and vice versa, as I show with examples. Therefore, I suggest to renounce the notions of "AI fiction" and "human fiction".

Dr. Mag. Thomas Hainscho, Bakk. (Short Bio)

Thomas Hainscho studied philosophy and informatics at the university of Klagenfurt. He was a predoc scientist at the department of philosophy at the university of Klagenfurt and obtained his doctoral degree in philosophy in 2020 with a dissertation on the machine model for the human body in Early Modern French Materialism. He currently is employed at the Karl Popper Library at Klagenfurt and works in the fields of history of philosophy, language philosophy, and philosophy of technology. Thomas Hainscho writes software that produces computer generated fiction.

Selected recent publications (scientific):

Hainscho T. (2020). Comprehension and the Eigenform View on Language. *Constructivist Foundations*, 15(3): 287–289.

Hainscho T. (2020). The temporal order in an inconsistent non-dualism. *Constructivist Foundations*, 15(2): 185–186.

Hainscho, T. (2017). Die Selbstdeutung des Menschen. Zu Arnold Gehlens Resonanzphänomen und Ernst Kapps Organprojektion. In A. Oberprantacher & A. Siegetsleitner (Eds.), *Mensch sein. Tagungsband des 10. Kongresses der Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Philosophie* (p. 539–547). Innsbruck: Innsbruck University Press.

Hainscho, T. (2016). Wie Maschinen denken. In M. Soboleva (Eds.), *Das Denken des Denkens* (p. 197–219). Bielefeld: Transcript.

Recent publications (fiction):

Fomobot (2020). *Die lesende Frau*. Berlin: sukultur.

Lovebot (2020). Nobody loves no one. *mischen – Zeitschrift für Literatur*, 4.

Selected recent talks:

30. May 2019: *Calling the News Fake*. Conference: Truth, Fiction, Illusion – Worlds & Experience (Klagenfurt, Austria, 29.5.–2.6.2019).

1. March 2018: *„In der Nürnberger Spielschachtel sind die Bäume kreisrund gedrechselt." Sprachliche Normierung bei Fritz Mauthner*. Conference: Wer darf hier **** sagen? sprache macht bildung (Klagenfurt, Austria, 28.2.–1.3.2018).

30. September 2017: *Transhumanismus & Kunst: Ästhetik für neue Menschen oder mit neuen Menschen?* Kulturtage Bad St. Leonhard 2017 (Bad St. Leonhard, Austria, 29.9.–1.10.2017).

18. September 2017: *Alan Turing's models of cognition*. Cologne Summer School of Interdisciplinary Anthropology – The Phenomenality of Material Things III: Cognition (Cologne, Germany, 18.–23.9.2017).

4. May 2017: *« Il est possible que l'imagination nous fasse un bonheur plus grand que la jouissance. » On the role of imagination in the philosophy of Denis Diderot*. Laboratoire: Imagination et Discours à l'âge Classique (Lyon, France, 4.5.2017).

Contact information:
Thomas Hainscho
Karl Popper Library, University of Klagenfurt
Universitätsstraße 65-67
9020 Klagenfurt
Austria

thomas.hainscho@aau.at
++43 (0)463 / 2700 6264