Letter to Editor

The Concept of "The Extended Mind" Can Provide A Sound Philosophical Justification for the Academic Use of AI, but with Ethical Precautions!

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Dear editors,

I think the important discussions on artificial intelligence tools in the last few issues of your journal have made important contributions to the literature. We have seen that many authors, especially in the field of medicine and health sciences, have followed and contributed to the topic with interest. In an article that I had previously tried to contribute to, I had argued that we should ask ethical and philosophical questions about the issue depending on the sensitivity of the issue [1]. At this point, it is possible to say that various applications of AI have a significant impact on our lives. In this article, I would like to briefly mention the concept of "the extended mind", which has had a significant impact on fields such as the philosophy of technology and the philosophy of mind with the articles published in 1998 by the important philosophers of technology Andy Clark and David Chalmers, and then I would like to mention that this concept can form a strong basis for academic (and other) uses of artificial intelligence. However, I argue that the uses we can justify with this concept should also be balanced with ethical sensitivity, awareness, and constant questioning.

Andy Clark and David Chalmers argue that we can extend our cognitive functions to the environment, and that we do not need to confine them to the inside of our brains or skulls. In this regard, they state that we can attribute some of our cognitive functions to the tools and devices we use in our relationship with the environment. Thus, the support we receive from outside our brain or from the environment can have an effect on cognitive processes just as it does inside our brain [2]. In this respect, tools such as calculators, reminder applications, notebook and mobile phones perform cognitive functions on our behalf, extending our cognitive capabilities beyond our biological limits, even though they are actually external to us. These tools (not necessarily only physical tools, abstract concepts such as language can also be seen as such) can also become part of our cognitive being. The cognitive contributions of these tools and our given cognitive processes have the possibility of continuous interaction and extension [2].

If we look at the issue of AI and its academic use in terms of the concept of the "extended mind", it can be said that especially the instrumental use of AI applications can be considered as a contribution to our cognitive process. In other words, it may be the case that the cognitive

tasks we impose on artificial intelligence are homologous to the cognitive tasks we can perform. This can basically be seen as a contribution to our mind and its expansion and even development. It is therefore plausible to see applications of artificial intelligence as cognitive tools that can only be used instrumentally in their relation to us, without being subjects in themselves. What I mean here by instrumentality is not necessarily a lower quality in terms of value. It is just used to indicate an ontological difference. In time, AI may also become a fundamental element of our cognitive process in relation to our mind.

Although it seems unlikely today, the most fundamental problem that can be considered in this regard in the future may be related to drawing the boundary between the body and mind that we ascribe to ourselves as subjects and the boundary of the cognitive effect of artificial intelligence as a tool. Although this is an extremely important question, it is beyond the scope of this article for now. In this article, I particularly wanted to emphasize the instrumental use of AI. However, the fact that the use of AI as a cognitive tool can be justified in terms of the "extended mind" concept does not mean that ethical problems will not arise. In particular, the fact that AI is not simply a tool that can be used equidistantly and openly in the real world makes it necessary to have ethical discussions on this issue. In addition, the problem of the transparency of the cognitive processes that we attribute to AI and the cognitive problems that seem to be attributable to AI (bias, etc.) are among the issues that need to be carefully considered. Some of the most fundamental questions that face us academically may be related to the ethical dimension of the production and circulation of knowledge related to AI, the meaning of AI as a means of cognitive enhancement, justice and inequalities. The content of the cognitive contributions of AI in its academic use should be analyzed in detail. Given the speed of AI, the cognitive contributions that humans cannot make can also be seen as a kind of cognitive enhancement tool. In this case, who has or will have this opportunity should be considered, especially in terms of justice and equality. In this respect, the possibility that control over AI applications is predominantly in the hands of private for-profit companies may be a notable area of concern. All these categories of problems require prudence, which is one of the most important concepts of technological ethics [3]. This means that the scientific world should reflect on its actions from the individual to the institutional level and be willing to be responsible researchers.

Yours sincerely,

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