



# What is Contemporary AI's Relationship to the Human Person?

Walter J. Scheirer

Dept. of Computer Science and Engineering  
University of Notre Dame

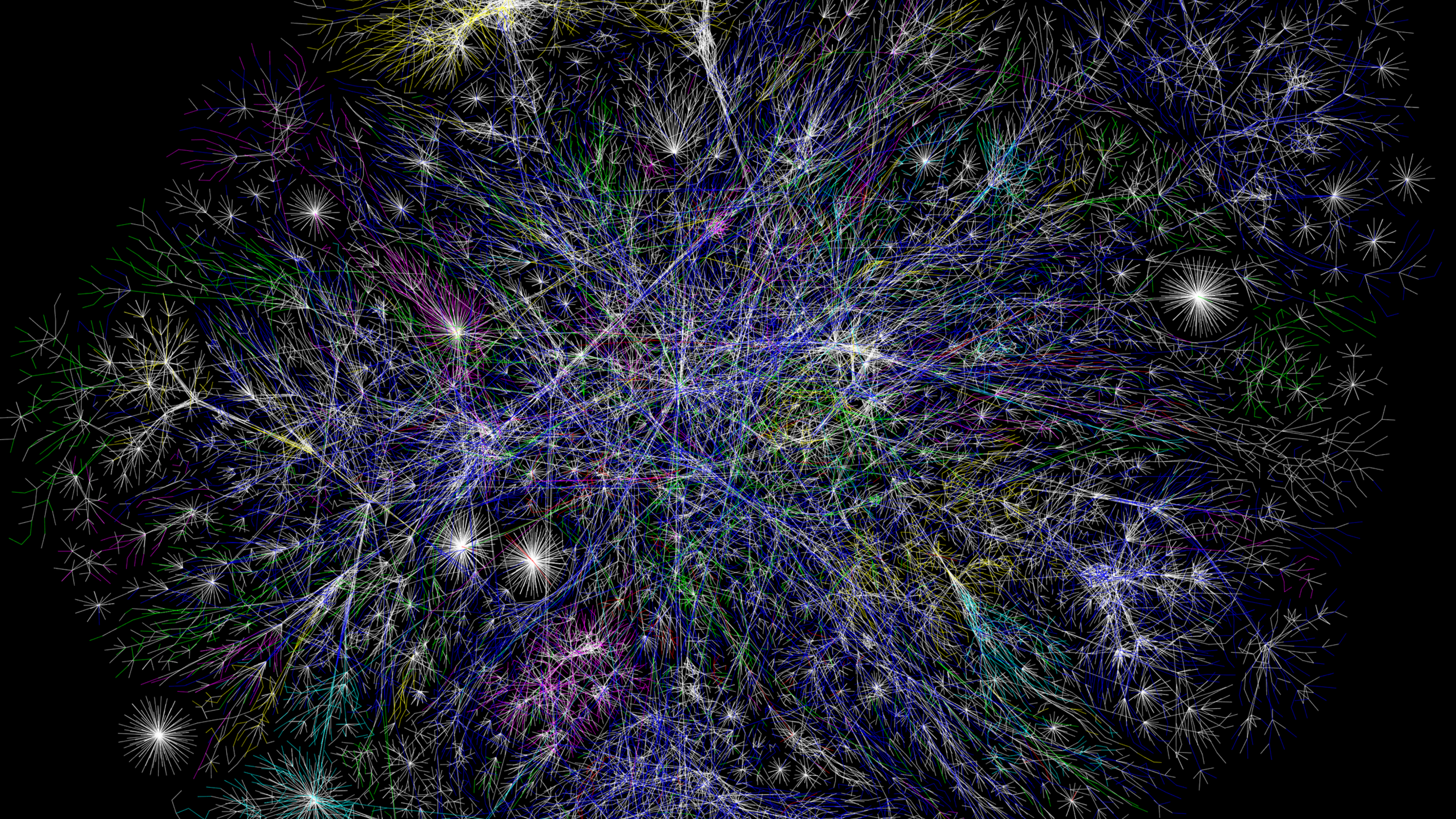


Notre Dame Institute for  
ADVANCED STUDY

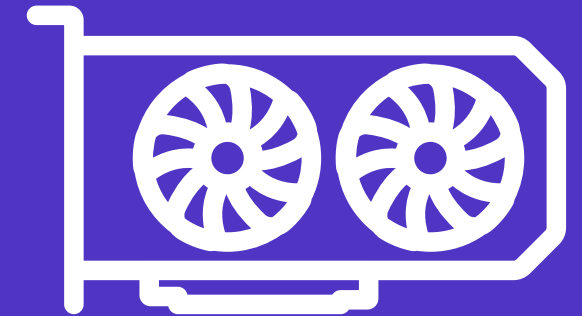
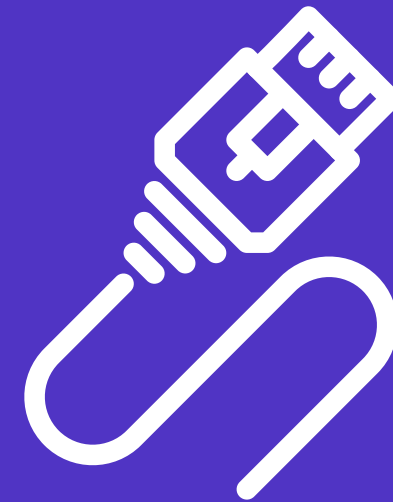
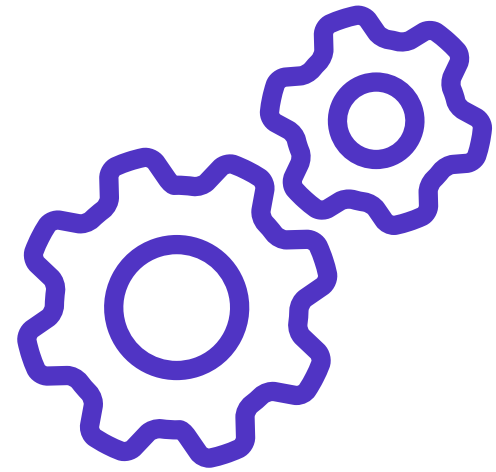
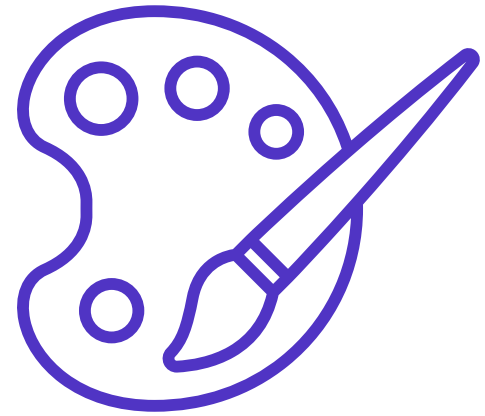
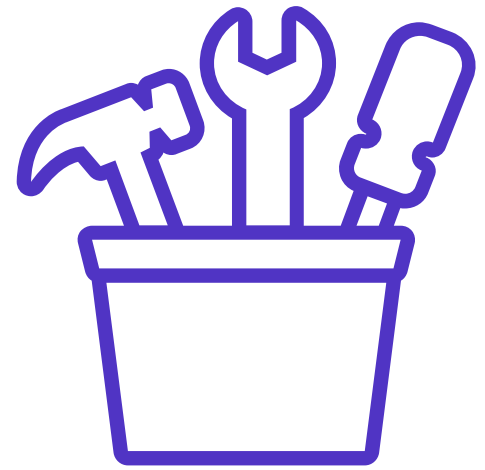


The act of creation is perhaps the most breathtaking aspect of human nature





Human creation and creativity are  
inherently good



Digital technologies, as human  
creations, thus also have tremendous  
potential for good

...we will finally take seriously the simple question of what the name “technology” means. The word stems from the Greek. *Technikon* means that which belongs to *technē*. We must observe two things with respect to the meaning of this word. One is that *technē* is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts. *Technē* belongs to bringing-forth, to *poiēsis*, it is something poetic.

Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” from *Basic Writings*, rev. edn. (New York: HarperCollins, [1993] 2008), pp. 311–341.



Martin Heidegger

# The Human in AI




```
a                                iiiiiiiiii 00tom  
                                hhth  
                                hfs  
f                                nnoooooooooonn  
                                dnnuoorrrrrrrroo          rni n  
                                e,ueti n t   erihh llaaarrrrrrraaa,, t   whnidmea  
                                t,itid   hh e eel   hfffhhhhllllccccssppIIlaaeotta,J todo  
nora aefSt pi aoolgie Jitigcauollo          locrc slb toesiletfm  
hiisanwdlyc inasr es   awihiu bllrooommooooorlabsorx ga ti t p raeu  
ido Jhso ai dioio id a          ren          r ilr  
sn s haepda          t l          tttt          H n          re  
wniay          u m e i          g p t          H n  
          lg          nt o ta evlllllllliv, a          nt          a t  
          e lg          ot ac pbr   a mi iemacccam m caele   tpn a,ae t  
i i asu nr   h e          c          eep   oa;M,  
pon nt t          G eeo csr   444   rsc or o f   i hk   pi  
soit ah          or a4rM          y          e v u ,   i e  
it c ,   d nrh          n o gue          c r n   d ec b   i  
          ,e h   i rg, i sur fn   nf oaia   c r   l g o  
t e          d a si   le K   aa          n imv n o   rfs  
l ,nn s          e ea t a   o   b   e in   a  
o h          o          n          rl C   h   v k  
rpn          so  
- dn          s,  
gi          e ,e  
ei          t dn c l un  
f o t          t r   ai h   s t nu a   nn t          r c w  
sc          a t   e i i asoh   a ,,ca   l o i eo h ce 4ew  
gob l ti   t t i da   i icm   nte   c ad   h lc 4 a   o  
n tf brP o i          e ni   cg          r te ;t r o  
nr i o Lee          to e          e oe,es   neh e io h  
          r ai,i   bot eite,nnsssn ,toc eob   fr   il i  
          n          ii   ictamaaamai   aa          i   it n u,  
uif noc          i          ,,   ,r   ig          nnt   peSmn ia  
eenenGfndlf e uei          tftx   ansSpin   p n bgip  
rth tmi etaenrG//nrr tt ffff   tiioo oow t   rtin   pewas  
a,lt,sv,3hgehh ituaent aa a   treatti   cyp o eoau   m a  
i          sanka ci encs   eeiee scee,ptsa n          i r   s  
          ta          n          to          t          t          io  
          et          uu          u          aa  
          hti p          ns          vo acoyf,p  
          Hnr anin          eo,ara,mo o nnceus eseta  
oolsh drer riannglleeesseelliirneh emnysiarti ht.s a ide drty
```




# T TIME E

**T** Hi ChatGPT

 Hello! How can I assist you today?

**T** What do you think of a TIME cover story with the title, "The AI Arms Race Is Changing Everything?"

 As an AI language model, I don't have personal opinions or beliefs, but I can provide some context and information on the subject.

"The AI Arms Race is Changing Everything" could be an attention-grabbing and thought-provoking title for a cover story on AI. A cover story in a widely-read publication like TIME could help raise public awareness about the potential risks and benefits of this trend, and stimulate discussions on how to ensure that AI is developed and deployed in a responsible and ethical manner.

It's important to note that the title of the story could also be interpreted as sensationalist or alarmist, and may not accurately reflect the complexities ■

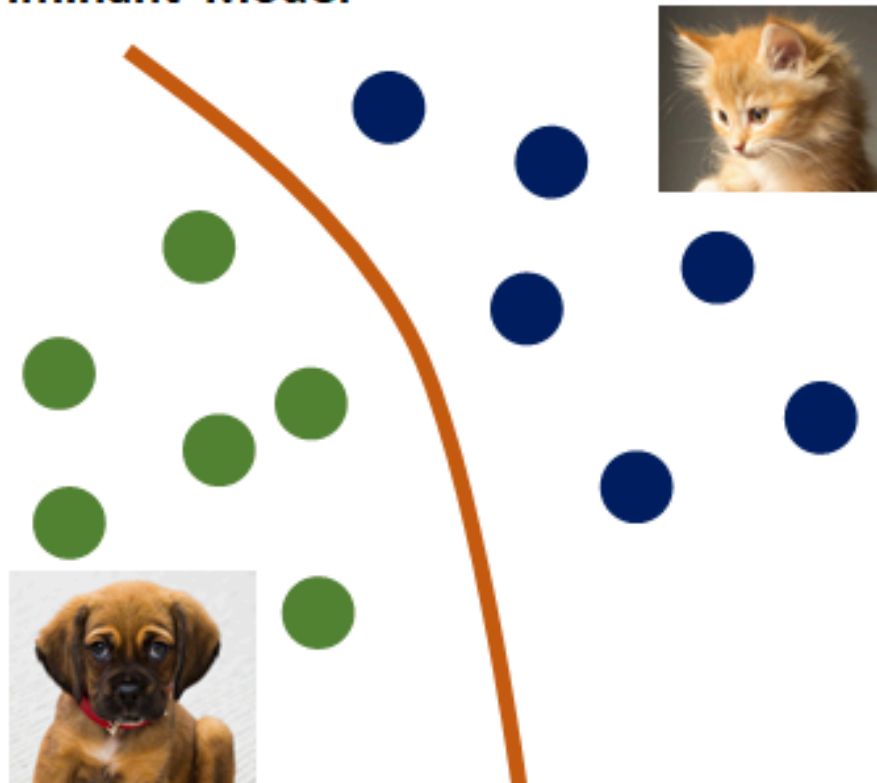
*by*  
ANDREW R. CHOW  
& BILLY PERRIGO  
*(humans)*



# ChatGPT

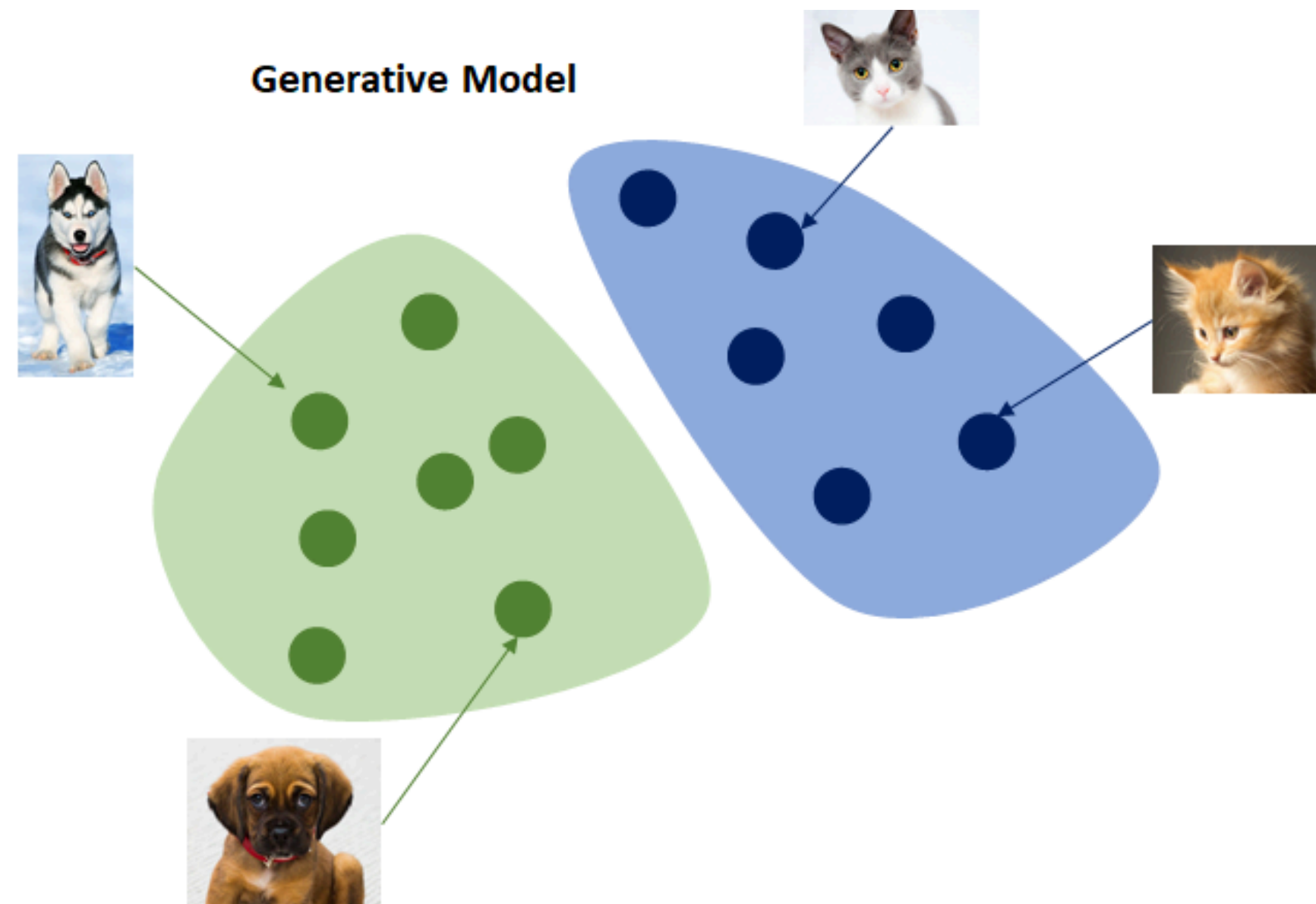
# Discriminative AI

Discriminant Model

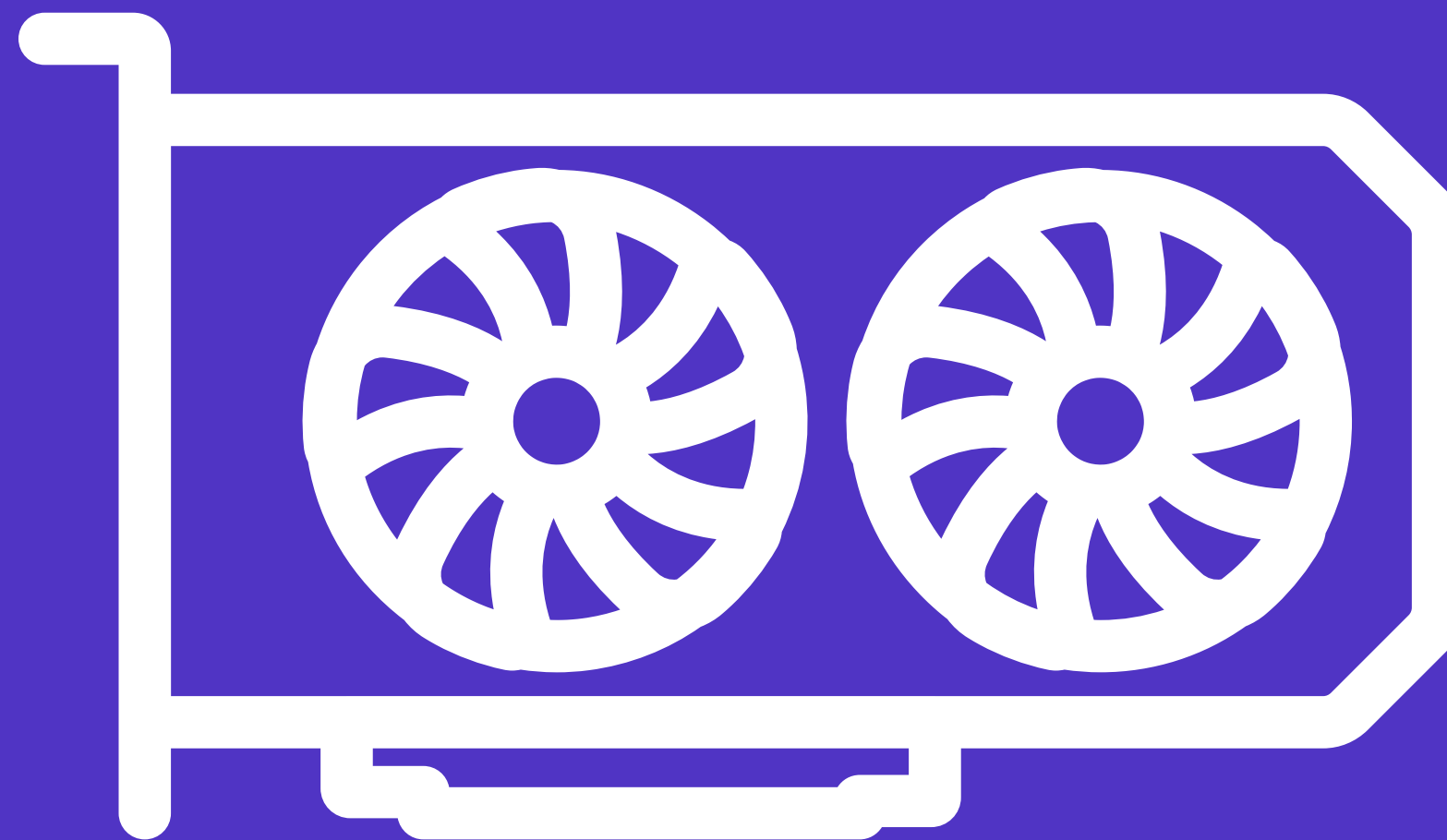


# Generative AI

Generative Model



# Early 2010s: An AI Inflection Point



The data reflect the collective imagination of humanity



What is the place of AI in human  
creativity? Does it, too, have  
potential for good?





# Restyling Reality





A detailed Renaissance-style painting depicting a celestial scene. In the center, a circular architectural structure with columns and a dome is visible, possibly representing a temple or a celestial realm. The scene is filled with numerous figures, including angels, deities, and other celestial beings, all rendered in classical attire. The figures are arranged in a dynamic, swirling composition, with some appearing to be in motion. The background is filled with soft, billowing clouds, creating a sense of depth and atmosphere. The overall color palette is rich and varied, with prominent use of gold, blue, and red. The text "Perhaps we are witnessing the resurrection of the myth cycle on the Internet..." is overlaid in white, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

Perhaps we are witnessing the resurrection  
of the myth cycle on the Internet...

If our interpretation is correct, we are led toward a completely different view, namely, that the kind of logic which is used by mythical thought is as rigorous as that of modern science, and that the difference lies not in the quality of the intellectual process, but in the nature of the things to which it is applied.

Claude Lévi-Strauss. 1955. "The Structural Study of Myth." *The Journal of American Folklore* 68 (270): 428-444.



Claude Lévi-Strauss

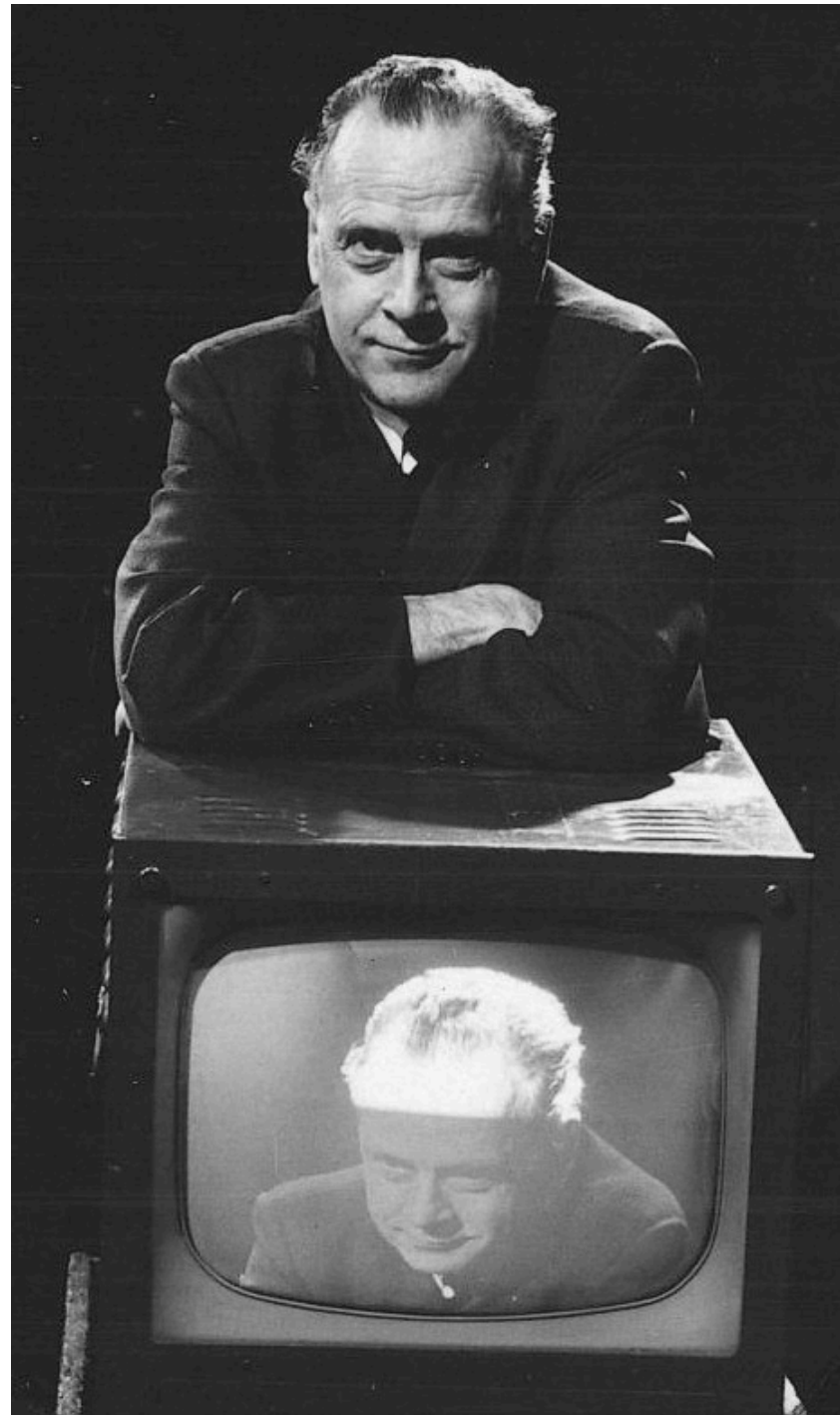
This is well in agreement with the situation known to prevail in the field of technology: what makes a steel axe superior to a stone one is not that the first one is better made than the second. They are equally well made, but steel is a different thing than stone. In the same way we may be able to show that the same logical processes are put to use in myth as in science, and that man has always been thinking equally well; the improvement lies, not in an alleged progress of man's conscience, but in the discovery of new things to which it may apply its unchangeable abilities.

Claude Lévi-Strauss. 1955. "The Structural Study of Myth." *The Journal of American Folklore* 68 (270): 428-444.



Claude Lévi-Strauss

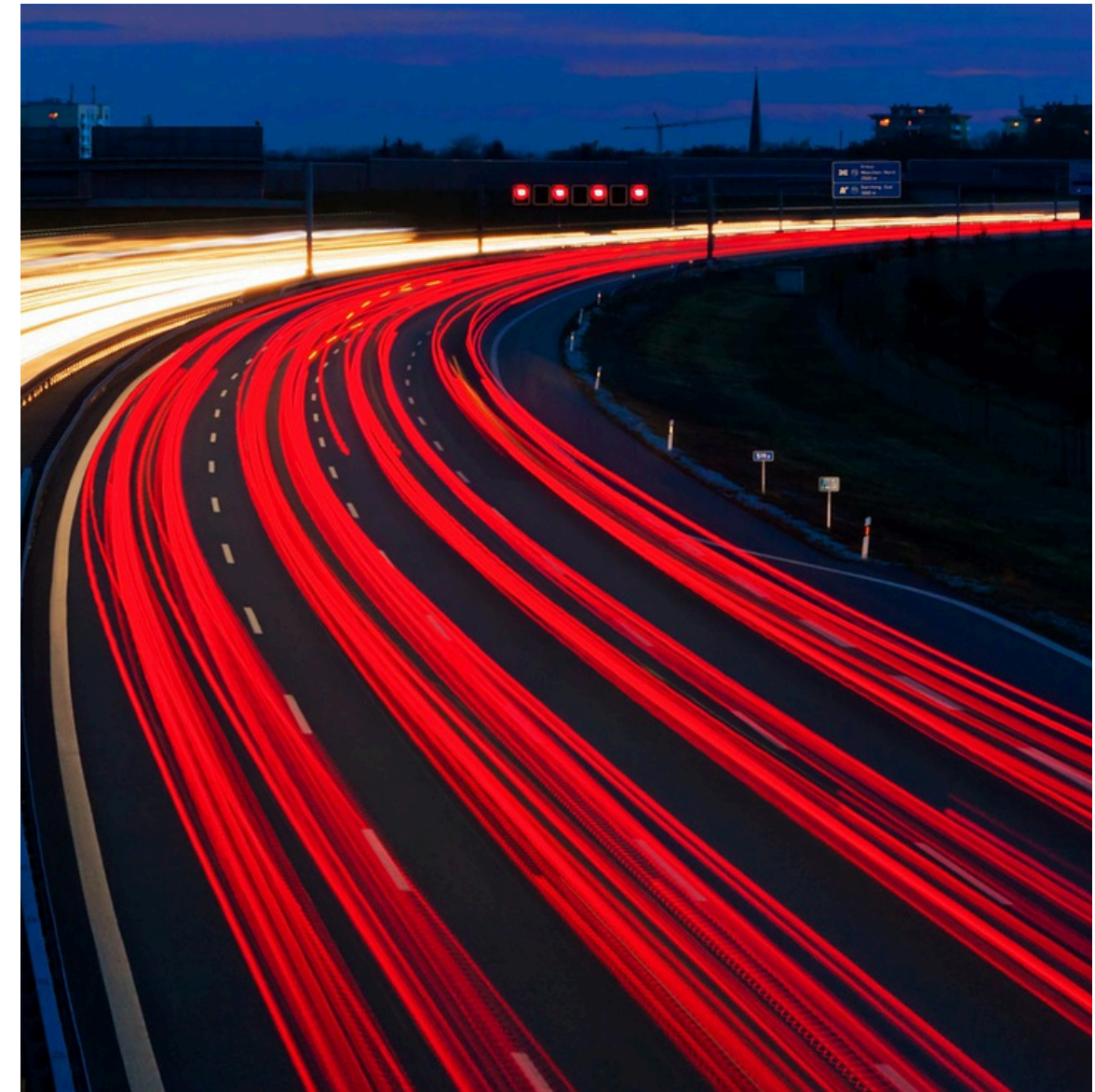
# Marshall McLuhan



"electric circuit, *an extension of the central nervous system*"

VS.

# Information Superhighway



"Wander through a distant library. Turn your corner store into a multinational. Curious? *IBM can get you there.*"

AI is a product of human ingenuity; thus, any AI necessarily carries with it some of the humanity that underpins creativity



<https://huggingface.co/spaces/akhaliq/ArcaneGAN>

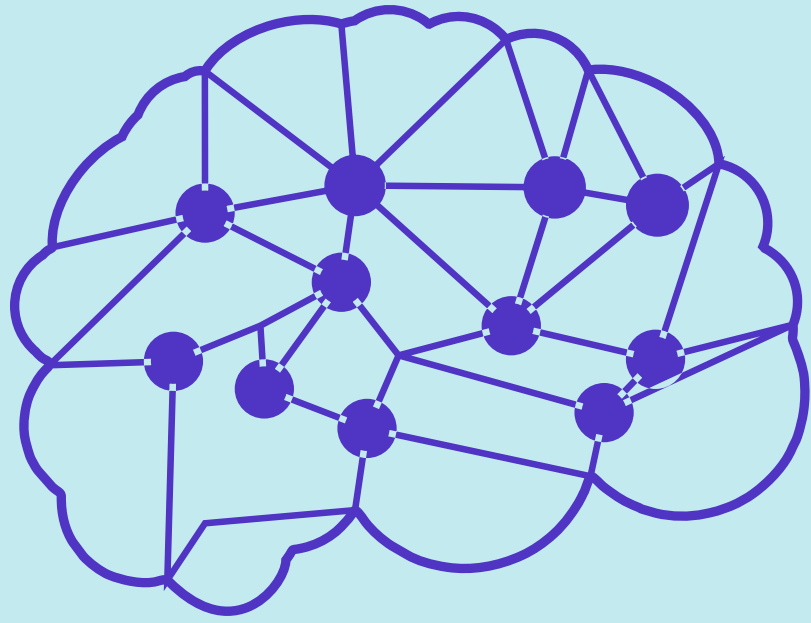
# Meghan O’Gieblyn



Just as algorithms manipulate discrete symbols, creating new lines of code via endless combinations of 0s and 1s, so writers build stories by reassembling the basic tropes and structures that are encoded in the world’s earliest myths, often—when things are going well—without fully realizing what they are doing. The most fertile creative states, like the most transcendent spiritual experiences, dissolve consciousness and turn the artist into an inanimate tool — a channel, a conduit.

Meghan O’Gieblyn, “Babel”, *n+1*, Issue 40, Summer 2021

# Bruno Maçães



...technology has become the new holy writ, the inexhaustible source of the stories by which we order our lives.

# Devi Parikh



I think accessible and educational material that helps laypeople understand the technology better would go a long way. I think telling the stories of how artists and designers and content creators in various capacities are leveraging these tools would help. Telling the story of how these tools democratize and enhance human creative expression would help.

Walter Scheirer, "The Human in AI," *Comment*, August 9th



Want to learn more?

https://comment.org/the-human-in-ai/

LOGIN

MEET COMMENT

THE MAGAZINE

COMMENT

DONATE

SUBSCRIBE



The Human in AI  
ESSAY



Walter J. Scheirer

# The Human in AI

Competitor to us, or extension of us?





Out Dec. 5th 2023 From Stanford University Press!