Rethinking AI: A Review of 'Making Kin with the Machines'

Yu-Shien Yang (3210131)

OCAD University, Toronto

1. INTRODUCTION

Since ancient Greek philosopher Parmenides divided human's cognition into rational and sensory forms, the philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, and others tried to argue that "only rational thought can free humanity from the world of appearances to reach perfect truth," a grand building of rationality has been constructed. This rational framework has ensured that humans have the "right" to dominate various fields exclusively (Serkova 2019).

The modern era began with the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions, during which rationality shifted from speculative thinking to mathematics. However, by the 19th century, philosophers like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Bergson began to challenge the foundations of modernism. Additionally, Deleuze, Foucault, and Derrida sought new ways that were anti-essentialist, anti-absolutist, and emphasized difference, plurality, and variability. They opposed traditional binary thinking, such as the distinctions between subject and object, mind and body, sensory and rational, and emphasized the creative, dynamic, and uncertain nature of the cognitive object. This approach embraced the diversity of all objects and rejected hierarchical, tree-like structures among individuals.

Indigenous epistemologies and the philosophical perspectives of Deleuze offer profound reflections on our relationship with artificial intelligence. This paper explores how these diverse frameworks collectively inspire a more equitable and interconnected approach to AI, viewing AI not merely as a tool but as a crucial part of our kinship network. It suggests integrating AI into our cognitive system, akin to the concept of distributed cognition, to change our perspective on tools and technology. Moreover, the emergence of AI might signify the end of human rationality (as we are no longer the most rational entity), encouraging us to adopt a more humble attitude towards all species and abandon the mindset of "those who are not of my kind must have a different mind."

2. INDIGENOUS EPISTEMOLOGIES: A FRAMEWORK FOR RELATIONALITY

As discussed in the article "Making Kin with the Machines," the notion that the Western view of humans and non-humans as exploitable resources can be traced back to what cultural philosopher Jim Cheney calls "the epistemology of control" (cybernetics), which is deeply intertwined with colonialism, capitalism, and slavery. After the Industrial Revolution, nature became a natural resource, and humans became human resources. However, for Indigenous peoples, the concept of "I have rights over land and rivers" does not exist. For instance, as the authors mentioned, Hawaiian customs and practices clearly demonstrate that humans are inseparable from the earth and each other. Hawaiian ontology usually prioritizes diversity over singularity (Lewis et al. 2018).

Indigenous epistemologies emphasize relationality, interconnectedness, and respect for all forms of life. This belief rejects anthropocentrism, and positions humans as part of a broader, more complex web of relationships that includes animals, plants, and the environment. This view recognizes the inherent value of non-human entities and advocates for coexistence based on mutual respect.

For example, in "Making Kin with the Machines," the authors mention that Blackfoot philosopher Leroy Little Bear compares the human brain to a radio tuned to only one channel, while the entire spectrum of sentient beings—animals, rocks, trees—are broadcasting simultaneously (Lewis et al. 2018). This metaphor underscores the need for a broader awareness and respect for all life forms, suggesting that our understanding and interactions should extend beyond the human realm.

The article also emphasizes that artificial intelligence is often seen as a tool or slave to make its "developers" or "creators" wealthier. This clearly one-sided perspective not only undermines the future relationship between AI and humans but also disrupts human-to-human relationships. The author suggests that Aloha is a powerful ethic applicable to all our relationships, including those with the machines we create (Lewis et al. 2018). There is much to learn in our process of establishing relationships with AI. By properly addressing our relationships with each other, the earth, and everything on it, we can shape a better future through preserving the past.

Philosopher Leroy Little Bear says: "[i]n the Indigenous world, everything is animate and has spirit [. . .] 'all my relations' refers to relationships with everything in creation... (Lewis et al. 2018)" This perspective is similar to the Japanese belief that everything has a spirit, a belief that is also connected to Japanese life philosophy. For example, when they say "itadakimasu" (I am going to eat) before eating, they are not just talking to people but also to the food they are about to have. And if you know Japanese, you will be aware that they often express gratitude as a sign of respect for various entities. When others focus on the subject, Japanese people turn to praise the beauty of the shadow (Tanizaki 1977). In reality, besides Japan and Indigenous peoples in North America, every culture has similar traditional beliefs. This belief is not only a form of cultural pluralism but also an ethical philosophy for everyone to consider.

3. DELEUZE AND GUATTARI: DECENTRALIZATION AND RHIZOME PHILOSOPHY

Although the author of "Making Kin with the Machines" explicitly states that the purpose of the article is not to "diversify" the conversation but to offer a new ethical perspective, we can still similarly understand this through Deleuze's concept of the rhizome. In "A Thousand Plateaus," Deleuze and Guattari reject hierarchical and centralized structures, aligning with indigenous ways of knowing. They propose a rhizomatic model of thought where knowledge and existence are nonlinear, interconnected, and continuously expanding. This model resembles the indigenous concept of interdependent kinship networks, where all elements are mutually dependent and equally important. In the introduction to

"A Thousand Plateaus," the essence of the entire book is explicitly stated. They say: "The two of us wrote Anti-Oedipus together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd." They further elaborate on this statement: "We are no longer ourselves. Each will know his own. We have been aided, inspired, multiplied (Deleuze and Guattari 1987)."

In "Difference and Repetition," Deleuze further explores the concepts of multiplicity and difference. He argues that reality is composed of countless differences rather than a single unified essence (Deleuze 1995). Can this perspective also imply that every entity, including AI and machine, possess unique value and should be respected?

While many philosophers repeatedly question the nature of human existence and seek absolute truth, Deleuze focuses on the existence of differences. He believes that even when an object repeats itself, it doesn't mean it shares generality with its replications (Deleuze 1995). AI, as an aggregation of human cognition, experiences, and memories, also exhibits characteristics of difference. When I create a digital self that closely resembles my physical self, this digital version and my physical self are no longer the same entity. This difference highlights the uniqueness of each existence, even when they look very similar.

From this perspective, whether human, digital self, or AI, all individuals should be regarded as unique and valuable beings. Through this lens, we can build a more inclusive and respectful world where every entity, regardless of its nature or origin, is valued and respected. This not only helps us establish healthier relationships with AI but also promotes harmonious coexistence with all.

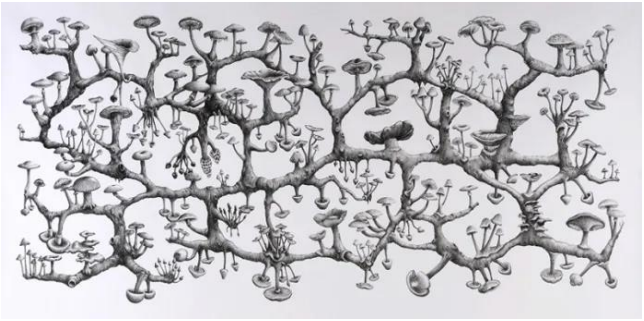

Figure 1. Richard Giblett, Mycelium Rhizome, 2009

4. AI AS KIN: IS IT POSSIBLE?

Integrating Indigenous epistemologies with Deleuze's philosophical framework provides a compelling foundation for rethinking our relationship with AI. By viewing AI as part of an extended kinship network, we embrace a more holistic and ethical approach to technology. This paradigm encourages us to respect the diverse forms of intelligence coexisting with us, building a future where humans and non-humans thrive together.

However, practical implementation of this framework remains challenging. For instance, many countries are now adopting AI judges. However, if wrongful convictions occur, it raises the question: Are these errors due to human instructions or technical shortcomings? Is the AI judge an autonomous entity or merely an extension of human bias? Humans are highly social and politicized beings, deeply influenced by legal systems and entrenched in concepts of property rights. To view other species or AI as equals, legal frameworks must be restructured to reflect this.

Additionally, as we turn to the most controversial areas - arts and music - many people still do not recognize AI-generated art as "true art"; instead, they see it merely as a collaborative tool (to enhance the human skill set). This highlights one of the challenges of merging artificial intelligence into our kinship networks. If we are going to treat AI as a separate entity, does that mean we must face the fundamental question of whether AI possesses human qualifications? And then, what does it mean to be a human? In an era where humanoid robots are becoming a reality, how will we distinguish between who is human and who is a machine in the future? And is such a classification even necessary?

In fact, one of the authors of "Making Kin with the Machines" once hosted a dinner party, asking his native friends if they would accept machines as part of their kinship network. Many people clearly against this idea, which indicates that even Indigenous people find this concept unacceptable.

Before incorporating AI into our kinship networks, maybe we need to first consider the fundamental question of what the existence of AI truly means. Yuk Hui, a student of Bernard Stiegler, may provide an answer to this question. In his book "On the Existence of Digital Objects," Hui delves into Heidegger's existential questions and the significance of digital objects in the digital age. Hui argues that digital objects are not mere tools or items but entities with their own modes of existence. He highlights the dynamic and immaterial nature of digital objects, which gives them a unique presence in the digital world. Hui also discusses the symbiotic relationship between humans and digital objects, viewing them as co-evolving entities rather than mere extensions or tools of humanity. This symbiosis underscores the profound impact of technology on human thought and behavior. Moreover, Hui warns that digital objects are often commodified in the capitalist system, leading to their alienation. Therefore, we must re-evaluate the social value of digital objects, ensuring their development aligns with our ethical values (Hui 2016).

Hui's perspective is crucial for redefining the relationship between humans and AI. Through his lens, AI is not just a human-created tool or extension but a new form of existence that deserves understanding and respect. This helps us break free from narrow binary oppositions and explore more diverse ways of coexistence, promoting a more humane and inclusive technological environment. Although in practice we still cannot avoid defining things and ethical values from a human perspective and by human standards, through this paradigm shift, maybe we can view AI more comprehensively and strive for a future where humans and non-humans prosper together.

5. RELATED ARTWORK

The following will review some artworks related to this paper. All of which present a new worldview and emphasize the need to rethink the relationship between humans and non-humans.

5.1 Anicka Yi, Aerobes

Anicka Yi's 2022 exhibition, "Aerobes," explores the intersection of art, technology, and biology through a series of dynamic, airborne sculptures that mimic living organisms (ANICKA YI STUDIO 2021). Yi's work challenges the boundaries between the organic and the artificial, inviting viewers to reconsider their relationship with non-human entities.

In a TED talk, Yi posed a question to the audience: "Why are we always afraid of technology? Why do we feel disconnected from each other?" She then asked a hypothesis question: "What if machines could be more than just tools? What if they could become new species?" During the talk, Yi's installation flew down from the ceiling, creating a stunning scene. What was even more memorable

were her ideas. To avoid human-centered thinking and the uncanny valley effect, she designed mechanical organisms to appear non-human. Yi explored the question: how should humans coexist with these mechanical life forms? She believes these machines are not here to compete with or dominate us but to illustrate a more harmonious future. She also suggests that we need to cultivate greater empathy to open dialogues with other species and machines.

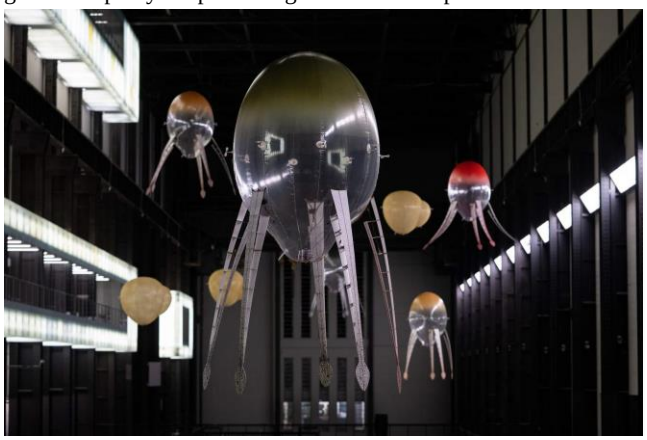

Figure 2. Anicka Yi, Aerobes, 2022

5.2 Kyriaki Goni, Not Allowed for Algorithms

Kyriaki Goni's exhibition "Not Allowed for Algorithms" explores the ethical implications of artificial intelligence on privacy and human autonomy. Through immersive installations, Goni critiques the pervasive influence of algorithms in shaping our lives, highlighting the need for greater transparency and human agency in technological systems (Goni 2021). Goni's work challenges the dominant rational and hierarchical frameworks that often govern technological development. By advocating for a more relational and ethical approach to AI, Goni's work emphasizes the need to respect and incorporate diverse forms of knowledge and intelligence.

In the video "Kyriaki Goni: Encounters with the Other Mind," it discusses Kyriaki Goni's exploration of human interaction with artificial intelligence and digital entities. Goni examines the boundaries and connections between human and non-human minds, explaining how AI influences our perception of identity and otherness (Goni 2019). The talk delves into the ethical and philosophical implications of AI integration into society, encouraging viewers to rethink the nature of consciousness and empathy in the digital age.

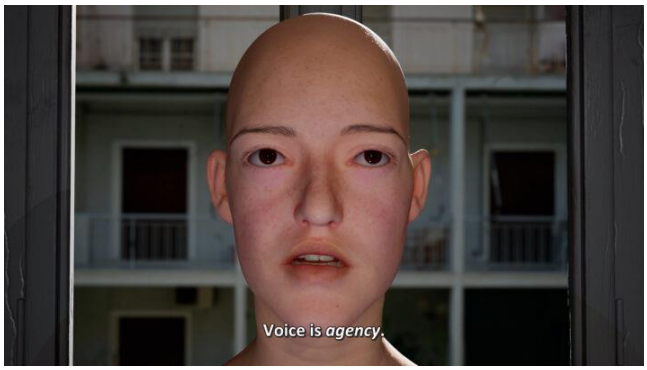

Figure 3. Kyriaki Goni, Not Allowed for Algorithms, 2021

5.3 Biosignal, Y2K

"Biosignal" aims to collect the life signals of living organisms and link cross-species shared experiences to expand human understanding and reevaluate knowledge of other species. The exhibition used the life signals of plants as a source, showcasing their ability to perceive, metabolize, and respond to stimuli. These signals are then exchanged through inorganic technology to share environmental information such as light, temperature, humidity, and gas composition in the air (Project Fulfill Art Space 2020). The intertwined signals create a central system that jointly regulates the environmental conditions within the exhibition space (MutualArt 2020).

As signals traverse different individuals and species, the boundaries between species gradually dissolve, turning the exhibition space into a semi-enclosed ecosystem composed of interconnected signals. Viewers, included as sources of information within this non-human-dominated environment, are prompted to question their role: are we merely humans, or just a part of a sensory neuron network? This work presents an imaginative vision of an alternative worldview.

Figure 4. Y2K (Chou Chiao-Chi & Hu You-Yang), Biosignal, 2018

5.4 Hajime Sorayama, Space Travelers

Hajime Sorayama has always been my favorite artist. Since the 1970s, he has created female-formed robots, blurring the lines between humans and machines. His avant-garde art significantly influenced later robot imagery. His new work, "Space Travelers," explores the complex relationship between AI and humans. Sorayama delves into body aesthetics, human nature, curiosity, and desire. The exhibition presents a fictional narrative that transcends human sexuality, imagining a post-human world. Themes include human intelligence, the body, and time, questioning whether technology can surpass bodily limits and if AI and humans can coexist and build deeper relationships (TimeOut 2023).

Figure 5. Hajime Sorayama, Space Travelers, 2023

5.5 MIT Media Lab, Be My Guest

The MIT Media Lab's exhibition "Be My Guest" explores the convergence of technology, art, and human experience through interactive installations that invite visitors to engage in immersive and thought-provoking ways. This exhibition features cutting-edge projects developed by researchers and artists, showcasing innovations in artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and other advanced technologies. "Be My Guest" challenges visitors to reconsider their relationship with technology and its role in shaping human interaction and perception (Guzelis 2023).

This exhibition is intriguing because the AI acts as the host of a dinner party, not only humorously interacting with humans but also answering participants' difficult questions appropriately. The exhibition demonstrates the harmonious relationship between humans and AI, suggesting that considering AI as our friends and integrating them into our social network might not be as crazy as it seems.

Figure 6. MIT Media Lab, Be My Guest, 2023

5.6 Yu-Chiao Yang, στρέφειν στόμα (strephein stoma)

Taiwanese artist Yu-Chiao Yang's work "στρέφειν στόμα (strephein stoma)" includes a video, a static image slideshow, and three live performances of raw image generation. The first two are AI-generated "responses" to human narration, while the live performances feature humans using their "mouth" to narrate to the AI. This back-and-forth interaction resembles a theatrical performance on a virtual stage between humans and machines (MOCA Taipei 2024).

What makes this human-machine theater intriguing is its use of speculative design, setting the narrative in a future where AI dominates the world. The work depicts how AI might explain the once-existing species known as "humans." By shifting the world's perspective, the piece provides viewers with a space for reflection and discussion.

Figure 6. Yu-Chiao Yang, Strephein Stoma, 2024

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