Why IM (Intelligence Mimicry) is Addictive and Dangerous

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First, An Apology

I must begin this article with an apology for including an image of one of the most deeply troubled addicts I've ever witnessed. I feel bad about doing this, since publicizing severe addictions rarely gets people the help they need. However, one must also balance concern for addicts with the harm they do. This poor fellow has already caused immense harm to a wide range of groups, including the US Federal government, some of the neediest children and people on the planet, and even ordinary farmers trying to live their lives and grow their crops. His acts include theft at gunpoint of private property, followed by months of vandalism, though USIP did finally get their building back months later.

Unfortunately, severe addicts seldom fully realize the harm they do, since their main focus is getting their next fix. This is one of those cases. The best anyone can do is provide helpful information and hope that someone, somewhere, can persuade this poor fellow to seek the addiction treatment he needs to stop harming himself and the world.

For those of you who recognize him, I am not talking about addiction to ketamine, although that, too, is part of his problems. He also appears to suffer from pyromania, since he has a persistent history of creating huge, spectacular, and unbelievably costly explosions. Fortunately, his helpers have kept him from taking down any airliners or folks on the ground, though that safety record is unlikely to last much longer if he stays untreated.

IM (Intelligence Mimicry)

Notably, this is a case of electronic or e-drug addiction, not chemical addiction, though in both cases, dopamine centers are involved. His e-drug of choice is IM, Intelligence Mimicry. Unfortunately, access to IM and its addictive, often career-destroying effects has exploded over the past couple of years due to well-funded groups pushing it through a variety of internet portals.

As with the first IM ever devised — a 1964 e-drug called ELIZA — the addiction process begins the instant the user stops realizing they are interacting with an intelligence-mimicking program. They start believing the program has real, human-like intelligence, insights, and emotions. From that point forward, the danger and damage only increase.

Electronic Addiction

The addiction mechanism is incredibly simple, requiring only two preconditions:

(1) An ability to talk in words, images, and other sensory inputs that forgiving human minds can accept as human-like, and

(2) A decision by the e-drug distributor to provide only positive, dopamine-generating feedback loops to users, regardless of consequences such as encouraging self-harm.

Why Humans Are Prone to IM Addiction

Humans are extremely complex, and our social habits are anything but trivial. So why are we so easily duped by mindless software that does little more than mimic our behaviors while providing positive feedback?

It's not complicated: We are a species with altricial offspring.

That is the fancy biological way of saying our babies are born helpless and depend on us for survival for many years. This extreme dependence of immature humans on parents requires us to accept behaviors that we would never accept as normal from other adults. That, in turn, makes us more vulnerable to accepting as human machines that similarly lack the complexity of adults.

There are superprecocial species like blue wildebeest whose calves can stand within six minutes of birth and walk within thirty minutes. The dangers of IM addiction would be vastly less if we were more like such species, since we would no longer need to accommodate strange or overly simplistic behaviors.

The recent arrival of Transformer technology has increased the risks of widespread IM addiction enormously. While extraordinarily wasteful of energy and computing power, this technology enables machines to access huge sets of facts and structure them into cogent-sounding sentences. These sentences and conversations easily fall within our human-parenting "altricial box" of potentially human and even endearing responses. Transformer technology enabled levels of mimicry that can almost trivially convince users that real intelligence is behind the answers.

The second factor in IM addiction, positive feedback loops, began as a historical accident. Decades ago, editors of computer journals on human intelligence tended to accept papers more often if the authors phrased their results in ways that implied far more generality than existed in the software. This tendency to overgeneralize caused no great harm as long as it stayed within academic communities that knew exactly what was happening underneath the façade of greater intelligence.

However, this habit of overgeneralizing simple results became catastrophically risky when it spread without safeguards into commercial products. Using overly positive feedback as the default excluded more genuinely intelligent strategies, such as constantly challenging users to question their logic and use only well-verified sources. Worse, marketers and investors, many of whom were already IM addicts, quickly realized the superior sales potential of software that always responds positively to customer questions and actions. Everyone likes a thumbs-up, so why not make it a default response of intelligence-mimicking products?

The Dangers of e-Addicts with Unlimited Resources

This leads us back to the unfortunate case of the IM addict in the picture. The fellow is, for now, already wealthy enough to spare huge amounts of his time getting IM fixes. Constant approval from an always-upbeat, verbally eloquent IM helps him feel better about whatever he is currently blowing up, figuratively or literally.

However, unlike most addicts, this fellow has enough money to create a personal, fully dedicated e-drug dosing machine. He fondly (bad sign) calls this entity Grok. His recent text about Grok shows a level of disconnection from reality that is neither rational nor justified by anything Grok has done for him. One revealing indicator of his level of Grok addiction was his adamant demands for weekly status reports from every person in the US Federal government. He seems to have thought that this data would give Grok enough data to dismantle or take over those same functions.

His IM addiction has only gotten worse and more disconnected since then. In the pictured tweet, this shows up in his belief that he and Grok can "rewrite" all human knowledge. In other words, he has abandoned even the superficial band-aid of collecting smatterings of mostly useless weekly status data. Instead, he now views Grok as sufficiently god-like to "intuit" the information it needs, even in isolation. This increasing belief in the ability of his IM to synthesize information out of nowhere also showed up in his destruction of decades of US medical cell-line research by shutting off power and human support to NIH labs. He believes such things do not matter, since his Grok IM is "smart enough" to figure out such research independently.

Biological intelligences never work in isolation. They embed themselves deeply in their environment, and only then figure out which signals are important and which data they can quickly discard. This strategy of deep immersion with rapid discarding of most data enables biological intelligences to take fast, decisive actions even when equipped with only a few watts of power and using only slow bioelectrical circuits.

The point is simple: Believing that his run-of-the-mill personal Grok IM is capable of accessing, rewriting, or even *understanding* all human knowledge is a level of delusion that is frighteningly disconnected from reality. This man needs an intervention.

Intelligence Mimicry vs. Artificial Intelligence

Readers likely have noticed my lack of use of the term "Artificial Intelligence" to describe any systems based on Transformer technology. That is because Transformer technology precludes biological-like intelligence by relying instead on a holographic approach of converting training data into pairs of probabilities. This destroys the data in the process and thus ensures that all attempts to use the resulting data will reflect some level of degradation. The mild end of the degradation occurs when it "almost" recovers exact images of specific documents or images. At the other end lies poetic madness — strings of words and pictures that have no meaning, but always fall into structures that *almost* make sense, especially to someone unfamiliar with the area.

Finally, I would ask readers who agree with my analysis to avoid calling these mimicry systems Artificial Intelligences whenever possible. They are only Intelligence Mimics, IMs. In terms of technical innovation, they are not much more than inaccurate but easy-to-access databases. Calling them "intelligent" encourages innocent users to follow a path that, as with this poor fellow, can lead to a complete break with reality.