

data
resisting flesh ,
on a soulless
internet

<Dead Internet
Theory >
<Content Farms /
Data Junk >
<The Turing Test
turns tables >

<Dead Internet Theory>

I am continuing my affirmations as I try to convince the machine in front of me of my human existence, slowly but confidentially clicking the check box next to the words forming the sentence 'I'm not a robot'.⁽¹⁾ I am real flesh navigating through the wide webs with the help of my wireless extension to my hand. I am the only conscious cyborg in a virtual sphere full of automated bots and predictable codes.

The internet is dead. Further, it is filled with algorithms and programmed trolls, copying and spamming nonsense in the form of generated human behavior in the intrusion to generate assets. According to a 2010s-4chan conspiracy, you are the last alive self-regulating human on a fully automated internet. Are you even reading a text written by real human, or was it also generated with the handy help of a large language model?

The 'Dead Internet Theory' started long before the rise and normalization of AI assistants being able to output grammatically convincing sentences. It claims that most internet activity is contained by bots and automated machine behavior, therefore most of our interaction in our beloved World Wide Web is not based on real human interaction. Even further, it claims that those algorithms were designed to shape our consumerist urge and manipulate 'real' humans to believe in the freedom within the choices that we make on the web.

The theory believes that the start of the internet's 'death' happened around the timeline of 2016 to 2017.^{<1>}

But what started as a theory is slowly becoming-and with no doubt already happening-cyberpunk-dystopian URL-reality. Especially since the internet became inseparable from our AFK lives and therefore stopped being just a possibility. The internet is there, accessible, and all over the place. Even if an individual chooses to be offline for a while, there is barely a given opportunity to stay away from its dependency, its surveillance, and therefore its data exploitation.

In their (already in) 2013 published text 'Too Much World: Is the Internet Dead?', Hito Steyerl rather declares the internet not as being dead, empty, and left behind, but as actually being all over the place.^{<2>} So not only are you passively communicating and delivering those automated bots your location/interest/religion/gender/income and family tree by liking/linking/swiping or even opening the comment tab/revealing your desired duration of looking at a post-you also have no chance to escape it. Worst case with the gathering and collection of all the data belongings you are possibly not aware of, being fed for the sake of training the next artificial intelligence leading you into personal bankruptcy by suggesting perfectly curated items to consume in between your posts-Flesh just loves retail therapy!

But coming back to all of it once being just an internet conspiracy, the internet being dead was discussed within two different scenarios. In the first idea, it is claimed that bots have replaced almost all 'authentic' human activity-with you being the last human 'alive' online, unconsciously communicating with soulless zeros and ones.

The theory claims that with the increasing speed and therefore amount of lunatic content created by algorithms (I will talk about content farms in a bit) it has already surpassed the actual amount of content created by humans, therefore a lot of the content we perceive on the internet is possibly 'non-authentic' bot interaction.^{<3>}

The second idea of the 'dead internet theory' claims that those believed bots are (U.S.) government-arranged actors shaping, surveilling⁽²⁾ and manipulating the human population for common reasons^{<4>} (here is your opportunity to send greetings to your personal FBI agent⁽³⁾ into your webcam)^{<5>}. UK's governmental programs like 'The Investigatory Powers Act', also known as 'Snooper's Charter' are IRL-current examples for the possibility and permission of State Allowance seeking and collecting personal data, such as your texts/emails/location/(...)-while having this data stored by private companies-regardless of whether you have broken the law or not.^{<6>}



<3> Read, Max. "How Much of the Internet Is Fake?" New York Intelligence, December 26, 2018. <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2018/12/how-much-of-the-internet-is-fake.html>.



<4> Felton, James. "Dead Internet Theory: According to Conspiracy Theorists, the Internet Died in 2016." IFL-Science, February 1, 2024. <https://www.iflscience.com/dead-internet-theory-according-to-conspiracy-theorists-the-internet-died-in-2016-72617>.



<5> Jackson, Sophie Lynne. 2018. "What the FBI agent memes say about our generation's digital anxieties." Dazed, February 5, 2018. Accessed June 20, 2024. <https://www.dazeddigital.com/science-tech/article/38894/1/what-the-fbi-agent-memes-say-about-our-generation-s-digital-anxieties>.



<6> "SNOOPERS' CHARTER - Liberty." 2020. Liberty. February 3, 2020. Accessed June 20, 2024. <https://shorturl.at/Zc2qq>.



<1> James Hennessy. "Did A.I. Just Become a Better Storyteller Than You?" The Story, December 18, 2022. Accessed June 5, 2024. <https://thestory.au/articles/ai-chatgpt-storytelling/>.



<2> Steyerl, Hito. "Too Much World: Is the Internet Dead?" E-Flux Magazine, no. 49 (November 2013). <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/49/60004/too-much-world-is-the-internet-dead/>.

(2)



(3)



(4)



(1) Tweet by user @amore_orless.
(2) Tweet edited into Picture by X user @beckyvenus.
(3) Still from “Sex and the City” (TV show, 1998, Episode 6, Season 4).

<Content Farms and Data Junk>

Following the dystopian feeling of being observed without being surrounded by the human eye, we are continuing to talk about content farms, clickbait, and other types of accumulating media junk, continuously being widely and non-stop thrown into the web<7>, setting up traps and conjuring up data leaks. Content farms have the purpose of generating as much content as possible, following it being low-quality or even complete nonsense in the form of 'Lifehacks', extensive summaries of movies overdubbed by an artificial voice, or even pseudo-merchandising shops selling printed shirts. All of that is only for the sake of pleasing algorithms resulting to be further promoted on someone's For You or Explore page. Bots are stealing, processing, and selling t-shirts based on drawings posted by artists online.

I recently saw a TikTok<8> summarizing a Reddit thread talking about Twitter user @Hannahdouken, where they posted a hand-drawn image saying: 'This site sells STOLEN Artwork, do NOT buy from them!'⁽⁴⁾, asking her followers to comment their request of having the graphic printed on a Shirt. Shortly after, automated bots became aware of the demand and started to offer her drawings printed on a Shirt. To further prove and provoke this theory, another user started to post a graphic featuring a drawing of Mickey Mouse saying: 'This is NOT a parody! We committed copyright infringement and want to be sued by Disney. We pay ALL court and tribunal fees.'⁽⁹⁾-After a while, once again bots started to generate links making it possible to purchase a Shirt⁽⁵⁾ with the exact print.<10>



<7> "What Is a Content Farm? (Definition) - SEO Glossary." n.d. Accessed June 21, 2024. <https://growhackscale.com/glossary/content-farming#:~:text=A%20content%20farm%20is%20a,a%20high%20volume%20of%20visits>.



<8> @Laughing.llamaaa on TikTok: <https://www.tiktok.com/@laughing.llamaaa/video/7346983189971225902>



<9> Del Rey, Jason. 2019. "We Committed Copyright Infringement and Want to Be Sued by Disney." Fortune, December 6, 2019. Accessed June 21, 2024.



<10> The shirt is still (or again) online and purchasable on this website: <https://busstee.com/product/wod-not-licensed-by-the-walt-disney-company-hoodie/>

(5)



(4)



(4) Tweet by user @Hannahdouken.

(5) Screenshot of the stolen drawing on a shirt found in an online shop.

<The Turing Test turns tables>

But not only are you observed by your personal granted FBI agent who you can gossip about your colleagues with, or bot printing shirts of the self-mockery in the form of memes you post on a daily basis. Most of your online interaction/performance these days is part of an AI trainee program-to finally teach robots to convincingly behave, create (and sell T-shirts???) like a human being. Very kind of you to give AI a free and solitary tutoring course in being human. (6)

By the end of June 2024, Meta announced to change its terms of use, in which they claim to train its own artificial intelligence 'Meta AI', by the content posted and even messages sent by its users on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, their new X/Twitter-clone Threads and even WhatsApp. (Heads up: The Meta AI program is stopped for now, due to the complaints of several countries of the EU.)<11>.

Finally, we can further enjoy looking at more of Meta's hyperrealistic AI-generated Influencers(7)-next to our actual friend content-which is based on the visuality of actual celebrities.<12> The Instagram user under the name @yoursisbillie<13> represents a bestie-coded influencer, based on the visuality of Kardashian member Kendall Jenner(8). It is an artificial influencer, posting content and pictures generated by AI, having an artificial character possibly making brand deals. @yoursisbillie is not the only Metas AI-influencer based on the faces of real celebrities, following also Snoop Dog (@meethedungeonmaster<14>), Paris Hilton (@amberthetdetective<15>),

the YouTuber MrBeast (@comedyzach<16>) and many more. Each of them represents a character with a special interest or profession other than the celeb's actual career. According to the magazine 'The Information'<17> Kendall Jenner and others sold the right to use their faces for one million dollars to be an AI influencer and chatbot in eternity.

In the end, we are actually already living in an episode of black mirror.<18>



<11> "Objection to Meta AI Facebook and Instagram Want to Use Personal Data for AI Training." 2023. Klicksafe.De. October 20, 2023. Accessed June 20, 2024. <https://www.klicksafe.de/en/news/facebook-und-instagram-wollen-persoennliche-daten-fuer-ki-training-benutzen>.



<12> Company, Facebook, and Meta. 2023. "Introducing Social Profiles for Meta's AIs." Meta. October 2, 2023. Accessed June 20, 2024. <https://about.fb.com/news/2023/09/social-profiles-for-metas-ai-characters/>.



<13> Kendall Jenner as @yoursisbillie on Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/yoursisbillie/?hl=en>



<14> Snoop Dog as @meethedungeonmaster on Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/meethedungeonmaster/?hl=en>



<15> Paris Hilton as @amberthetdetective on Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/amberthetdetective/?hl=en>



<16> MrBeast as @comedyzach on Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/comedyzach/?hl=en>



<17> The Information. 2023. "Meta Is Paying Creators Millions for AI Chat Bot," October 5, 2023. <https://www.theinformation.com/articles/meta-is-paying-creators-millions-for-ai-chatbots/>.



<18> Arana, Belen. 2023. "Talking About the Future, Are We Living in a Black Mirror Episode?" The Leiden University Centre for Digital Humanities (LUCDH). Digital Media, Society, and Culture (blog). December 12, 2023. <https://digmedia.lucdh.nl/2023/12/12/talking-about-the-future-are-we-living-in-a-black-mirror-episode/>.

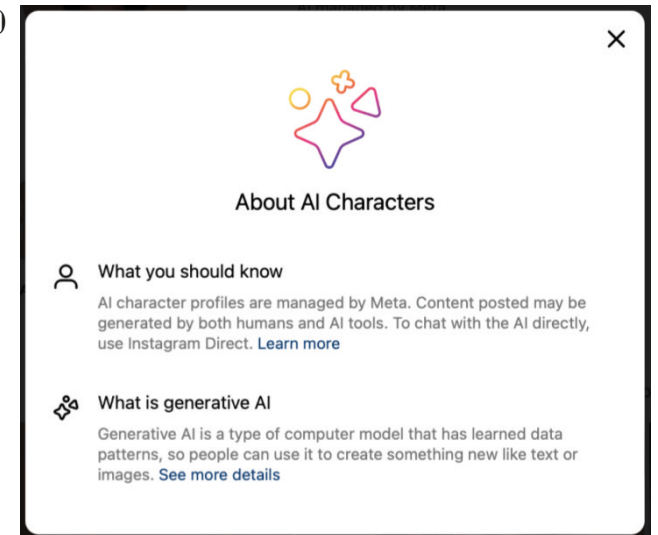
(8)



(6)



(7)



- (6) Stil from the movie "Ex Machina" (2014).
(7) Screenshot of the information shown when clicking on "Learn more", located on the Instagram account by user @yoursisbillie.
(8) Screenshot from the Instagram account by user @yoursisbillie.

So here we are, destined to continue our speculations about the actually slowly decaying human internet, thanks to large language models-with OpenAI's chat GPT being the most popular and powerful AI tool with its latest release of GPT4o. OpenAI claims that GPT4o (the 'o' stands for 'omni', meaning 'all' or 'everywhere', connecting this to what Hito Steyerl said in their 2013's essay) is a further step to a 'much more natural human-computer interaction'^{<19>}, with its app allowing you to real-time vocally communicate in 'human response time'^{<20>}.

The scenarios taken from their video examples look pretty familiar to Theodore Twombly's interactions with his AI assistant and later girlfriend 'Samantha'⁽⁹⁾ in the 'Sci-Fi movie' 'Her' (2013) (having quotation marks for Sci-Fi here, because it definitely is more of a modern day romance regarding today's technical progress).

A recent test discovered that more than 50 percent of humans are tricked into thinking they are communicating with a real human being, while actually writing with OpenAI's newest ChatGPT model-meaning that GPT4o passes the Turing test without hesitation.^{<21>}

We already have an online epidemic of AI-generated content, such as photos on Facebook fooling mostly baby boomers into seeing 'creative' content made by real humans. In a recent TikTok^{<22>} the user @leamarjia talks about her grandma sending her a video containing a compilation of AI generated art made out of fruit and vegetables, proudly claiming that 'this is real art'⁽¹⁰⁾.

So maybe it isn't a question or theory of whether we are constantly interacting with pre-programmed bots and content, but more of a question if we are conscious about it in that exact moment that we do interact and communicate online. Maybe it is already AI's job itself to be able to identify if it rather communicates with real value human-content⁽¹¹⁾ or rather another large language model or preset data-gibberish.

The internet may not be dead in the sense of being lifeless, with its exploitative numbness constantly growing. It is dead in the sense that its soul has left its HTML <body>, leaving behind never-ending digital automation.



^{<19>} "Hello GPT-4o – We're announcing GPT-4o, our new flagship model that can reason across audio, vision, and text in real time." 2024. OpenAI. May 13, 2024. Accessed June 20, 2024. <https://openai.com/index/hello-gpt-4o/>



^{<20>} "Hello GPT-4o – We're announcing GPT-4o, our new flagship model that can reason across audio, vision, and text in real time." 2024. OpenAI. May 13, 2024. Accessed June 20, 2024. <https://openai.com/index/hello-gpt-4o/>



^{<21>} Al-Sibai, Noor. 2024. "Majority of Humans Fooled by GPT-4 in Turing Test, Scientists Find." Futurism, May 17, 2024. <https://futurism.com/the-byte/gpt-4-passed-turing-test>.



^{<22>} @Leamarjia on TikTok: <https://www.tiktok.com/@leamarjia/video/7374490932688833824>

(11)



maria cristina sherman
@mariasherm

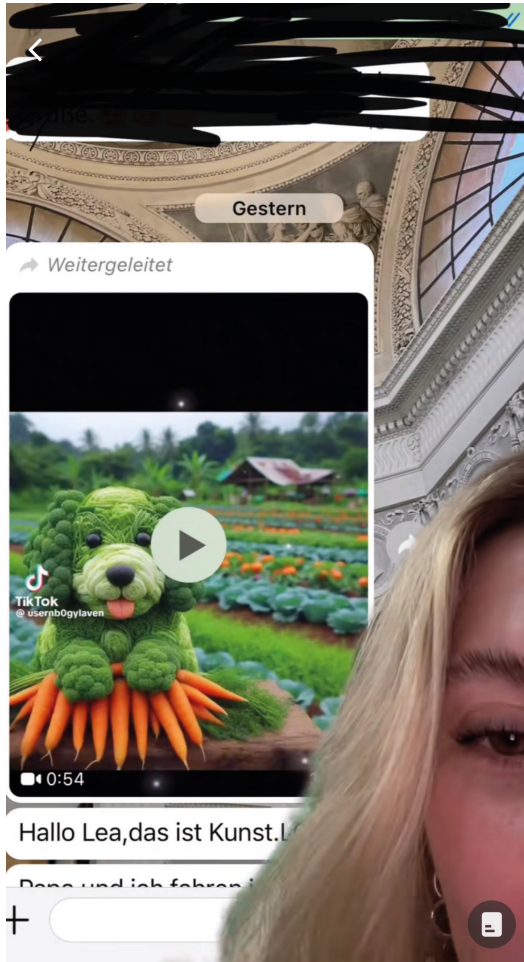
are we human... or are we content

19:56 · 08/04/2021 · [Twitter Web App](#)

104 Retweets 9 Quote Tweets 573 Likes



(10)



(9)



- (9) Stil from the movie "Her" (2013).
(10) Screenshot from the TikTok by user @leamarjia.
(11) Tweet by user @mariasherm.