Short Communication

Metaphorical Backsteps in Society Moving Forward with AI

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Abstract

This opinion piece offers thought-provoking opportunities to reflect on society's advancement with AI by proposing metaphorical backsteps that we can possibly take. The metaphorical backsteps suggested here include reflection on our history, current state, balance between changes and adjustments, the sustainability of humanity, and the preparedness that accompanies humility. By providing these attentive sentiments to consider, the article ultimately aims to raise meaningful philosophical questions to contemplate amidst the rapid and drastic changes driven by AI in order to progressively and proactively move forward.

Introduction

In recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) has been noted as a significant catalyst for changes in our society. Amidst such rapid transformations, moving forward has been considered as a given path that we all need to follow. While AI's transformative impacts have been prevalent across various sectors in society, AI is not just about technology itself anymore; it has become a revolutionary milestone that resonates with each one of our lives. However, my question is, are we really okay with these changes? Perhaps with all these changes that are happening right now, we didn't even have a chance to think deeply and sufficiently about them, and as we're already on board with the flow of sweeping changes, we might have just needed to face it and move forward.

Likewise, in our society, already changing with the advancements of AI, moving forward with the flow has been considered a natural path for us, but are we really okay with that? We may have been overlooking this fundamental question, so I suggest we at least consider whether there is something we are missing in society's rapid progress as we step forward with AI. The aim of this opinion piece is to take a moment to consider something ironic, to propose what else we can do in the bursting floods of changes and advancements driven by AI. Take a moment to step backward, moving forward with AI. This may sound ironic; however, here, stepping back doesn't mean retrogression in a negative or deteriorative way. Rather, it is a constructive and progressive step for retrospection. Metaphorically, it can signify taking a moment to (1) reflect on our history, (2) observe the current state, (3) maintain a balance between changes and adjustments, (4) look out for humanity, and lastly (5) be equipped with humility.

The first metaphorical backstep is reflecting on our history. Our history has undergone profound changes with the emergence of new resources and tools. Humans have learned to adapt over time. Today, we have witnessed the revolutionary presence of AI in society, and we are confronted with the need to learn about this advanced new technology. Likewise, new tools have been continuously created and endorsed throughout our history, and our history records the past undertakings on how humans have experienced such transitions and coped with them. What are the trials and errors that occurred

in our history? How did our ancestors cope with devising such new tools? Considering these questions through a historical lens allows us to see the bigger picture, what we overlook in the advancement of AI, and what we miss with these drastic changes. Through this reflection on our history, we can earn helpful insights and solutions to the problems that may arise in society as it progresses with AI.

The second metaphorical backstep is observing the current state. Everything is moving forward so quickly, and you might feel swept away like all the things that flow ahead. However, taking a step back could offer you the opportunity to seize the present moment to ponder upon the current state amidst ongoing changes, moving forward with AI. The speed of society's advancement is so fast that sometimes there is no time for us to take a wait-and-see approach to consider the current issues. However, what is really going on right now, and what are we missing? Speculating on what has been changed with the widespread use of AI and how our society is currently dealing with those changes will ultimately benefit us and help us identify societal needs and goals to constructively step forward with AI.

The third metaphorical backstep is making a balance between changes and adjustments. As changes already exist and prevail in society, it can be nearly impossible to reverse those changes to the point where there is no change. Moreover, regarding the speed of society's progress with AI, it is also challenging to have it fully under control. Therefore, the goal here is not to completely reverse or halt changes to shut them down, but rather to ask: Are we adjusting timely and efficiently to those changes? Let's step back for a moment to examine whether we strike a balance between the speed of the changes and the pace of our adjustments. If there are significant gaps noted between them, relevant efforts and initiatives should be made to bridge these gaps, which can be continuously monitored.

The fourth metaphorical backstep can suggest looking out for humanity. In this metaphor, backstepping suggests yielding to others, like stepping back to let more people in. This embraces not only our current selves one-on-one but also considers humankind generation-to-generation. It is our current society's responsibility to begin considering how future society can continue to thrive amid the drastic changes driven by AI. Are the changes beneficial for our future generations in the long run? What direction do we need to take to ensure that our society is sustainable, so future generations can continuously thrive? Likewise, we would need to strive to address the issues surrounding the sustainability of humanity amid drastic AI-driven changes.

Lastly, the fifth metaphorical backstep is being equipped with humility. Here, the final metaphor implies stepping back as an acknowledgement of our limits. With the advancements achieved by AI, our capabilities may seem omniscient and unlimited, but the last metaphor carefully approaches this. Every matter has downsides and upsides, and we don't have full control over every single matter. We have strengths, but we also have limitations. Are we really fully capable of controlling how AI navigates society? What are our limitations as well as strengths? If we don't know our limits first, we wouldn't desperately feel the need to cultivate readiness and preparedness. Therefore, we should humbly acknowledge our limitations and get prepared for the next steps. Be vigilant about concerns raised during drastic changes and get humbly prepared for actionable steps to address the issues with AI.

Likewise, these metaphorical backsteps could raise various philosophical questions for us to consider. During this time of reflection, our answers may seem vague as we continue to figure them out, and this process seems to be ambiguous and time-consuming, as we now live in a world where all the advanced technology can provide us with clear and affirmative answers within a few seconds. However, we are all humans who are capable and privileged to think profoundly and reflect deeply still. This struggle is essential for setting a direction. Our society is already moving forward with AI, but we still need to reflect on our path to ensure a meaningful direction.

Let us take a moment to consider these metaphors in the midst of the shifts we are facing right now. These seemingly ambiguous but thought-provoking metaphors may open opportunities for us to contemplate how humans can persevere through the significant changes occurring in society. Again, these metaphorical backsteps are not meant for negativity or deterioration but for positivity and progress. These steps to reflect on our history, observe the current state, strike a balance between changes and adjustments, consider the sustainability of humanity, and be equipped with humility will give our society more time and space for reflection, helping us find ways to endure amidst drastic changes driven by AI and to navigate our future directions. Every step we take will mark a lasting footprint in the history of humankind, demonstrating perseverance and resilience as we navigate transformative milestones.

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Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.