

The Role of Politeness in Human's Interaction with AI Upon the Principle of Morality

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ABSTRACT

As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes increasingly integrated into everyday communication, questions surrounding the ethics of human–AI interaction have gained growing philosophical significance. This paper examines whether politeness toward AI possesses genuine moral value despite AI's inability to experience emotions, recognize respect, or reciprocate social behavior. Challenging the conventional assumption that politeness depends upon reciprocal social relationships, the paper argues that politeness directed toward AI represents a purer expression of human virtue precisely because it is performed without expectation of emotional response or social reward. The argument proceeds in three stages. First, it establishes rationality as the common characteristic shared by humans and AI, providing a meaningful basis for ethical comparison. Second, drawing on theories from Kant, Hume, Rawls, and contemporary discussions of rationality and social contract theory, it contends that choosing to remain polite in non-reciprocal interactions demonstrates autonomous moral agency and respect for rationality itself. Finally, the paper addresses the objection that AI lacks moral standing and therefore cannot be an appropriate object of ethical conduct, arguing instead that virtue is determined by the moral character and free will of the acting individual rather than by the recipient's capacity for response. The study concludes that politeness toward AI reflects unconditional moral responsibility and offers new insights into the evolving ethical relationship between humans and intelligent technologies.

INTRODUCTION

Politeness has always assumed a recipient who can register it as such. We say please and thank you because another person may feel respected or slighted by our words, and it is their responsiveness that gives politeness its social function. Artificial Intelligence (AI), however, challenges this assumption given that AI cannot register respect nor hold a grudge, and it cannot reciprocate any social cost or benefit from how it is addressed. This forces a question we have not had to ask before. When politeness can no longer be motivated by risk or reward, does it still count as virtue? Or has politeness lost its object?

I argue that politeness towards AI is a purer expression of human virtue, and I make this case in three steps. First, I establish the common ground of rationality between AI and humans. Second, I examine

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politeness toward AI on moral grounds to show that this purer virtue follows from it. I will, lastly, defend my argument from its counterargument. Before making this argument, I must define three terms: politeness, rationality, and artificial intelligence. Politeness needs definition because the question is whether it can extend beyond human interaction at all. Since the entity in question must be understood before it can be meaningfully addressed, AI needs definition too. Finally, rationality lays the context to discuss other terms because it is the property that makes a moral comparison between AI and humans possible in the first place.

DEFINING CONTEXT

Politeness

Politeness is defined as a socially regulated practice of communication that protects face, reduces conflict, and signals respect. It is largely determined by the judgement by others and used as a concept of which one must remain conscious in order to maintain others' feelings by adjusting one's behavior to be less damaging. It could also be generalized into the theory of preserving others' faces, as indicated by Brown and Levinson in Politeness Theory, through which people can be conscious of their environment in the context of a society and will attempt to reduce damaging acts to others' faces by presenting themselves through various gestures. As a result, politeness is almost always praised as a virtue in the context of individuals. In other terms, it is a set of communication skills that we adopt to grease society. Politeness, in turn, also functionally serves to increase cooperation, through which people can benefit themselves or their identified group. By benefiting themselves, polite individuals maintain their positive and negative face, signaling respect to others. By benefiting the group, politeness leads to higher levels of cooperation, thus progressing the society in terms of productivity.

Rationality

Rationality is commonly referred to as its presentation, essentially the ability to reason. It is often characterized as the opposite of sensibility, prioritizing logic and reasoning instead of emotions and impulses. Rational beings have the ability to reason with received information and interact with the world. Humans are a good example, and in fact, we derived our understanding of rationality from our inherent ability to reason with information. It is noticeable that many other creatures and beings might also be endowed with the attribute of rationality given their demonstration of an ability to reason logically. Exactly because of the concept's extensiveness, humanity can reasonably be discussed alongside many other embodiments of rationality, with AI being the strongest example in terms of its exclusiveness in representing elements of rationality.

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the most recent technological advancement intended to imitate human intelligence via technology. The element of intelligence embodied by AI and presented to humans, such as the ability to reason with processed information, largely overlaps with significant characteristics that humans use to define rationality. However, as AI is not bound by moral and emotional values, the form of

rationality it possesses is distinct from that of humans, as it lacks the moral agency that might limit or extend the scope of its reasoning process. In turn, AI embodies the form of rationality that is reduced and refined to its functionality, unaffected by the qualities that usually impact the process of reasoning and its outcomes in the context of human intelligence. However, it is indisputable that AI should be discussed in the same intellectual context as humanity, given that it shares similar rational abilities with humans.

IDENTIFYING VIRTUES IN INTERACTIONS WITH AI

Rationality helped humans to build most of modern civilization, from various aspects of personal lives to the establishment of nation-states and governance. Humans have the inherent ability to let rationality and sensibility coexist. As a result, however, sensed information is often processed with emotional biases and empirical distractions that disturb the ability to reason, distorting perceptions of the world with individualistic recognitions and biases drawn from acquired information rather than self-directed rational activity (McLear, 3.2). However, in its functional use, the abilities of reason brought by rationality perform with fewer distractions and greater objectivity when isolated from emotionally driven perceptions within a society formed upon social contract. It is additionally arguable that rationality, when confined to its functionality, should be regarded as a virtue generally, even on the level of individual interactions (Gibson, 197). Among the many ways we apply and present this virtue in our society through products yielded from its usage, such as various forms of technologies, Artificial Intelligence (AI) stands as a direct representation of our rationality. Examining its role in society may sincerely help improve our understanding of its relationship with humanity.

In serving society more efficiently by eliminating variables like sensibility and emotional perception, AI was created in service of logic, replacing humans in basic functions. This conceptualization of AI could direct our understanding of it in many ways, but one distinct mindset in recognizing AI is to see it as the embodiment of rationality, which humans value. In effect, AI cannot function interactively and individually in our society, because it does not share common ground with humans in the theory of social contract. Since AI is fundamentally different from humans in its absence of emotional perception, human interaction with AI is morally limited. It produces no reciprocity in morality, only rational output drawn from perceived information. Therefore, it is improbable for AI to take on moral and social responsibilities, resulting in the isolation of AI from the present system of justice, political association, and social institutions (D'Agostino et al., 3.1).

Although unlikely to be a full participant in the social contract, AI is often compared with humans based on the shared common ground of rationality. In turn, examining interaction with AI would be the most direct way for us to examine our attitudes towards the ideals behind it. Being long regarded as a mutual process that requires reciprocal responses in maintaining either positive or negative face, politeness can be a spontaneous action in representation of higher ideals. With classical epistemological interpretation of human beings, it is certain that a being should be driven by consciousness or liberty to be called free. That is, one must be conscious to take on the responsibilities of the social contract (Rawls 1958, 33). The

choice to be consciously active and spontaneous matters in terms of demonstrating one's moral activeness: although with controversies on the condition of determination, Kant and Hume both agreed that freedom of a being must be either free in action or free in will (Hume, 2.3.1.2; Wilson and Denis, 5). While AI does not have free will, in the case of communicating with AI, there are no forceful factors that are imposed on the person to be polite to it as the conversation is known to be non-reciprocal, handling the choice of whether to be polite or not to the person exclusively. As AI is inactive in areas other than the form of rationality it embodies, such as morality and ethics, it might involuntarily offend the person and their faces during conversations by violating their personal beliefs with moral arguments in conversations. In turn, while there's no social reward when politeness is directed towards AI, one also has to take the risk of maintaining their positive and negative faces. Therefore, demonstrating politeness to AI is to present unconditional morality. With the extra conditions which disfavors humans imposed on the context of conversing with AI, the conversation itself tests one's morality better than reciprocal conversations interpersonally. Therefore, in the above defined context, it is better, sometimes superior, in presenting one's moral activeness by having one perform responsibilities to beings outside of the social contract. In this case, one is showing evidence of their moral activeness by demonstrating their appreciation of rationality, which AI embodies, through respect and politeness, better presenting one's will and ability to engage in the social contract system with their demonstrated ability to take on responsibilities.

REFUTING THE COUNTERARGUMENT ON RECIPROCITY

Some may argue that AI has no moral standing, meaning that it is not aware of the existence of rationality morality and is able to react to it. Therefore, it is fundamentally different from interacting with another human, where both individuals in the communication are mutually aware of the rationality that is presented by the other. To illustrate further, when a GPS malfunctions and underperforms its purpose of providing the optimal route to the destination, politeness seems to be worthless as itself is not aware of its purposes. Therefore, adopting components of politeness in conversing with it is worthless, neither solving the issue nor demonstrating oneself as patient. Similarly, when asking AI questions, it is not aware of the rationality and the ability to reason it embodies. Hence, it is meaningless and impossible to apply ethics to scenarios in which awareness of rationality and morality is non-reciprocal.

The above objection misunderstands my argument by wrongly assuming that one's virtue can be valuable only when it is presented under a reciprocal and responsive context. That is, politeness is only valuable when its purpose and presentation are accepted by the receiver. Whether or not the action of politeness demonstrates one's virtue does not depend on whether or not AI can receive it, but depends on whether one chooses to enforce it with free will. As we perceive the element of rationality of AI in the first place, it is a choice for us to decide whether to extend or not our appreciation of virtues to the form of respect at the being which embodies it under circumstances in which we know nothing of the results of either option. In this context, demonstrating the virtue of rationality through politeness represents one's active morality that is derived from their original will. As defined by Kant in his *Critique of Practical Reason*, the action of a person and the materialistic results became unimportant in terms of how much they are

presenting their virtue: "It is here a question only of the determination of the will and of the determining ground of its maxims as a free will, not of its result" in bodily action (Kant, 5:45).

Based on the previous claim that the free will of presenting politeness is driven by pure reason, I have refuted the idea that supported the counterargument, which stands for the emphasis of material gain and pragmatism in conversing with AI, by highlighting the role of free will in expressing and presenting virtues in moral interactions. Therefore, the counterargument is refuted as I justify that moral processes can be non-reciprocal and need not depend on the other recipient's response.

CONCLUSION

Being polite to AI in conversation is an arguable evidence for one's morality and ability to take on social responsibility. With Kant and Hume's account of moral agency, moral activeness is grounded in one's action demonstrated in interactions. This activeness reflects one's social responsibility and appreciation of values, it is most visible when it is demonstrated unconditionally in non-reciprocal interactions. While AI embodies rationality, a quality we appreciate as a virtue, it remains neither socially nor morally active. Being unconditionally morally active in interactions with AI is, therefore, strong evidence of one's virtue in the context of the social contract. Therefore, being polite to AI during conversation is a purer expression of one's virtues, proving one's activeness and competency in fulfilling societal responsibilities. We can also appreciate the superiority of AI in terms of rationality, as a form of existence that embodies rationality in ways superior to humans. And as we continue to respect and evolve AI for pure rationality and pure reasoning, it might take over humanity's rational and functional responsibility as a better enforcer, presumably becoming and even replacing humanity to be a fundamental constituent of society that specialises to embody and present rationality.

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