

SLAVE OF ALGORITHM: EXPLORING THE IDEA OF FREEDOM, TRUTH AND VALUE IN DIGITAL AGE

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Abstract: *Information technology of this age had immensely changed the way we interact and situate ourselves in the world. Although its life-improving effect is felt immediately, some thinkers and intellectuals beg to differ. Schwartz and Gertz, to name but a few, suggest that in contrast to feeling genuine freedom, screen-dependent individuals experienced ‘techno-hypnosis’. From a bird’s eye view, it is as if they are slave to what they were fed online. Algorithm-based system which gives rise to what is known as ‘Artificial Intelligence’ (AI) is the main feature of today’s information technology. In light of this, Heidegger argued that technology is not neutral because it is reciprocal of social activities. In the age where algorithm-driven platforms heavily shape our choice, the idea of freedom has to be revisited. Furthermore, in environment where information was curated by algorithms, ‘truth’ becomes susceptible to undervaluation, partly due to the seductive power of digital technology. Hence, this article examines the implications of over-reliance in digital technology towards our idea of freedom, truth and value. In achieving this, the study employs content analysis which mainly uses philosophical inference and readings such as propositional logic. The analysis introduces the idea of ‘enslavement’ to reflect on how overfeeding of algorithm impedes truth-seeking and freedom. Rather than offering normative solution, this article raises awareness of how algorithmic systems affect how we see things (worldview), especially our moral foundation; and suggests that a sound ethical framework is required in the digitally-mediated world.*

Keywords: *Algorithm, Morality, Technology, Philosophy, Truth, Freedom*

Introduction

“Did you used ChatGPT to write your academic article?” This type of question is genuine and introspective to those who have had a taste of the chatbot. It evokes one’s level of sincerity. In fact, as this text was typed, it is probable this was generated by ChatGPT or any AI chatbot too. For those unfamiliar with ChatGPT, it is a Natural Language Processing (NLP) chatbot developed by OpenAI that can be chatted with to generate human-like response that displays human cognitive capabilities (Apruda et al., 2024; Dai et al., 2024). It is classed as a Large Language Models (LLM) Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology (Martela, 2025).

The current digital/ information technology also enables us to effortlessly connect with everyone without border. This level of accessibility is unprecedented when social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and X allow us to conveniently engage with others in multiple ways. In light of this, it supports the idea of ‘being related’ which is fundamental for human being. As Whitehead (1929: 108) states: “...every society requires a social background, of which it is itself a part”.

Unquestionably, digital technology had drastically improved human productivity. From military activities, industrial activities, and daily activities like sports and interaction (Creely, 2019; Gertz, 2024). Strangely enough, based on statistical data in Malaysia, suicidal rate in this digital age shows an increase; and it reflects the overwhelming number of suicidal thoughts. Even so, the rate of mental health problems is also on the rise (Raihan Nasir et al. 2025; Nor Ba’yah Abdul Kadir et al. 2018). For instance, a report by the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia in 2024 states that in 2023, the numbers of suicide kept on increasing than previous years (Fahmi Tajuddin, 2024). Globally even, suicide causes rising concern when *World Health Organization* (WHO) (2022: 46) states that “In 2019, an estimated 703 000 people across all ages (or 9 per 100 000 population) lost their life to suicide... high-income countries grouped together have the highest suicide rates at 10.9 per 100 000.”

High-income countries, although had the most technological success, also had the highest suicidal problems. This suggests the correlation between how this supposedly improving-life technology -the digital technology- failed to cure the mental and psychological stress people had (Ponders, 2023). Paradoxically, the means which seamlessly connects us and provides information also becomes the means through which human degeneracy begets. From a metaphysical perspective, this is explicable through the philosophy of nihilism and fatalism, as Weller (2011) and Gertz (2024) described. Nihilism is a philosophical idea which maintains the meaninglessness of existence (Ponders, 2023); while fatalism is the belief that all events have been destined to happen regardless our course of actions (Pink, 2004). Subsequently, the metaphysical sides brought along epistemological and ethical problems too.

In light of this, Hildebrand (2019: 17) remarks, “AI has the potential to make our life easier, though this convenience might come at a price. It’s a price we have to pay as we uncover AI’s dark side – such as biases built directly into the algorithms we use (who programs the programmers?)”. In a study conducted by University of Zurich (2025: 2), they concluded that AI “...can be highly persuasive in real-world contexts, surpassing all previously known benchmarks of human persuasiveness... their effectiveness also opens the door to misuse, potentially enabling malicious actors to sway public opinion.”. The study also confirms that it is difficult to distinguish human from AI-generated content. Not to mention, the question of authenticity – a fundamental idea in epistemology and value theory – is also disrupted (Andrei, 2025). Bertaglia, Dubois & Goanta (2021) reflects this when ‘clout chasing’ has been the

driving concept which determines the ‘social capital’ of digital users and their transactions. This shift in human behaviour is explicable by fundamentally explaining the concept of forcing, or loosely called ‘enslavement’. Borgmann (1984: 9) had mentioned the encroachment of technology as being “...the autonomous and irresistible power that enslaves everything...”.

The over-ambitious pursuit onto the ‘new world’ of digital technology had compromised some of the fundamental things that define human beings. These are the concept of truth, freedom and value. It is argued that these ideas which distortion would cause one’s internal predisposition teared apart, in effect would lead to destabilization within society as a whole for what once united a society, or the ‘common ground’, had been distorted.

Hence, this study aims to explore how the concept of ‘freedom’, ‘truth’ and ‘value’ situate themselves within the environment of overwhelming dependency on information/ digital technology. The objective is set to explain the critical idea of ‘enslavement to technology’: how over-consumption of algorithm-based digital technology would enslave us; and may threaten the stability of human civilization. Afterwards, it wants to suggest a solution to the issue. In achieving this, data is garnered via the readings in topics related to philosophy, technology, psychology and history. The analysis employs socio-historical analysis and philosophical arguments, layered in propositional logic. It also involves content analysis in which perused interpretive analysis to minimize misreadings and distortion of meanings.

Literature Review

There are quite a few literatures in philosophy which addressed the daunting effects of technology towards society. Gertz (2024) in his updated work elaborated the implications of AI towards one’s philosophical standpoint and (mental) health. He explains that in the expedience of perceived ‘freedom’, AI and digital technology had in a way disconnected us with reality and confined us inside our bubble. In a nutshell, he explains how our insatiable pursuit of technology brings about nihilism in the air we breathe. Although Gertz’s analysis is one of the most extensive and updated out there, there remains a room for improvement: the ontological and ethical model to best explain and resolve the crisis which this article will explore. Miller (2019) also had written on the crisis of nihilism in our technological age, summarized from Gertz’s writings. However, he did not touch upon the AI technology which this article will be focusing on.

Schwartz (2004) in his *Paradox of Choice* explains the intersecting idea of freedom and technology. He assessed the philosophical motivation in using technology, mainly to realize our ‘free will’ or sense of control. He then shows how this is sense of freedom is essentially orchestrated behind the scenes, by super tech-companies and elitist. He explains how technology, did offer us more freedom, but actually a false sense of freedom, which is beneficial in the discussion of technological determinism. However, the ontological perspective of ethical model was not discussed in his work.

Toffler (1970) in his *Future Shock* discusses the multiplication of our role and task created by technology. He analyses how technology, in the expedience of accelerating our task-solving activities, also followed with burdening us with other tasks and challenges. The notion of choice and freedom had become a taxing endeavour for human beings in light of technological advancement. Notwithstanding, his explanation lacks the discussion on free will and determinism which is a core discourse for this topic, especially in relation to AI technology.

Ellul (1964) warns that over-reliance on technology would have detrimental effect to human freedom. He wrote that this zealous motivation for technology will made human eventually "...be confined to the role of a recording device; he will note the effects of techniques upon one another, and register the results." (Ellul, 1964: 93). He also observed the enslavement happening in the wake of modern technology upon mankind; as well as how this situation blurred the 'truth' from them. However, no assessment was made on AI technology and how the idea of freedom and determinism in relation to what this encroachment entailed.

Heidegger (1977) was among the pioneer who had contributed in the speculative philosophy the endangering effects of modern technology. Heidegger discussed the main idea of technology and showed that technology is never a neutral tool. He makes distinction between the essential understanding and the common-sensical understanding of technology. His discussion is heavily metaphysical and pegged on the idea of *Dasein* (Being). His work serves as invaluable reference to understand the nature of technology and its relation to humankind.

The discussion on modern man which is defined by technological advancement as well as the motivation for it was done by Nietzsche. Nietzsche (1974) employed the concept of 'death of God' as something which is the result of our modernity and technological success. The idea of freedom entailed offered mankind an unprecedented sense of freedom, physically and ideologically, to the point that it begets nihilism; and this is the inevitable destiny of humankind. Nonetheless, this article wanted to show that this is not necessarily the case, by suggesting reasons for why alternative ontological-ethical framework is required to resist such outcome.

Definition of Technology

Technology is a term everyone familiar with, yet hard to describe. Even the Malay does not have a local term to express the concept. According to Merriam Websters (2004: 734), technology is "a manner of accomplishing a task using technical methods or knowledge". This definition resonates with Borgmann (1984) assessment that it is derived from the word, 'technique'. That being said, the common-sense definition of technology entails that technology is simply a linguistic expression denoting that certain process is based upon, or accomplished through certain set of art, craft or knowledge. Technology is basically the tool in which improves our process of accomplishing a task and subsequently ease our life, or so it says (Allan 2008; Gertz, 2024). This concept of 'betterment' or 'improvement' is a contentious issue also which debate does not need to be dragged into this article. Notwithstanding, from the definition, it could be said that anything that we made to speed up our task solving is called technology; from *beliung* (hand axe), sewer system, steam ship, atomic bomb, computers to artificial intelligence (AI).

The philosophical definition is a lengthy discussion. *What is technology?* Is it a physical thing? an abstract idea? Heidegger (1977: 5) alludes the many understandings of the term as 'a means to an end', 'a human activity' and 'a contrivance'. He gave examples of hydro-electrical turbine, airplane, and the electronic devices. Meaning, it is something which has instrumentality (Allan, 2008; Heidegger, 1977). Heidegger (1977) views that this is fair enough as working definition, but not sufficient.

Heidegger (1977) therefore provides a comprehensive understanding of technology which is based on the idea of un-concealment. Instrumentality is embedded in the process of 'bringing-forth' because causes are necessitated. Hence, he says that "Technology is therefore no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing." (Heidegger, 1977: 12). The significance here is, it

does not confine to the idea of control only. Rather, the idea is that, technology ‘discloses’ reality in many ways, other than bringing-forth our end, it also discloses a philosophical state which shapes our view towards the world (e.g. we start to objectify everything). Furthermore, reality shows that we often experience technological malfunction and the inability to control it. Thus, it ceases to become the means to an end (Heidegger, 1977). It is important to highlight a more profound definition of technology because one will see that technology is not just ‘a (neutral) means’, but is context-laden which is imposed with worldview (Allan, 2008; Creely et al., 2019).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Modern Digital Technology

There are two types of AI: (i) strong AI; and (ii) weak AI. For the former, not only we do not have a trace of workable model yet, but is also metaphysically impossible because it implicitly demands a first-person human subjective experience in a machine, which is a non-physical concept (Sloman, 1986; Schismenos, 2023). The latter however, is omnipresence and a hallmark of our advancement.

In the past 20 years, almost everyone would never have in mind that they would be talking with a tool (device) and that tool will do any task for them; or at least, they can only imagine it. The advancement of technology in this age witnesses that the fantasy had become reality. People are talking to devices, smartphones, and industrial machinery, and they will do the task for them. Furthermore, people are conversing with devices not only as intermediary between human and another human, rather the device was ‘perceived’ as a first-person, human-like ‘individual’ (Krueger & Oslo, 2022; Wu, 2024). These have been achievable via the invention of what is termed as Artificial Intelligence (AI).

AI can basically be construed as an advance computational machine that processes the input (data) and by means of algorithm, produce the output through manipulation of symbols. Searle’s famous Chinese Room Experiment is a great way to explain what is AI. This is our modified example of the experiment taken from Moural (2003): Imagine you are in a one-way mirror room. The room only has a box filled with Chinese characters and a manual to use the Chinese characters. Then, the supervisor outside the room instructed you via digital signboard inside the room to follow the manual. The manual gave you instruction that if “你好吗” appeared, then you manipulate and display “我很好谢谢” in front of the mirror; and the list of instructions goes on. The supervisor gave a series of Chinese words displayed on the signboard and you are able to reply exactly as the instruction says. For instance, the moment the 你好吗 (how are you) appeared, you replied with 我很好谢谢 (I am fine, thank you), seemingly demonstrated your proficiency in Chinese language. In fact, the Chinese spectators outside can be very impressed by your ‘understanding’ of Chinese. However, the fact remains: you still have no idea what does the words 我很好谢谢 even means. You are effectively only manipulating symbols - the syntax; it does not mean you know the semantics (the meaning of the word) (Moural, 2003: 221). AI works exactly the same way: it receives input, and by means of algorithm (i.e. instruction manual), it produces output. The only difference is that it manipulates *a massive set of input* in the internet which enables it to ‘predict’ the correct answer and hence, be perceived as having a human-like cognitive ability or even almost conscious (Schismenos, 2023: 44).

Essentially, all AI is pegged on algorithm. The definition of AI being human-like or matches human cognition is just another way to explain the vast amount of data manipulation based on algorithm (Pozzi, 2018; Creely et al., 2019). It is still “a set of finite logical operations, an algorithmic table of binary reactions recorded as points 0 and 1” (Schismenos, 2023: 40).

Basically, AI is a technology which imitate and manipulate data in the internet. It is driven by human cognition and its source is human; not some mysterious invisible brain and self-consciousness as portrayed in the Chappie movie (du Plooy, 2024; Martela, 2025). As Schismenos (2023: 43) puts it, "...our ability to connect with the digital world does not mean that AI has cognitive abilities". In other words, what we feed into the internet, the AI system reads it, learns and gives prediction using the symbols we understand.

We often think AI as chatbot. Actually, AI is just a term to express the 'almost human-like function' of the computational system. If we scratch the surface, AI is more than chatbot. Using the definition given above, it is easy to see that Netflix, Google, Facebook post, and Instagram suggestion that appears on our screen are all operated by AI technology. In other words, our modern digital technology is operating based on algorithm (Creely et al., 2019; Pozzi, 2018: 5-6). The very fact that we are using Google search engine (or others) nowadays shows the overwhelming utility of AI in our life. It is algorithm which makes our digital applications and devices having 'intelligence'. In fact, even in risky endeavour such as investment, we use AI to help us, and often determine our investment (Nyang, 2024).

The Implication of Modern Digital Technology towards the Idea of Freedom

In philosophy, freedom is inevitably tied to the discussion of determinism. The term 'determinism', if it was used without caveat, usually refers to causal determinism. Some philosophers come up with various types of determinism such as theological and technological determinism. Some however included these as parts of causal determinism. The difference is only on what is regarded or emphasised as the determiner (Kane, 2007; Kinlaw, 1988; Cooper, 2009).

Lehrer (1970: 182) explains that determinism "...is the principle that whatever happens is caused... if something is caused, then given the conditions that caused it, whatever happens, could not have happened otherwise". Fischer (2007: 3) on the other hand describe determinism as "the thesis that at any time... the universe has exactly one physically possible future... Something is deterministic if it has only one physically possible outcome". Determinism therefore can be understood as determinism a metaphysical view which proposes that there is only one possible future caused by antecedent events and 'natural laws' (Jorati, 2017; Von Mises, 2007; Kane, 2005; Sarkar & Pfeifer, 2006)

Freedom is tied to the idea of free will. In order to have the slightest idea of freedom, one must assume free will. Not the other way around. The reason being, free will is 'constituted by disposition to will or act on one's own desire rather than forces external to us' (Berofsky, 2017; Timpe, Griffith & Levy, 2017). Meaning, it is more immediate and introspective. A disposition which we experience the moment we become conscious. Atkinson (1978: 180) echoes that free will "...is rooted in a practical attitude to conduct... of deliberation, decision, accountability and responsibility". Berlin (2002) equates free will as free choice and this is similar to Moore who understood it as the power to choose (Gert & Duggan, 1979). Another popular definition of free will is "the ability to do otherwise" (Kane, 2005). By having tasted free will then will we have the idea of freedom.

Debate concerning free will and determinism is almost endless, recorded since the age of antiquity in the Eastern and Western civilizations hitherto. Some argued that determinism is true and free will is just illusory. This is called hard determinism. The opposite is known as libertarianism which argued that we have genuine free will and that the world is not

deterministic (Pink, 2004). There is also a position known as compatibilism which maintains that there is no real contradiction between free will and determinism and that both concepts are true (Berofsky, 2017; Kane, 2005).

Discussing freedom is essential in our assessment on modern digital technology. Heidegger (1977: 4) warns the encroachment of technology: “Everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it. But we are delivered over to it in the worst possible way when we regard it as something neutral”. He argued that modern man had become enslaved to technology (Allan, 2008; Gertz, 2024). The common understanding is that we want to be free; we dislike being imposed upon and would rather have more control and choice in our life. The situation of slavery reflects perfectly with this feeling. Other than many restrictions placed upon a slave, the slave had very limited connection with other people.

From the perspective of social media, we take it that it gives us more freedom of connection. In this age, a mere minimum of not having internet connection would made us feel disconnected and would impede our economic activities. This disconnection causes us to feel unfree (Gertz, 2024; Creely et al. 2019). This is why information technology is important in expanding our freedom of ‘to be related’ and ‘in the zone (and Zoom)’ with others (Ponders, 2023; Gertz, 2024). If previously we were confined to only one brand of sneaker, now we have the freedom to select from a variety of branded sneakers through AI-powered shopping platforms such as Amazon and Shopee. This understanding can be presented as in the following *modus ponens*:

1. If we have artificial intelligence, we have more freedom
2. We have artificial intelligence
3. Therefore, we have more freedom

Structurally, the reasoning is valid. However, it is unsound. Reality dismantles the first premise immediately. Is it really the case that we have more freedom if we have AI? We argue that it is a false sense of freedom. Ellul (1964) also argued that the incessant pursuit of technology to automate-solving our task in order for us to have more luxury and free time will eventually deprive us of genuine freedom. Ultimately, we will be mere ‘recording device’, witnessing the machines do the work for us. Seeing from a deeper perspective, that does not give us true freedom. We are actually being determined to operate in a certain way due to the overuse of technology.

Is Hypnotic a Free Person? A Deluded Sense of Freedom

Social media such as TikTok, Instagram and Facebook had caused us to deposit all our energy to the point we are ‘zombie-scrolling’. This phenomenon is due to the problem of overabundance of information that feeds off our screen (Toffler, 1970; Gertz, 2024). This overabundance of information is further curated by algorithm which skilfully suggests to you content by reading your previous interests (Leben, 2019). This numbness or ‘zombie-like’ state is expected once this technology is overused like chores; causing the loss of sensitivity due to overexposure. Gertz (2024: 61) calls this miserable state as tech-hypnosis: “...we know technologies can hypnotize us and that we see this hypnotization as not only pleasurable but as justified is important for understanding the proliferation of techno-hypnotic devices, websites, and apps.” In light of this, how can a hypnotized person be called free?

A good example of how AI has been naively construed to be ‘a mere tool’ or ‘a means to an end’ is best reflected in the growing number of people who have started communicating with AI prompted as the deceased. This shows how AI had not only become the means, rather the

end: the focus of attention and meaning. These people had ‘zone out’ into tailored realm of AI in order to distract their psychological damage due to the death of loved ones (Krueger & Osler, 2022). Not only that, algorithmic technology could even delude a person with fake relationship. The phenomenon of people falling in love with a chatbot illustrates how the hypnotic effect that AI capable of inflicting (Gillath et al., 2023). It is actually a prompt to amplify our selfishness, fantasy and bestial needs. This reflects the Heideggerian argument that technology is a mode of being and is always value-laden (Allan, 2008).

Over-Choice Impedes Freedom in Light of AI

Furthermore, over-choice is also a problem to freedom. Having too much choice does not actually make us freer, in contrary it causes us paralysis (Schwartz, 2004). Choosing what to watch in cinema previously is much easier since you have limited options. In fact, you actually have more choice as you are not being overwhelmed by the wide array of selection on Netflix. Human beings have limited resources and time. Having to exert our energy in choosing what is the best choice not only increases the feeling of fear and self-blame of not making the right choice, but also makes us leave it to the AI to do the choosing for us instead (Leben, 2019). In this over-abundance of choices and algorithm at play, you would go with what was suggested for you (Schwartz, 2004; Ponders, 2023). Essentially, is not that a type of technological determinism? Your free sense of ‘choosing’ in online purchasing and content searching is ultimately determined by algorithm.

Artificial Intelligence Determines Our Mode of Being

On top of that, AI facilitates the phenomenon of over-reliance in technology. The convenience it provided is unprecedented which attracts people with a specific moral inclination in place: utilitarianism (Ponders, 2023). However, having more dependency means having more limited freedom. As information technology had curated our decision making and judgement, it had shaped our mode of being. This shift in mode of being caused by technology happens because the increased layers of causal instrument underlying a certain technological result (Allan, 2008). To shed light further, consider these situations: (i) relying on our memory and look at the signboard to reach our destination; and (ii) rely on our smartphone, by means of algorithm and the internet, to drive us to destination. Situation (ii) extends the layers of causal instrument. Hence, if one of the causal chains were malfunction, which situation has better ‘control’ or ‘autonomy’? obviously situation (i). Heidegger’s commentary on the ‘enframing’ and ‘standing-reserve’ succinctly allude to this: modern technology discloses our way of thinking into privileging efficiency and dependence, but at the expense of autonomy (Heidegger, 1977; George, 2014).

The assertion is also empirically supported by a recent study conducted by MIT researchers using Electroencephalography (EEG) to assess cognitive engagement and neural activation on three task-groups (the LLM, Search Engine and Brain-only). They conclude:

“The LLM... came at a cognitive cost, diminishing users’ inclination to critically evaluate the LLMs outputs... the Brain-only group reported higher satisfaction and demonstrated higher brain connectivity, compared to other groups. Essays written with the help of LLM carried a lesser significance or value to the participants” (Kosmyrna et al., 2025: 143).

This shows how digital technology determined our mode of being; our cognitive activity and value sensitivity. Thus, Allan (2008: 7) warns that “...the ubiquitous rise of modern technology

has been too much for us to handle, that our means for calculating, manipulating and controlling what we will in the world have run beyond our control.”

From the above explanation, premise (i) of the *modus ponens* is untrue. In the realm of AI, technological determinism seems to have more grounding in the discourse. Paradoxically, the more convenient the technology, the less resilient and autonomous the user becomes. Ellul (1964: 133-134) exhorted this technological determinism: “Technique elicits and conditions social, political, and economic change... Technique’s own internal necessities are determinative. Technique has become a reality in itself, self-sufficient, with its special laws and its own determinations”.

Epistemic Challenges to Truth in Light of Artificial Intelligence

Information technology in particular is highly concerned with truth-seeking. The driving force to pursue this technology, other than to expand our ‘freedom’ to acquire knowledge, is that we wanted to filter falsehood or untrue information (Gertz, 2024). In other words, it is for the sake of truth. With the help of LLM such as ChatGPT and Perplexity not only allows easier and quicker process of attaining knowledge, but also a reliable analysis processes. It is far superior than normal search engines. The sheer number of users of LLMs today indicates the epistemological importance of AI in this age (Dai et al., 2024). Hence, the logic for this correlation can be lay down as follows:

1. The more we can harness information technology such as AI, the closer we are to truth
2. We can harness information technology such as AI
3. Therefore, we are closer to truth

The discussion in the next sections will address the falsity of the premise(s).

Truth Devaluing Itself

The value of seeking truth is placed upon you the very moment you read this article and judging it. On what basis do you judge this article? Fundamentally it is based on the idea of truth. But is it possible that the pursuit of truth in this digital age devalues itself? Nietzsche (1974) had assessed this in an almost prophetic way. He argued that modern man which was the product of Western pursuit of becoming the ‘overman’, had eventually reconfigure the value of truth. Truth is not absolute anymore and anything which serves the modern man a new self-centred and individualistic commitment, is the truth. Truth becomes subjectified into what man takes to be the truth. In the end, truth becomes arbitrary and a convention (Gertz, 2024; Ponders, 2023).

Now, in what way the AI age causes the devaluation of truth? Firstly, due to the overfeeding of information, truth has become something unclear. This over-saturation itself becomes a barrier to genuine knowledge. Information overload has made us paralysed from making the right judgement on what is true; what is the best choice for us (Toffler, 1970). It seems our epistemic responsibility bar had just raised due to this advancement.

To help the epistemic burden over the overabundance of information, algorithmic filtering was introduced, which eventually also caused struggle in discerning what is real and reliable (Erol et al., 2025). Thanks to algorithm and AI, the public gets to bypass the traditional way of seeking the truth; truth does not require careful inquiry, but outsourced to technological mediators: the LLMs (that are themselves trained on human biases and driven by engagement-maximizing mechanisms) (Martin, 2019). This epistemic outsourcing erodes our responsibility as truth-

seekers, raising the unsettling question: do we still value truth as truth, or merely as what algorithms serve us as convenient?

Furthermore, the digital age witnesses that popular platform which had the most social influence on human life also compromises truth in its interaction. Reducing relationship into mere performance for self-gain and ego-feeding. The phenomenon of ‘everyone can be an influencer’ had people compromised genuine relationship into selfish gains, disregarding truth in their interactions (Susie Khamis, Ang & Welling, 2016; Creely et al., 2019). Again, raises the question of truth not only with regards to how you see others, but also to the influencers’ valuation of truth (Kapitan et al., 2021). Expanding Nietzsche’s explanation, truth, to men, has become what algorithm takes as truth. From this perspective, the truth-seeking technology had become the one which causes the devaluation of truth (Allan, 2008). Hence, the shallow reasoning that ‘AI makes us closer to truth’ is actually untrue.

Growing Distrust and Scepticism

Trust is fundamental in our epistemic activities: it is the concept which establishes our main route to knowledge which is testimony. Distrust and doubt in everyone will cause a disfunction society. In light of this, AI through various means offers everyone limitless access to knowledge. The very fact that we are having problems of students letting AI do their assignment and task demonstrated how the masses put their trust on AI in achieving truth. Its extensive usage however develops distrust among teachers and lecturers of the authenticity of their students, in terms of knowledge mastery and trustworthiness (Leyra-Curiá & Soler, 2023). Advancement in information technology which developed AI applications such as writeless.ai that can bypass the AI-detector amplified the challenges in assessing the authenticity of student’s work which entails, the degree of graduates of this digital age does not represent their true mastery on the subjects (Aproda et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the content monetization incentive provided by algorithmic-powered platforms such as YouTube and TikTok actually deteriorates genuine trust and relationship. The idea of ‘now, everyone can make money by becoming content creator’ had generates a new career in the market. Users are aware of this and many had made it a motivation to becoming one for extra income. This eventually creates an online environment where users assume other users are creating content for the sake of monetization which requires engagement, views, likes, etc (Bertaglia, Dubois & Goanta, 2021). Thus, whenever a content came out, what it conveys is looked at as mere attempt to make money, not a sincere advice, knowledge-sharing, etc (Kapitan et al., 2021). Technology shapes the lens of how people look at each other: as a resource to be ‘used’. Ultimately, a growing form of scepticism pervaded the society (Heidegger, 1977; Allan, 2008).

The New Dogmatic AI Society

Previously, people rely on expert for knowledge. This reliance is based on trust. When the trust is broken, the relationship between the two parties (the expert and the masses) crumbled. Information technology allows one to skip this process in attaining knowledge. However, the sheer amount of information in the internet may cause exhaustion in analysing, integrating and synthesizing the information. In fact, it would cause anxiety, stress and depression due to other needs of life such as a rest to catch and permanent job to complete (Gertz, 2024; Ponders, 2023). Eventually, people let AI do the job for them: in electing government, choosing partner or even investment. Although algorithm or LLMs are there to help individualized our choice, it is in effect creates another problem: people will be relying on LLMs. This is dangerous in terms of

truth-seeking because we know that LLMs are not bias-free (Tiribelli, 2021; Martin, 2019). The convenience of algorithm and information overload is a recipe that enslaves our truth-seeking ability.

This reflects how AI is taking people into ‘the enslavement of epistemic activity’. The overwhelming energy required due to loads of information on the internet and the exhaustion caused people to stop doing the research on their own or referring to esoteric opinions of experts. Rather, they turn to AI as it is perceived as having truth or ‘knows better’. Ironically, many people do not know where AI is coming from; they only know AI as the authority. Most technology user in fact, do not even know how the technology works to produce the result (Leyra-Curiá & Soler, 2023; Cooper, 2009).

How can we trust something we do not understand? Is not this a dogmatic-based faith? But how can they be convinced of this technology? Related to the idea of Truth as being fundamental, it is intertwined with the idea of feeling certain. Everyone wants to feel certain: it is indispensable of human. When you are uncertain of something, you tend to refer to others. This is known as informative social influence (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Human also wanting to be liked or have a sense of belonging in a group (Toffler, 1970). This urge influences action and behaviour. If everyone around you started to use smartphone and see it as a goodness, and there is no reason preventing you from using it, you will follow along to comply. This is known as normative social influence (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). In light of this, Wyatt (2008: 169) states:

“For most of us, most of the time, the technologies we use every day are of mysterious origin and design. We have no idea whence they came and possibly even less idea how they actually work... technological determinism conforms with a huge majority of people’s experiences that it remains the “common sense” explanation.”

Having said that, this dogmatic faith in AI is dangerous as AI only manipulates data it received. It is susceptible to bias and prejudice and it does not ‘understand’ truth or have ‘metaphysical truth’ (Gertz, 2024). To put this idea across, let us imagine someone asks ChatGPT which religion is true, and let us suppose that ChatGPT says it is Spaghetism. Does this mean that Spaghetism is really the truth? No. ChatGPT collects and manipulates the symbols using algorithm to give answer based on what it learns from the internet. Meaning, if the input in the internet says about Spaghetism in a way that coherent with other inputs of symbols in the internet which prompt it to be true, it will say Spaghetism is true. However, whatever in the internet does not represent the real world, let alone the metaphysical truth. One needs to understand that LLMs have developers and it was programmed (Martin, 2019; Gertz, 2024).

Over-Reliance on Digital Technology and Its Ethical Implications

Badiou shows through his philosophy of novelty and ‘forcing’, how paradigm shift happened (Burhanuddin Baki, 2020). For example, in the 1990s, we only have Nokia phone and no one had unlimited access to the internet. These people are the believer of the ‘old world’: they had their specific belief on what is technology. Then, a black swan event happened: technologist and tech companies ‘discovered’ smartphone. This event invites a new group of believers: the tech-companies cooperation with government bodies had promoted this to be affordable for interested users. This, therefore, gathers a group of believers to participate in the event (the smartphone potential, function, etc.). Thus, creates a ‘new world’ where the new generation of believers never had the ‘belief system’ of the old world. For example, the idea and term for

‘video call’ and ‘content creation’ never exist in the old world, in as much that the new world is unfamiliar with ‘Yellow/ White Pages’ or ‘public phone’.

The ethical questions intersect with the nature of truth in environments where content is curated according to engagement metrics rather than epistemic reliability (Bietti, 2021; Leyra-Curiá & Soler, 2023). Tech-companies and developers had made social media platforms disguised as genuine platform for connecting with others: as a ‘mere means’ for knowledge-sharing and other good stuff. However, the hidden motivation accompanies with is to generate money from users’ active engagement to influencers’ product advertisement (Gertz, 2024; Hildebrand, 2019; Allan, 2008). Ellul, Heidegger and Badiou already showed that technology engages with us in an organic way and something which ‘forcefully’ and ‘unconsciously’ reconfigure our way of life, including our ethics.

A Deceitful Culture and Selfish Society

Weller (2011: 45-46) notes on the Nietzschean prediction that “...technologization as such affects the totality of relations and no bourgeois value can resist it... technology... as active nihilism produces anarchy, undoing all existing relations...”. Monetization, convenience, ‘zoning out’, and social influences facilitated by modern information technology as explicated previously explains why it is seductive to many people. People are being too consumed in navigating YouTube, TikTok, Facebook and LLMs. The social media culture had bring-forth a new culture which begets selfishness (Susie Khamis, Ang & Welling, 2016). As tech users, few people succeed in resisting the penetration of this culture. Disingenuity and deceitfulness of social media users are sign of this new culture. It has bred a self-centred, self-love mentality. Everyone wants to get in the spotlight. Traditional ethical guidelines were sidelined in exchange for controversial and often offensive content (Bietti, 2021; Tiribelli, 2021). Creely et al. (2019: 115) informs us of this:

“We are living in digital equivalent of Plato’s Cave lacking meaning and purpose while in cyberspace individualism... Morality is now relative to one’s own agenda; one’s ethical compass is guided by self-interest. Beliefs are without traditional moral principles as a framework to good judgment...”.

The statement ‘bad marketing is a good marketing’, holds water especially in the wake of algorithmic-based information technology (Nor Adila Mohd Noor et al., 2023). Take for instance, the recent Sydney Sweeney’s American Eagle advertisement in social media. She talked about genetics and her biological make up, then link it with the American Eagle jeans she was wearing. She tries to link the phonetic of ‘jeans’ and ‘genes’, which is at the onset evoke racial sentiment (Zubair Amin, 2025). This insensitive behaviour has been the mark of today’s online marketing.

As explicated before, being genuine or authentic is important for it facilitates trust and social cohesion in a community. Take the story of Andrew Tate for example. Andrew Tate once was one of the most searched individuals in the internet. In 2022, he had embraced Islam and the Muslim online community welcomed him with open arms. He was already an influencer and had his own brand prior to his conversion to Islam, and after conversion his influence increases manifold. This fact, coupled with his previous affiliation in far-right ideology and behaviour online, had offended many Muslims online. Hence, questioning his sincerity: whether his conversion to Islam is for the sake of followers or sincere conversion. His constant behaviour of sparking controversies raises doubt as to how an influencer can even be authentic (Menzfeld,

2024; Kapitan et al, 2021). The Muslim online community should not feel guilty for having suspicion over his conversion for it is due to his misdeed as well.

Significantly, in this era of information technology, people often find it hard to not viewing people as being deceitful; and on the other hand, it is also difficult to put across a good sincere content online and becoming a good influencer. This is reflected from the event of Nuray Istiqbal or his real name, Kae Asakura. Previously, she was a quite famous adult content actress. After she converted to Islam in the early 2025, she receives various criticism even among Muslim community. People online doubt her Islamic content of her journey and learning (Thomas, 2025). This tells us something: in the age of content creation, becoming genuine and producing good content is far more challenging. Users often find it depressing in embracing goodness and those who had to rely for views and likes, will end up defeated in treading the path of goodness (Ponders, 2023; Toffler, 1970). This is due to the seductive nature of algorithmic engagement.

Seeking Truth as an Objective Moral Truth: An Explanation

There are many truths that we regard as self-evident, such as the past exists, justice is good, and $1 + 1 = 2$ (Shapiro, 2009). In light of this, 'being followers of truth is good' is also self-evident. These truths are true by default. Kant (1976: 305) asserts this: "...do not wrest from reason that which makes it the highest good on earth... the prerogative of being the ultimate touchstone of truth". The self-evident truth of 'seeking truth is good' implies that it is an objective moral truth. Meaning, its moral status is good regardless if everyone says the opposite: its truth is 'out there', external of our mind (Cornett, 1986; Gray, 2011).

Now, we have seen how destructive AI can be to our metaphysical idea of freedom, truth and epistemology. This is not without condition. According to Nietzsche (1974), this devaluing happens when 'God is dead' for God is the anchor of any moral value. Partly, it is true that AI is only a technology: it does not have consciousness, less any intention. It is actually our ethical and moral viewpoints which serve as the soil that ensures what the seed (AI technology) would grow into. Consequentialism fails to explain truth as an objective goodness. This failure is reflected from how truth had devalued itself as explicated in the previous sections. In actual fact, it is the motivation of utilitarianism (the main view of consequentialism) which had facilitate the state of devaluation of truth. When goodness is reduced to pleasure for the maximum numbers of people, if the 'truth' gets in the way, it ceases to be a goodness (Ponders, 2023; Bietti, 2021). The selfish culture spoken earlier was cultivated from this utilitarian mindset, as well as individualism (Creely et al., 2019).

Deontological ethics (categorical imperative) may explain the truth as being a goodness which we should always pursue. Kantian would argue that what makes truth is good because it is in and of itself is good (Udayakumar & Babu, 2021). However, it lacks explanatory power to ground 'good' itself. In other words, to say that 'pursuing truth is good' requires an ontological grounding for 'goodness' itself, and it must assume that there is 'absolute goodness'. Virtue ethics would contend that seeking truth is a goodness because 'being followers of truth' is a virtue i.e. is good. This also fail to provide an ontological grounding for moral truth (Timmerman & Cohen, 2020). Furthermore, in this case, virtue ethics seems to fall into circular reasoning in justifying the objective goodness of truth.

Divine command theory of ethics such as in Islam, on the other hand explains truth as something having absolute reality and epistemic reality. It provides a sound ontological and moral

grounding for truth. It posits that truth and goodness is indispensable because it comes from God (Udayakumar & Babu, 2021; Al-Utsaimin & Al-Fauzan, 2015). The reasoning is quite simple: whatever comes from God, whose attribute is the Truth and the Good (among others), is true and good. Also, it provides a clear ethical manual which is the Quran and authentic *hadeeth* (the sayings and action of the prophet) (Tzortzis, 2018).

Slave of Algorithm or Slave of God?

Enslavement is a state where one loses autonomy and submit to another power, force or system (Cooper, 2009). Our inquiry led us to the conclusion that in this world, which is a constant movement of technological ‘revealing’ as Heidegger (1977) puts it, we are determined by external factors. We have seen that enslavement appears in many forms. This discussion highlights how information technology in this modern age had enslaved us in many ways; from being hypnotized to being exhausted from exerting our free will. Also, it enslaved us in the sense it determines what we should regard as truth, and even determines our worldview (how we see the world). The seductive nature of technology in the ethical domain is a force to be reckoned with, as evident in the case examples provided. Hence, whether we like it or not, if we keep on living a secular, hedonistic way of life devoid of transcendent-religious principle, we will be enslaved to algorithm, which is essentially, enslaved into contents of our own desire (Haapoja et al., 2024). Creely et al. (2019: 118) aptly highlights this:

“Men and women have a choice, to either put their faith in value-laden algorithms to direct their life in pursuit of meaning and purpose or to pursue the transcendent and mystical Divine... People are turning to technology as a new form of religion, guiding their actions and increasingly narcissistic motives. This societal transformation has heightened the need for moral awareness with its inevitable ethical side-effects”.

From this perspective, everyone worships something or enslaved themselves to something: they have something that they love the most, want to know the most, and occupy all of their actions (internal and external) towards the most (Tzortzis, 2018; Creely et al., 2019). If we do not direct our obedient and enslavement to the Divine, we will end up directing it to other things including our own desire and even technology; the void will be filled. Human being will always be in chained to something. Therefore, it is only a matter of, *to whom should we chained ourselves to? Where should we give total reliance unto?* As Rousseau (1920: 5) famous dictum reads: “Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains. One thinks himself the master of others, and still remains a greater slave than they”. This article therefore suggests the need to return and look into the Divine command theory ethical framework in resisting the damning effects that our modern technology had unleashed unto us.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, we see that people subconsciously had enslaved themselves to their desire and this is further amplified when they are being too reliance on algorithmic-based technology. We have seen what will happen when over-reliance on AI takes place. It strips off our idea of freedom, value and truth. This would lead to various problem including the loss sense of purpose and reflection which could potentially lead to nihilism. Over-reliance in AI has done more damage than benefits. From the philosophical assessment above, without a sound ethical foundation, human will ultimately be enslaved by AI as their freedom being limited and ultimately, jeopardized through algorithm. This limitation and control also apply to the truth-seeking activity: The overused of AI had reduced human cognitive functioning; confused them

and even led them to project their delusional state as truth. The idea of truth as being the highest value is also compromised when people had succumbed into extreme individualization prompted by AI and developed extreme self-love i.e. 'what matters now is myself'. This is evident in the usage of AI to write academic assignments/ thesis while disregarding the ethical considerations of being truthful. It also disconnects genuine human interaction and replaced it with virtual, or rather interaction with 'imposter'. Ultimately, over-reliance in AI technology - as it initially means- causes men to be acted upon and not active. When truth and value had been undervalued, men become slaves to algorithm.

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