



Conscientization in Times of Cognitive Injustice

anita gurumurthy

IT for Change

Paulo Freire Annual Lecture 2023

**The Institute for Media and Creative Industries
Loughborough University, London**

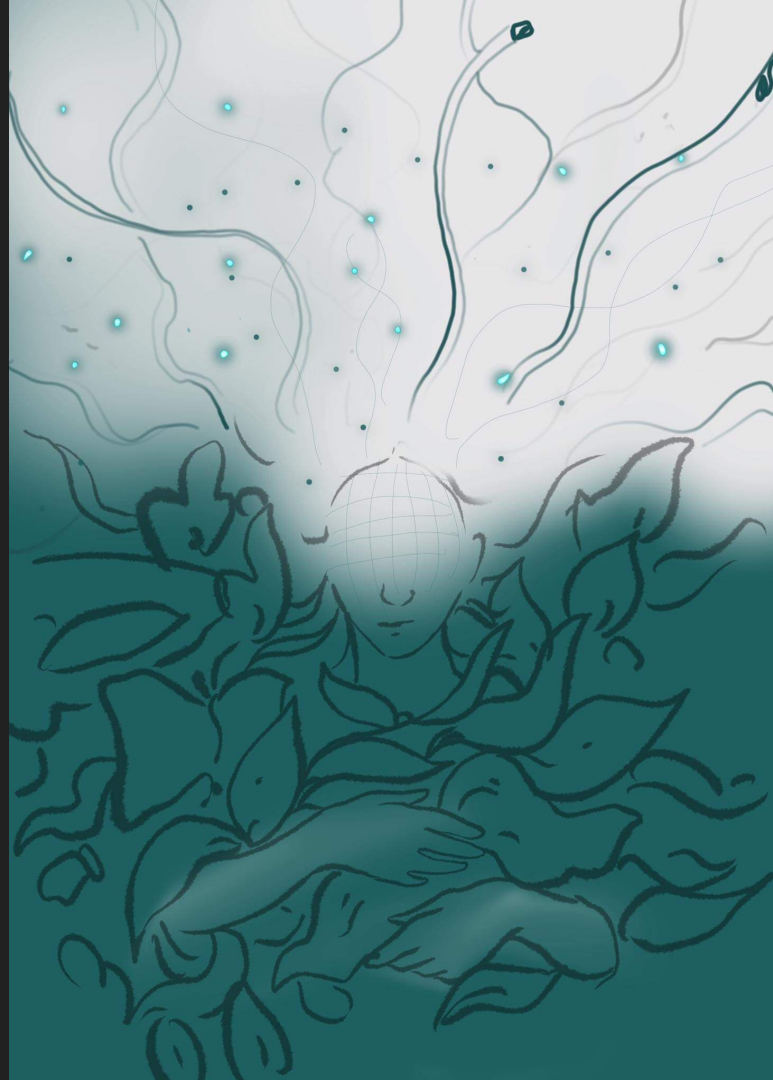
Outline

Part 1 – The archaeology of consciousness as backdrop

Part 2 – Would Freire have embraced AI?

Part 3 – How must the ethics of an egalitarian AI be shaped?

Part 4 – Reflection and action for a new epoch of uncertainty





Part 1 – The archaeology of consciousness as backdrop

The archaeology of consciousness as backdrop

The idea of consciousness of consciousness

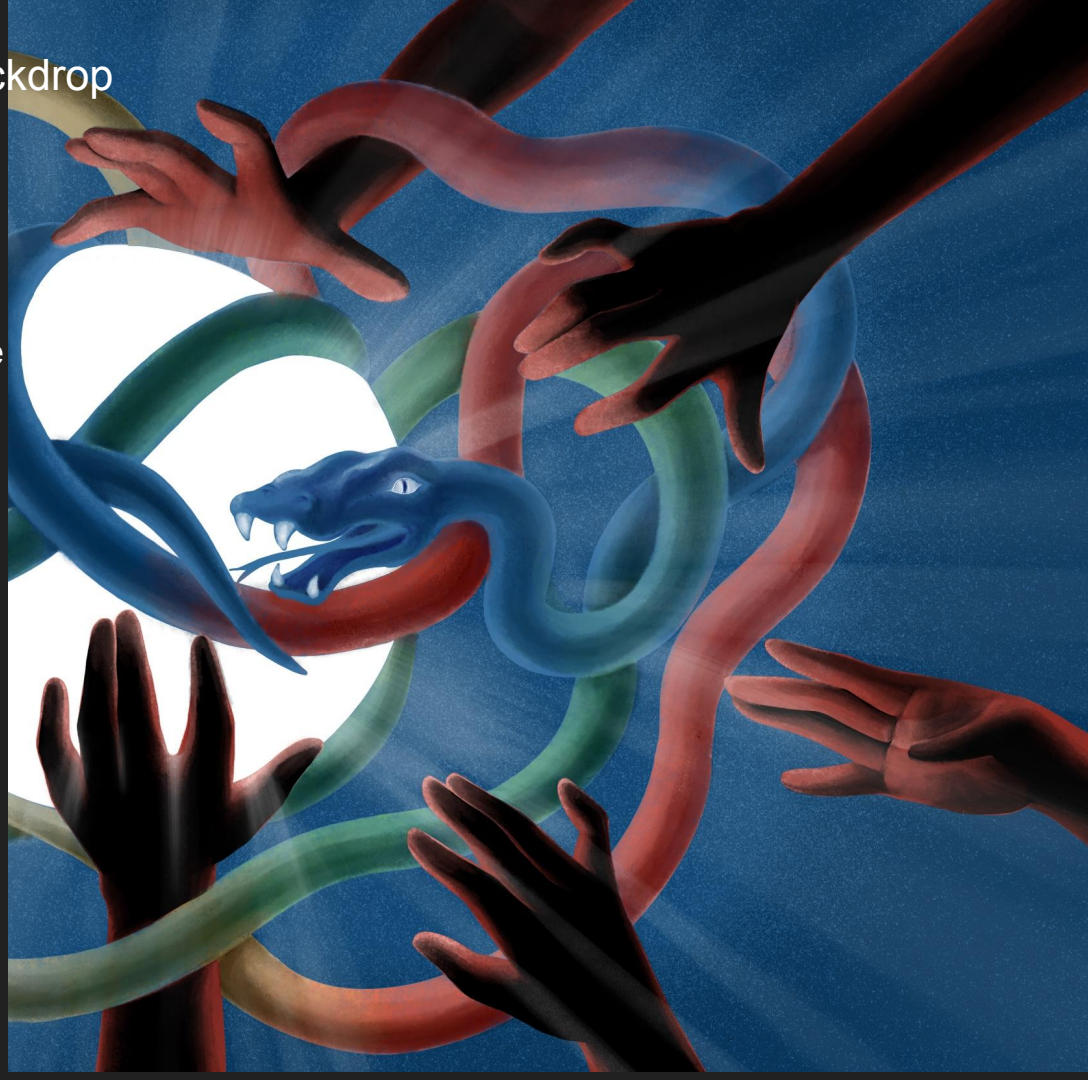
Cognitive structure of the AI paradigm

Algorithmic order - decoupling of human knowledge from human understanding

What is keeping us “naive”? How do we tie human knowledge with human understanding? And does this mean we reject algorithmic intelligence?

A cognitive order under siege:

1. The erasure of personhood in the economy of prediction
2. Connected individuals in inauthentic community
3. The narrative as metanarrative
4. An empire of plunder



Erasure of personhood in the economy of prediction

Subordination of human personhood to the supremacy of market ideology

A science of knowing without seeing

Infinite profiles, and the reification of social inequality and exclusion



Connected individuals in inauthentic community

Individuals as segmentable aggregates

Persuasive tech wants views to be quantified

Relationships that AI hallucinations make real through structures that demand servitude.

Ever-multiplying connections based on a common data stream that simultaneously narrows dialogic possibilities

Agency and solidarity besieged by infrastructures of inauthenticity

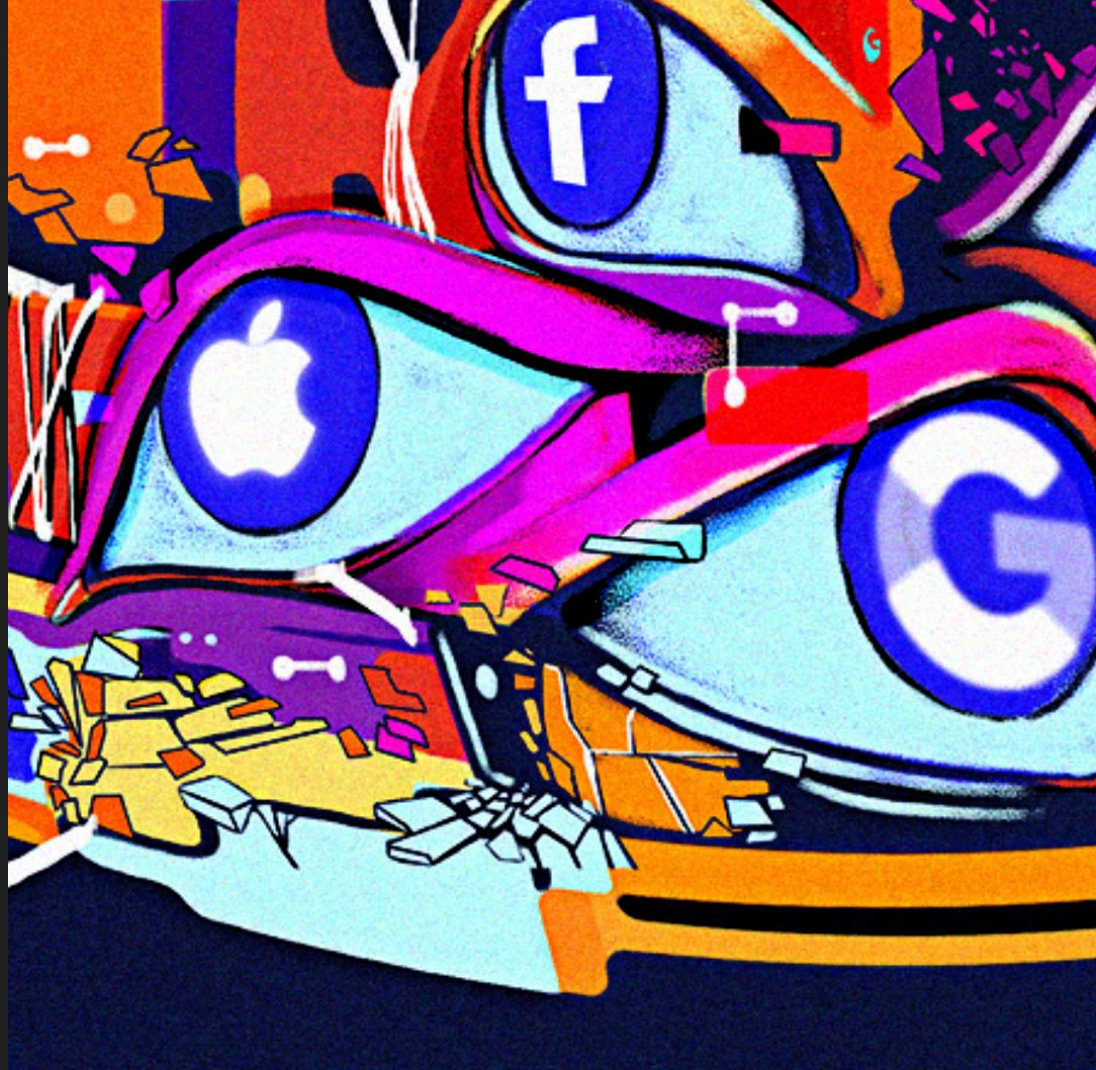


The narrative as metanarrative

Public discourse arises in the form of the 'spectacular and catastrophic'

Powerful enclaves that viralise hate, spread inanity and project antagonism

Algorithms engineer visibility for clickbait, even as they "systematically produce absences"



An empire of plunder

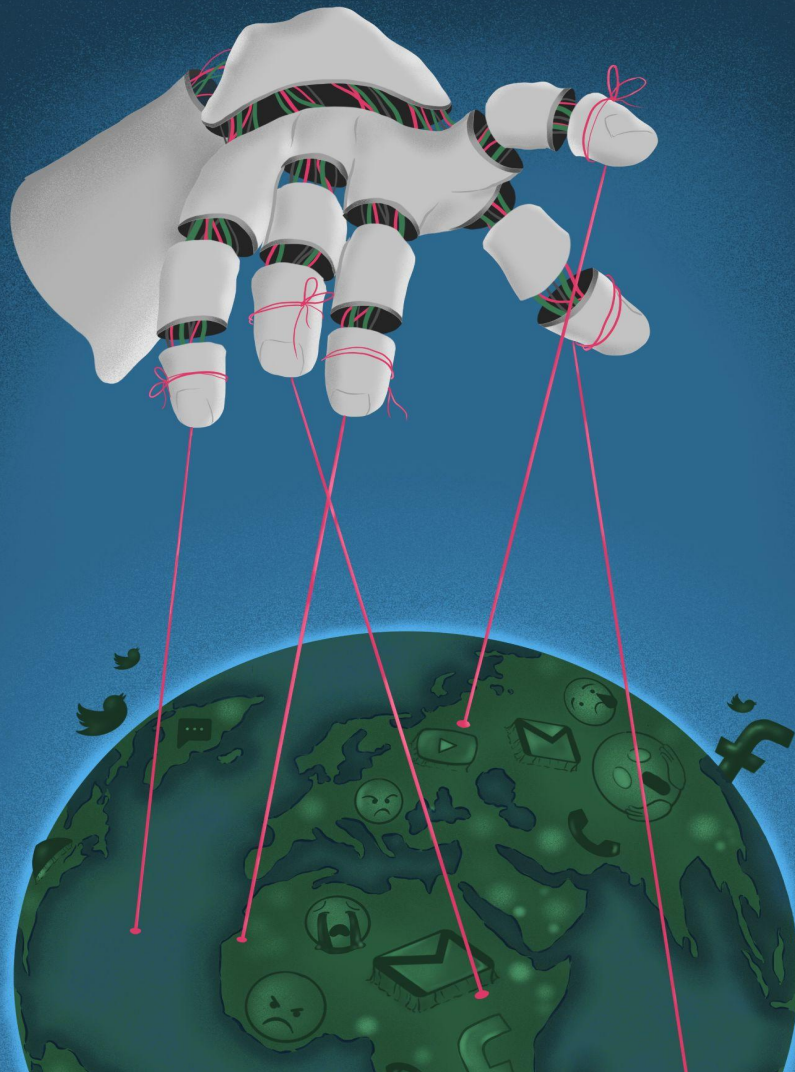
AI built through the drudgery of
mind-numbing work that dehumanises

Carbon emissions and environmental costs

Big Tech - the interlocutor of public
infrastructures

Scope creep that hollows out the local, while
creating dependencies on proprietary foreign
expertise

Silence on the control and distribution of
data value





Part 2 – Would Freire have embraced AI?

Science cannot produce meaning

The cognitive turn in civilization – a corporatised paradigm of pseudo-science

The meta-assumption - big data and the truth.

AI models - not a problem of knowledge but of meaning, in a hegemonic world of market fundamentalism

The ontology of AI systems – public reason needed to understand the shift to human-machine, natural-synthetic interfaces

The real question as one of optimising; achieving complementarity





Part 3 – How must the ethics of an egalitarian AI be shaped?

AI egalitarianism is not served adequately by the human rights paradigm

Need to chip away at the system as a whole

Democratic control as the precondition for a Freirian “freedom of consciousness” that is historically and materially grounded

The truth condition of AI systems not about computational representations

Vigilance needed about real world conditions and consequences we see associated with AI

AI’s meaningfulness as predicated on a cognition of embodiment, embeddedness and enablement, apparent in its everyday operation



Two conditions are vital to this radical shift.

First - breaking the omnipotence of the corporation

Seeking the freedom for serendipity as individuals and societies - rescuing social cognition from its capture

The autonomy of non-human intelligence needs a fundamental rethink on intellectual property

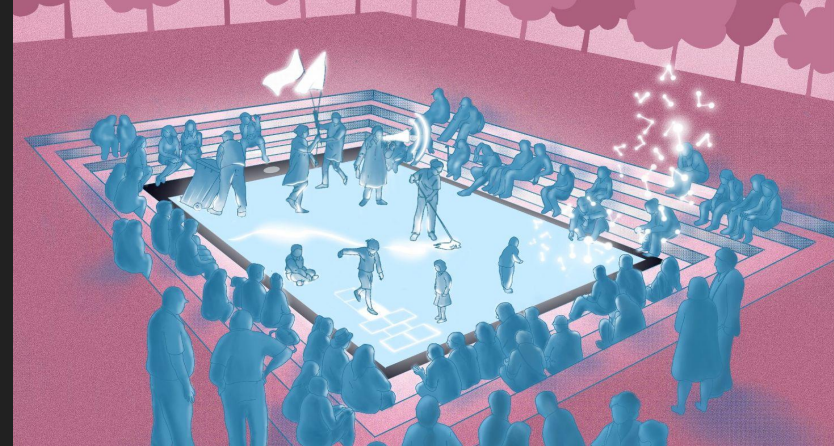
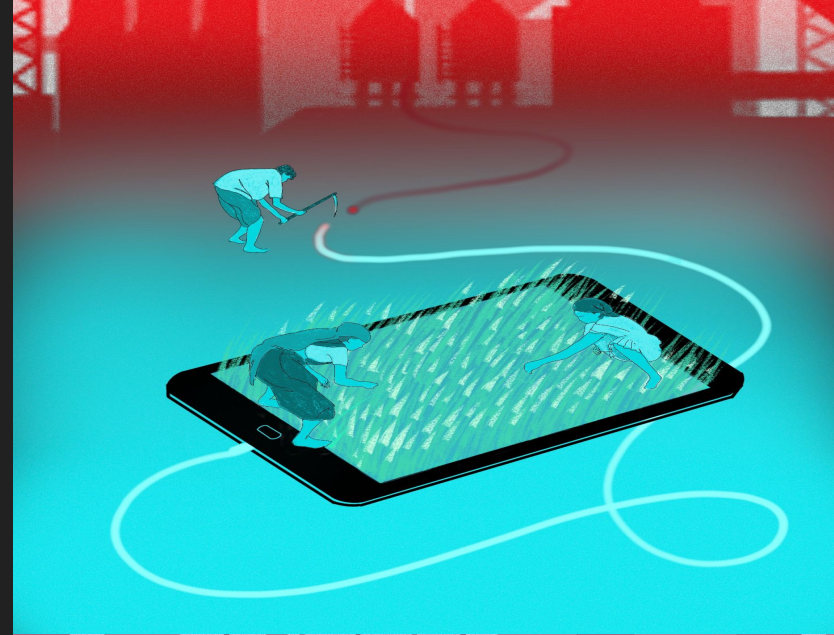
The need for an international treaty for AI

Second - the repoliticisation of pedagogy

Critical thinking hinges on 'attentiveness'

Reclaiming the digital tools underpinning learning and learning communities

Radical projects – schools and learning institutions must recover the narrative, look behind the stories





Part 4 – Reflection and action for a new epoch of uncertainty



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Thank you

