

Disability, Technoethics, and Power

Exploring AI Refusal

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI), including generative AI, is marketed and widely discussed as a great benefit to many, especially to disabled and neurodivergent individuals. It appears to level the playing field, so to speak, by making certain tasks and work more accessible, performing the often disproportionately draining mental labor of tasks such as creating outlines, timetables for completing assignments, and more.

While we recognize the potential benefits of solutions to these known challenges, the rapid development and adoption of generative AI largely bypasses meaningful civic input. Decisions about its suitability, design, and impacts are made largely by private and technocratic interests, with little critical engagement from the communities it claims to serve. As a result, the narratives around AI eclipse questions of suitability, and whether the adoption of AI systems and technologies are worth the consequences.

When it comes to technology, including AI, intent matters, but what often matters most are the impacts of decisions. The adoption of any tool or system must be preceded by critical evaluation, assessment, and an understanding of environmental context and consequences. The choice to adopt or reject the use of AI is to be made intentionally, involving a deeper commitment to civic engagement: inclusive, participatory processes that shape not just how AI is used, but also how it is governed.

This zine will explore questions around the intersection of generative AI and disability, examining the ways in which the purported benefits of generative AI are not actually benefitting anyone, disabled or not, through a disability justice lens. Instead, we work together to imagine alternative futures, where AI is not inevitable, and where we can envision a more just, equitable, and radically kind world. Together, we ask our audience if they are willing and prepared to refuse systems of harm.

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