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THE PROBLEM OF AUTHORSHIP AND THE CREATIVE SUBJECT IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: A PHILOSOPHICAL AND AESTHETIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract: This article examines, from a philosophical and aesthetic perspective, the transformation of the concepts of authorship and the creative subject resulting from the growing use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in artistic practice. It compares human creative intention, aesthetic experience, emotional perception, and meaning-making with the generative capacities of algorithmic systems. Authorship is conceptualised not merely as the production of a finished artefact, but as a process encompassing the formulation of an idea, selection, editing, interpretation, and responsibility for the outcome. The article proposes criteria for assessing distributed creative participation, aesthetic agency, and responsibility in human–AI collaboration. It argues that AI can expand the possibilities of artistic production without thereby becoming equivalent to a human creative subject.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, generative model, authorship, creative subject, artistic creativity, aesthetic experience, creative agency, digital aesthetics, human–AI collaboration, aesthetic value.

Introduction

At the present stage of digital technological development, generative artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly involved in the creation of texts, images, music, video, and other forms of creative output. This development does not simply renew the technical means of art; it also requires a reconsideration of the established relationships among the artist, the artwork, the audience, and authorship. Whereas the origin of an artwork was traditionally explained primarily through the worldview, intentions, life experience, and aesthetic position of a particular human creator, under generative conditions an artefact may emerge through the interaction of a human prompt, algorithmic processing, training data, and subsequent acts of selection and editing.

Consequently, questions such as “Who is the author?”, “What is the source of creativity?”, and “How should an algorithmically generated result be evaluated as a work of art?” have become increasingly important for philosophy and aesthetics. These questions cannot be reduced to the legal determination of copyright. They also concern the nature of the creative subject, the role of human experience, the formation of aesthetic values, and the distribution of creative responsibility.

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The aim of this article is to provide a philosophical and aesthetic analysis of changes in the concepts of authorship and the creative subject under generative AI conditions and to propose criteria for creative participation and responsibility in human–AI collaboration.

Research methodology

The study is theoretical and analytical in nature. It employs philosophical analysis, comparative analysis, conceptual analysis, a systems approach, and generalisation. The concepts of authorship, creative agency, intention, aesthetic experience, and responsibility are examined as interrelated categories. Contemporary scholarly approaches to generative AI and creative agency are compared. No empirical survey or experiment is claimed; the conclusions are based on theoretical sources and conceptual analysis.

1. The philosophical and aesthetic meaning of authorship

Historically, authorship has been associated with the person responsible for the origin, content, and form of an artwork. In classical aesthetic thought, the creator's individuality, inner experiences, way of perceiving the world, and spiritual experience are treated as factors that determine the distinctive character of a work. From this perspective, authorship is not merely technical production; it is also a process of creating meaning, expressing an attitude towards reality, and articulating an aesthetic position.

In a digital environment, however, the creation of an artwork becomes a multi-stage process. A user provides an idea or instruction; a model generates possible outputs based on patterns learned from data; and a human selects, edits, contextualises, and determines the final form. Several factors therefore contribute to the emergence of the creative result. Goodfellow considers distributed artistic authorship as a spectrum extending from wholly human creation to works produced through collaboration [1]. This approach makes it possible to analyse authorship in terms of degrees of participation rather than as a strict either-or distinction.

Nevertheless, authorship cannot be equated with technical contribution alone. The use of a complex algorithm to produce an image does not automatically determine its aesthetic meaning. The meaning of an artwork is also shaped by the circumstances of its creation, the creator's purpose, the criteria used in selecting the result, its cultural context, and the audience's interpretation. At least three dimensions should therefore be distinguished in the philosophical and aesthetic meaning of authorship: conceptual initiative, formative and editorial participation, and responsibility for the final outcome.

These three dimensions may be concentrated in one person or distributed in different ways across human and technological participants. Yet the involvement of a technological system does not eliminate human aesthetic judgement or responsibility. The decisions made by a person at each stage of the process become important criteria for identifying the human contribution to authorship.

2. The creative subject and the agency of artificial intelligence

A creative subject may be understood as an agent capable of setting goals, reinterpreting existing experience, generating new meanings, and reflecting on its own activity. Human creativity is closely

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connected with perception, memory, imagination, emotion, values, and socio-cultural experience. Generative AI, by contrast, uses patterns learned from large datasets to produce new combinations that correspond to given instructions and constraints.

The external results of these processes may appear similar: both a human and an algorithm can produce a new image or text. However, the novelty of an output does not demonstrate that all the characteristics of a creative subject are present. In examining the creative agency of large language models, Ukpaka points to the absence of first-person experience, subjective awareness, and intention as reasons not to equate such systems with human authors [2]. This position does not deny the creative value of AI-generated outputs; rather, it emphasises the need to distinguish the capacity to generate products from the status of a human creative subject.

At the same time, defining creative agency exclusively through inner experience does not resolve the entire issue. Moruzzi examines the criteria by which agency and creativity are attributed to both human and artificial systems [3]. Cross interprets the artist's relationship with AI not merely as the use of a tool or a fixed model of collaboration, but also as an interactive process of exploring algorithmic possibilities and experimenting with them [4]. This approach highlights the active and directing role of the human participant.

From this perspective, it is more appropriate to identify the functional role of AI in the creative process than to assign it the status of an independent creator. An algorithm can generate alternatives, suggest unexpected forms, and broaden human imagination. However, understanding the social significance of an idea, evaluating an artwork within a system of values, and accepting responsibility for its consequences remain matters of human agency.

3. Distributed authorship in human–AI collaboration

Generative technologies are transforming artistic production from an activity centred solely on an individual author into a broader network of relations. Users, model developers, data sources, platforms, editors, and audiences may all participate at different levels. Khosrowi, Finn, and Clark discuss the "many-hands problem" in generative AI outputs: the difficulty of determining whose contribution and responsibility are involved in a creative product [5].

In this context, the concept of distributed authorship can serve as an important theoretical tool. Distributed authorship does not mean declaring all participants equal authors. Rather, it means distinguishing the tasks performed at different stages of the creative process, identifying the nature of each contribution, and assessing its influence on the result. For example, a human may define the subject and concept, an algorithm may generate initial alternatives, and the human may select and edit them to achieve artistic coherence.

Research by Formosa and co-authors indicates that perceptions of human authorship, creativity, and responsibility in AI-assisted writing vary according to the extent of AI assistance [6]. This finding reinforces the need to assess authorship through the human participant's actual involvement rather

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than merely by naming the technology used. Disclosure of AI assistance can also contribute to transparency in the creative process.

This article proposes the following conceptual criteria for assessing authorship in human–AI collaboration:

• Conceptual initiative: identifying who determines the subject, purpose, and central concept of the work.

• Creative direction: assessing the extent to which prompts, constraints, and aesthetic requirements are formulated by the human participant.

• Selection and editing: identifying which AI-generated alternatives are selected and the reasons for those choices.

• Semantic interpretation: determining who establishes the meaning, symbolism, and cultural context of the work.

• Responsibility and transparency: accepting responsibility for the final result and appropriately disclosing the role of AI.

4. Aesthetic experience, originality, and artistic value

The value of an artwork is not determined solely by its technical novelty or unusual appearance. Aesthetic evaluation emerges through the work's form, content, emotional impact, symbolic layers, and relationship to human experience. Generative AI can produce numerous alternatives in a short period of time, but the quantity of alternatives does not in itself indicate artistic excellence. Creative selection, semantic coherence, and aesthetic criteria remain necessary.

Two dimensions of originality should also be distinguished. The first is formal novelty: the extent to which a product differs from existing examples. The second is semantic and aesthetic novelty: the emergence of new meaning, perspectives, or emotional experience through a new form. Algorithmic generation may increase formal novelty, whereas semantic and aesthetic novelty often depends on human selection, interpretation, and the placement of an output within a cultural context.

Bomba and De Angeli examine agency and authorship in AI art as interconnected phenomena that emerge through relational processes [7]. Their approach encourages analysis of the interaction among humans, data, and technologies rather than attributing a creative product exclusively to an individual or an algorithm. Nevertheless, a relational approach should not obscure human ethical and aesthetic responsibility.

On this basis, the article proposes the concept of "aesthetic authorship". Aesthetic authorship is a form of human activity characterised by conscious responsibility for the conceptual direction, semantic coherence, artistic choices, and interpretation of a creative product. This concept does not restrict the human contribution in AI-assisted art to entering a prompt; instead, it takes into account the unity of conception, selection, editing, and interpretation.

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5. Authorship responsibility and cultural context

Artistic products created with AI raise questions concerning copyright, the use of source materials, stylistic imitation, cultural heritage, and misrepresentation. These issues cannot be resolved solely within the framework of technical efficiency. Every creative practice exists in relation to social values, historical memory, and cultural diversity.

The national aesthetic context is particularly important in digital creativity. Uzbek applied arts, architecture, musical traditions, patterns, and symbols may serve as sources of data for generative systems. However, reproducing cultural signs as merely visual elements does not fully express their historical and spiritual meanings. Artists should therefore take account of the origins, meanings, and cultural sensitivity of national motifs when using them.

Authorship responsibility is manifested in three areas. First, there should be an appropriate degree of transparency about the technology used and its role in the creative process. Second, the use of borrowed materials and the work of other creators should be treated with respect. Third, the creator should take responsibility for the content presented to the audience and its possible social effects. These principles can support forms of human–AI collaboration that are trustworthy and culturally responsible.

It is also important to distinguish legal authorship from philosophical and aesthetic authorship. A legal system determines who holds rights and obligations within a particular jurisdiction, whereas philosophical and aesthetic analysis explores the nature of creative intention, meaning-making, aesthetic choice, and responsibility. These approaches complement one another, but should not be treated as identical.

Research findings and discussion

The analysis leads to several theoretical conclusions concerning the reconsideration of authorship under generative AI conditions. First, the participation of an algorithm in producing a creative work does not automatically transfer authorship to AI. Second, the human contribution can be identified through conceptual initiative, creative direction, selection, editing, and semantic interpretation. Third, creative agency and legal authorship are not identical: the former concerns influence and participation in an activity, while the latter concerns legally recognised rights and obligations.

Fourth, the assessment of authorship in AI-assisted creativity requires the documentation of stages in the creative process, disclosure of the tools used, and identification of the human decisions that determine the final result. Fifth, aesthetic evaluation should consider not only technical novelty but also content, emotional impact, cultural context, and interpretative possibilities.

The proposed category of “aesthetic authorship” helps articulate the role of the human as a creative subject under conditions of algorithmic production. It does not deny AI participation, but connects conscious responsibility for artistic meaning and values with human activity. In this respect, the category is also related to the concept of “artificial aesthetic experience” developed within the broader dissertation research: an algorithm may model outputs resembling aesthetic impressions, but

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understanding and evaluating them from the perspective of human experience and values requires a distinct subjective activity.

Conclusion

The integration of generative artificial intelligence into artistic practice requires an expansion of traditional views of authorship and the creative subject. A creative product may now emerge not only through direct human labour but also through the interaction of human intention, algorithmic generation, data, selection, and editing.

However, an algorithm's ability to generate new forms is not sufficient grounds for recognising it as a creative subject in the same sense as a human being. Human creativity is characterised by subjective experience, purpose, emotional perception, cultural memory, and engagement with values. AI is better understood as a technological participant that can expand creative possibilities, suggest alternatives, and stimulate human imagination.

The concept of "aesthetic authorship" proposed in this study interprets authorship as the unity of conceptual initiative, creative direction, selection, interpretation, and responsibility. In human–AI collaboration, these criteria, together with transparency in the use of technology and cultural sensitivity, should be taken into account when evaluating authorship.

Thus, artificial intelligence should be regarded not as a subject that fully replaces human creativity, but as a new technological factor that expands creative possibilities. The principal task for future aesthetic thought is to harmonise technological innovation with human meaning, creative freedom, and moral responsibility.

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