



Reflections on AI

Q&A with
Dr. Emre Kazim

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The TUM IEAI had the pleasure of speaking with Emre Kazim. Dr. Emre Kazim holds a Ph.D. (2016) from King’s College London. He is an AI ethicist based in the Department of Computer Science at the University College London. We were able to ask him some brief questions about AI ethics, the challenges of creating implementable AI assurance mechanisms and to what extent is AI changing us as humans.

1. What is the biggest misconception about Artificial Intelligence?

I think the biggest misconception about AI is that the robots are taking over and that we lost all agency and control over what is happening. That there is some kind of technological determination, by sheer force of adoption and we will not be able to control our own destiny. I think it is the exact opposite- the choices that we make as researchers, industry practitioners, as civil society members etc. will determine in which way the digital revolution will unfold.

2. What is the most important question right now in AI ethics?

I think the most important & interesting question in AI Ethics at the moment is the question of authority. And the relationship between authority and trustworthiness. So is AI Ethics something to be done by jurists, legislators, is it by some council of the virtuous (that some technology companies have currently employed), is it by activist communities? So for me, the most

Important question is, who are the constituents that are involved in this debate and how do we determine what is authoritative and what isn’t in this context.

3. What is the role of academia, research institutions and other centers when it comes to the ethics and governance of AI?

The role of academia, with respect to governance and ethics of AI, has been seen to be an interest group or a constituent of the debate, which occupies a more neutral space. So you will find that there is a lot of strong views held in the academy. I think the academy should get its own house in order and think about ways in which different academic units can meaningfully work with one another. So the role of academia is to set an example of how to actually in practical terms have different communities of scholars or perspectives working together. Honest and good faith engagement by academia is to set an example for the wider community.

4. How does AI assurance and auditing relate to creating responsible and trustworthy AI?

In the discussions about AI Ethics, quite rightly, we hear people refer to ethical polarity or differences of perspective- contentions in the value systems that underpin our ethical judgements- that ultimately translated into other discussions or positions on AI Ethics. And that’s fine, of course it is important to recognize that diversity. However, there is a danger in

pointing out the need to respect diversity and never actually coming to some consensus with respect to how we want our systems to perform. So what I see in the world of assurance and auditing is a way in which to make apparent and transparent the decisions that have been made and the kind of ethical targets, values, principles or processes that have been guiding a particular system's development and deployment. So I see assurance as the kind of way in which we can move past subjectivity into a bit more objective or publicly verifiable set of standards or statements.

5. What challenges do you see to creating implementable AI assurance mechanisms?

I believe that the single most important problem in implementable AI assurance processes is the shifting positions, or the non-committal positions, of various regulatory standards bodies. I believe if we had relatively mature targets- it makes assurance much easier to do and it makes it much more stable. So I am going to burden the regulators and the ethicists with this problem of actually giving us targets.

6. We often say that AI is changing or transforming the world. To what extent is AI changing us as humans?

My background is in Philosophy, and often I think to myself when I read texts from thousands of years ago, whether or not the authors of those texts would in some way or another be able to meaningfully engage in discussions and debates that we have today. On some subjects- they wouldn't, because it would just be just a radically different context, truths or assumptions, but perhaps in more important ways, they would totally get it. So there's actually something quite universal about the nature

of the human that underpins this. And I think that when some of the hyperbole about the change in reality brought about by AI. It is important to take a historical view on these things and to understand that a human will still remain a human. We should have a more realistic understanding that not every single event in history is a unique event. An event that will radically change the nature of how we are as humans. Humans will remain humans.

Meet the Expert



Dr. Emre Kazim is a Senior Research Fellow in Computer Science, University College London. His research interests include algorithmic assessment, the impact of new digital technologies on the structures of state and informed policy making. He has a track record of interdisciplinary and knowledge exchange through community and consortia building. He has a strong interest in how moral and legal issues arise as the structures of the state are impacted by new technologies. He has an MSci in Chemistry (University College London) and a MA and PhD in Philosophy (King's College London).