



Does Creativity Require Humanity?

*By Katharine McLennan,
created for the Debate of Sydney Vivid Festival 2017,
15 June 2017*

*The Artificial Intelligence Debate,
where she argued for the YES! Side (of course):*

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Creativity: a transcendence beyond rules, beyond form
Creativity: a generation of ideas, surging well past any norm
Humanity: a collective of humans, we humans as a race
Humanity: the quality of being humane, kind and full of grace

Does creativity require humanity? a question is so asked
As computers have surpassed our IQ, not quite so vast
We have fed the computer our rules, our logic and then our queries
In microseconds it then answers and even returns with better theories

2017, I watch as artificial intelligence can paint and compose
A computer devours Shakespeare and creates even better prose
Inhaling Picasso and a photo, famous art made beyond a grave
Gobbling Mozart and Bach, a new sonata uniquely made

And more and more computers are passing the Turing test
Which is passed if we have not detected a computer as our guest
In a dialogue we are having with multiple humans at a tea
The computer passes as a person
perhaps known as a "She."

What role does humanity have as artificial intelligence expands?
As more and more of our tasks are taken off our hands.
Will our leisure time grow
a new definition for being alive?
Will we long for bygone days of hard work, the good ol' 9 to 5?
Most important, will our creativity disappear as AI does this task?

Can computers do all creativity
and not require us at last?
Shall we ponder on the transcendence beyond rules and beyond norms
Shall we consider the requirements for creativity in all its true forms?

As I reflect upon Dostoyevsky and honour his thousands of pages
Reflecting the childhood losses and his anti government rages
Or on Michelangelo mourning his mother, lost in his early youth
Sculpting the Pietà, expressing profound grief in its truth

Or Mr. Einstein who struggled in school and in speech
Finding solace in physics whose greatest heights he would reach
Or Pelé growing up poor, kicking around a sock filled with a rag
Would create poetry in motion as a footballer under the Brazilian flag

Or Vincent Van Gogh, his plumbing of the depths of depression
Leading to the most beautiful of all in starry night expression
Or Virginia Woolf, who experienced such deep childhood grief
Yet wrote such momentous stories searching for her relief

So many writers, so many artists, so many athletes and all
Source their creativity from their life stories, great and small
Find their ideas in the intersection of memory and emotion
An unknown concoction of patience, movement, and devotion

And we as mere mortals known as the “Human type Common”
Also find our creativity in feelings, in memories, in moments held as solemn
We take memories and add colour, and we twist, and we turn
We move our bodies, we open our mouths, and out new ideas do churn

From the depths of agony, we find relief from the art of creating
From the expanses of our excitation, we are dancing and gyrating
We can combine old ideas to make new as we allow poetry to emerge
We allow our hands with paint to go free on canvas; creativity will surge

We can sing in any tune to express an emotion that is past plain prose
We can make up a new game with a few stones and a few throws
We can sit in the quiet and allow new ideas to float in without form
The stiller we remain, the more ideas and creativity will swarm

These ideas come from our longings, from our yearnings for times gone by
From our wishing for a different future, from our gift of humour ever wry
This creativity for humans is transcendence beyond rules, and beyond form
Through our emotions and our memories, we surge well past any norm

We see things that are not yet there, we hear sounds that have not yet clattered
We feel textures that don't yet exist, and we taste new sensations almost on a platter
We see our lives through emotional lenses that change with the passing of a day
Producing a kaleidoscope of new ideas, new pictures, new stories emerging on the way

Whilst a computer can "create" if given precedents and rules,
It is still creating from the human who originally crafted the tools
A computer requires input from the human who feeds it with ideas already thought
The computer can then combine, and reform, all that it has been taught

Can the computer go on creating without the human there to keep feeding?
Sure for millions of iterations, it will create new versions of art for reading,
For listening, for hearing, for touching, for cheering, all diverging
For 24 hours a day, new forms of art constantly emerging

But the audience's connection to the artist as computer not a man
Is tested when we don't feel the presence of the human hand
The pangs of the growth travels amongst joy and grief
Between happiness and anger, all emotions, and all belief

And the audience's role in creativity is essential
The "appreciator"--the one that makes the creation eventful
Without the observer to hear, no treefall would be noticed,
Without the human to see, no creativity could be truly focused

The creator and the audience make the dance of creativity alive
A computer creating for a computer does not true creativity drive
Like a mirror looking into another mirror, with endless iteration
Without content and a viewer, there is not much inspiration

Technology bestows efficiency and an electronic kind of connectivity
But humanity bestows an imperfect self knowledge with all its subjectivity
And through that journey towards the absolute that can never be achieved
We find our creativity through the pain that can never be truly relieved

So, take heart Mr. Musk, Mr. Hawking and Mr. Gates
As you warn us about AI and the horrible, dire fates
That may come upon us if we do not as humans find our creative solution
About what we will do with all this extra time in the Robot revolution

I suppose we could give the dilemma to the computers to resolve
What to do with the extra humanity who seem unwilling to evolve
I have a deep sense, however, that only the human and our heart
Will know how to explore in this new era in which we take part

We will see things that cannot be seen now with analysis and its limitations
The profound wisdom just beyond our algebra is ready for our orchestrations
We have music within us that is dying to emerge
Dancing that longs for expression, words that need to surge

We have painting that longs for colours that have never seen the light of day
And words foisted next to each other with poems that need our play
We have ideas that long to descend from realms far beyond this tiny land
We have joy that will create at once ordinary and at the same time grand

These acts of creativity so called spontaneous
Are this planet's gifts, as fragile as they are momentaneous?
Don't miss this in your ruing about computers who take your jobs
When your heart longs to create its destiny as it expresses and it throbs

Now is the time to build your stage, as you have come here to do
No one else has this play you can write, to thine own heart be true
We are called in this life to stand up for what we can create
Trust the moment, and ask for its gifts, and in return you shall elate

I just know there are reasons for all that we do . . .
For all whom we meet, and all that we rue
So, the universe has brought me a gift in yourself
Tonight, I'll toast to you and drink to our wealth.

So, lift your glass, and toast the moment.
That's all that there is, no need for torment.
About pasts that can't change, about futures that don't exist
About flaws, about jealousies, about pain that persists.

Thank God for our humanness, and thank God for this life.
Thank God for this music which seems so rife.
It teaches us of love, of tenderness, and care,
Of friendship, of honour, of giving beyond compare.

God grant us the serenity, God grant us the love
And steer us towards Heaven, which need not exist above.
Show us the way to Heaven here on Earth,
I trust Your guidance, and I honour Our worth.

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