

Facing AI: The Epistemological and Political Dimension of Trust

Abstract: AI can possess and consider more evidence specific to a target proposition because of its database. AI can possess powerful reasoning skills because of cloud computing and machine learning. More importantly, AI is predictably becoming more accurate and reliable. In this sense, it seems that AI can be treated as epistemic authorities, and AI can function better than human experts. According to “the preemption view”, which is the recently defended view of epistemic authority: Once an epistemic authority is recognised, one should defer the belief to the epistemic authority and not make use of one’s own evidence and reasoning. Because of the reliability and normativity of epistemic authority, deference to epistemic authority can be both epistemically and instrumentally justified. However, there is intuitively a difference between trusting human experts and trusting AI experts. The question is what we should believe in the face of AI. In this paper, I try to explore its differences in terms of the epistemological dimension and the political dimension. Regarding the epistemological dimension, because of the lack of reliable indicator, laypeople are difficult to identify the relevant experts. Moreover, deference to AI can potentially undermine acquiring understanding and developing expertise. Regarding the political dimension, while forming well-supported beliefs has to depend on human experts, deference to AI can potentially lead to political harms, such as democratic deliberation and misuse of political power. In addition, there is a worry that human-experts will be replaced. By highlighting the difference, I argue that treating AI as epistemic authority is in conflict with what is required from an epistemic and political dimension.