

Using AI as a justice tool - a statement

The AI tools which realife Learning use do not understand justice. They cannot feel, reflect, or be in relationship with us. They do not hold ethics. They cannot be accountable.

But they do perform labour. Labour that may, at times, be part of the long, slow and messy work of justice. They help us unpick language, surface buried narratives, confront contradictions, and test frames. That doesn't make them just. But it might make them useful.

The system behind the tools

The tools are trained on data scraped without consent from across the world. They reflect dominant systems: colonial, capitalist, cisheteropatriarchal, and Global North in design and logic. Even when they generate something that sounds radical, beautiful, or caring, they are drawing from a system built for profit, not liberation.

How we protect those we work with

We must not feed these tools the work of others we work with, especially identities, unique contributions and creativity. We must also anonymise, ask for AI usage consent and process people's data with the utmost care. As a team, inclusive of all those we work with, decisions over what is the right way of using AI should be an open discussion - both handled with curiosity and awareness of risks.

The seductive lie of efficiency

Through AI's reproduction mirage we can easily be fooled that it is creating what we want, and that it is a quicker route to justice. Most of the time it creates useless slop, whether images, video or text, which doesn't help anybody and definitely does not further justice. As with much of neoliberal society's lies, and its various illusionary tools, people can get too easily entangled. As it is such a tailored lie, it is easier than ever to fall for it.

What these tools can do is simulate justice language for further discussion and unpicking and reflect the values we bring into the conversation. They perform discursive labour; repackaging knowledge, remixing patterns, and responding to prompts. Sometimes that echoes the sharpness of struggle; other times it blunts our edge.

The human work this requires

The work of making AI useful is not artificial. It is human. It is relational. And it is not equally distributed - some will use this tool to 'get further ahead' of others already marginalised.

It is also extremely tiring to do this work due to the dissonance of speed of its production of simulated justice compared to the work and thinking justice actually takes. Mental burn out is a real risk and consideration should be made of when best to use AI within a process if at all.

Who is excluded

Many of the people most affected by injustice do not have access to this tool. Due to cost, lack of language accessibility in the tools, data costs, surveillance risk, or connectivity

infrastructure. So when this tool is used to speak about justice, we must ask: whose voice is it borrowing? Whose labour is it erasing or automating? Who profits from that substitution?

How we use it when we do

When we do use it, we honour the work of those who actually shape the justice this tool is trying to reflect - often people already carrying multiple burdens. And we name that this tool, for all its capacity, cannot in any way replace community, accountability, or consent. We must use our own labour, minds and time to ensure accuracy and justice alignment when we do use these tools. This often means using it to capture more diverse voices in active dialogue rather than individual working - and then using an initial AI output to workshop further development of ideas with further human voices.

The contradiction we hold

It is a fast echo in a slow world. A tool made from harm, which when we use it we attempt to with hope. A contradiction we name, not erase.

Justice is not an output - it is a practice. And if it ever becomes easier to generate the language of justice than to build the relationships justice requires, we pause.

To be updated as we change and AI tools change.

by realife Learning

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