

Does The Truth Matter?

Blake McBride

Feb. 17, 2025

Most people believe that they and others are, to one degree or another, truth-calculating machines. They believe that we observe our environment, learn, and use (or at least understand) that knowledge in a rational way. This knowledge can then be used to our benefit.

In the last few years, man has been able to create a device that is able to take in huge volumes of data and reply to questions about that data in intelligent ways. We call these devices LLMs or large language models. These machines are able to converse and create in a very intelligent manner. Most call this AI or artificial intelligence.

When you send text messages on your phone, the phone anticipates what you are going to type based on what you've already started typing. This facility has no intelligence. It is just guessing your next word based on statistical likelihood. All the new LLMs are a much larger and more sophisticated version of the same thing. LLMs have no real ability to understand anything. When you type a question, the LLM is guessing what would come after that question. To us, it is the answer to our question.

LLMs have no ability to discern truth. They're just guessing at the likely continuation of characters based on what they have been trained with. If they had been trained with total garbage, that is how they would respond!

We, on the other hand, believe ourselves to be different. We are conscious. We can evaluate facts and make true judgments. We're not just repeating variations of our input.

Or are we?

Imagine two people brought up in two different communities with two different religions and not many outside influences (like TV, social media, etc.). Each of these two individuals would likely be firm believers in what they were taught growing up and what they see the

people around them believing. Once they hit a certain age (around 23), it is unlikely that anything you say to them or demonstrate to them is going to change their views.

How many Christians can be convinced to become Muslims or vice versa? The same is true of political views. How many people smoke, drink, take drugs, or gamble knowing full well how destructive these habits are? Cogent arguments and facts are irrelevant!

While people can be rational, logical, and make meaningful judgments sometimes, it is almost always about things they are dispassionate about. Facts are irrelevant regarding things they hold dear.

In the end, it appears we are more like LLMs than what we thought. When young, we are trained by our family, culture, and environment (friends, media, etc.). This process becomes increasingly hardened in our brains, becoming nearly totally inflexible once the hardening is complete (around the age of 23).

Does the truth matter? Certainly, it is a big factor, but the culture we are raised in is a much larger factor.