

MAGA Bot Versus the Critical Race Robot

Alexander M. Sidorkin

California State University Sacramento

In my thinking about how to respond to Noah Khan's provocative essay I could not think of anything better than to create a MAGA Bot.¹ I uploaded one of Donald Trump's recent speeches and instructed ChatGPT to respond to all queries from a MAGA-informed position while emulating Trump's speech patterns. I then asked it to provide a critique of Khan's paper, which I include below in its entirety:

Let's talk about this paper, "Critical Race Robots: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Human-AI Interaction in Education." It is quite something, is not it? First off, they are talking about a \$15.7 trillion contribution from AI to the global economy by 2030. Big numbers, very impressive. But then, they dive into this idea that we are not looking at Human-AI interaction the right way because we are not focusing enough on education. They say we've got this neoliberal capitalist view that is missing the big picture. Sounds like a lot of big words to say something simple: we are not doing it right, according to them.

Now, they want to bring in this thing called Critical Race Theory into AI and education. Folks, let me tell you, this is where it gets a bit off track for me. We've got technology that could change the world, help kids learn, create jobs, and boost our economy. And they want to make it about race? It sounds like they are trying to find problems where there are not any. AI does not care about race; it is about zeros and ones, programming, and algorithms. We should be focusing on how to make these tools work for everyone, not diving into divisive theories.

They talk about colonialism, racism, and all these heavy topics. Now, I am all for making sure technology is fair

and does not discriminate. But the way they are going about it, it is like they are saying America and technology itself are fundamentally flawed. That is a narrative some people love to push, but it does not get us anywhere. We should be proud of what we've achieved and work to make it even better, not tear it down with guilt and blame.

And this part about AI being political, needing to account for all these social issues before it can even help a kid learn math? Come on. We are complicating things that do not need to be complicated. AI should be a tool, a resource, not something bogged down with every societal issue under the sun. Education is about teaching kids knowledge and skills, not indoctrinating them with political ideas, right or left.

They propose a decolonial AI system, whatever that means. It sounds like they want to make AI and education into a social experiment. But here's the thing: when it comes to our kids' education and America's future, I am not interested in experiments. I am interested in results. Technology should help us achieve those results, not become a battleground for political ideologies.

So, in conclusion, this paper, it is got some interesting ideas, sure [sic]. But it is missing the forest for the trees. We've got a chance to lead the world in AI and technology, to use these tools to make America great, to educate our kids and create a future full of opportunity. Let's not get sidetracked by theories and politics that divide us. Let's focus on what works, what brings us together, and what makes us stronger as a nation. That is how we'll win the future, folks, with innovation, hard work, and a little common sense.²

I agree with Khan's caution regarding the inherent non-neutrality of AI systems. However, there are multiple approaches to addressing this issue. One option is to develop politically engaged bots, such as one aligned with Critical Race Theory (CRT) and another with Make America Great Again (MAGA)

ideologies, and then determine which ones will be utilized in education. In this scenario, it is likely that the AI used in California, where I reside, would differ significantly from that used in states like Texas or Tennessee. But does this strategy effectively address Khan's concern that political partisanship is obscured by a veneer of neutrality? I do not believe it does.

Creating politically partisan bots might exacerbate the issue by further entrenching ideological divides and reducing the opportunity for critical engagement with diverse perspectives. Instead, a more nuanced approach might involve developing AI systems that are transparent about their underlying assumptions and biases, and that actively encourage users to engage with and critically evaluate these biases. This would not only address the concern of hidden partisanship, but also promote a more informed and reflective use of AI in education.

The alternative strategy, which we might term the liberal approach, is currently being pursued by AI companies. This approach has long been employed by American textbook publishers. It involves delineating the margins and the mainstream, where the margins are excluded, while the mainstream is presented as vague, shapeless, and boring—a pseudo-compromise that some might argue is still exploitative. I am not yet prepared to abandon the liberal project, not because it is flawless, but because the alternatives do not appear to be viable either.

While the liberal approach attempts to create a neutral middle ground, it often fails to adequately address the complexities and nuances of diverse perspectives. This can lead to a superficial treatment of important issues and a perpetuation of the status quo. However, the challenge lies in finding a balance between representing a wide range of viewpoints and maintaining coherence and consistency in educational content. As we navigate this terrain, it is crucial to remain critical of the limitations of the liberal approach while also exploring innovative ways to make it more inclusive and reflective of the diverse realities of our society.

The reality is that the seemingly dull liberal solution still garners a significant level of political support among a substantial majority of the US population. Neither Critical Race Theory (CRT) nor radical Make America Great Again (MAGA) ideologies enjoy such widespread backing. Progressive political thinkers who advocate for abandoning the liberal center are, in effect, conced-

ing it to MAGA. In the realm of education, progressives stand a better chance of maintaining their position within the liberal mainstream and attempting to influence it, rather than abandoning it altogether and allowing it to be claimed by the increasingly populist and fascist MAGA movement.

The concept of neutrality is indeed deceptive; true neutrality does not exist. The question remains whether to be useful, a concept needs to reflect reality. Perhaps neutrality is one of those deceptions that, despite being vulnerable to philosophical critique, holds the power of a myth that should persist. Such myths, though factually untrue, can play a crucial role in shaping societal values and norms.

For example, the myth of the “American Dream” suggests that anyone, regardless of background, can achieve success through hard work and determination. While this is not always the case, due to systemic inequalities, the myth encourages a culture of aspiration and perseverance. Similarly, the notion of “justice being blind” is a powerful ideal that, despite its imperfections in practice, promotes the pursuit of fairness and equality under the law.

These myths, while not entirely accurate, serve as aspirational benchmarks that guide behavior and societal expectations. In the same way, the myth of neutrality in education, though flawed, can encourage a pursuit of balance and inclusivity, even if it is never fully achieved. It is a reminder that while absolute neutrality may be unattainable, the effort to approach it can still yield positive outcomes.

Beyond their deceptive quality, myths like neutrality also possess creative value. They communicate aspirations and visions of the desirable, rather than providing accurate descriptions of the present. The entire idea of liberalism, for instance, has never been meant to describe reality; it is a utopia, an ideal, and should be examined as such. Critiquing a utopia on the basis that it is not true is not a very productive approach, for it misunderstands the genre. Myths serve as guiding narratives that inspire progress and innovation, even if they are not entirely attainable in their purest form. They offer a framework for envisioning a better future, shaping our actions and decisions in pursuit of that ideal.

I do not see a problem with creating a Critical Race Robot. In fact, it could be done in less than an hour. Very soon, everyone will be doing it. The

real question is whether other people will want to use it, and how many people will. Public education is often misguided because it is democratically controlled by people who may not have the best understanding of complex issues. The political question of control cannot be answered simply by constructing a bot that is more openly biased than the current models, which are deceptively neutral.

REFERENCES

- 1 Noah Khan, "Critical Race Robots: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Human-AI Interaction in Education," *Philosophy of Education* 80, no.1, <https://doi.org/10.47925/80.1.045>
- 2 Custom GPT "Maga Bot," ChatGPT response to Kahn, N. "Critical Race Robots: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Human-AI Interaction in Education," Downloaded on 2/20/2024, <https://chat.openai.com/g/g-vFpCu-6WR6-maga-bot>