A Simulacrum of Solace

June 28, 2023

If you had thought about it at all, you may likely have hoped that artificial intelligence's spread of popularity this last year would halt its "viral" spread short of politics. In a June 25 *New York Times* article, Tiffany Hsu and Steven Lee Myers dash your hopes.

Regular readers of this column are familiar with one use of AI: images constructed to arrest your attention and ease you into an old-fashioned presentation of news and opinion, written *without* benefit of AI.

But our images are obviously fictional, fanciful — caricatures.

One advantage of AI-made images is that they are not copyrighted. Using them reduces expenses, and they look pretty good — though sometimes they are a bit "off," as in the case of a Toronto mayoral candidate's use of "a synthetic portrait of a seated woman with two arms crossed and a third arm touching her chin."

But don't dismiss it because it's Canada. Examples in the article include New Zealand and Chicago and . . . the Republican National Committee, the DeSantis campaign, and the Democratic Party.

Indeed, the Democrats produced fund-raising efforts "drafted by artificial intelligence in the spring — and found that they were often more effective at encouraging engagement and donations than copy written entirely by humans."

Yet, here we are not dealing with fakery except maybe in some philosophical sense. Think of it as the true miracle of artificial intelligence, where heuristics grab the "wisdom of crowds" and apply it almost instantaneously to specific rhetorical requirements. Astounding.

There's a lot of talk about regulating and even prohibiting AI — in as well as out of politics. After all, science fictional scenarios featuring AI becoming sentient and attacking the human race precede *The Terminator* franchise by decades.

I see no way of putting the genie back in the bottle.

The AI will only get better, and if outlawed will go underground. It would be a lot like gun control, only outlaws would have AI.

We cannot leave deep fakery to the Deep State.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.