

Artificial Intelligence & Common Sense

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How to cite this paper: Puhek, R. E. (2025). Artificial Intelligence & Common Sense. *Open Journal of Political Science*, 15, 94-103.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/ojps.2025.151007>

Received: October 4, 2024

Accepted: January 7, 2025

Published: January 10, 2025

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Abstract

The contemporary disorder in government and politics cannot be understood without attention to its roots in the prevailing culture. Specifically, we must grasp the way knowledge has been afflicted by the rise of artificial intelligence and the decline in the natural intelligence of “common sense.” Entranced by the power of artificial intelligence, many have not only neglected natural intelligence but have become hostile to it even though its use is vital to sound and effective decision-making. They have not only neglected common sense but have become fearful of and hostile toward it. Moreover, the mental dynamics involved in relying on artificial intelligence have fueled attacks on common sense and on leaders that exercise it that are destructive to electoral as well as legislative institutions. This condition can be avoided only by a return to common sense.

Keywords

Artificial Intelligence, Natural Intelligence, Common Sense, Logic, Truths, Digital Devices, Physics, Kubrick, Greatness, MAGA

1. Introduction

While there is much talk today about the dangers of artificial intelligence, they are much more subtle and profound than commonly recognized. This is partly because the true nature of artificial intelligence and the reach of its presence have not been properly identified.

2. Artificial Intelligence

It is a mistake to think that intelligence is artificial only if it is conferred upon a computing machine. Artificial intelligence first operates in the human mind. It was invented at the very dawn of human history. The purest form it takes is mathematics, but it encompasses any thinking or logic that processes signs, symbols or

names in a particular way. One example is the syllogism: If $A = B$, and $B = C$, then $A = C$. The artificiality of such mental processes is rooted in their reliance on *artifacts*—the signs, symbols, numbers of mathematics as well as the names that the human mind creates, but it also involves the binary way it processes them. As *logic* artificial intelligence works by saying yes or no to each proposition; in mathematical terms, 1 or 0; in electronic terms, On (1) or Off (0).

Ages ago, the human mind devised a way of using the electrical system of the brain to calculate its artifacts in this way. It did so to enhance the quality of interactions with things through using the information this process provides about them. By calculating the level of “the sun” or counting “the phases of the moon,” our ancestors would gain reliable information concerning planting and harvesting. Thus, artificial intelligence was devised to supplement the quality of our understanding so that we would make more informed and so better decisions. It is hard to overstate its usefulness to life. It is the basis of the advantage our minds have over those of other animals (They do not produce the mental artifacts essential to the thinking of artificial intelligence.)

The discovery of mechanisms to support the processes of artificial intelligence outside the brain is also long-standing. Perhaps it was the shadow cast by a stick in the ground designed to measure the height of the sun as the seasons change so that our ancestors would no longer have to bother their minds with assessing its level and all in the community would share a common objective standard. The recent discovery of how to duplicate the brain’s artificial electronic process was, of course, a major advance in extracranial computing. It took the binary aspect of mental artificial intelligence along with the input of mental artifices similar to names, symbols, or signs and conferred them upon electronic devices. Placing the brain’s artificial functions into a machine was attractive because it reduced one of the disadvantages of mental calculation and eliminated the other. The distractions of the living organic mind would not be there, and the processing could be speeded up—almost infinitely it seemed, although a limit is likely to be found in attempts to use a medium that lacks sufficient mass to control and direct the electric flow off and on (Conover, 2023).

Because artificial intelligence has been around for so long, we tend to regard it as if it were natural even though its purest processes such as mathematics are not natural but acquired and must be strictly taught. Indeed, the minds of many children can learn its higher forms only with difficulty, and others appear to be utterly unable to master them. Some minds even resist it. By contrast, while we need guidance and encouragement to practice it, natural intelligence is not taught.

3. Natural Intelligence

We can define artificial intelligence, but we cannot define natural intelligence. It is the prime knower and as such cannot be an object to itself. More specifically, we cannot apply the analytical methods of artificial intelligence to understand it because we cannot name it, treat it as an object of study, and reason logically about

it. The content of the processes of natural intelligence is concrete existential perception and not abstract signs and symbols. We can know natural intelligence only by recognizing it in existence; that is, seeing it in its working. It functions most familiarly as the basis of common sense. Common sense is the “sense” or knowledge of life we develop out of immediate perceptions of existence. It is common to all because it is based on the natural intelligence that all share. When we chide others for “lacking” it, we mean only that they are not using it or have not developed it, not that they do not have it.

We use natural intelligence from our earliest years and for the simplest kind of common-sense knowledge. We use it in learning to tie our shoes and in learning to tell time from an analog clock or in learning cursive writing. However, we also rely on natural intelligence for some of our most profound knowledge. An example of its significance is its role in world religions. It makes their appeal cross cultural. For instance, Jesus’ teaching that the sin that poisons life is more in the *motive* than in the deed: the sin of adultery occurs as “the lust of the heart” (“A man who looks at a woman with lust in his heart has already committed adultery.”). Natural intelligence *sees* this as true immediately without reasoning about it, and then stores the knowledge as part of common sense. The same is so of the Three Universal Truths of Buddhism. Another example is the universal truth that is the foundation of the American nation, the truth that all of us are “created equal.” This truth is “self-evident” to the human mind because it needs no processing of artificial intelligence to arrive at it; it arises from the exercise of natural intelligence. Only those that do not or will not use natural intelligence in building their common sense fail to see it and so are likely to deny it. We need no logical reasoning to see the truth in it nor can we ever arrive at this truth through it. It is easy to remember the common-sense truth of universal equality when we confront another person face-to-face, however, it is much easier to forget it when we define people in abstract aggregates. When we *name* ourselves as “Americans,” “Christians,” or “Democrats,” it is easy to believe that each of us as members of the aggregate is superior to everyone who is not.

If artificial intelligence is intelligence that considers abstract symbols and signs, natural intelligence concerns itself with existence, it focuses upon our immediate presence in the world. Existence involves things but also involves us. Existential thinking informs us wholistically. Thus, it entails the self-knowledge of our being created equal to all. We rely not on what we sense or what we feel but on feeling and sensing; above all we rely on the sense of the self-evident. The *knowledge* that is the result of existential thought develops and remains with us to be immediately accessible in the form of common sense. Fed by natural intelligence, it is less in our youth, but with the constant exercise of natural intelligence, it grows, and if we persist, it can grow into wisdom.

The contemporary explosion in and accessibility of digital devices encourages us to abandon exercising natural intelligence and so weakens common sense. Teaching a child to tell time through using a digital clock is easier than using an

analog clock. Learning to play and playing a video game is simpler than learning to play and playing stick ball in the street. This is because both learning to read the digital clock and to play the video game rely on artificial intelligence more than on natural intelligence. As teenagers we find that breaking up with a girlfriend or boyfriend is easier to do in a text message than face-to-face because we can rely on the simplicity of artificial intelligence in abstractly calculating the intensity of our feelings rather than face the complex ambivalences of common sense. Trained to use artificial intelligence so consistently, we come to use it habitually in all our physical and emotional decisions so that natural intelligence is gradually eclipsed.

Physics at its best relies on *both* natural and artificial intelligence. However, it is natural intelligence that is responsible for scientific creativity. Great physicists do not rely on the artificial intelligence of mathematics to achieve their scientific breakthroughs. Einstein's *discovery* of relativity came not from mathematical calculation but from the use of the natural mental faculty of imagination. He imagined seeing a speeding train and through imagination grasped the principle of relativity entirely without mathematical calculation (Hossenfelder, 2015). His theory was only subsequently "verified" mathematically. Kekule's famous discovery of the ring shape of the Benzene molecule in the late 19th century through a reverie or daydream after he put to sleep his frustrated attempts to identify it by reasoning came to him through imagination; it presented him with the ancient image of the uroboros (a serpent swallowing its tail). If the mind is focused on direct observation, either of what is immediately before it or a memory preserved as an image of it, natural intelligence is operating. "Seeing" two things is natural; calculating about real things using "2" is artificial. The calculation is proper and valid but determining a conclusion about reality requires returning with the conclusion back to common sense. Physicists that rely on the artificial intelligence of mathematics alone have come up with absurd ideas such as the existence of multiple physical universes. If we want better physicists, we need to help the young develop and use their powers of natural intelligence, not letting artificial intelligence obscure it.

Natural intelligence serves life; artificial intelligence helps it to serve life better. Natural intelligence guides us to the knowledge of our existence. Artificial intelligence is an instrument of power. The root cause of the suppression of natural intelligence, as demonstrated below, is the will to power. It is about the fruits of artificial intelligence that we say, "knowledge is power." It enables us to grow in power over the world of things. However, artificial intelligence gives us knowledge only of things. When we treat ourselves and others based on artificial intelligence, we treat them as things or objects.

4. The Danger of Artificial Intelligence

The immediate danger that artificial intelligence poses to human life arises when we turn existential decision-making over to it rather than keeping its information

as input for natural intelligence. The greatest of Stanley Kubrick's films—starting with *Paths of Glory*, through *Dr. Strangelove*, and *2001*—focus on the risk in turning decision-making over to it. The cruel and chilling logic of General Broulard in *Paths of Glory*, *Dr. Strangelove's* strategic calculations and his ecstasy when military decisions coincide with his logic, and of course, the calmly cold calculations of Hal are all manifestations of artificial intelligence untethered.

The case of artificial intelligence guiding the mind of the general in *Paths of Glory*, on the one hand, and the cases in *2001* or *Dr. Strangelove*, on the other, illustrate that the danger of artificial intelligence whether it is operating in the human brain or in computational devices is the essentially the same: its over-riding of common sense. They also show why the danger of this happening in the human mind, as illustrated by the general, is a much greater and more intractable problem.

The risk of faulty decisions when guided by the artificial intelligence of computers cannot be eliminated but it can be substantially limited. We may allow computers to make decisions on their own but with guard rails. First, we ensure that their decisions are revocable and second, we confine the decisions they are allowed to make to those whose impact could not be severely destructive. Thus, we may allow computers to determine when conditions demand that a nuclear power plant be shut down and to shut it down if the intervention of humans acting with natural intelligence can readily restart it. Though the shut-down might have harmful effects such as the loss of power to a city, if it is brief, it is unlikely to be devastating. By contrast, the computer decision to launch nuclear weapons could have devastating consequences and turn out to be irrevocable. Hal's decision to end a human life by cutting off the oxygen supply to the spaceship turned out to be revocable only because of the availability of an alternative supply of oxygen—enough of it to allow that human being, guided by common sense, to revoke the decision by turning Hal off physically.

The hardest thing is to make sure that those charged with making important decisions as well as those supervising computer decisions have developed a high quality of common sense and are willing to use it. This is why dealing with the threat of artificial intelligence operating in the human mind, as is illustrated by General Broulard in *Paths of Glory*, is a much graver matter. Broulard allowed his military decisions to be directed by calculations of military strategy and subsequently defended them logically. Here, common sense is lacking out of choice and the results, are horrifying. Given the inevitable consequences of suppressing common sense, it is hard to understand why anyone—especially an intelligent leader—would choose to abandon it and act against it and its use. They do so because fear of failure forces them to abandon it, and hostility drives them to fight it.

5. Fear & Hostility

Any instance of our making and executing a decision could illustrate the forces of this fear and of this hostility. However, extreme cases make both the motives and

danger clearer. Imagine that you desperately want to undertake something great such as leading an army to victory in war or building great things such as a spaceship. In undertaking either of these objectives, you must figure out what you need to do to achieve it. But when you face the immensity of the work, you would normally turn to common sense to determine whether you can or should undertake it. However, common sense makes you doubt and hesitate. Consequently, you find yourself impelled to stop thinking because you see that thought is undermining your will to greatness and convicting you of being weak-willed. The greater—the harder and rarer—the objective, the more sacrifice it entails; the more sacrifice it entails, the more the reflections of common sense undermine your willingness to do it; the more common sense undermines your will, the more you are driven to suppress it.

One of the three great mantras designed to guide the ruling class in Orwell's 1984 is "Ignorance is strength." It instructed leaders on how to keep on the path to power and success. The slogan is a paradox; it apparently contradicts the truth of the opposing principle: "Knowledge is power." Yet both are true. While the knowledge of artificial intelligence is power to do things, common sense lessens or even erases the willpower to do them. Guided by both slogans, powerful leaders learn to say "yes" to power-knowledge and "no" to common sense.

It is important to note that the aspirations cited here are to greatness rather than to goodness. What makes a deed great has little to do with its goodness. Greatness is determined not by goodness but by how difficult a thing is to do and by how few can do it. A deed is great whether it is good or evil. Evil deeds such as assassinating a President are great and are also usually simpler to do than good ones. Those that choose to do something great, however, commonly choose it not simply because of its rarity and difficulty but because they feel that achieving something that is hard and rare will make them great. They need to be made great because unless their self-worth is grounded in common sense self-knowledge of their being equal to all, the only ground to value themselves is how others perceive them; consequently, their sense of being great is generated by being seen as great. Thus, they "become" great not just by doing great things in secret but by having others and often the greatest mass of people possible ascribe greatness ascribed to them.

Vladimir Putin aspires to greatness through making Russia great again by rebuilding the Russian empire designed, as always, to be the "third Rome," the third Roman empire led by a Caesar/Tsar. To the extent that he does the great things that serve this objective, he "becomes" great. He compels others, both those that think he is doing good and those that think he is doing evil, to see him as being great. He is no Hitler, but he shares with Hitler a reliance on the cleverness of artificial intelligence both to maintain greatness through political power and in his great political decisions. The KGB trained him in the willingness to use whatever power he calculated he needed to achieve a specific goal without reflecting on it through natural intelligence. Hitler relied on his calculations of the effectiveness

of his military to wage lightning war as well as on the scientifically calculated effects of Zylon gas to efficiently achieve a final solution and on the science of eugenics to improve natural selection by adding unnatural selection. Putin uses prison murders, poison darts, bombs in planes, and war crimes on the path to his greatness.

In relying on artificial intelligence without the restraints of common sense, Putin cannot foresee the vulnerabilities of his use of power nor that they will eventually lead to failure. This is because the calculations of artificial intelligence that he relies on cannot encompass the whole dimension of power relationships among people and so cannot account for all the variables affecting the power in his hands. Consequently, his successes were conditioned by chance—the elements of countervailing power that his focused calculations did not account for were, by chance, not strong. When they are there and strong, also by chance, he will fail and sometimes catastrophically. Putin was clearly mistaken in his calculations about going to war with Ukraine and failed to achieve his objective. Calculations of artificial intelligence are eventually miscalculations. Thus, the unwisdom of the clever leads to their Nemesis.

In sum, the first element in the motive that induces us to reject common sense in striving for success at anything is the fear of losing willpower, a fear that is greatest in those whose aspirations are greatest. The second element leads us not only to neglect common sense but also to attack it. Hostility toward it compels us to wage war against it and take joy in each assault upon it. Present in the many who are striving to achieve anything that leads them to suppress common sense, hostility is widespread but is usually mild and unconscious. However, in some, it is conscious and virulent. A leader who is aspiring to greatness in politics and consequently is possessed by intense hostility may also speculate on how to use it to gain power and may therefore calculate how to draw hostility out from the many and use it to rally the virulent. The following simple example should suffice to see its nature and should show how it can be quietly pervasive in all modern societies, especially in those affected by the distorted “liberalism” of economic hedonism.

Informed by the conclusions of scientific research, I might accept the high “probability” that the nutritional substance sugar in purified or refined form and dissolved in flavored water is damaging to my body; informed by scientific studies, common sense tells me that I should curtail drinking it. But I do not want to do so—my will balks because it is being guided by *pleasure*—in this case the anticipated and commercially stoked pleasure of the sweet water. Thus, I experience a commonsense judgment to be an enemy or an opponent to my will. Common sense appears as an enemy of my *liberty* to do as I please. If I yield to it, I do so with a resentful heart, and if I refuse, I am still left with hostility toward it. If doing a great thing is what pleases me, my hostility will also be great.

This hostility would also be shown toward common-sense mandates such as wearing a helmet when riding a motorcycle or a mask during an epidemic as well

as toward the government officials who issue them. Such reasonable mandates interfere with the liberty to do whatever gives pleasure and to reject whatever brings displeasure.

While simply suppressing common sense in striving to sustain willpower in pursuing deeds guided by artificial intelligence leads to failure, hostility to it leads to acts of violence against it and others who practice it. Moreover, those hostile to their own common sense under these circumstances feel that their conscious violence against others is a fight for liberty. They take pleasure in acting destructively or foolishly in attacks on common sense and on authorities who use it. Every assault is liberating, exciting, and intensely joyful. This war against common sense can never end in its victorious elimination. Common sense is the child of natural intelligence and can only end when natural intelligence is eliminated, but that can come about only by the death of the hostile mind. Consequently, crusaders celebrate both victory and being victors *in* the violence. It is violence for the sake of violence, and the struggle, which is first within the mind, gets externalized in forms of competition such as in partisan politics. Thus, a mental disorder generates psychopathology, and the objectivation and externalization of the psychopathology generate sociopathy, which generates political pathology, which, in turn, leads to the destruction of democratic government in the paralyzing warfare of permanent partisanship.

A great puzzle of the early 20th century was how Germany, the most scientifically advanced nation in the world and the country whose system of higher education had been emulated around the world, could have fallen victim to the ravages of Hitler. It is not so puzzling when we realize that it was precisely such education—training in artificial intelligence and the powerful results of it—that made the ravages and the ravager possible. Hitler was guided by a political form of artificial intelligence and relied on its technological forms to advance his will to greatness. He used the clever calculations of artificial intelligence to assess the public and technologies such as radio and film for his tactics. He also *appealed to* hostility of intellect in others. Established leaders melted before him since they expected political common sense to defeat or control him. Liberated from the tether of common sense himself, he tapped into a general but usually secret will to annihilate it, a will most powerful in the most madly devoted of his followers. Thus, his movement at its often-hidden core was always nihilism of intelligence and so always toward destruction and always toward self-destruction in the twilight of the gods that ended in glorious flames.

Ultimately, the conquest of common sense can be had only by the destruction of natural intelligence and that can come about only with death. The triumph of the will—the nihilistic will to “liberation” from common sense—is death.

Unguided by natural intelligence, the power gained through artificial intelligence fails to achieve its goals (as demonstrated by the failures of Putin) and becomes life destroying as is depicted in Kubrick’s films and exemplified in our day by the cases of Robert Oppenheimer, who recognized the danger that political

leaders would use nuclear weapons based on calculations of military strategy but went ahead with developing them and placing them in their hands, as well as Robert McNamara, who realized only after the fact that his mathematical reasoning and his Putin-like illusions of victory in Vietnam produced useless casualties and humiliating failure. Elon Musk stands out as the most prominent figure today who demonstrates the whole range of this mental disorder. Called to greatness most dramatically in his goal of saving humanity by colonizing Mars, he pursues greatness in an unending series of great achievements such as SpaceX and Tesla. He accomplishes them using his highly developed artificial intelligence. He convinces both fans and critics of his greatness. He aligns himself with anti-common sense political figures and policies and indulges in anti-government conspiracy views. His Nemesis may well be the Twitter take-over because, as a social medium, it is not like his earlier successful projects that dealt with material things like space-ships and autos; it deals with a complex human activity that more successfully defies the abstract calculations of artificial intelligence. The prospect of his plans to implant a direct interface between intra-cranial and extra-cranial artificial intelligence is scary (Lepore, 2023).

An assault on intelligence drives and energizes the nihilist core of the MAGA movement in American politics. Trump's defeat and his final failure will not kill it. Its anti-intelligence forces will persist in forms such as the anti-vaccination movement and in a multitude of anti-common sense "government conspiracy" views, both of which were prefigured in *Dr. Strangelove's* General Jack D. Ripper in his obsession over a plot to sap his "vital juices." Deranged anti-government forces often present themselves as rational, claiming they base their views on the artificial intelligence of science and mathematical calculation the way that 9-11 government conspiracist theorists appealed to scientists who calculated that a plane could not have "brought down" the twin towers. Such movements identify their political enemies by their allegedly "oppressive" policies based on common sense. Their intense hostility to the so-called "deep state"—hostility to non-elected civil servants—is out of hostility to the intelligence of their commonsense expertise.

MAGA, by this or some other name, might again find another "great leader" to love and to guide it to greatness—a leader who expresses his own hostility toward common sense in hostile feelings of grievance, resentment, and vengefulness and in doing so, can capture, mirror, and magnify that of all classes of citizens forging them into a powerful social force with a single mission. Expressed in paranoid views and designed to crush commonsense truths—especially the truth of universal equality. Calculated hostile assaults on common sense such as that Haitian immigrants are eating pet dogs and cats, are not meant to deceive but to excite the fervor and joyful giddiness of all those who have joined their leader in the war.

6. Conclusion

The current social crisis in America is happening because of the ascendance of artificial intelligence and hostility to common sense. It threatens not only our

well-being but also our natural equality and freedom since these depend on the *commonality* of human knowledge that is rooted in natural intelligence. The freedom of society rests on the extent to which the intelligence of common-sense guides legal and political decisions. Decisions of Congress and the President, like those of judges and juries, must be based on common sense. It alone can hold the full range of natural knowledge.

Since the natural intelligence of common sense is always there at least as a goad to fear and hostility, appeals to return to it provide the way to overcome willful ignorance. Success, however, will ultimately depend on how much a person has been educated to use natural intelligence and how fully their common sense is enlightened with the deep universal truths that all are created equal and that the sin that taints our minds and undermines our lives is not so much the evil deed as the willful hostility of the heart.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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