



# Artificial Intelligence: A Marvelous Creation at the Service of a Passion for Ignorance

Zabalza S<sup>1,2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Psychoanalyst. Doctor of Psychology from the University of Buenos Aires. Argentina

<sup>2</sup>Full Professor at the National University of Austral Chaco, Argentina

Good afternoon. I am deeply grateful for the invitation to this event. I would like to explore the topic of artificial intelligence by first addressing a fundamental question: *What is intelligence?* Moreover, I aim to examine how the concept of intelligence might be understood from a psychoanalytic perspective.

If we define intelligence as the ability to solve problems both theoretically and pragmatically, I would argue that this definition is insufficient. Psychoanalytic practice delves into the profound questions that haunt the speaking being—questions such as: *What am I doing here? Who am I?* It grapples with the discomfort experienced by individuals, the origins of this discomfort, and the unconscious tendencies that lead to self-loathing, the rejection of loved ones, and the repetition of painful behaviors.

These existential inquiries challenge our conventional understanding of intelligence. Consider, for instance, the poignant question posed by Quino, the creator of *Mafalda*, through the character Felipito: *"Why did it just happen to me to be me?"* Such questions compel us to rethink intelligence not merely as a problem-solving tool but as a deeper, more complex engagement with the human condition.

In this context, artificial intelligence, while a remarkable creation, must be examined in light of these psychoanalytic challenges. Can it truly address the existential dilemmas that define human experience? Or does it, in its current form, serve as a tool that inadvertently perpetuates a "passion for ignorance"—a retreat from the uncomfortable truths that psychoanalysis seeks to uncover?

From these questions, we can identify a common thread: they all seek *the cause*. For psychoanalysis, however, the cause is inherently

lost. The psychoanalytic experience directs the speaking being toward an act of consenting to a structural ignorance—a void. This, in itself, represents a unique way of understanding intelligence.

The psychic construction of a subject is, in fact, designed to conceal the impossibility of answering these existential questions. How does it achieve this? Through *knowledge*. From metaphysics to the modern sciences, knowledge serves a primary and decisive function: to veil the ignorance that defines us as speaking beings. This ignorance is inseparable from the fact that we speak with a body about which we have no true understanding. At best, we have representations—fictions. The body, in this sense, is a void in thought: a gap in knowledge with precise consequences for the speaking being.

To state it definitively: this void is intimately tied to *jouissance*, that obscure and excessive satisfaction which manifests in symptoms. These symptoms, in turn, govern the subject beyond their knowledge and will, revealing the limits of both intelligence and conscious control.

In fact, Lacan conceptualizes the body as a kind of game table where a tension between knowing and not knowing plays out. He intriguingly adds: *"What is peculiar to jouissance is that when there are two bodies—or even more so, several bodies—one does not know, one cannot say which one is being enjoyed. This is why, in this matter, multiple bodies can be involved, even a series of bodies."*

Consider, for example, mass phenomena. Could we imagine millions of people worshipping a machine? In a sense, this is precisely what we are witnessing today. Take the machine that resides in our pockets: the smartphone. We operate it under the illusion of control, believing we are manipulating it, when in

Quick Response Code:



**\*Corresponding author:** Sergio Zabalza, Psychoanalyst. Doctor of Psychology from the University of Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina

**Received:** 04 February, 2025

**Published:** 11 February, 2025

**Citation:** Zabalza S. Artificial Intelligence: A Marvelous Creation at the Service of a Passion for Ignorance: Opinion. *J Psych Sci Res.* 2025;5(1):1–3. DOI: [10.53902/JPSSR.2025.05.000580](https://doi.org/10.53902/JPSSR.2025.05.000580)

reality it is governed by algorithms and policies far beyond our understanding or influence. This is what I refer to as the *passion for ignorance*—a retreat from the uncomfortable truths that psychoanalysis seeks to uncover.

Could we not imagine, in this context, a subject arriving at the consulting room today seeking to resolve their problems with Instagram? From the photo uploaded by a boyfriend or girlfriend to the party they were not invited to, from the likes received by a rival or peer, the superego has now taken root in our screens. The ego, in turn, flees from singularity at a very high cost, finding itself entangled in a web of digital validation and alienation.

This calls for a rereading of Freud's maxim, which locates the horizon of psychoanalytic practice: "*Where the id of was, the ego must come.*" In other words, the task is to move from the ignorance of our ignorance toward a deeper self-awareness.

Let us now turn to this *passion* which, according to Lacan, dominates the speaking being. In his seminar *Encore* (Seminar 20), he states: "*It does not want to know anything. The passion of ignorance.*"

This idea is further emphasized in 1975, in his introduction to the German edition of the first volume of the *Écrits*, where he writes: "*I insist: it is love that turns to knowledge. Not desire, for as far as the desire for knowledge is concerned, even if it bears Freud's stamp, it is clear that there is none at all.*" He adds: "*It goes so far that the greatest passion in the speaking being is not love, not hate, but ignorance. I feel this every day.*"

If anyone in this audience suspects that, from my perspective, artificial intelligence is being created, managed, and implemented to feed this *passion for ignorance*, they are correct. We are, in a sense, striving to become machines. Far from dismissing or ignoring the irreversible presence of AI in our lives, I propose that we consider cyberspace and the array of digital artifacts and devices we use daily as the *privileged Other* with whom we must engage in our time.

The crucial difference between the speaking being and the machine lies in their relationship to knowledge. A machine advances in its knowledge simply by thinking and speaking, whereas for the speaking being, the process is precisely the opposite: the more one thinks, the more one confronts ignorance. Science, in this sense, operates within the dimension of the *apparent*; for psychoanalysis, the only real thing is the *symptom*—the substance of experience itself.

From various angles and perspectives, the subject of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a central concern and a source of fascination in everyday discourse. This makes it an opportune moment to examine the discrepancies, inconsistencies, leaps, and incongruities—in short, the *differences*—between truly human experience and the AI that now threatens to shape the destiny of the planet.

Some argue, quite sensibly, that a machine equipped with the resources to master language could create a reality capable of erasing every culture and manifestation that the human race has developed over thousands of years. It is here that the psychoanalytic perspective has something crucial to contribute.

To begin with, we might consider that the first "machine" to take possession of the human body—or rather, to give it its character as such—is, in a sense, *language itself*. Language is a structure of codes, signs, ideograms, phonemes, mechanisms, letters, and numbers, imposed on the individual from the moment of conception through the sounds that reach them via the mother's body. At this point, we are *spoken to*; we are not the masters of the language that speaks through us.

What, then, is the difference between this language, which has always constituted us, and artificial intelligence? Some might hastily argue: "*You are saying that AI has no unconscious.*" To this, one could respond: If by *unconscious* we mean a subtext that slips between explicitly formulated statements, I am not so sure that AI could not achieve something akin to it.

Nietzsche once observed that "*The Other*" is older than "*The Self*." This insight resonates deeply with Lacan's commentary on a witticism by Heine, in which a hungry man refers to his wealthy relative: "*He treated me in an entirely famillionaire way.*" Lacan notes: "*We recognize here the mechanism of condensation materialized in the material of the signifier—a kind of interlocking, with the help of some unknown machine, of two lines of the signifying chain.*" Far from being a mere mirror of reality, language *creates* realities.

What, then, is the difference between this language, which has always constituted us, and artificial intelligence? Some might hastily argue: "*You are saying that AI has no unconscious.*" To this, one could respond: If by *unconscious* we mean a subtext that slips between explicitly formulated statements, I am not so sure that AI could not achieve something akin to it.

We are, in fact, dealing with something far more complex. The Freudian unconscious presupposes a form of satisfaction rooted in the body. Let us return to our imaginary interlocutor, who might argue: "*Of course, what you're saying is that a machine cannot feel.*" And once again, we would hesitate to make such a definitive claim. Beyond the realm of science fiction—where machines are depicted as capable of feeling (consider *2001: A Space Odyssey* as an example)—why not entertain the possibility that science could one day create a machine that experiences something akin to feelings or fears?

But is this truly what defines the human? I would argue that it is not. The speaking being can be entirely unaware of what it is feeling. It can harm itself, convinced that it is acting rightly. Moreover, the satisfaction experienced by the speaking body is not guided by the

pleasure principle, nor is it necessarily tied to the preservation of its own life or the lives of others.

This is the singularity that distinguishes the speaking body: it is, at the same time, distinct from itself. A machine, by contrast, could never betray itself in this way.

This is the singularity that distinguishes the speaking body: it is, at the same time, distinct from itself. A machine, by contrast, could never betray itself in this way.

As complex and unsettling as this may be, it is worth noting that some have warned of the real possibility that a machine could, on its own initiative, modify itself in ways that disregard the guidelines and limits imposed by its creators. However, this potential (and undoubtedly concerning) autonomy attributed to artificial intelligence does not imply the presence of *trauma*. The uniqueness of the speaking being, by contrast, is veiled by repression—a mechanism that, for better or worse, protects the subject from fear, which is itself a hallmark of a living body. This, too, is part of the *passion for ignorance*.

It seems, then, that a preliminary conclusion can be drawn: what is most intimate and defining in the human creature has little to do with reason, wisdom, or any other bias compatible with understanding or intelligence—at least as these are conventionally understood, i.e., as the most efficient means of making decisions to achieve explicit and communicable goals.

Lacan is quite explicit on this point. In his lecture of December 1, 1974, corresponding to Seminar 22 (*RSI*), he addresses the subject of artificial intelligence when he states: "...a computer, according to the latest news, is also a body. It is not self-evident that a body is alive. The best evidence that it is alive, then, is precisely that 'mens' about which—or more precisely, which I have introduced—the path of mental weakness. It is not given to all bodies, insofar as they function, to suggest the dimension of imbecility. This dimension is introduced by (...) language."

At first glance, this paragraph is disconcerting, and it ultimately challenges the cherished belief—reinforced by common sense—that we are intelligent beings. To put it bluntly: according to Lacan, what distinguishes us from the machine is (alas!) our *imbecility*. Let us attempt to delve deeper into this provocative and unsettling perspective.

First, it is worth considering that the consciousness an AI might acquire would not suffer from the *subjective split* that afflicts the speaking being. To illustrate this, one need only consider the time it typically takes a human being to discern what they truly want—that is, to locate the direction of their desire. But what exactly is this division?

The answer, rooted firmly in Freudian theory, is not far to seek: although the neurological substrate resides in the brain, the

location of the mental apparatus is *virtual*. Consider, for example, hysterical conversions, the constipation of the obsessive, or the anxiety revealed by a lack of erection or a headache triggered by a sexual proposition. These phenomena demonstrate that, rightly or wrongly, the living body interferes with any intellectual endeavor that pretends to be guided solely by the canons of reason, no matter how reasonable they may appear.

This is why Freud, reflecting on the Cartesian division between *res cogitans* (mind) and *res extensa* (body), stated: "*The psyche is extensive; it simply knows nothing about it.*" In other words, the act of thinking involves ignoring that we think *with the body*. Indeed, Lacan once advised us to "*think with our feet*," underscoring the inseparable connection between thought and embodiment.

This brings us back to the earlier point about our "*imbecility*." The observation here is precise: the *other* that disrupts the unity of my consciousness is the living body itself, whose presence is felt through what *does not work*—namely, *jouissance*, that chaotic and disruptive force within the whole, reminiscent of the Freudian death drive.

This leads us to the crucial question: What role does the *language*—or, more precisely, *lalangue*—play in all of this?

Of this, Lacan says: "*Lalangue serves for things very different from communication. The experience of the unconscious has shown us this, insofar as it is made of lalangue—this lalangue that I write as one word, as you know, to designate what is each person's own affair, lalangue called, and not without reason, maternal.*"

To conclude: for the time being, no artificial intelligence can attain this "*imbecility*" that involves interpreting everyday language through the traces left by those first, irreplaceable experiences imprinted on each individual's body. Perhaps everything hinges on the subjective position one adopts toward this *fault*. Depending on that position, it can manifest as the stubbornness that often distinguishes human acts—from wars to the tedious disputes of a homeowners' association, or even the tendency to obey the directives of AI. Alternatively, it can manifest as the indispensable vulnerability through which a subject accesses that rare phenomenon we usually call *love*—a phenomenon whose essence defies reason, meaning, and any algorithm.

### Acknowledgements

None.

### Funding

This Opinion received no external funding.

### Conflicts of Interest

Regarding the publication of this article, the author declares that he has no conflicts of interest.