**The AI Hype**

# Lawyers Needed to Rein in Altman and Co

More than technology, Silicon Valley produces hype. It is forever on the cusp of a major breakthrough, needing only a bit more cash for the magic to happen. In the 1990s it was the dot-com boom; in the 2000s nanotechnology; and in the 2010s blockchain and its crypto derivatives.

All these hypes promised deliverance from some affliction suffered by mankind and usher in an era of peace, prosperity, and general wellbeing. The paperless office and global village came and went, as did the miraculous nanotech materials and all the pyramids that touched the heavens unlocking vast wealth to believers. More often than not, Silicon Valley offered solutions in search of a problem.

Those refusing or reluctant to buy into the narrative and hysterics were instantly dismissed as sclerotic grandpas, hopeless luddites, or worse - out of touch and out of sync. There are also a few alarmists who caution against blindly embracing all that is novel just because it promises to herald a better tomorrow and seems on track to deliver - 'seems' being the operative word.

Currently, the tech wonks of Silicon Valley are in overdrive to promote their latest scheme to dazzle the masses with things nobody asked for or needs. According to Sam Altman, artificial intelligence is "on the verge" of unveiling a cornucopia of limitless prosperity. Mr Altman also expects AI to fix the climate, ban disease, unravel the remaining mysteries of physics, and enable humankind to colonise space. All of this, Mr Altman promises us in his manifesto *The Intelligent Age*, will be accomplished in "a few thousand days", provided he gets enough data, energy, chips, and, of course, cash.

Mr Altman, initially driven by the best of intentions, has now thrown caution to the wind, surrendered to greed, and no longer asks for a six-month moratorium on the development of large language models to address the social impact of AI. He dropped the nonprofit status of OpenAI, his company and rid the boardroom of members who asked difficult questions. This way, Mr Altman hopes to entice investors to release the billions he needs. Keeping to their hyped-up style, the tech wonks foresee trillions in profit.

*Caveat*

Yet since the release of GPT-4 nothing much has happened in the way of progress. The latest OpenAI release, named o1, entered the market with a caveat. Mr Altman warned that the system seems "more impressive" on first use than it does after spending some time with it. OpenAI considers o1 but a waypoint on the path to something much grander. It is on "the cusp" of the next great leap forward.

That leap is to be made with "deep learning" which - given sufficient volumes of data, energy, time, and money - will solve all problems faced by humankind. Regarding the cash, Mr Altman may eventually require up to $7 trillion to realise his vision. Oh, and he needs nuclear-fusion energy as well.

The trouble with the Altman and his ilk is that they are ignorant of both physics and philosophy. They are mere entrepreneurs who know how to make money with great promises and smart marketing. Meanwhile, large language models are clogging the internet with AI-generated slop and helping a few poor souls who lack the brainpower or drive to compose an email or report.

Here are some of the offerings available to paying clients at OpenAI's GPT store: a bot that will find hiking trails;, another one that summarises academic papers, a presentation design assistant,

and a bot that suggest new books to read. How about having the summarising bot chat with the book bot and wake the user up when they are done?

To call this intelligence is absurd to the highest degree imaginable. It is, however, quite artificial and perfect for the mentally challenged who couldn't be bothered to read either a map or a book but have $20 to spare to outsource their brain.

OpenAI boasts that its ChatGPT attracts over one hundred million weekly users. Amongst them, cheating students, greedy managers, and unscrupulous media producers. All seeking to find shortcuts to the top that do not involve any mental exercise. Doubt that? ChatGPT has markedly less visitors during the summer holidays.

*Poor Sods*

Yet, Mr Altman has big plans for his plagiarising bot. He lifted a tip of the veil in his 2021 essay *Moore's Law for Everything*: "In the next five years, computer programs that can think will read legal documents and give medical advice. We can imagine AI doctors that can diagnose health problems better than any human, and AI teachers that can diagnose and explain exactly what a student doesn't understand." Please note the hype. It comes from far.

However, Mr Altman and his peers only do that was is expected of them: promote their vested interests. Wider society can either believe their hype or be sceptical. On LinkedIn, most poor sods still believe they stand a fighting chance against large language models and may prosper in the AI era thanks to their superior adaptive, cognitive, and creative powers. That sort of invites a comparison to the businessman eagerly selling the rope that the hangman will soon tie around his neck. The naïveté (and ignorance of social history) on display is truly impressive.

As Mr Altman demonstrated by scrapping the nonprofit nature of the company he cofounded, money is what drives any new technology. The trillions he dangles in front of investors are to be made by the rationalisation of production processes, i.e. to do more with considerably less. That less includes you.

Whilst most laudable, whenever such a process involves the replacement of people by machines trouble is not far off. AI is particularly dangerous to human society. The hype need not even become all true for its impact to be felt. It is enough to for bots to take over a few key segments that currently provide excellent livelihoods such as law, healthcare, and media. It doesn't really matter that the bots' performance is slightly off for in the grand order of all things business, quantity always trumps quality.

Your adaptive, cognitive, or creative powers may be truly awesome, but when a bot can replace you for pennies to your dollar, there is nothing you can do quality-wise to keep your job. Just like the Lucky Strike cigarettes in Mad Men, you're toasted. Btw, where else did you think Mr Altman's trillions will be sourced from if not your salary?

Before lawyers get replaced, it would be advisable to release them on AI corporates. Whilst governments may be unable or unwilling to properly regulate AI, lawyers suffer no such restrictions and may well wrap artificial intelligence and its revenue models in a legal straightjacket that befits the social system and stops bots from upsetting or undermining the social order and/or cohesion. Once upon a time, Napster was tagged to kill off the music industry.

However, it didn't take lawyers long to defenestrate the file sharing app. Just like Napster's original business model, artificial intelligence and its large language models are also founded on the theft of intellectual property. The only difference is the scale at which AI operates.