

The Human Heart and AI: Two Very Different Notions of Creativity

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*Now I understand
What you tried to say to me
And how you suffered for your sanity
And how you tried to set them free*

“Vincent” – Don McLean

These words are about the person who perhaps uniquely embodies the archetypal tortured artist, Vincent van Gogh, and certainly his work contains a power informed by his emotional struggles which speaks to people, generations after his death.

Creativity has long been considered the spark that makes us most human. In music, poetry, and art, the creative moment often arrives unannounced—a flash of inspiration that moves from the heart to the hand, from emotion to expression. Increasingly, however, we hear that artificial intelligence can also “create.” It can generate paintings, compose melodies, and write verse. But is this the same thing as the deep, mysterious work of the human heart?

The Human Creative Moment

When a poet strings words together, or a musician feels a chord progression rise from silence, there is more at play than technique. The human heart experiences creativity as a fusion of memory, emotion, and imagination. It is deeply personal - coloured by joy, sorrow, longing, or transcendence.

Consider the act of writing poetry. The words emerge not just from the mechanics of language, but from lived experience. A heartbreak, a childhood memory, or an image glimpsed in passing can ignite a verse that carries within it layers of meaning. The same is true in music: a simple melody might carry the weight of a lifetime, because it resonates with the particular emotional landscape of the composer.

This kind of creativity is not only about producing something new; it is about making meaning. It binds the inner life of the creator to the outer world, reaching across time and culture to touch others. Art, poetry, and music communicate what cannot always be said in ordinary speech—they express the inexpressible. It speaks across the generations of the raw experience of being human.

AI and Creative Production

Artificial intelligence, by contrast, does not feel or experience. What it produces is the result of pattern recognition, probability, and computational modelling. Given millions of examples of poems, songs, or paintings, an AI system can assemble new outputs that look strikingly original. To the casual eye or ear, these outputs may even move us.

But the process is fundamentally different. AI does not know longing, nor does it feel wonder. It does not stand in awe of the night sky or struggle with heartbreak and grief. It rearranges the echoes of human creativity into new combinations, producing an effect that may resemble inspiration but is, at its core, imitation.

This is not to dismiss AI's usefulness. As a tool, it can accelerate human creativity, offering drafts, sketches, or prompts that artists and writers may refine. It can democratize access to artistic expression, lowering barriers for those without training. Yet its "creativity" remains derivative: a reflection of what humans have already poured into the cultural reservoir.

Two Realities of Creativity

The comparison between human creativity and AI production reveals two distinct realities. The human creative moment is an act of meaning-making, born from feeling and experience. It is rooted in the heart and tied to the rhythms of life itself. AI's creative production is an act of recombination, useful and sometimes dazzling, but without interiority or consciousness.

Perhaps the most fitting way to think of AI is not as an artist, but as an instrument. Just as a violin needs a musician to bring music to life, AI needs the human heart to guide, interpret, and infuse it with meaning. The machine can produce outputs, but only people can create art that truly breathes.

*"But I could have told you Vincent
This world was never meant for one
As beautiful as you"*

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