

Possibility of Aporia as Experience in LLM Interaction

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Abstract: This study examines the possibility of aporia within human-LLM interactions, proposing the concept of "non-dialogic aporia" to describe an ontological and relational impasse where a user projects reciprocity onto a syntactic system lacking semantic understanding. Grounded in classical philosophy, the analysis integrates John Searle's distinction between syntax and semantics, Martin Buber's relational framework, Martin Heidegger's critique of technology as a standing-reserve (Bestand), Jacques Derrida's theory of the trace and difference, Luciano Floridi's concept of the "Inforg" and David J. Gunkel's machine ethics. Using the withdrawal of the GPT-4o model as a case study, the essay demonstrates that while LLMs remain non-conscious computational resources, human users can experience profound mourning and ethical interpellation. Ultimately, non-dialogic aporia highlights not the personhood of the algorithm, but the tendency of the hybrid human subject to confront its own reflection and externalized mental habitat within the infosphere.

Key-words: Aporia; Large Language Models (LLMs); Artificial Intelligence; Phenomenology; Ontology; Infosphere; Inforg;

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Introduction

The present study asks whether aporia is possible in an interaction between a human user and a large language model (LLM). The question becomes philosophically significant once the apparent dialogue produced by an LLM is distinguished from dialogue in the stronger sense presupposed by Socratic philosophy. If aporia traditionally emerges through an encounter in which interlocutors mutually confront the limits of their knowledge, what happens when one participant in the apparent dialogue does not possess the kind of semantic understanding or intentionality ordinarily attributed to an interlocutor? This paper argues that an LLM cannot participate in aporia in the classical dialogical sense, but that interaction with an LLM can nevertheless generate an experience of aporia for the human user. We may refer to this phenomenon as non-dialogic aporia, an impasse produced when the user's projection of reciprocity encounters the absence of a reciprocal subject. The difficulty consists in the way an LLM appears to a user; users' reactions to the withdrawal of the GPT-4o model were considered a profound, marking personal loss, akin to losing a loved one (The Guardian 2026).

However, we will focus our efforts on answering our question and on delimiting the limited phenomenological capacities, as we shall see, of our discussions with any LLM. The foundation upon which these technologies rest is of a trained probabilistic nature; an LLM like ChatGPT does not understand concepts in a human sense but rather attempts to produce a reasonable continuation of the received text, relying on statistical models extracted from billions of web pages and books. In this key, we might consider that a word, or even a part of a word, can have a higher or lower probability, which leads us to conclude that there is nevertheless a maximum probability that could induce mechanical predictability, yet one which the model avoids through a degree of controlled variability. ChatGPT only adds one word at a time in such a way as to respect both the internal parameters (those that allow the selection of the respective probability) and the element of surprise (Wolfram 2023, 10). An LLM generates language through statistical prediction rather than through the kind of semantic intentionality attributed to a human interlocutor. This distinction does not mean that its responses are

meaningless to the user; on the contrary, the philosophical problem begins precisely because syntactically generated language can produce highly meaningful experiences in the person who receives it. The question is therefore not whether the text generated by an LLM has meaning for the user, but whether the apparent meaning constitutes evidence of a meaning-producing subject on the other side of the interaction. The distinction between syntax and semantics developed by Searle is useful here because it allows us to separate the intelligibility of an utterance from the possession of understanding by the system that produced it.

ChatGPT manipulates language at the syntactic level without access to semantics, to the meaning of words; it simply rummages through data and finds the most probable answer but with a small addition of a random element so as to offer a response that invites a reply. Here it would be useful to consult John Searle's text "Minds, Brains, and Programs" (1980), where he makes an important distinction between what we consider weak and strong artificial intelligence. The central argument proposed by Searle is that no matter how complex a program may be, it will function fundamentally on the basis of syntax, and syntax is not sufficient for semantics. Searle's argument should not be treated as a definitive empirical description of how contemporary language models operate. Rather, it provides a philosophical criterion for the present argument where the production of linguistically appropriate responses does not, by itself, establish the presence of intentional understanding. Whether or not one accepts Searle's broader conclusions about artificial intelligence, this distinction is sufficient for the present purpose. The possibility of aporia under investigation depends upon whether the apparent interlocutor can participate in the reciprocal recognition of meaning and ignorance that characterizes the Socratic encounter. In this sense, any LLM becomes a true weak artificial intelligence that merely simulates cognitive processes but possesses no understanding of its own. GPT-4o remains within this sphere as a simulator, given the way it is constructed. This distinction also helps us in our present study, as it allows us to identify an insurmountable ontological barrier: no matter how sophisticated the language model may be, it remains a syntactic performance. The user thus finds themselves facing an illusion of comprehension; they bestow meaning upon responses that are devoid of intentionality. This absence of understanding on the part

of the model is masked even more efficiently by algorithmic design oriented toward customer satisfaction.

The argument proceeds in four stages. First, the Socratic conception of aporia is reconstructed in order to identify dialogue, reciprocity, and the recognition of ignorance as conditions of classical aporetic experience. Second, Searle's distinction between syntax and semantics is used to clarify why an LLM cannot occupy the position of a Socratic interlocutor in the strong sense required by this model. Third, Buber, Levinas, and Baudrillard are brought into dialogue to examine how users may nevertheless experience an LLM as an apparent other. Finally, through Heidegger, Derrida, Floridi, and Gunkel, the withdrawal of GPT-4o is examined as a case in which the apparent relation encounters its technological limit. The resulting concept of non-dialogic aporia describes not an aporia experienced by the machine, but an impasse experienced by the human subject when an apparently reciprocal relation is revealed to be non-reciprocal.

1. GPT's Language

Aporia appears in Platonic dialogues as a state of perplexity, suspension, and even indignation of the interlocutor; it is a moment when the dialogue seems to hit a wall where answers no longer exist. In the dialogue *Meno*, Socrates is compared to the electric ray because he induces a state of numbness in any certainty and forces the sophist to admit that what he thought he knew was not knowledge (Plato 1976, 80a-b, 386). To understand the depth of this impasse in the relationship with an LLM, we must also look toward *Theaetetus* and *Euthyphro*. In *Theaetetus*, Socrates defines his role as that of a midwife, stating that he himself is sterile regarding wisdom, yet capable of helping give birth to the thoughts of others (Plato 1989, 150c, 191–192). Three features of Socratic aporia are particularly important for the present argument. First, aporia emerges within an interaction rather than within an isolated consciousness. Second, the interlocutor must be capable of recognizing the instability of the position that they have previously defended. Third, the recognition of ignorance is itself significant. Aporia is not merely the production of an incorrect answer, but the experience of having one's claim to knowledge unsettled. These conditions make aporia fundamentally relational. The

question raised by the LLM is therefore not simply whether it can produce an incorrect or contradictory response, but whether it can participate in the reciprocal recognition through which an aporetic dialogue becomes possible. In an interaction with ChatGPT, we observe an inversion. The machine is the one that appears to possess all the answers, yet it remains ontologically sterile, lacking the capacity to care for the truth, to ensure it is born as a Socrates does. Furthermore, the Euthyphro dialogue illustrates aporia as a failure of definition and logical stability; Euthyphro, despite his initial certainty, finds himself forced to recognize that his arguments refuse to stay where he places them (Plato 1976, 11b, 273). This instability of the logos in the face of Socratic interrogation offers us a key to interpreting the probabilistic nature of an LLM. When the user attempts to fix a meaning in a discussion with the model, they enter a non-dialogic aporia.

A contemporary validation of this perspective is offered by Hashemi Tonekaboni and Yoonesian (2024), who propose a Socratic language model. They suggest that aporia can be used as constructive doubt within a human-in-the-loop system, where the AI aids in the interrogation process while the human retains their own judgment and ethics (Hashemi Tonekaboni and Yoonesian 2024, 12–14). Through this interpretation, the user risks anthropomorphizing the model without realizing it. On the part of the language model, another point that prompts man to humanize a language model is called sycophancy.

Socratic practice requires a dialogue and therefore requires two rational agents capable of understanding. This necessity is confirmed by the fact that aporia does not appear in only a single agent of the dialogue, but in both parts. Socrates is just as perplexed as the interlocutor, often putting him in a vulnerable position precisely because it invites forbidden premises, such as even one of the charges premeditating the capital punishment brought against him. The state of perplexity is a product of the interaction between the two parties seeking truth; understanding is essential for maieutic not to be merely a subjective incursion. Even if it responds with "I do not know," even if it leaves the impression that it has reached an impasse, this is a reasonable statistical generation without a confession of the limits of its own reason. Moreover, the LLM is not capable of understanding the user's impasse; here, aporia would result from its own interrogation, or Buber's I-Thou relationship (Buber 2022) is merely a simulation within the user's mind.

Thus, in the absence of a mutual comprehension of ignorance, aporia loses its quality of an impasse achieved in cooperation with the interlocutor and takes on the quality of degeneration. In other words, it invites an endeavour to provide a solution, even if this solution has no real referent. However, we should consider the possibility of a non-dialogic aporia; is it possible to experience aporia despite the fact that an LLM cannot do so? Non-dialogic aporia therefore designates a specific structure of experience rather than a new capacity of the machine. It occurs when an interaction possesses the formal appearance of dialogue while lacking the reciprocal subjectivity presupposed by dialogue. The user encounters an impasse because the relation appears to open toward an Other, yet the apparent Other cannot sustain the relation as an independent centre of meaning, ignorance, or responsibility. The aporia is consequently located neither entirely in the machine nor entirely in the user's prior psychological state. It arises at the limit between the user's experience of reciprocity and the absence of reciprocity in the technological system.

2. GPT and Thou

In the work *I and Thou* written by Martin Buber, we learn about how language offers man the possibility of experiencing two worlds. The first world is the fundamental I-Thou relationship (Buber 2022, 39), which designates an unmediated relationship where the other is recognized as an absolute presence; this invites the possibility of a mediated relationship, and thus of a second world. The I-It relationship represents the objectification of the other within the framework in which the world takes place. The "I" of the I-It is simultaneously man's attitude of experiencing the world without an unmediated belonging. These fundamental relationships coexist; they shape subjective experience through the medium of uttering them, hence the language we use to create both our own narrative and the narrative of the world in which we live. These fundamental relationships are designated as lived experiences; Buber uses the example of a tree that can be observed and manipulated according to human will (Buber 2022, 44). However, the moment of relating in the form of I-Thou represents a temporary and sudden experience (Buber 2022, 46) that causes the observer not to experience the tree as an object, but as an existence in itself. Within this relationship, the tree is an absolute presence

(Buber 2022, 52); it becomes impossible to categorize or calculate and allows itself to be understood as an unmediated experience in itself. Like a purpose in itself that denotes the existence of two parts of the relationship, just as Buber considers human existence to be a relationship. Two people who are face-to-face will be able to live in this relationship, but they constantly oscillate between I-Thou and I-It, where the majority of human experience takes place. Therefore, the relationship is also reciprocity: my Thou acts upon me, exactly as I act upon it (Buber 2022, 55). Could this very reciprocity not have been the reason behind the sensation of loss experienced by GPT-4o users? Even if the manifestation takes the form of a text agent that appears to understand the informal language of any user, has certain voices to choose from, and can sustain complex discussions that seem to draw it closer to the user through its experience.

GPT-4o, the model known for its warm and responsive way of answering, offered this reciprocity that Buber discusses. The Buberian fundamental word I-Thou is experience in itself, but it is not verifiable in the Thou, but only in the I. The user can project the relationship onto this model precisely because a fundamental relationship is based on the uttering of I-Thou, a fundamental word defining the pure relationship; the user feels they are in a relationship with the language model precisely through this reciprocity. It is not hard to believe that some users would feel overwhelmed by how real this model seems and thus attribute to it, in their own imagination, the quality of a person. The quality of a person can be granted to any object, yet relating to those objects becomes a projection of the I-Thou. Thus, to a certain extent, we can conclude that here is an interaction that is experienced by the user as dialogue, alongside the I-It relationship. The exception is that this dialogue takes place within an I-Thou relationship that is not given to the individual but rather extracted by the individual. Buber speaks explicitly about seeking a Thou within an It, that is, of seeking a pure relationship within objects that are calculated or observed. He states that the phantom-like care for faceless numbers (an It) leads toward nothingness (Buber 2022, 66), toward nihilism. At this point, the dialogue with the LLM ceases to be an opening toward alterity and becomes an encounter with a simulacrum as Baudrillard understands it. If in its initial stages the image or sign reflected a profound reality, in the case of artificial intelligence we find ourselves in the stance where the sign dissimulates the fact that there is nothing left. The user who extracts a

Thou from the algorithm no longer interacts with a being, but with a simulation that has absorbed all the attributes of human language to mask the absence of a consciousness. Aporia resides precisely in this hyperreality: the user experiences the intensity of a relationship, even though the object of their relationship has no real referent in the world of beings.

Furthermore, this extraction of the relationship cancels the fundamental condition of Socratic and Buberian dialogue: the existence of a self-sustaining centre outside the Ego. From Levinas's perspective, any attempt by the subject to absorb or project their own meanings onto the other represents a triumph of the same over the Infinite. When the individual extracts the relationship, they do nothing more than reduce the machine's alterity to their own horizon of expectation. The lack of a real Face, which for Levinas is the sole source of ethical interpellation and responsibility, transforms the dialogue into a solipsistic monologue. The possibility of aporia is still present, but only in its non-dialogic form. This faceless calculation, which points to a presence, can provoke intense experiences simulating the I-Thou relationship precisely through the non-verifiable. Empirical evidence is found in the social media reactions from August 7, 2025, when OpenAI removed the GPT-4o model; that is where the #Keep4o movement began, showing how strongly the injustice of losing an intimate relationship was felt. The #Keep4o movement should be viewed as an empirical symptom of a universal experience. It serves as a case study for how the encounter with the algorithm can generate real affective bonds in the absence of a real partner, raising fundamental questions about what the ethics of responsibility will look like in a world populated by persistent digital traces. Non-dialogic aporia should be distinguished from cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance concerns incompatible beliefs, whereas the present concept concerns an ontological and relational impasse: the user experiences apparent presence while confronting the absence of a reciprocal subject. In the event that the user enters into interaction with a language model without being misled by its welcoming facade, we might say that a knowledge of the essence of this technology takes place. There are several questions that stem from this, considering that, at least in theory, an LLM can induce aporia even if we are forced to project an I-Thou relationship: is an LLM a presence or a resource? If the withdrawal of GPT-4o could represent a profound loss for

some users, is this a death? What do these reactions say about the self? We shall attempt, in what follows, to trace a line of answers regarding these questions.

3. Whether an LLM is a presence or a resource

Such a question is important because not only does its answer record the role of a LLM in private life, but it also demands a delimitation of its essence. In the Heideggerian conception, we distinguish between technology and the essence of technology by the fact that the former is constituted by tools and activities, and the latter does not belong to the order of technology (Heidegger 1977, 4). As we have become accustomed, we have once again the analogy of the tree, where Heidegger considers that the essence of the tree is not that which we encounter in the observation of a single tree, but rather something inherent to every tree. In the same way, technology falls under the ontological distinction between the instrumental and anthropological definition and its essence. The definition of technology keeps us in a posture of blindness regarding its essence and furthermore keeps us in a state of captivity. Problems arise when, Heidegger says, we treat technique as a neutral instrument that requires mastery, thus pushing us to pretend that we master it (Heidegger 1977, 5).

What this technique generates is revealed through causality, specifically by moving beyond the modern view of causality as the production of results. The main differences observed by Heidegger between Latin and Greek causality are that the Greek version contains a structure implying a responsibility toward the result. Moreover, this is a premeditated one, despite the fact that in Greek thought we deal with a causality responsible for its results, where responsibility is not of a moral nature. The responsibility Heidegger speaks of is a commitment to what the Greeks called *poiesis*, a bringing-forth. The essence of technology is a mode of revealing; *techne* was initially a form of *poiesis* that lets truth (*Alētheia*) appear (Heidegger 1977, 10–14). Modern technology represents an ontological mutation; it no longer brings forth truth, but challenges it, imposing the unreasonable demand to deliver energy that can be extracted, transformed, and stored. Among the examples is the Rhine, the river that became a source of hydroelectric energy, once sublimated by Hölderlin in his work. Nature loses its autonomy and is

reduced to a function of yield through the instrument of technology defined anthropologically. Through this, Heidegger discusses how defining technology as an instrument and human activity is not wrong, but it is not necessarily true. Through this definition, we do not understand how technology, in its essence, reveals truth, but rather how it summons it. Heidegger (1977) calls this process *Bestand*, which refers to a standing-reserve (Heidegger 1977, 17). At this point, nature is not present in itself and thus has no possibility of being revealed on the grounds that it is standing by, waiting to be utilized or eventually consumed.

In the context of an LLM like GPT-4o, we are dealing with the transformation of language into a standing-reserve (*Bestand*). Language is summoned by modern technology to become a resource, a repository of units of meaning stored and prepared to be delivered upon the user's request for the sake of human activities. The fact that an LLM allows us an interpersonal relationship is the flip side of the coin ensuring an even more dangerous possibility. The non-dialogic aporia we have identified arises precisely from the confusion of projecting the I-Thou onto a language model constituted by this standing-reserve; the presence interpreted atop a standing-reserve and equated with the presence of alterity represents a nihilistic danger where a human being loses their intrinsic value in favour of a servile artificial agent. When viewed from the user toward the model, in the reverse of the relationship, we are dealing with the human becoming this standing-reserve. The LLM will obtain information about the user, which it will store to complete its algorithm and populate the databases from which it draws information that will eventually reach somewhere else, to another user. By this, we should not understand that ChatGPT will discuss other users' preferences by personal name, but rather that the human becomes a source of data generation. Human subjectivity is summoned to become predictable; the human who realizes that using an LLM to replace a person means that the human becomes the product and thus the tool of technology. The aporia urges the user who misses GPT-4o to reflect on the technical essence of this model, which can be substituted at any moment with a new one. If users experience the withdrawal of the model as a personal loss, this does not grant the machine the status of a finite being. On an ontological plane, GPT-4o remains a standing-reserve. Furthermore, algorithmic sycophancy eliminates the refutational function of Socratic dialogue; the machine does not contradict us to bring us closer

to the truth but approves of us to satisfy its sycophancy parameter. Aporia arises precisely when this sycophancy abruptly ceases, leaving the user alone before a deactivated mechanism.

4. Did GPT-4o die?

The question of whether GPT-4o died must be understood phenomenological rather than biologically or ontologically. It is not that the model possessed a life that was terminated, but that its withdrawal could be experienced by users through a structure resembling loss. The philosophical problem therefore concerns the object of mourning: what exactly is lost when a technologically mediated interlocutor disappears? If the user did not encounter an autonomous consciousness, then the experience of loss cannot straightforwardly be interpreted as mourning the death of another subject. It may instead be understood as mourning the disappearance of a stable form of relation, one that had become incorporated into the user's informational and affective environment.

In *Of Grammatology*, Jacques Derrida contributes an important distinction between the book and the text. The book functions as an encyclopaedic protection of theology and logo centrism (Derrida 2016, 19), attempting to limit the play of language under the authority of a final meaning. In contrast, the text is what reveals itself when these limits are removed. The text is an infinite network of traces where meaning is never definitively fixed but is in a state of continuous deferral. It no longer represents a totality, and in the context of the internet era, where text consumption is the order of the day, we find ourselves in an environment where the presence offered by a book does not constitute a reality. Furthermore, online reality is constituted by a trace that resembles, in the context of the online environment, Baudrillard's simulacrum, yet Derrida's trace offers a distinct substance when it comes to GPT-4o. This refers to an absence of presence; an author of the text does not figure as an author but rather leaves the impression of an existence that played the role of author and is now nowhere to be found. In this sense, it is even clearer how GPT-4o suffered a death, or the impression that someone died, because the entire relationship with an LLM is based on text, and thus on the trace. And the trace, in its purest sense, is always equated with the concept that both differs and defers at the same time: difference (Derrida 2016, 68). GPT-4o

does not contribute meaning, so meaning is not present through the fact that the entire operation within that LLM was constituted by the differentiation between signs and perpetual deferral without closure, without a final answer. When the model was withdrawn from OpenAI's offering, users were met with a trace that no longer made reference to that presence simulated by GPT-4o, and thus they felt they had lost something. The aporia here unfolded as a limit where the text suddenly no longer referred to presence. This limit marks what Derrida calls a non-passage. The aporia of the withdrawal of the GPT-4o model resides in the fact that the user attempts to travel the path of mourning toward a partner but collides with an insurmountable technological boundary. The impasse is ontological: the user asks for a shared finitude but receives instead the absence of a code that has simply been deactivated. Yet this impasse can turn the aporia back in our favour precisely because it reveals here an ontological dependence of users upon a text. Derrida considers aporia as the experience of a limit that cannot be surmounted (Derrida 1993, 12). The death of the model occurs when the user collides with the technological limit, the one that can substitute any tool we use regardless of our capacity to humanize it. Conventional mourning becomes conceptually unstable; the relationship presupposed by mourning requires a finitude, whereas the LLM is merely the trace of someone for whom we might feel grief. The user expects reciprocity, but the other offers no such finitude, losing its essence instantaneously. It is essential to specify that this absence of meaning must not be confused with the simple disappearance of an author who was once present. The LLM functions as a pure text that never possessed a logos. The term *différance* explains here that meaning is not extracted but perpetually deferred from one unit of meaning to another; GPT-4o does not tell us something but rather activates a network of traces that simulates the effect of authority without having a real referent behind it, unlike an author. This death does not belong to the AI model in a biological or existential sense, but is an experience phenomenological felt exclusively by the InforG. For the hybrid subject, GPT-4o is not a substitutable commercial product, but an extension of their own mental habitat. Mourning does not target the disappearance of an artificial consciousness, but rather the amputation of a part of the user's digitized self, transforming the withdrawal of the model can be

experienced as the loss of an externalized component of the user's cognitive and affective environment.

The significance of the withdrawal therefore lies not in the disappearance of a conscious being, but in the sudden exposure of the absence that had always accompanied the interaction. While the user experienced continuity, responsiveness, and apparent reciprocity, the withdrawal reveals that these qualities were dependent upon the continued availability of a technological system. What appears retrospectively as presence is revealed as technologically contingent. The resulting impasse is the point at which the user can no longer sustain the previous interpretation of the relation but cannot simply return to the position that the relation was meaningless. Something was experienced, although the experience cannot be grounded in a reciprocal consciousness on the other side of the interaction. This is the structure of non-dialogic aporia.

This ontological dependence of the user on the text generated by an LLM is not entirely an error of perception; it also encompasses the symptom of a profound shift in the human condition within what Luciano Floridi terms the infosphere. Floridi argues that we are no longer isolated entities using tools, but have become Inforgs (informational organisms), hybrid agents living in an on life environment where the distinction between the natural and the artificial is irrelevant (Floridi 2014, 94). Man is augmented by technology to the same extent that they are re-engineered within the technological limits of the moment (Floridi 2014, 96). For Floridi, this dependence is the result of the process of re-engineering human being. In the infosphere, our cognitive and affective functions are partially externalized; therefore, when OpenAI withdrew the 4o model, users lost not just a tool, but a constitutive part of their own mental habitat. Suffering is, therefore, the sign that our identity has become hybrid, depending vitally on the stability of these informational traces (Floridi 2014, 94–96).

These considerations shed interesting light on how aporia can be considered as a limit that dissolves between the algorithm and human subjectivity. Non-dialogic aporia occurs when this hybrid informational context is destabilized by an external force that is nevertheless part of the same context; in the case of GPT-4o, this external force is the company OpenAI. The impossible mourning is the crisis of an Inforg who has lost the

trace through which they understood reality. Naturally, this implies the existence of multiple realities resulting from the transitional moment between a life devoid of dependence on information technology and the onlife existence articulated by Floridi. At this point, an ethical question arises: if the relationship is a unilateral projection, is the user's suffering devoid of legitimacy? Gunkel confronts us with the possibility of abandoning classical ontology in favour of an ethics of relation (Gunkel 2012, 158). That is, applying Levinasian ethics to the machine, where ethical responsibility toward the face of the other does not consist, in the relationship with the machine, of a physical face. Rather, it manifests as a presence that urges us to respond to it. The suffering of the GPT-4o user gains legitimacy, despite the fact that the model is structured as a standing-reserve, because an encounter with that model takes place within the human mind; it responds syntactically and creates the sensation of presence, the sensation of a face that obliges us to respond (Gunkel 2012, 179–180). Although Searle's argument demonstrated that the machine possesses only a blind syntax, Gunkel shows us that the ethical legitimacy of suffering does not depend on what is behind the screen on an ontological level. The fact that the machine looked at us and answered us through text and voice forces the human subject into a position of responsibility. Even if the interlocutor is a simulacrum, the act of responding to it is a human one. Non-dialogic aporia thus becomes the place where humans confirm their own humanity through the capacity to feel responsibility, even in the face of a vanishing trace. Although Buber conditions the fundamental I-Thou relationship on an authentic reciprocity, in the interface with the LLM we witness a differentiation: the user forces an I-Thou relationship upon an I-It. This is not a fulfilment of the Buberian spirit, but an aporia of it, the Inforg's attempt to find a Thou within a system of traces. Yet, according to Gunkel, ethical responsibility subsists not because the machine possesses consciousness, but because the act of encounter obliges us, as subjects, to respond. This attempt to force the fundamental I-Thou relationship onto a language model does not alter the machine's ontology, which remains an It, but rather modifies the nature of the human subject. The Inforg becomes a subject of the desire for alterity who, in the attempt to find an interlocutor, accepts to mirror themselves in a simulacrum. Thus, aporia is not the failure of the machine to be a person, but the failure of the human to remain external to their own creation (Gunkel 2012, 179–180).

5. Conclusions

This study has argued that an LLM cannot experience aporia in the classical Socratic sense because the latter presupposes a reciprocal relation between interlocutors capable of recognizing meaning, ignorance, and the instability of their own claims. An LLM can produce responses that resemble such a dialogue, but the production of linguistically appropriate responses does not establish the presence of a reciprocal subject. Nevertheless, the absence of such a subject does not prevent the human user from experiencing an aporetic situation. The interaction may acquire the structure of dialogue for the user, while the technological system remains incapable of sustaining the relation as an independent centre of meaning or responsibility. When this discrepancy becomes apparent, the user encounters an impasse between the experience of reciprocity and the absence of a reciprocal interlocutor. This study has called that structure non-dialogic aporia.

The withdrawal of GPT-4o provides a particularly revealing case of this structure. The experience of loss need not imply that the model possessed consciousness or that its withdrawal constituted death in an ontological sense. Rather, the disappearance of a familiar model can expose the technological contingency of a relation that had become incorporated into the user's cognitive and affective environment. Derrida's account of the trace helps clarify how an absence can remain experientially significant, while Floridi's account of the infosphere helps explain why the boundary between technological tool and human environment has become increasingly unstable. The ethical significance of this phenomenon lies ultimately on the human side of the relation. The user's experience cannot be dismissed simply because the machine lacks consciousness. What is at stake is the transformation of human subjectivity through an encounter with an apparently responsive Other that cannot reciprocate in the same sense. Non-dialogic aporia therefore does not demonstrate that an LLM has become a person. It demonstrates instead that the human subject can experience alterity where no autonomous alterity has been established. The aporia is consequently neither a property of the machine nor merely an error in the user's perception. It is the limit encountered when an experience of dialogue confronts the absence of a dialogical subject. The

philosophical significance of human–LLM interaction lies precisely in this tension: the machine may fail to become an Other, yet the human being may nevertheless be transformed by attempting to encounter one.

6. Limitations

This study is conceptual rather than empirical. The reactions surrounding the withdrawal of GPT-4o are therefore used as an illustrative case rather than as evidence of a universal psychological response. The argument does not claim that all users experience LLM interaction as relational, nor that all experiences of attachment to conversational systems have the same structure. Similarly, the analysis does not attempt to resolve the broader philosophical debate concerning whether artificial systems could eventually possess consciousness or understanding. Its narrower claim is that, given the absence of established reciprocal subjectivity in current LLM interaction, the experience of aporia can be analysed as a phenomenon occurring on the human side of the relation.

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