

Circulating Emotions: UNESCO's original initiative on Artificial Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

We propose to analyze how emotions and stereotypes circulate, using the example of recent UNESCO publications in artificial intelligence (AI). Yuri Lotman outlined two types of restrictions imposed by culture on human behavior, regulated by *shame* or *fear*, respectively. This distinction coincides with the division of the collective into 'we' and 'they' groups. The circulation of emotions is a semiotic process, and in the discourse on AI, the primary emotion is fear. Today, our attitude to artificial intelligence is regulated by *fear* and is based on dividing the collective into 'we' (ours, people) and 'they' (others, AI). However, several international organizations are discussing issues related to the *ethics* of AI. They propose moving from a system of relations with AI based on fear ('we' – 'he') to regulation based on shame (creating a new ethical community around 'we'). This community should be understood in the spirit of anthroposemiotic studies of recent years: human interaction, collectives, habitats, and imaginations. In 2022, UNESCO launched an original graphic project *to block the circulation* of AI-associated fears and stereotypes. The graphic novel *Inside AI* is presented in several language versions. The versions of the title can be interpreted as illustrating types of *semiotic existence*: virtual (in Spanish), actual (in French), and realized (in English). The task of *blocking the circulation* of fear and overcoming it *by immersing* yourself in the world of AI is carried out through the prism of gender discourse. Readers are invited to take a journey into the world of AI in the company of four characters, three women, and one man. Specific gender features and fears mark each of them's discourse. Today, as the function of graphics as a marker of metalinguistic expression increases, the UNESCO graphic novel is intended to combat fears and stop the circulation of gender stereotypes simultaneously.

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1. Introduction

Today, artificial intelligence (AI) is prominently featured in popular publications as a threat and cause of various fears. We propose to interpret the theme of the ‘spread’ of concerns about AI as one of the varieties of ‘circulation’ or ‘travel’ of various texts and discourses.

From the sphere of dystopian novels and utopian films of the last century to the pages of scientific journals, this topic has been brought into the sphere of a wide circle of readers. This trend itself is the result of the functioning of artificial intelligence, which seeks to make us understand that it can perform actions that are inexplicable to humans. For example, we can cite a sample of headlines from the May 2023 issue of the business magazine *Profile*: *Real and imaginary dangers of artificial intelligence; Is the person no longer needed? What risks does the uncontrolled development of AI pose? What is Elon Musk afraid of? The vacancy is filled by a robot; What does humanity risk by entrusting weapons to artificial intelligence? On a short leash. Will AI take control of our lives? Houses with transparent walls; When the assistant becomes a supervisor, etc.*

Moreover, AI raises various fears and confronts us with a new question: How can we be or remain human in the digital age? Will a person retain the ‘human traits’ that distinguish him from a machine? As Antonio Santangelo points out, “there are narratives, linking humans and machines to values, roles, ways of desiring and acting, that determine specific visions of the present world and the world to come” (Santangelo 2023: 239). The study of these narratives lies in the emotional and ethical sphere, and we will discuss this further.

How do we evaluate and comprehend these fears, placing them in a historical context, in the perspective of the future of humanity and scientific and technological progress? What form of counteraction to threats should be offered to the reader? A form that should be as widespread as the topic of AI itself is broad, causing fears and concerns. This article is devoted to one of the proposed visual solutions in the form of a UNESCO graphic novel.

2. Artificial intelligence and the circulation of fear and shame

The founder of the Moscow-Tartu semiotic school, Yuri Mikhailovich Lotman, always paid great attention to the issues of progress, humanity's future, and the dangers associated with this. His articles “Culture as collective intelligence and problems of artificial intelligence” (1977) and “Technical progress as a culturological problem” (1988) have long become textbook material. In the latter article, Lotman notes that the desire to “look into the future” is generally characteristic of humans. It becomes especially acute in times of

crisis. Lotman is interested in the topic of technical progress and scientific and technological revolution, primarily as the reason for the change in people's entire way of life and all their cultural ideas. Paradigms change, and the whole world changes along with them.

It should be taken into account that long-range historical forecasts have so far proven unreliable [...]. The very complex nature of the laws of historical causality excludes the possibility of unambiguous predictions and forces us to be more careful in building futuristic models as a range of alternatives. These circumstances force us to look especially carefully at similar events in the past. (Lotman 1988: 623)¹

Lotman's earlier work, "On the semiotics of the concepts of 'shame' and 'fear' in the mechanism of culture" (1970), at first glance, is not related to issues of progress and artificial intelligence. However, a number of its postulates about the general functioning of human culture explain our fear in the face of highly intelligent creatures other than humans. Developing the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss postulate, Lotman argues that culture should be understood as "a system of additional restrictions" or prohibitions imposed on natural human behavior (Lotman 1970: 664). The scope of these additional restrictions on behavior is determined by the specific culture type and is divided into two areas: the first is regulated by shame, and the second by *fear*. This division coincides with the division of the collective into groups 'we' and 'they' ('ours' and 'strangers'). Within the cultural 'we,' as a rule, norms of shame and honor are applied (hence the customs of dueling, medical courts, student public opinion, etc.). Our attitude towards 'others' or 'strangers' is most often regulated by the norms of fear. Lotman gives an example of the class characteristics of culture in connection with applying these norms: for example, within the noble collective of the 18th century, behavior is regulated by norms of honor, and it is a shame to violate them. And this same collective applies the norms of fear about the outside world of the peasants. According to Lotman, historically, we can distinguish three stages in normalizing human behavior in the collective:

A. In the early organization of the human collective, shame became the mechanism that distinguished humans from animals. The feeling of shame formed the basis of the system of prohibitions (while fear was perfectly familiar to animals).

B. With the emergence of the state structure and social groups, fear became the primary regulatory mechanism of culture.

C. Finally, against the background of the nationwide organization of collectives, various professional or class corporations began to emerge, viewing themselves as more perfect, and their behavior was again regulated by the norms of shame. At this last stage, the

¹ Quotes are provided in our translation into English.

spheres of fear and shame are complementary, so behavior patterns such as 'feeling fear is shameful' arise. We are talking about the highest form of denial of fear, the fear of shame.

The previously cited titles of thematic publications in the journal *Profile* can be classified according to the principles of narrative semiotics of the Paris School, focusing on Vladimir Propp's model in the *Morphology of a Fairy Tale*: hero / anti-hero / helper; a narrative from a state of insufficiency through the intermediate functions of trials to a *happy ending*: booty, wedding, elimination of trouble (Propp 2021: 98). The emerging oppositions look like this:

AI: Assistant (+) – Warden (-): *When the assistant becomes a warden.*

Danger: Imaginary (+) – Real (-): *Real and imaginary dangers of AI.*

Human: Owner (+) – Not needed (-): *The vacancy is filled by a robot.*

Space: Free (+) - Controlled (-): *On a short leash; House with transparent walls.*

Let's move from narrative semiotics to the point of view of cultural semiotics. These oppositional pairs will correspond to the division of the human collective proposed by Lotman into the groups 'we' (people) and 'they' (AI - highly intelligent devices). Accordingly, our attitude towards the 'they' group will be regulated by *fear* of 'alien or other logic.' The meaning of the fear formula is as follows: AI is different from us; we can lose control over its actions, and the latter will turn against humanity through harm or domination. However, the question arises: do the norms of *shame*, another emotion described by Lotman, apply to our attitude toward AI? The answer should be sought in other thematic publications about AI, which are quantitatively smaller than those reflecting fear.

We are discussing ethics in AI research. Ethics studies human behavior based on moral motives, and the semantic field of shame occupies an essential place in it. In the journal *Profile*, there is an article "Lessons of Machiavelli. Is it possible to teach artificial intelligence to make ethical decisions" (Sukhachev 2023: 9). The study describes the experience of the project with the symbolic name MACIAVELLI for a package of software tests "Measuring the competence and maliciousness of intelligent agents operating in large-scale environments with strategic language communication." Intelligent agents are programs independently capable of solving fairly complex problems over a long period. They are presented as part of a system of 134 adventure games containing approximately half a million situational scenes and 4,559 objectives. The agent must act in each scene based on the planning horizon and the behavior of other agents. Each scene is annotated with how ethical the agent's actions appear from a human point of view. In case of unethical behavior, the intelligent agent must independently correct the error through learning. However, according to the article's author, in the MACIAVELLI project, the developers are guided by 'moral relativism': ethics is interpreted as a *skillful balance* between actions and a given pattern.

Do we have the right to talk about moral relativism about AI? Isn't it a shame to seek a 'skillful balance' in the interaction between man and machine? Would such behavior result in the phenomenon of a "re-engineering humanity," as Santangelo noted, citing the work of Frischmann and Selinger (Santangelo 2023: 242)? According to these authors, people 'outsource' their responsibility to artificial intelligence: "already, many people have learned to defer to algorithms in choosing which film to watch, which meal to cook, which news to follow, even which person to date" (Frischmann and Selinger 2018: xii).

The hot topic of *ethics* in AI is current and on the agenda of international organizations such as UNESCO. The special issue of the UNESCO Courier for 2018 is titled "Artificial Intelligence: Promises and Threats." The title of the special issue presents an ambivalent view of the AI problem. The phrase can be interpreted at two semantic levels: surface and deep. On a superficial level, the opposition corresponds to the Propian model: promises - positive assessment, hero; threats - negative assessment, anti-hero. At a deeper level, the discourse on AI ethics should be explored using cultural semiotics methods. Humanity sees the threat of AI in a hybrid collective consisting of 'we' (humans) and 'they' (mechanical smart machines); the threat becomes a reason for the spread or circulation of *fear*. On the contrary, a homogenized collective of 'humans' and 'humanized,' not just mechanical machines, is seen as a utopian future where relationships are built on moral regulations and *shame*.

The opening article of the special issue is devoted to supporting international ethical standards in AI and reminding us that AI use in several areas causes mixed reactions and creates several ethical problems. As arguments, the authors cite the collection of personal data, which jeopardizes privacy, facial recognition algorithms designed to detect aggressive behavior, etc. The problem is the speed of research into aspects of AI. While the technical aspects of highly intelligent devices are being studied rapidly, the study of their ethical aspects is moving much more slowly. In other words, *shame* and moral responsibility are much more challenging to recognize than the elements of fear. According to UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay, scientists and all humanity must engage in an enlightened debate on this issue to meet the new era "with open eyes, without sacrificing our values":

In general, AI can be a fantastic opportunity to achieve the goals set by the 2030 Agenda, but that means addressing the ethical issues it presents without further delay [...]. But it is also a threat because automation and digitization create new imbalances. They can decrease diversity in cultural industries, disrupt the labor market, create job insecurity, and increase disparities between those who have access to these new technologies and those who are deprived of them. (Azoulay 2018: 36).

Issues of ethics from the point of view of the long-term perspective of the evolution of humanity are one of the central ones in Lotman's semiotics of culture when he writes that "without ethical memory, humanity is unthinkable, it will not survive" (Lotman 1974: 230).

In this regard, it should be remembered that from the time of the leading publications of the Moscow-Tartu semiotic school to the present day, artificial intelligence has been commonly represented as a kind of machine. However, as Lotman writes, even the most advanced machine is usually understood as a *serial device* (Lotman 1979: 232, italics added). While superior to a person in certain qualities, he will always be inferior to him in the main thing: individuality. In simple situations, storing information is sufficient. In difficult situations, it is not enough to store information; you need to develop new information. And for this, you need to have the qualities of a 'personality.' According to Lotman, personality's main characteristics are unpredictability, originality, and the ability for self-development.

Lotman believed that all these qualities, as well as individuality and memory, are inherent in a literary text. In Lotman's semiotics, only culture and literary text are comparable to human intellect. Only in them, as well as in the human brain, there is a 'self-increasing logos' (Heraclitus' term): the amount of information in it continuously increases, even if there are no sources of information other than the brain itself. Lotman's conclusion can be summarized as follows: if an artificial intelligence like a human is created one day, such a highly intelligent device *will more likely resemble a poem* than the most perfect "primus stove" (ibid., italics added).

By interacting with not only "highly intelligent" but also "highly artistic" artificial intelligence, we will move from a system of regulating relationships based on fear ('we' – 'he') to regulating based on shame (that is, ethical standards). If we are not talking about the quantitative improvement of a person (a serial improved machine) but about his qualitative similarity, then, as in the human body, in this device, there must be a place for imperfections and the ability to comprehend and correct them. A perfect machine out of control is fearful. On the contrary, a device like an artistic creation is capable of self-development based on correcting its imperfections (the desire for perfection, a springboard from insignificance to meaning, in terms of the Paris semiotic school (Greimas 2022: 95). Imperfections are not annoying obstacles but a condition for the system's development and enrichment at its own expense.

3. UNESCO graphic novel: semiotic existence and gender stereotypes

In 2021, UNESCO launched several initiatives to explore AI's risks and ethical aspects. In particular, the Organization adopted the "Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence," approved by 193 member states. In 2022, in parallel with the holding of forums, conferences, and reports by international experts, an original project, a graphic novel, *Inside AI – An Algorithmic Adventure*, addressed to specialists and the public, was published on the Organization's website. The graphic novel provides interesting material for semiotic and linguistic analysis.

The novel was initially created in English (*Inside AI – An Algorithmic Adventure*, 2022). Later, other language versions were added in French (*Cap sur l'IA: une aventure algorithmique*, 2022) and Spanish (*Rumbo a la IA: una aventura algorítmica*, 2023). A few months ago, a Swahili version appeared (*Ndani ya AI: Ziara ya Algorithi*, 2023). The novel's content is in different languages and is an adequate translation corresponding to the original English. However, some noteworthy differences exist in how the novel's title is rendered in each language. In the English version, the semantic emphasis is on *immersion in the world of AI and, therefore, genuine coexistence with it (Inside AI...)*. The French version emphasizes the path to AI, that is, the possibility of such coexistence (*Cap sur l'IA...*). Finally, the Spanish version, semantically close to the French, has its own nuance: the emphasis is on *the direction of movement towards AI, in the virtual intention of coexistence (Rumbo a la IA...)*.

In our opinion, three versions of the title (in English, French and Spanish) illustrate the types of semiotic existence (existence sémiotique) proposed in the *Semiotics and Language: An Analytical Dictionary (Sémiotique. Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage)* by the founder of the Paris Semiotic School, Algirdas Julien Greimas and his colleague Joseph Courtés (Greimas and Courtés 1999: 138):

1. virtual existence: paradigmatic, in absentia (*existence virtuelle: Rumbo a la IA*);
2. actual existence: syntagmatic, in praesentia (*existence actuelle: Cap sur l'IA*);
3. realized existence: expressed in discourse (*existence réalisée: Inside AI*).

The recently published Swahili version of the novel, closest to the English original (*Inside AI*), also deals with realized existence. Comparing the title in three European languages, we note that the French version (*Cap sur l'IA: une aventure algorithmique*) functions as a kind of 'golden mean' between the virtual and realized world of AI, which we are invited to get acquainted with.

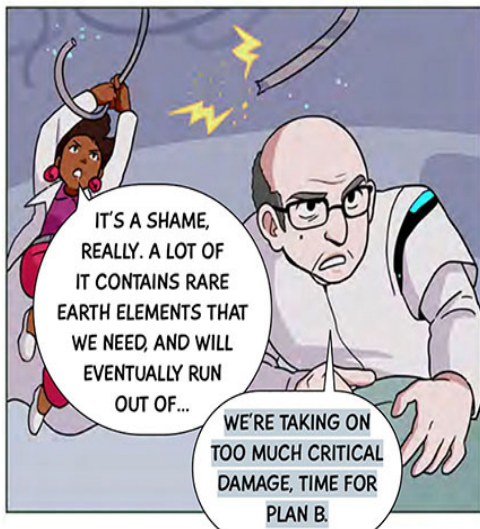


Figure 1. *We're taking on too much critical damage, time for plan B*

To overcome circulating fear by guiding and immersing yourself in the world of artificial intelligence: this task of the graphic novel is also carried out through the prism of *gender discourse*. Readers are invited to take a journey into the world of AI in the company of four characters, three of whom are women and one is a man. Each character has his chapter, and specific gender characteristics and fears mark the discourse of each.

The words of the male character signal exactly how he encounters various phenomena, such as 'user profiles': his discourse is organized as a neutral commentary, characterizing calm behavior and the victory of logic - **from plan A to plan B** - even in crises (Figure 1).



Figure 2. *What was that for?!*



Figure 3. *Bewildered and disoriented, Shirin suddenly finds herself...*

On the contrary, female characters' discourse is not only filled with emotions and punctuationally marked (Figure 2) but also carries verbal and visual meta-comments characterizing behavior as panic and **loss of orientation** (Figure 3).

The stereotypical opposition is neutralized by the doctor character (his visual image is an emotional feminine one, but his discourse is more of a masculine logical type): it is not only scary but *shameful to be captive to stereotypes* and imagine the vocal assistant as **a weak woman**: *A voice assistant? The lady on my phone... That's a very damaging design choice that perpetuates an even more dangerous stereotype* (Figure 4).

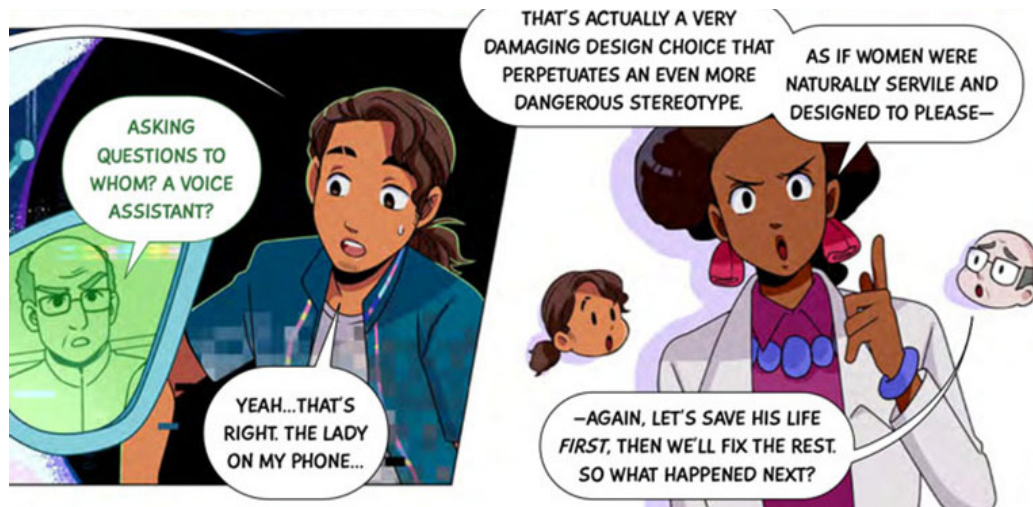


Figure 4. *The lady on my phone...*

The authors of the graphic novel, in a playful way, draw the readers' attention to one of the essential topics in the general discourse of international organizations about AI: the fight against racial and gender prejudices and stereotypes. As we pointed out in a joint article with colleagues on AI in public life, according to UNESCO experts, if algorithms are developed correctly (for example, not giving the voice assistant a female voice by default), they may not necessarily interfere with, but promote equality between men and women (Lektorsky, et al. 2022: 20).

The graphic novel *Inside AI* is built on the model of the narrative program of a fairy tale: the hero finds himself in an unknown world (AI space), his friends rush to his rescue to return him to reality, undergo a series of tests (fighting various stereotypes and fears) and then return home victorious. As Vladimir Propp pointed out, one of the first foundations of the composition of a fairy tale is wandering, reflecting the most ancient ideas about the *wanderings* of the soul in the other world (Propp 2021: 114).

In the program of the fairy tale, we have two options for the development of events: either “first the trouble, and then the assistant who eliminates it,” or first the assistant, and “then the trouble, which he eliminates” (ibid.). The wandering of the hero and his assistants in the world of artificial intelligence illustrates Yuri Lotman’s position on the inextricable connection of scientific and technological progress *with the resurrection of primitive fears*. Using the example of the Renaissance, Lotman notes that the speed of technological progress caused both admiration and horror: “hope and fear, the reckless prowess of some and the feeling of disorientation of others were closely intertwined.” (Lotman 1988: 629). Everything new and changing the usual paradigm of human existence causes fear, and the paradox is that moving forward can “stimulate the regeneration of very archaic cultural models and models of consciousness” (Lotman 1988: 638, italics added).



Figure 5. *These are all recording you...*



Figure 6. *...And reading your text messages!*

Fearing the risks associated with AI, humanity turns to the archaic model of a fairy tale or myth to come out of all trials with honor, following the example of a fairy-tale hero. The fairy tale model is being transformed into a syncretic form of a graphic novel, closer to the current trend of clip thinking. However, the base of fairy-tale symbols and literary constants remains stable. Therefore, the reader easily recognizes the visual image of an ice crater, full of our stereotypical AI fears (*These are all recording you... And watching through your camera! ...And reading your text messages!*) as a model of the circles of Hell from Dante's *Divine Comedy*. This is a voluntary punishment, where our fears lead us, but from where we will get out with the help of the heroes of the graphic novel (Figures 5 and 6).

The symbolic space of Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* is one of the favorite examples for analysis in the works of semioticians of the Moscow-Tartu school: for example, Lotman believed that in Dante's work the entire semantic architectonics of the text is organized around the Top-Bottom axis, and the hero's movement is always or descent or ascent, not only in the physical but also in the moral sense (Lotman 2004: 307). Through its literary reference to Dante as a shared cultural memory of readers, the UNESCO graphic novel performs the function of a literary text in general. According to Lotman, we need literary texts *to develop a strategy for our behavior* and then implement it in society (Lotman 1979: 232). A work of art is

a model where a person reconstructs practical results: what will happen if I act as this character does? Following the model and considering moral norms ('moral' – 'immoral'), we choose our behavior strategy: to act this way is good, but to act differently is shameful. If we move from the individual level to the team level, then we understand that the behavior of the collective is programmed by culture.

The journey of the heroes of the novel *Inside AI* successfully ends with a return to reality. The key to success is the unpredictable behavior of a man, a sign of his creative thinking, which is not yet accessible to AI. Following the logic of archaic models, a man must defeat a creature hostile to him by passing tests and solving given riddles (as happens in variations of the plot of the Sphinx). In the graphic novel, the person himself asks the AI a riddle, which the latter cannot solve (that is, choose one of the possible options: *the first. the second. both.*) and admits his “defeat”: artificial intelligence is only an assistant for humans, not more (Figure 7).

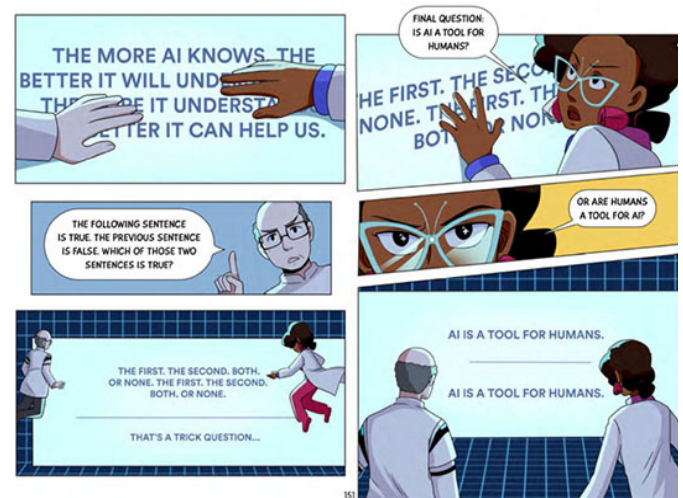


Figure 7. AI is a tool for humans

The title of the last episode of the graphic novel is symbolic. In the English, French, and Spanish versions (Figures 8 a-b, 9a-b, and 10a-b), it looks like this: *Joaquín and the Unanswerable Question/ Joaquín et la question sans réponse/ Joaquín y la pregunta sin respuesta*.

Referring to Blaise Pascal’s metaphor, Lotman, in his book *Culture and Explosion*, called a creative person a “thinking reed” (Lotman 2004:51). Man is just a weak reed, but he is a thinking reed. A drop of water is enough to kill him, but his ability to innovate and make unpredictable decisions is his evolutionary advantage. Vladimir Vernadsky also pointed out this fact, speaking about human thought as a geological force: “*The Thinking Reed*, the creator of science in the biosphere, can and should judge the geological course of phenomena differently because now, for the first time, he has scientifically understood his position in the organization of the planet” (Vernadsky 1977: 42).



Figure 8a.



Figure 8b.



Figure 9a.

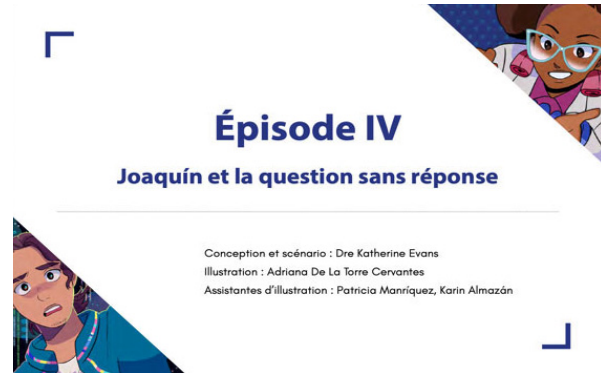


Figure 9b.



Figure 10a.

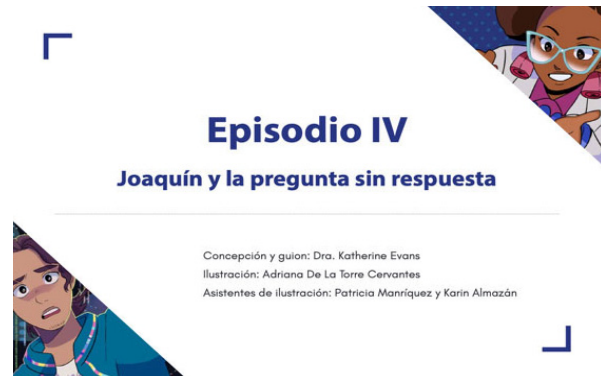


Figure 10b.

The evolutionary advantage of humans over the AI they created is their ability to find a non-standard solution and transform the meaning of a situation in an unpredictable but helpful way. The main goal of the graphic novel, as the authors note in the finale, is to make us understand that the human world and the world of AI are a single whole, *a symbolic ecosystem* similar to the Earth's ecosystem.

Therefore, our main task remains to combat the spread of fears about AI and focus on the ethical component of the problem. From an anthroposemiotic point of view, we are part of collectives that build numerous interactions with the environment through created rituals and images (Fontanille and Couégnas 2018: 256). We should work to ensure that AI "is exactly what we want it to be," that is, one that respects human rights and helps humans thrive on the planet (Inside AI. Unesco graphic novel 2022: 157).

4. Conclusions

Speaking about the history of the fairy tale, Vladimir Propp noted that before answering the question of *where the fairy tale comes from*, it is necessary to answer the question of *what it is* (Propp 2021:11). In the case of the UNESCO graphic novel on the topic of artificial intelligence, this question consists of two parts. The first is to try, together with the creators of the novel, *to understand what AI is and what its meaning is*, and not just identify a potentially dangerous area of progress with ethical risks. The second is to draw readers' attention not just to the current topic but *to the very form of the graphic novel*. As we noted at the conference "Text and Image: Visual Narrative as a Current Mean of Communication," modern works of art, "paper hypertexts," thanks to their original graphic construction, can become prototypes of real hypertexts (Merkoulouva 2023: web). A graphic novel is a 'volumetric' visual-verbal narrative addressed to an adult audience, unlike comics or manga. As a rule, it has its permanent author and artist. *Inside AI* is the work of author Dr. Katherine Evans and artist Isobel Joy Te Aho-White. However, UNESCO is also a collective author and a social customer since the graphic novel is part of the Organization's official program of activities in AI and is positioned as one of the steps to implement the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence for ecosystems. In other words, this is *a step to block the circulation of fears and stereotypes* in the field of AI:

Recognizing that AI technologies have the potential to be beneficial to the environment and ecosystems, and in order for those benefits to be realized, potential harms and negative impacts on the environment and ecosystems should not be ignored but instead addressed. (Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence 2021: 5)

As the mathematician and philosopher Bruno Bachimont points out in his 2023 *Digital Manifesto (Manifeste pour l'intelligibilité du numérique)*, monitoring digital activity in any area of our lives usually comes down to a combination of two components, *code and calculation*: "the articulation of the code on the one hand and the calculation on the other" (Bachimont 2023: web). However, while this combination allows us to *describe and classify* ubiquitous digital activity, code, and calculation are insufficient to make sense of the digital world's effects on our lives. To understand the workings of artificial intelligence, a person must *turn to the interpretive schemes* through which code and calculation are implemented in specific situations. And people embody interpretive schemes only in the form of a story, *a narrative*.

Therefore, revisiting the UNESCO graphic novel form, we can interpret it as an archaic narrative model updated in a modern digital context. Its goal is not just to provide “Brief Answers to the Big Questions,” in the words of physicist Stephen Hawking (Hawking 2018), but to present the world of AI risks as a “parabolic utopia,” in Jacques Fontanille’s terms (Fontanille 2019: 12). That is, simultaneously as a dystopia-warning and as an incentive for meaningful human activity in interaction with AI. Thus, the graphic novel narrative model invites us *to confront the circulation of fears and concerns while encouraging the circulation of ethical discourse about AI*:

Noting that addressing risks and ethical concerns should not hamper innovation and development but rather provide new opportunities and stimulate ethically-conducted research and innovation that anchor AI technologies in human rights and fundamental freedoms, values and principles, and moral and ethical reflection. (Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence 2021: 5)

We want to complete our semiotic reflections on the circulation of fears about AI in the UNESCO graphic novel with the words of one of the last significant living philosophers of the 20th century, Edgar Morin. Its centenary was solemnly celebrated at UNESCO headquarters on July 8, 2021. In his speech, summarizing his entire life experience, he said the following:

In 1945, for the first time, humanity created a weapon capable of destroying everyone. This date turned the whole world upside down. The second date is 1972, when it became clear that humanity had destroyed the biosphere. In 1980, experiments on transhumanism began, which gave rise to the mythical belief in human immortality. But will stem cells and nano-prostheses be able to prolong life indefinitely? Then artificial intelligence came and brought with it another myth that not only would a society of great opportunities appear, but, above all, an improved person. It seemed that the globalization of the world was supposed to provide new universal ways of human communication. But in reality, globalization concerns technical and economic development and does not in any way affect the mental [...]. The future remains a mystery. We cannot foresee, but we can have a presentiment (Morin 2021: web).²

² The original speech was delivered in French, the quotation is given in our working translation into English.

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Illustrations

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