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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

11A • DINCĂ ANDREI

In the last decades, computer advancements made the concept of logical complex algorithms that are able to change their way of working possible. This is also called “artificial intelligence”. Nowadays people use computer programs very often because they are really useful. But should they be made even better?

Artificial intelligence has been of great help in many cases. A program that is capable of decrypting messages very fast is extremely useful in military operations and for national security. AI was also used to solve complex puzzles or play complicated games, such as chess. Today it is extremely important for a chess player to have an AI that helps him analyse his moves after the match. Chess AIs have gotten incredibly powerful over the years, and now they are capable of beating every human player, even the world champion. In fact, they have been so good for more than two decades, when the famous supercomputer “Deep Blue” was able to defeat the world champion Garry Kasparov during a special championship. AIs are currently used as assistants, such as Alexa, Siri and the Google Assistant, who sometimes make life easier. Some of them have also been incorporated in “smart houses” that work somehow independently and based on computer programs.

On the other hand, one could argue, AI cannot be properly named intelligence, as it resembles the human intelligence in little to no ways. Human intelligence has, as the ancient philosophers have said best, the principle of reason, and that is the unique power of drawing conclusions based on premises. This, free will, and the human conception of morality cannot be “emulated” by programs. Modern writers have observed this as well, and perhaps the most well-known one is C. S. Lewis, who made his argument in his book called “Miracles”. AI is simply a program and nothing more. It always functions as it is coded. For that reason, the so-called AI “art makers” do not actually create anything new, as they are not capable of this, but heavily plagiarize. Some even say the AI is dangerous because it makes people lose their jobs and that it cannot be objectively trusted. Also, the concept of an AI ruling over a state, or a company is complete fiction, as the AI will work as programmed and is not, and never will be, capable of reason, will or any of the characteristics of a real being. AIs are best when used for repetitive and boring tasks that would take too much for a human to perform, such as predictions or calculations based on mathematics and cannot, and never will, resemble the real process of human thinking in any way. The word “robot”, which is another term, more rarely used, for AIs, comes from the Slavic word “robota”/”orbota”, which literally translates to “slave”. Even the most apparently complex operations of AIs are, in fact, repetitions of the simplest expressions possible.

In conclusion, many arguments can be made to support AIs, such as the help given to humans and the fast calculation capabilities, but also against, such as the fact that it is not really intelligent and most certainly not capable of thinking, and that it does more harm than good. Personally, I agree with the “against” position and I think that humanity could spend the resources it has in a much more meaningful manner, such as helping the poor and expanding the education system. Even if some AIs are useful, the reality is that they are most certainly overestimated and wrongly named

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

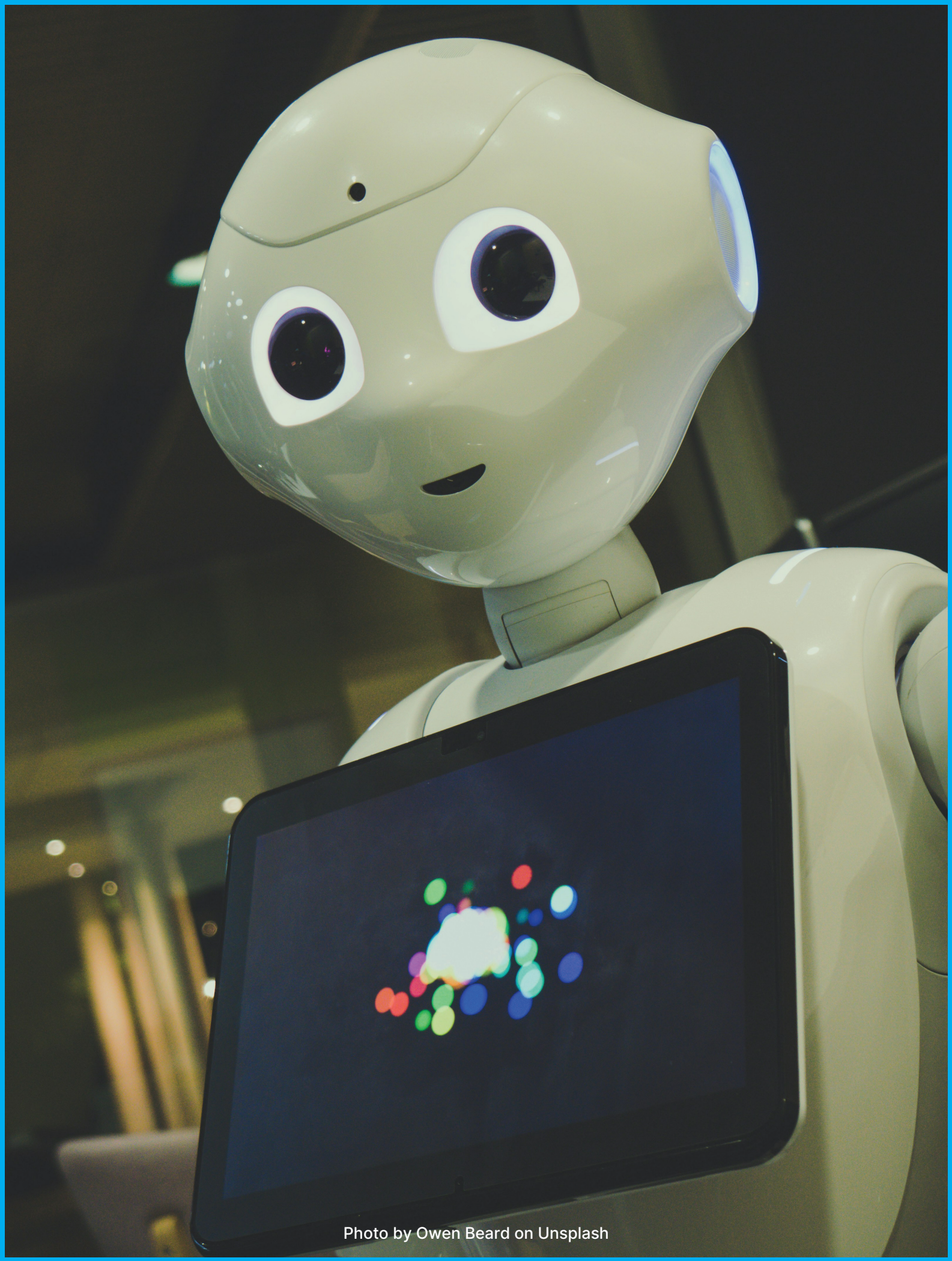


Photo by Owen Beard on Unsplash

THE CHERNOBYL DISASTER

10E • STAN TUDOR

The Chernobyl disaster was a nuclear accident that occurred on 26 April 1986 at the No. 4 reactor in the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, near the city of Pripyat in the north of the Ukrainian SSR in the Soviet Union. The accident occurred during a safety test meant to measure the ability of the steam turbine to power the emergency feedwater pumps of an RBMK-type nuclear reactor in the event of a simultaneous loss of external power and major coolant leak.

THE SAFETY TEST

The turbine run-down energy capability still needed to be confirmed experimentally, and previous tests had ended unsuccessfully. An initial test carried out in 1982 indicated that the excitation voltage of the turbine-generator was insufficient; it did not maintain the desired magnetic field after the turbine trip. The electrical system was modified, and the test was repeated in 1984 but again proved unsuccessful. In 1985, the test was conducted a third time but also yielded no results due to a problem with the recording equipment. The test procedure was to be run again in 1986 and was scheduled to take place during a controlled power-down of reactor No. 4.
The test procedure was intended to run as follows:

TEST PREPARATION:

• The test would take place prior to a scheduled reactor shutdown
• The reactor thermal power was to be reduced to between 700 MW and 1000 MW (to allow for adequate cooling, as the turbine would be spun at operating speed whilst disconnected from the power grid)
• The steam-turbine generator was to be run at normal operating speed
• Four out of eight main circulating pumps were to be supplied with off-site power, while the other four would be powered by the turbine
Electrical Test:
• When the correct conditions were achieved, the steam supply to the turbine generator would be closed off, and the reactor would be shut down
• The voltage provided by the coasting turbine would be measured, along with the voltage and RPMs of the four main circulating pumps being powered by the turbine
• When the emergency generators supplied full electrical power, the turbine generator would be allowed to continue free-wheeling down

The test was to be conducted during the day-shift of 25 April 1986 as part of a scheduled reactor shut down. The day shift crew had been instructed in advance on the reactor operating conditions to run the test and in addition, a special team of electrical engineers was present to conduct the one-minute test of the new voltage regulating system once the correct conditions had been reached.

Preparations for the test were carried out, including the disabling of the emergency core cooling system. Meanwhile, another regional power station unexpectedly went offline. At 14:00 the Kiev electrical grid controller requested that the further reduction of Chernobyl's output be postponed, as power was needed to satisfy the peak evening demand, so the test was postponed. Soon, the day shift was replaced by the evening shift.

At 23:04, the Kiev grid controller allowed the reactor shutdown to resume. This delay had some serious consequences: the day shift had long since departed, the evening shift was also preparing to leave, and the night shift would not take over until midnight, well into the job. According to plan, the test should have been finished during the day shift, and the night shift would only have had to maintain decay heat cooling systems in an otherwise shut-down plant. The night shift had very limited time to prepare for and carry out the experiment.
Anatoly Dyatlov, deputy chief-engineer of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, was present to supervise and direct the test. He was one of the test's chief authors and he was the highest-ranking individual present. Unit Shift Supervisor Aleksandr Akimov was in charge of the Unit 4 night shift, and Leonid Toptunov was the Senior Reactor Control Engineer responsible for the reactor's operational regimen, including the movement of the control rods. 25 year old Toptunov had worked independently as a senior engineer for approximately three months.
Unexpected drop of the reactor power

The test plan called for a gradual decrease in reactor power to a thermal level of 700–1000 MW, and an output of 720 MW was reached at 00:05 on 26 April. However, due to the reactor's production of a fission byproduct, xenon-135, which is a reaction-inhibiting neutron absorber, power continued to decrease in the absence of further operator action, a process known as reactor poisoning. In steady-state operation, this is avoided because xenon-135 is "burned off" as quickly as it is created from decaying iodine-135 by the absorption of neutrons from the ongoing chain reaction, becoming highly stable xenon-136. With the reactor power reduced, high quantities of previously produced iodine-135 were decaying into the neutron-absorbing xenon-135 faster than the reduced neutron flux could "burn it off". Xenon poisoning in this context made reactor control more difficult but was a predictable and well-understood phenomenon during such a power reduction.
When the reactor power had decreased to approximately 500 MW, the reactor power control was switched from LAR (Local Automatic Regulator) to the Automatic Regulators, in order to manually maintain the required power level. AR-1 then activated, removing all four of AR-1's Control Rods automatically, but AR-2 failed to activate due to an imbalance in its ionization chambers. In response, Toptunov reduced power to stabilize the Automatic Regulators' ionization sensors. The result was a sudden power drop to an unintended near-shutdown state, with a power output of 30 MW or less.

REACTOR CONDITIONS PRIMING wvvTHE ACCIDENT
When a power level of 200 MW was reattained, preparation for the experiment continued, although the power level was much lower than the prescribed 700 MW. As part of the test program, two additional main circulating (coolant) pumps were activated at 01:05. The increased coolant flow lowered the overall core temperature and reduced the existing steam voids in the core. Because water absorbs neutrons better than steam, the neutron flux and reactivity decreased. The operators responded by removing more manual control rods to maintain power. It was around this time that the number of control rods inserted in the reactor fell below the required value of 15.
Accident

At 01:23:04, the test began. Four of the eight main circulating pumps (MCP) were to be powered by voltage from the coasting turbine, while the remaining four pumps received electrical power from the grid as normal. The steam to the turbines was shut off, beginning a run-down of the turbine generator. The diesel generators started and sequentially picked up loads; the generators were to have completely picked up the MCPs' power needs by 01:23:43. As the momentum of the turbine generator decreased, so did the power it produced for the pumps. The water flow rate decreased, leading to increased formation of steam voids in the coolant flowing up through the fuel pressure tubes.

At 01:23:40, as recorded by the SKALA centralized control system, a scram (emergency shutdown) of the reactor was initiated as the experiment was wrapping up. The scram was started when the AZ-5 button of the reactor emergency protection system was pressed: this engaged the drive mechanism on all control rods to fully insert them, including the manual control rods that had been withdrawn earlier.

When the AZ-5 button was pressed, the insertion of control rods into the reactor core began. The control rod insertion mechanism moved the rods at 0.4 meters per second, so that the rods took 18 to 20 seconds to travel the full height of the core. An emergency scram could initially increase the reaction rate in the lower part of the core.

A few seconds into the scram, a power spike did occur, and the core overheated, causing some of the fuel rods to fracture. Some have speculated that this also blocked the control rod columns, jamming them at one-third insertion. Within three seconds the reactor output rose above 530 MW.

As the scram continued, the reactor output jumped to around 30,000 MW thermal, 10 times its normal operational output, the indicated last reading on the power meter on the control panel. Some estimate the power spike may have gone 10 times higher than that. It was not possible to reconstruct the precise sequence of the processes that led to the destruction of the reactor and the power unit building, but a steam explosion, like the explosion of a steam boiler from excess vapour pressure, appears to have been the next event. There is a general understanding that it was explosive steam pressure from the damaged fuel channels escaping into the reactor's exterior cooling structure that caused the explosion that destroyed the reactor casing, tearing off and blasting the upper plate called the upper biological shield, to which the entire reactor assembly is fastened, through the roof of the reactor building. This is believed to be the first explosion that many heard.

A second, more powerful explosion occurred about two or three seconds after the first; this explosion dispersed the damaged core and effectively terminated the nuclear chain reaction. This explosion also compromised more of the reactor containment vessel and ejected hot lumps of graphite moderator. The ejected graphite and the demolished channels still in the remains of the reactor vessel caught fire on exposure to air, significantly contributing to the spread of radioactive fallout and the contamination of outlying areas.

After the larger explosion, several employees at the power station went outside to get a clearer view of the extent of the damage. One such survivor, Alexander Yuvchenko, recounts that once he stepped out and looked up towards the reactor hall, he saw a "very beautiful" laser-like beam of blue light caused by the ionized-air glow that appeared to be "flooding up into infinity".

The death toll

Photo by Mads Eneqvist on Unsplash

The official death toll directly attributed to Chernobyl that is recognized by the international community is just 31 people with the UN saying it could be 50. However, hundreds of thousands of "liquidators" were sent in to put out the fire at the nuclear power plant and clean up the Chernobyl site afterwards.

THE CONCEPT OF LAST THURSDAYISM AND ITS EFFECTS ON HUMANS' PERCEPTIONS OF REALITY

10A • BAICU MIRCEA

The past is represented by something that we cannot experience, but we know how it feels due to the memories that we have. However, illnesses such as Alzheimer can make the brain forget some of these memories, and in turn, forget the past. If memories can be created, but also destroyed, then this must mean that there is a place in our brain responsible with stocking up these memories. It is more than likely a skill developed by the brain in order to survive longer.

To understand Last Thursdayism, we must delve even deeper into the depths of human memories, and question exactly, if they can be made and destroyed, can they be falsified? Well, we don't know for sure if us humans can falsify the memories of other humans. But scientists have made some progress in that department, by switching the memories of two snails, so we might be getting there. The idea of falsifying one's memories is not a new concept in this world, as it has been brought up by several books, movies, people and even video games. But this same concept can be quite scary. What if you wake up and are told you lived another life than the one you remember? What if all the experiences, all the joy, all the sadness, all the sorrow, all the grief, and all the pain you felt were fake? All of those traumatic events that you had were nothing but fake. The sheer idea can make a person fall into a great state of sorrow.

Now that I've explained the idea of false memories, allow me to start presenting the main course of this essay. Last Thursdayism refers to the theory that the universe, with all of its attributes has been created by a greater power, as the name of the theory suggests, last Thursday. There are also some variations to this theory, such as Last Wednesdayism and Last Tuesdayism, but they're essentially the same thing. And now, you may be asking yourself, "The universe couldn't have been created last Thursday, I've lived for over this number of years", but before you say this, refer to what I said earlier. An omnipotent being who can create the universe could very well create memories for the past how many years you've lived on this planet and insert them into your brain. You have the idea that you've been lived all of your memories, but can you be a hundred percent sure of it? Are you sure that some unseen omnipotent force has not falsified your memories and didn't put you on this world, last Thursday?

This theory can be described as mind-wrapping, existential dread inducing and even depressive. I can understand this feeling of denial, as it is the kind of theory that would make you scared if proven true, such as Roko's Basilisk, Boltzmann Brain Theory, the Dark Forest Hypothesis, Quantum Immortality, False Vacuum Decay and many other unsettling theories. The human mind is the most interesting organ we possess, due to its ability to think. But this is why it is both a curse and a blessing. These ideas can cause harm to the person who attempts to fathom them. The harsh reality that what you were living being a lie is too much for every individual to accept. The good part about these existential dread theories is that they're just that, theories, nothing more, and nothing less. Unless we can prove them, you don't have to worry too much about them. However, it is not wise to remain ignorant to such concepts. It is important to realise that reality can be harsh and it is not always sunshine and rainbows, and an existential dread inducing idea occasionally can do no harm.

DIURNAL ZODIAC SIGNS

11H • ENE BEATRICE

Diurnal zodiac signs. What does it mean and how do you know if you are one of them?

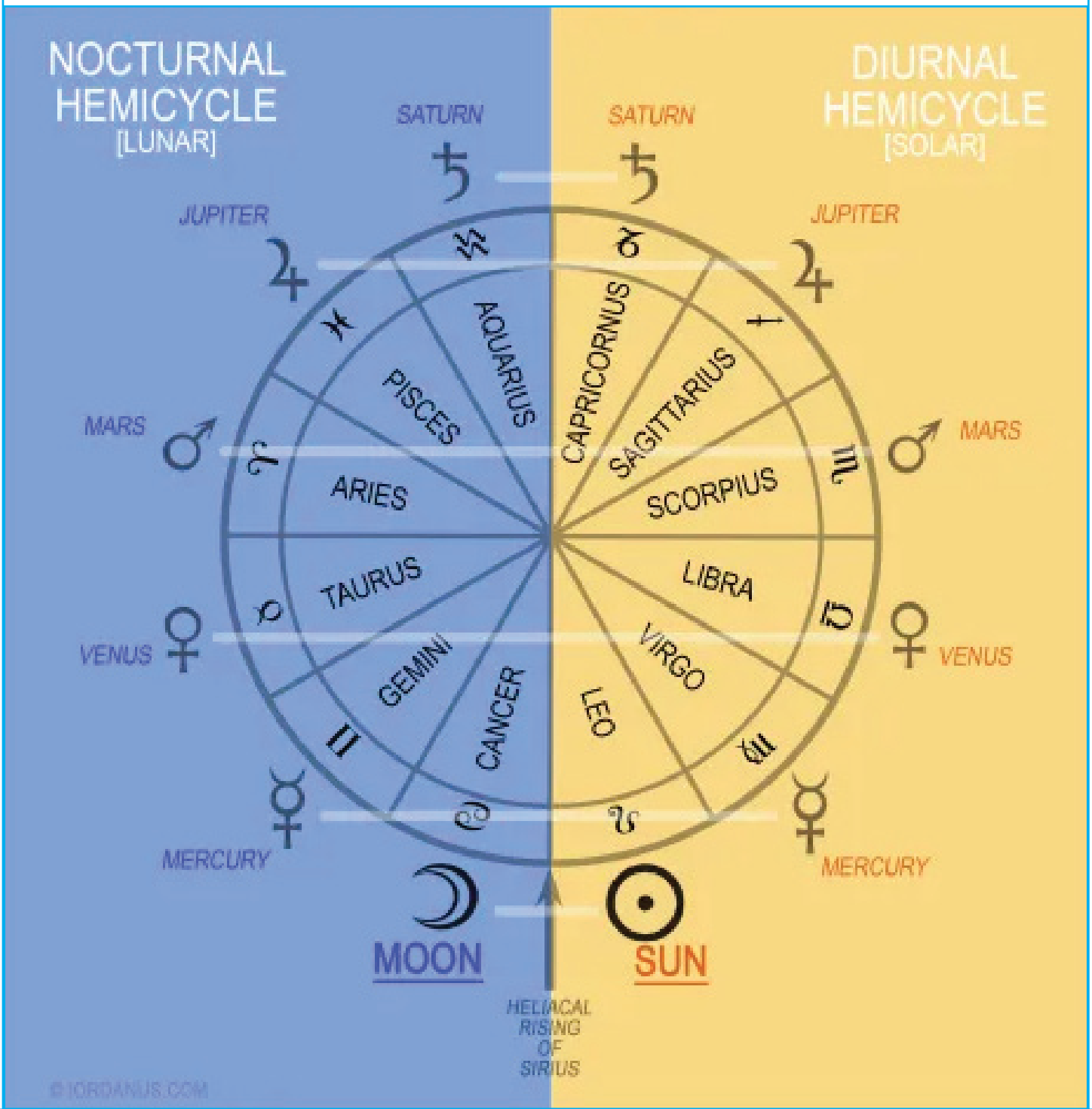
Sometimes people just don't feel like their zodiac sign, but have you ever wondered why? When we first think about astrology, we usually tend to look for predictions for our sun sign, but there's actually a whole map that makes up who we are. Depending on what we're looking for, most of the time our Moon Sign matters more, sometimes it's Venus, if we're looking for answers for love, and if we're trying to figure out how we communicate, it could be Mercury.

Why don't you feel like your zodiac sign? It has to do with the fact that you are a diurnal or nocturnal sign. But the point is, there's a lot going on in our birth charts and in our lives that goes beyond what our sun sign is. In fact, as we get older, many of us identify less with our sun sign, but have you ever heard of whether we have a day or night birth chart? It's not just about whether you were born day or night, it's about where your Sun falls in your chart. This practice is based on a lesser-known traditional astrological practice of dividing the birth chart into two sects. The first is called Diurnal, which is a daytime map, and the second is Nocturnal, representing the nocturnal map. Depending on where the Sun and your planets fall, there's a difference in how the aspects of your chart work together, which means it also affects the signs you identify with the most, and why it never seemed like your Sun Sign got it fits.

How to tell if you have a day or night map? The first thing you need to do is use a calculator to find out your birth chart, which means where all the planets were at the time of your birth. Once you've done that, find the horizontal line on your rising sign to see which side your Sun is on or, even easier, look to see what house your Sun appears in. If your Sun is above the horizontal line (or horizon) or in Houses 7-12, then you are a diurnal sign. But if your Sun is below the horizon line or in Houses 1-6, then you are a nocturnal sign. It's that simple! Those with a Day chart tend to be more extroverted and action-oriented, while if you have a Nocturnal chart, then you are more likely to use your intuition and emotions to guide you, regardless of your Sun Sign. What is also interesting is that depending on the Day or Night Chart, the planets and signs can appear a little differently, sometimes just stronger, and in other cases with completely different characteristics. This is especially important in relationships, as we often find that those where one partner has a Day chart while the other has a Nocturnal chart often find greater success and longevity in relationship, The reason this occurs is that the balance between day and night often creates the same balance in relationships; we never need someone just like us, but someone who is everything that we are not so that we can complete each other.

Diurnal characteristics. You tend to relate more to your Sun Sign and even take it to the extreme at times, especially if you were born under a fire sign like Aries. You tend to be more action-oriented and physically expressive in life. Usually always on the move or the soul of the party, there's not much that can slow you down. You like to be the center of attention, but you

can go a little too far sometimes. You have an unusual zest for life that draws others to you. If you're a night sign, you probably resonate more with your Moon Sign and can feel things even more deeply, especially if you are a water sign. You tend to be quieter and a little more withdrawn. You observe others and life quite a bit before making snap decisions, and you lead with your heart and feelings, which may not always turn out as planned. You have a mysterious side to your zodiac sign that draws others in as if under a spell. The zodiac signs that are Diurnal: Aries, Gemini, Leo, Libra, Sagittarius, Aquarius. In the end, the diurnal signs, six in number, often oppose the other six nocturnal signs. On the zodiac map, diurnal signs are dominated by positive energy and the light of the Sun, they are extroverted and strong.

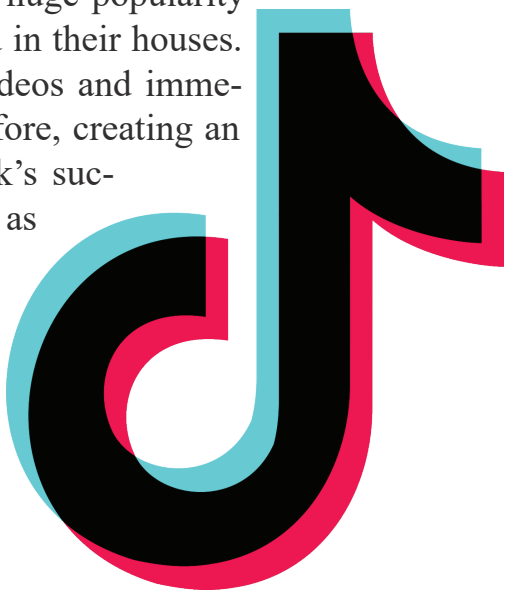


WHY SOCIAL MEDIA IS HARMFUL

10F • ALEXANDRESCU RADU

It is quite normal for a young child or even a teenager to feel some sort of temptation to use social media platforms, in fact, these sorts of websites are made out to only be a fun way to interact with your friends, family and celebrities, but unfortunately, the social media iceberg goes way deeper than what it seems to be.

Before the present times, social platforms weren't very popular and were mostly used by older people, as they weren't as accessible as they are nowadays. One of the most popular social media platforms in the past was YouTube, a simple but entertaining platform where you could watch all sorts of videos about topics you were inquired about or simply enjoyed. As the years passed by, we got to see many other social media platforms appear, such as Instagram, Twitter and Tumblr, which have had their peaks and lows throughout the years. As we entered the quarantine back in 2020, the app TikTok had a huge popularity growth due to the amount of people that we're bored locked in their houses. It was a brilliant app, one where you could watch short videos and immediately scroll on another video in case you got bored, therefore, creating an infinite loop of videos to entertain you. Because of TikTok's success, many people started preferring TikTok over YouTube as provided infinte short videos you could never get bored of, and thus YouTube's popularity slowly diminished. In the present, TikTok is the most frequently used social media platform with over 1 billion active accounts. This famous app has introduced us to a lot of short lasting trends such as fast fashion, one of fashion's worst phenomena, but also a lot of toxic trends that only made the viewers feel bad about themselves



Now, why do I think social media is bad for our brains? Please let me elaborate. Social media is a tool to make other human beings self conscious about themselves and it is a pretty toxic environment on its own. When you use big social media platforms such as Instagram and Tiktok, you are exposed to a variety of unrealistic and hard to achieve beauty standards which are purely ridiculous. For instance, there have been a handful of toxic trends on TikTok which consisted in mocking other people's features or body shape, which are aspects one has clearly no way of changing. It also does not help the fact that TikTok promotes those unrealistic beauty standards by allowing other people to create filters that alter your physical appearance, such as your eye shape, nose and lip size, which can really discourage unconventionally attractive people about their physical image.

It it also worth noting that most content you see on social media is fabricated, as the perfect "IT GIRLS" you see on your feed on Instagram have heavily edited photos taken at the right angles, with the right lighting and suitable makeup on their face. Those people don't look the same in real life and no one does, yet people still feel insecure because once again, those strict beauty standards are promoted everywhere. One example for this is how the Kardashians have gotten BBL's and lip fillers back when they were trendy but now they started taking them out.

It is proof that beauty standards are always changing and that there is no need to try and follow them.

Now, I would like to talk about the phenomenon in social media called Korean Pop, or for short, Kpop. It is undeniable that Kpop has taken the world by storm with its continuously growing popularity. Fans all across the world support and cherish their idols who seem to live a perfect life. But that is far from the truth. Idols are presented on social media platforms as flawless talented artists and are made to follow every order they have on camera, almost acting like puppets. Many toxic trends have arose from Kpop culture, such a harmful diets, since the idols have to maintain a very low weight due to the Asian beauty standards. It is so unhealthy to the point where most of the idols have developed severe eating disorders. It doesn't help that a lot of these diets are promoted on social media as well. Most of Kpop's fans are young, easy to influence children, which makes them very prone to following those strict diets they see on the internet. These aren't even diets; they are just different ways to starve yourself. A famous case of these diets is the Somi Diet, a diet which consists in eating one banana for breakfast, one for lunch and one for dinner. Jeon Somi has practiced this diet and after eight days she was hospitalised, which just emphasises the dangers of this diet. Additionally, Kpop idols practice these diets a couple weeks prior to releasing new content, such as music videos, attending fashion shows or filming adds for companies, as they are only needed to lose weight for those specific events. This method of losing weight is very unhealthy, as it makes you lose weight very fast then gain it back just as quickly, making you develop an eating disorder. It is a shame that so many young children are manipulated into ruining their health just because they wanted to look like their favourite idols. It is also worth mentioning that the beauty standards in South Korea are so severe that parents offer their kids a surgical appointment for a nose job as a gift for their sixteenth birthday, which is just messed up. All of this is created by the social media we incorporated in our daily lives.

Being exposed to such standards in your daily life can result in feeling overwhelmed and drained, but it's always good to know that what you see on social media is fake and that in real life those models you see online look nothing like they do on the internet. As a way to conclude this article, it is safe to say that social media is definitely fun to use, but when using it you should be aware of the negative side effects that can rub off on you from being too active on it, especially if you're of young age as you can easily be influenced by what you see on the internet. You should never allow the beauty standards you see on social media affect or change you in any way because they always change at very fast paces and it is practically impossible to chase every one of them down.

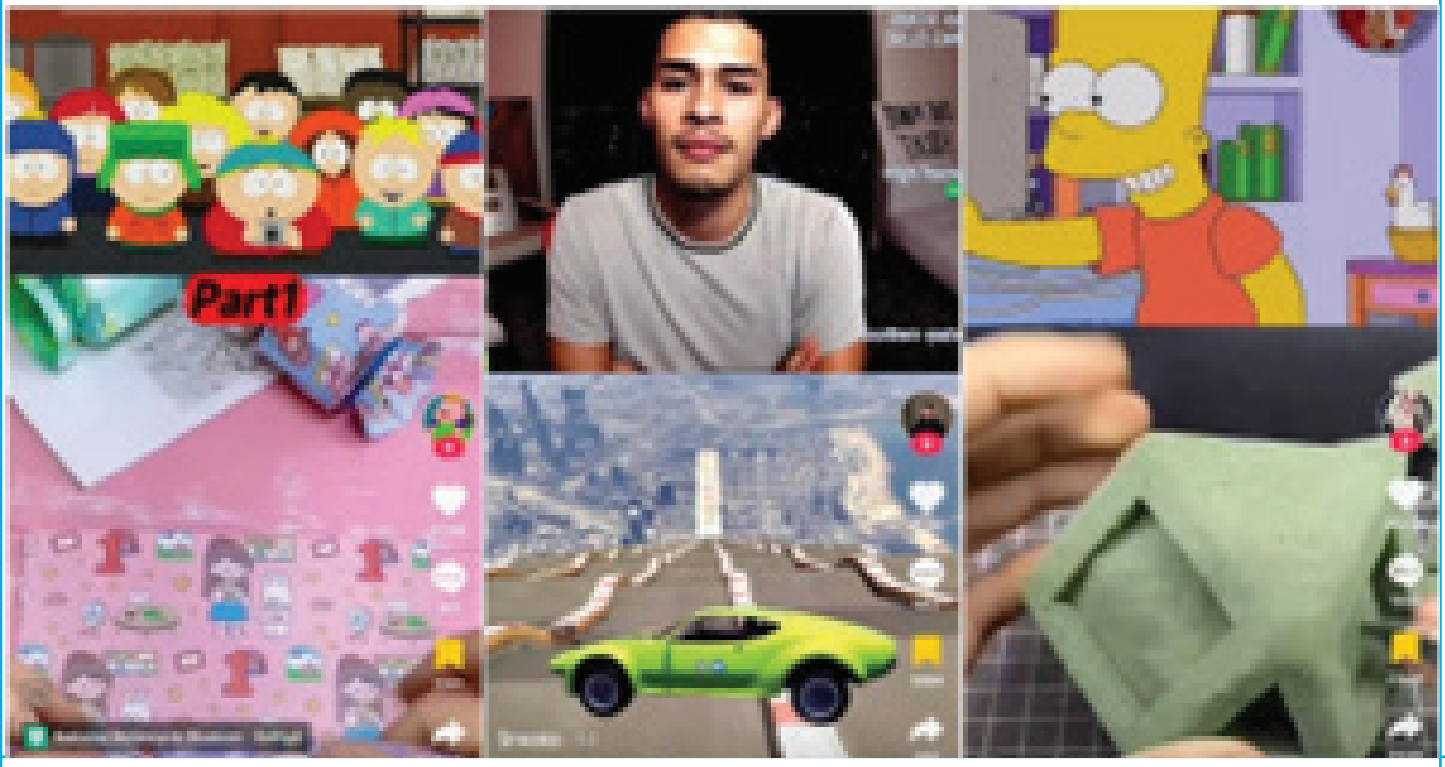
SOCIAL MEDIA'S EFFECT ON THE ATTENTION SPAN OF TEENAGERS

10A • HOCETA DANA GABRIELA

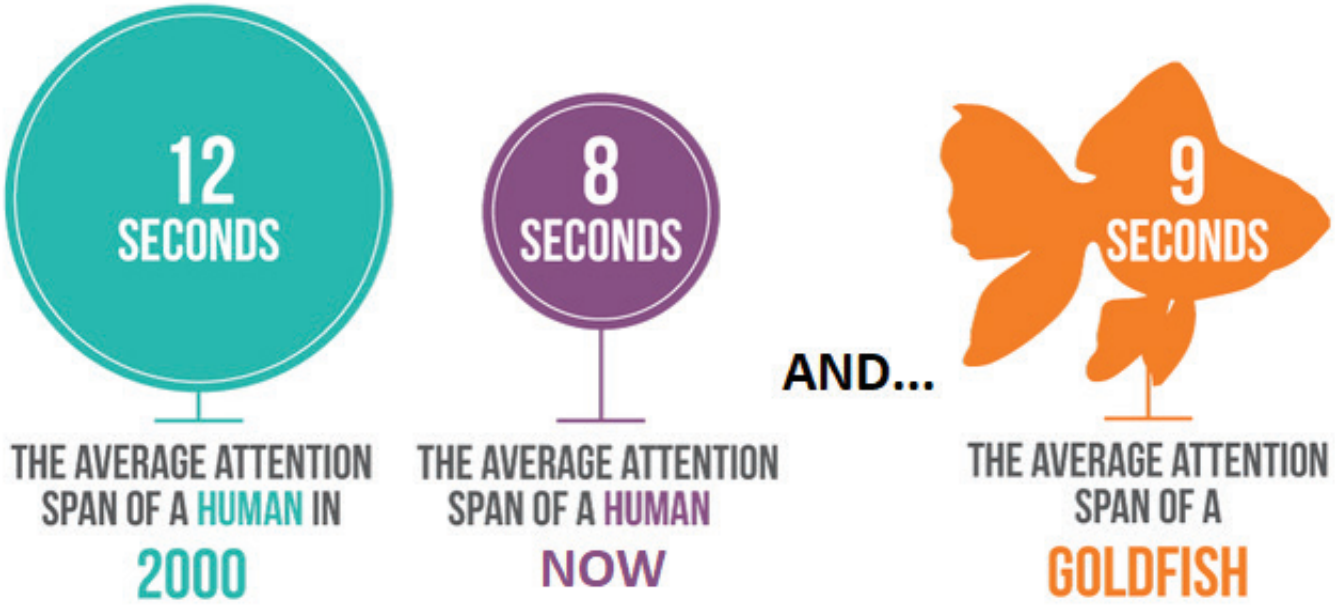
Social media is becoming more and more popular between today's teenagers but it has bad effects on their attention span. Lately, all applications are introducing a similar feature which consists of a short video of about 20 seconds with a song on the background. People make this videos to approach different topics such as global problems, their personal problems, promoting a business, news, video games, their personal life, opinions on fashion etc. A big amount of different topics that teenagers try to focus on in a short time, while they also listen to a background song and read a text the author left as a note shorten their attention span.

Their brain gets used to having to focus on many things at the same time making it hard for them to focus on one single thing for a long time later. This can get so bad that it is hard for teenagers to watch a long movie, pay attention only to the teacher in class or read a book. After you read a short texts while listening to music with lyrics and watching a video it becomes hard to only read a normal book without any sound or image. Only looking at pages full of black text after being used to colorful and moving objects makes people want to close the book and get back on social media. This affects teenager's studies as reading books is necessary for them.

Sometimes people have to add a game play video next to a video of them telling a story because viewers cannot actually pay attention to a whole story being told but instead or going to watch something else they will focus on the game play because it is moving and it is colorful while on the background they will hear the story anyways. Also these stories are split into more parts as people wouldn't have or wouldn't think they have the patience to watch a long video of a story.



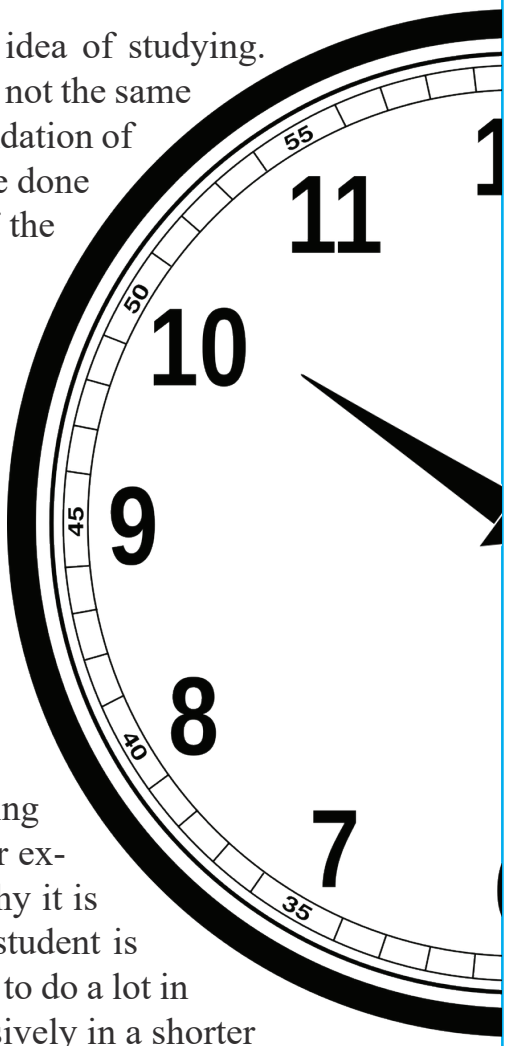
Even more, this makes it hard for teenagers to focus at school. They get used to thinking about a lot of different topics in a few minutes so paying attention to a class of about an hour that refers to a single thing can become difficult. Studies made by specialists also show this. It is proved that the attention span of a teenager is much more shorter now than it was 20 years ago. The attention span of teenagers today is so short that it is similar to one of a goldfish. Although social media brings us a lot of benefits such as easily getting informed about different topics, finding out more about other people's culture and opinions, meeting people with similar interests and making available to us an easy way of making money, this kind of short videos are dangerous for our attention span and we need to be more careful.



STUDY METHODS

12F • CRIVEANU ALEXANDRA

Studying is the number one enemy of students, it does not matter what grade they are in or where they study. The cause for this is never learning the appropriate ways to study, and most importantly never learning the appropriate study methods for each individual, because every single person learns in different ways and that is perfectly normal.



The mistake that is made very often is misinterpreting the idea of studying. Many students assimilate studying with reading, and those are not the same thing, while reading can help improve overall it is not the foundation of studying. Another frequent mistake is leaving everything to be done in the last minute, even if it appears to be better because of the pressure of a deadline it is not the best option.

The foundation for studying is having a good study guide. A study guide is an outline of everything that is needed to learn, it can be done in a lot of different ways by chapters with the use of key points, in a chronological order for non-technical classes. It is a concept map that helps you see all the main ideas for your lessons without having to spend a lot of time searching on the internet or trying to find the right page in a never-ending textbook; it is all there for you so that the whole process can be a lot smoother.

One of the things a student can do is to space out their studying over several shorter periods of time, once a couple of days for example. In order to do this a lot of time is needed, which is why it is best to start as early as possible. In this shorter periods the student is capable of being more focused because the pressure of having to do a lot in a little time is not there and they are able to study more intensively in a shorter period.

For more visual students a good way to study is by using diagrams. It is true, they are not universally good, for example the use of diagrams is not possible when talking about math equations, but it is perfect for different ideas that are interrelated to each other.

All in all, learning to study is important for students, but the most important aspect is to study correctly, and to be able to find the right method for each individual.

WHAT IS SCHOOL LIKE IN ASIA?

GHIȚĂ ALEXANDRA • 10A

We all know how the education system in the country we live in is like, but have we ever thought about the life of other students from different countries, or even continents? It is quite different and interesting at the same time. In this article I will present the education systems running in three different Asian countries: China, Japan and South Korea.

CHINA

In China, there are six years of elementary school, three years of middle school, and three years of high school. There is an exam at the end of middle school to decide who attends high school. Children typically go to school from 7:00am to 4:00pm. They study mathematics, reading, writing and propaganda, and often write on thin, brittle paper that feels like onion skin and glows if held up to the light. During recess children do calisthenics and relaxation exercises that consist of pressing two fingers on one's eyes, nose or cheeks. Middle class children fill the hours after school with homework, music lessons and other enrichment programs. English classes and Math Olympics are popular. Parents spend sizable chunks of money on classes at computer schools and language academies. Children often have lots of homework, which they often do in copybooks in front of their parents. More, students must memorize vast amounts of information to pass major tests, with the biggest determining factor in who attends elite universities and who does not be the "gaokao", China's grueling, ultra-competitive university entrance exam. Chinese spend much of their childhood memorizing and writing characters. By the time a student is 15 he or she has spent four or five hours a day over nine years learning to write a minimum of 3,000 characters.

JAPAN

Japanese children enter the first grade of elementary school in the April after their sixth birthday. There are around 30 to 40 students in a typical elementary school class. The subjects they study include Japanese, mathematics, science, social studies, music, crafts, physical education, and home economics (to learn simple cooking and sewing skills). More and more elementary schools have started teaching English, too. Information technology is increasingly being used to enhance education, and most schools have access to the Internet. Students also learn traditional Japanese arts like shodo (calligraphy) and haiku. Shodo involves dipping a brush in ink and using it to write kanji (characters that are used in several East Asian countries and have their own meanings) and kana (phonetic characters derived from kanji) in an artistic style. Haiku is a form of poetry developed in Japan about 400 years ago. A haiku is a short verse of 17 syllables, divided into units of five, seven, and five syllables. Haiku uses simple expressions to

convey deep emotions to readers. There are many school events during the year, such as sports day when students compete in events like tug-of-war and relay races, excursions to historical sites, and arts and culture festivals featuring dancing and other performances by children. Students in the highest grades of elementary, middle, and high schools also take trips lasting up to several days to culturally important cities like Kyoto and Nara, ski resorts, or other places. Most middle and high schools require students to wear uniforms. Boys generally wear pants and jackets with stand-up collars, and girls wear two-piece suits with sailor collar or blazers and skirts.

SOUTH KOREA

The standard of Korean schools is high and private and public schools both provide a great quality of teaching. The basic construction of Korea's education system is as follows: Compulsory education is composed of six years in elementary, three years in middle school, and three years in high school. South Korea also has a national curriculum developed by the Ministry of Education. They also monitor this national curriculum, which is revised every five to ten years, reflecting the changes happening in Korean society. There are two semesters in each school year, the first one running from March to July, and the second one from September to February. While holidays for summer and winter exist, there are ten optional half days of school at the beginning and end of each holiday break, and the majority of Korean students attend both. There are nine primary subjects taught in Korean high schools. These subjects are Korean language, social studies (including Korean history), mathematics, science, physical education, fine arts, practical arts, and moral education. The subjects taught in regular school are largely the same as the subjects in middle school education. In the 11th and 12th grades, students additionally get to choose subjects to learn. These include various sciences like physics, chemistry, geography, even economics or politics, or foreign languages. Meanwhile, in vocational schools, the students study the standard academic curriculum for the first year before moving on to studies specializing in their choice of vocational field. These include agriculture, business, fishery, engineering, technology, and marine transportation.

EDUCATION

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THE BEST EDUCATION SYSTEM

10A • MIELU BOGDAN

The Finnish education system is one of the best in the world! Due to the different approaches that it takes, this learning system is successful in every way possible and today you are going to find out some facts about it.

First of all, in the schools of Finland, there is no discrimination among the students, which gives everyone the same chance of being prosperous in their life. Moreover, every child has to choose his own subjects based on what career he or she wants to follow in the future. This way, everyone is happy with his choices and is motivated to carry on.

Another important aspect about their system is the absence of regular tests. Although this seems to be a very bad thing for the future generations, it actually has a lot of advantages. Two of the most important ones are the increased motivation for studying, because of the reduced stress, and the ability of teachers to experiment with their study techniques.

Apart from the curriculum, these institutions are very luxurious and offer what's best for everyone who's inside them. To be more specific, every school in Finland has its own park and little forest where students can relax or, in some cases, there are classes that can be held there. Furthermore, the architecture of each building is modern and beautiful, which combined with the gorgeous classes makes them a paradise for students.

Overall, the Finnish education system is widely regarded as one of the best in the world. Its focus on equality, student-centered teaching, and teacher freedom of educating have all contributed to its success. By valuing education as a basic human right and investing in the development of its pupils, Finland has created a system that not only produces high academic achievement, but also prepares students for success in all areas of life.

EDUCATION

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ANCIENT EGYPT

12F • GLODEANU ANA-MARIA

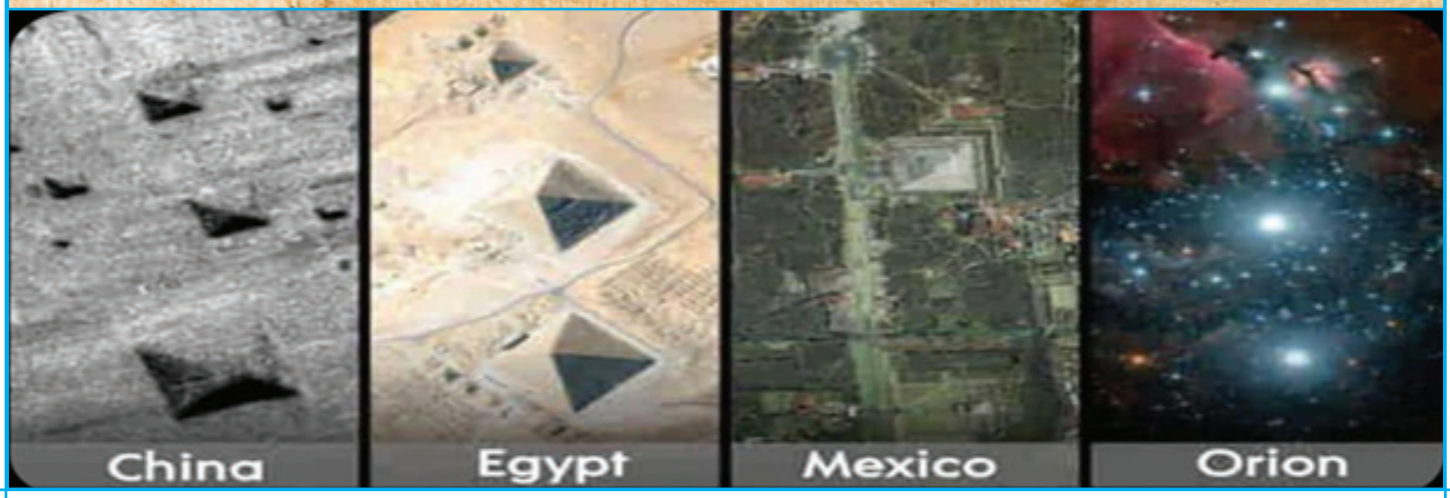
Ancient Egypt was a civilization that developed in northeast Africa, in the area that is now the modern state of Egypt, and emerged during antiquity, a historical period that spanned three and a half millennia, specifically from 3000 BC until the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 AD.

During this period, culture, art, religion, and great civilizations flourished. This distant land has left behind numerous curiosities, legends, and myths that reveal much about the depth of this people's culture. The Great Pyramid of Giza (also known as the Pyramid of Khufu or the Great Pyramid of Gizeh) is one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the only one that can be admired today. It is made up of 2.3 million individual stone blocks, each weighing approximately 2.5 tons, and it took approximately 20 years to construct. It was once believed that slaves were subjected to building the pyramids as a sign of the divinization of the pharaohs, but this legend has been proven false. In fact, the most skilled and dexterous citizens carried out the grandiose construction of the pyramids, with optimal conditions provided for them, such as care, food, payment, and sometimes exemption from taxes. The proof is that the tombs of those who contributed to their construction are located near the pyramids.

However, there is no real evidence that the mummies of the pharaohs are inside the pyramids, and the hieroglyphics inside were actually falsified. As a result of these facts, numerous theories have arisen claiming that the pyramids were made by or with the help of extraterrestrials because people cannot imagine how the Egyptians of that period were capable of building such a fascinating monument. The science fiction theory maintains that the technology necessary for such an effort could not be found on Earth. The parts of the three pyramids of Giza were astronomically oriented north-south and east-west. According to this, there is a correlation between the position of the pyramids in Egypt and the position of the stars, specifically between the three pyramids of Giza and the three central stars of Orion's belt, the asterism in the constellation of Orion. In Egyptian mythology, it was said that the gods had their origin in the belt

of stars of Orion and Sirius, the brightest star in the sky. For the ancient Egyptians, Sirius and Orion are the ones from which beings in human form came, Osiris and Isis, the creators of the human race. The Egyptian pharaoh Unas reigned for 30 years before making his final journey to the Orion star system.

Ancient Egyptians believed that the purpose of the Great Pyramid was to initiate transformation and travel through space and time. It is said that the pharaoh entered it as a human, and through the technological process for which the pyramid was built, the pharaoh was transformed into a god, a superior being capable of traveling to the stars. Even great researchers and investigators have been unable to unravel the mystery of the pyramids, which date back to the beginning of historical records. This has led to conspiracy theories that people believe, and personally, I am fascinated by this subject because no one can figure out what the truth is, as it is unimaginable and imperceptible due to the distant period in which these profound and supernatural events occurred.



AVATAR THE WAY OF WATER

11G • MAZILU CĂTĂLINA

James Cameron wants you to believe that aliens are killing machines, humanity can defeat time-travelling cyborgs, and a film can transport you to a significant historical disaster. In many ways, the planet of Pandora in "Avatar" has become his most ambitious manner of sharing this belief in the power of cinema. Can you leave everything in your life behind and experience a film in a way that's become increasingly difficult in an era of so much distraction? But one of the many things that is so fascinating about "Avatar: The Way of Water" is how that belief manifests itself in themes he's explored so often before. This wildly entertaining film isn't a retread of "Avatar," but a film in which fans can pick out thematic and even visual elements of "Titanic," "Aliens", "The Abyss," and "The Terminator" films. It's as if Cameron has moved to Pandora forever and brought everything he cares about.

We catch up with Jake Sully (Sam Worthington), a human who is now a full-time Na'vi and partners with Neytiri (Zoe Saldana), with whom he has started a family. They have two sons—Neteyam and Lo'ak —and a daughter named Tuk, and they are guardians of Kiri , the offspring of Weaver's character from the first film.

Family bliss is fractured when the 'sky people' return, including an avatar Na'vi version of one Colonel Miles Quaritch (Stephen Lang), who has come to finish what he started, including vengeance on Jake for the death of his human form. He comes back with a group of former-human-now-Na'vi soldiers who are the film's main antagonists, but not the only ones. "Avatar: The Way of Water" once again casts the military, planet-destroying humans of this universe as its truest villains, but the villains' motives are sometimes a bit hazy.

The bulk of "Avatar: The Way of Water" hinges on the same question—fight or flight for family? Do you run and hide from the powerful enemy to try and stay safe or turn and fight the oppressive evil? At first, Jake takes the former option, leading them to another part of Pandora. The aerial acrobatics of the first film are supplanted by underwater ones in a region run by Tonowari (Cliff Curtis), the leader of a clan called the Metkayina. Himself a family man, Tonowari is worried about the danger the new Na'vi visitors could bring but can't turn them away. Again, Cameron plays with moral questions about responsibility in the face of a powerful evil, something that recurs in a group of commercial poachers from Earth. They dare to hunt sacred water animals in stunning sequences during which you have to remind yourself that none of what you're watching is real.

The film's midsection shifts its focus away from Sully/Quaritch to the region's children as Jake's boys learn the ways of the water clan. Finally, the world of "Avatar" feels like it's expanding in ways the first film didn't. Whereas that film was more focused on a single story, Cameron ties together multiple ones here in a far more ambitious and ultimately rewarding fashion. While some of the ideas and plot developments—like the connection of Kiri to Pandora or the arc of a new character named Spider —are mostly table-setting for future films, the entire project is made richer by creating a larger canvas for its storytelling. While one could argue that there needs to be a stronger protagonist/antagonist line through a film that discards both Jake & Quaritch for long periods, I would counter that those terms are intentionally vague here. The protagonist is the entire family and even the planet on which they live, and the antagonist is everything trying to destroy the natural world and the beings that are so connected to it. There has been so much conversation about the cultural impact of "Avatar" recently, as superheroes dominated the last decade of pop culture in a way that allowed people to forget the Na'vi. Watching "Avatar: The Way of Water," I was reminded of how impersonal the Hollywood machine has become over the last few decades and how often the blockbusters that truly make an impact on the form have displayed the personal touch of their creator. "Avatar: The Way of Water" is a James Cameron blockbuster, through and through. And I still believe in him.

Render by 20th Century Fox

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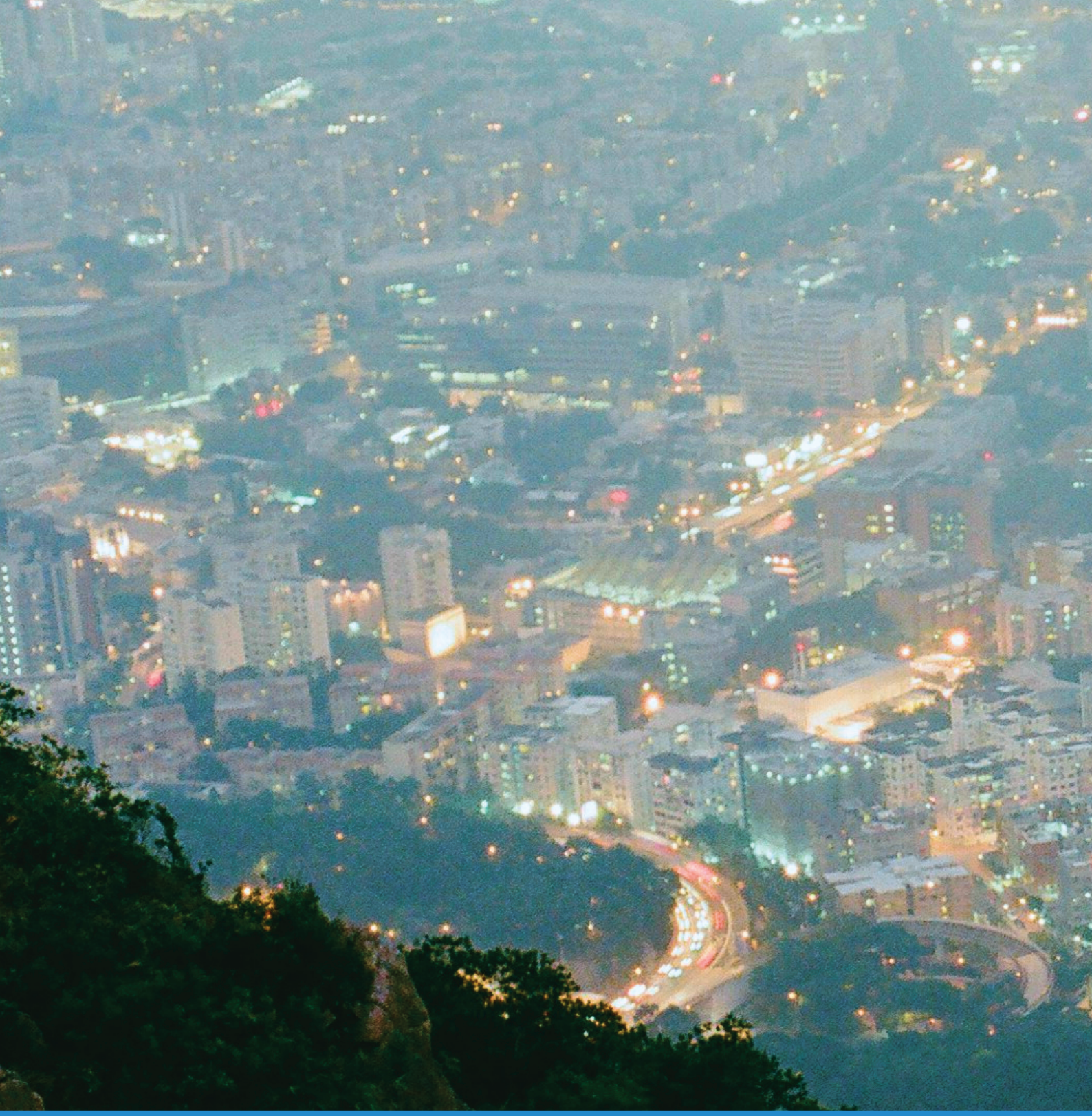

THANK YOU!

We are proud to present the 2024 edition of the Alexandru Ioan Cuza High's english magazine, now under the new name of "English is Alive". This year's publication focuses on quality over quantity, with the first edition boosting research and opinion pieces above all else. We want to thank each and every one of our contributors for helping us keep the magazine going - without them, we wouldn't be where we are today.