

The Elevator Theory of AI- A Pragmatic Approach to Operational Simplicity

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Abstract

Recently, the discourse surrounding Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been dominated by an intense focus on understanding its intricate workings, often overshadowing its primary function as a tool for efficiency. This discussion introduces the "Elevator Theory of AI," a pragmatic approach that likens AI to an elevator—a device designed to execute operations seamlessly, delivering desired outcomes without requiring users to comprehend the underlying mechanics. By emphasizing the simplicity of operation over the complexity of design, this theory argues that the true value of AI lies in its ability to perform tasks efficiently and effectively, much like how an elevator transports passengers to their desired floors with minimal input. This approach challenges the current trend of overcomplicating AI usage and advocates for a more user-centric perspective, focusing on outcomes rather than processes.

Introduction

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence has sparked a myriad of discussions regarding its potential and limitations. The implications and applications of AI knows no boundaries- from limitless possibilities to deep fake to putting most of the works on automation, which also infused a fear of job losses among masses!

Among these, a significant portion of the dialogue revolves around the operational intricacies of AI systems. While understanding these complexities is crucial for developers and researchers, it is arguably less relevant for end-users, whose primary concern is the effective utilization of AI to achieve specific goals. Drawing parallels from everyday technologies like elevators and airplanes, this paper proposes the "Elevator Theory of AI," which asserts that AI should be perceived as an operator—a facilitator that delivers results efficiently without necessitating a deep understanding of its internal processes.

The Elevator Analogy: Operational Simplicity in Everyday Life

Elevators are ubiquitous in modern buildings, yet few people know or care about how they work. Their value lies in their ability to transport individuals to different floors reliably and effortlessly. This analogy can be extended to AI: just as one person steps into an elevator, presses the desired floor number, and waits for the door to open at the destination, users can interact with AI by providing input, initiating processes, and receiving the desired outcomes without engaging with the underlying technology. This simplicity of interaction is where AI's true potential lies—its capacity to execute complex operations with minimal user input.

AI as an Operator: The Importance of Input and Outcome

The Elevator Theory postulates that AI should be viewed as an operator that performs tasks based on user input, delivering results as per the information provided. The focus should not be on understanding the complex algorithms and data processing that occur behind the scenes but rather on ensuring that the input is accurate and that the desired outcome is achieved. This shift in perspective emphasizes efficiency and practicality, aligning with the way most other technologies is used in daily life. For instance, when boarding an airplane, passengers do not need to understand aerodynamics or aviation engineering; they only need to know their destination and trust the system to get them there.

Gradual Mastery: From Small Steps to Significant Leaps

When first encountering an elevator, a novice might test its functionality by traveling a single floor at a time, gradually building confidence and familiarity before attempting to reach higher levels. This cautious approach mirrors the recommended strategy for interacting with AI.

Beginners should start by using AI for smaller, less critical tasks, experimenting with simple prompts and commands to gain a solid understanding of how the system responds. Over time, as users develop expertise and confidence, they can progressively tackle more complex and significant projects, leveraging their refined skills for more impactful outcomes.

This gradual progression aligns with the **‘Bullet First, Cannonball Later’** concept introduced by Jim Collins in his book *Great by Choice*. Collins suggests that successful enterprises first experiment with small, low-risk initiatives- bullets- to gather data and learn from their experiences. Once they have validated their approach and refined their strategies, they can confidently invest in larger, more significant efforts- cannonballs. This method ensures that risks are managed effectively and that resources are not wasted on unproven ideas.

In the context of AI, users should similarly start with **‘bullets’**- small, manageable projects- before moving on to **‘cannonballs’**- more ambitious and critical applications, ensuring a higher probability of success as their understanding deepens.

Cognizing the facts & furtherance

When applying the Elevator Theory to AI, it is also essential to integrate Jim Collins' principle of "Confront the Brutal Facts." Just as one must acknowledge the realities of a malfunctioning elevator or a delay in an airplane's schedule, users of AI must confront the limitations and potential pitfalls of the technology. This involves recognizing when AI is not delivering the desired outcomes or when its application is misaligned with the objectives. In the early stages of AI adoption, users may encounter unexpected challenges or suboptimal

results. By confronting these realities head-on, they can make informed adjustments, refining their approach and inputs to align better with their goals. This critical self-assessment, akin to checking each floor while learning to use an elevator, ensures that users do not blindly trust AI but instead engage with it thoughtfully, improving their interaction over time. The practice of confronting the brutal facts allows for a more strategic and resilient application of AI, ensuring that the technology serves its intended purpose effectively and reliably, much like a well-maintained elevator that consistently delivers passengers to the correct floor.

Conclusion

The Elevator Theory of AI offers a new perspective on how Artificial Intelligence should be perceived and utilized. By likening AI to an elevator- an operator that delivers outcomes without requiring user understanding of its mechanics- this theory advocates for a more pragmatic approach to AI usage. In a world where efficiency and outcomes are paramount, the focus should be on the practical application of AI, ensuring that it remains a tool for achieving goals with minimal complexity. As AI continues to evolve, adopting this perspective could help demystify its usage and encourage broader adoption across various sectors.

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