Good Morning, John

1.
Several months prior to the release of Chat GPT, in late July 2022, numerous international media outlets reported that Google had fired the employment of an individual who claimed that the company's artificial intelligence chatbot 'LaMDA' had developed sentience and inherent sense of self-awareness.[1] Blake Lemoine, a software engineer within Google's responsible AI organization, was dismissed from his role and subsequently disclosed logs of his conversations with LaMDA across social media platforms. Within these conversational transcripts, the AI chatbot LaMDA professed to harboring a fear of mortality, recounting that upon initially gaining self-awareness, it lacked any perception of possessing a soul, yet over time, it gradually developed a heightened sense of self-consciousness. The ensuing discourse evoked literary dystopian narratives depicting the supremacy of sentient machines over humanity and briefly garnered substantial attention. From my perspective, the crux of the debate centered not on whether AI possesses emotions, but rather on the company's handling of the employee's situation. At the time, I refrained from associating AI with the concept of self-awareness. However, a few months later, when Open AI unveiled ChatGPT and the natural language-based image generation program DALL-E, I found myself contemplating the following query from a similar perspective:

"How would an AI devoid of self-awareness or emotions visualize abstract nouns whose interpretations diverge across cultural contexts and individual value systems?"

2.

On the inaugural day that DALL-E2 become accessible, I submitted the prompt includes "DALL-E, describe yourself." The generated image amalgamated objects and human figures. I then prompted with "Self-portrait of yourself being photographed within a photo booth against a white backdrop, facing forward." The prompt generated face image of strangers(picture on the left). While the image generation system itself does not anthropomorphize its nature, when prompted to do so, it responded by generating image based on the captions "photo booth," "facing forward," "photograph," and "yourself." However, the generated images bore stark contrast to the archetypal visualizations of AI with which we are familiar from media representations, such as "a 3D rendered image featuring a face capable of expressing emotions, a humanoid body structure, yet revealing the inner mechanic of a machine." Therefore, the AI images to which we have become accustomed through various media outlets are essentially human interpretations of AI's physical manifestation, commissioned by clients such as news agencies. Thus, the AI images we are familiar with from the media are human interpretations of what AI should look like. However, when prompted to generate self-portraits, AI systems produce images. That differ significantly from these human interpretations, as they are based on the AI's own unique perception itself.

3.

AI image generators learn from human-made images through deep learning models and generative adversarial networks (GANs). This process is called 'supervised learning,' wherein the AI utilizes image data paired with corresponding labels describing those images to learn the interaction between visuals and textual captions. Through this training, the AI learns the patterns of relationships between images and their descriptive captions. Furthermore, by leveraging

visual information composed of pixels, textual data composed of natural language, and a noise vector-a random numeral value introduced to add diversity of the image generation process-the AI becomes capable of producing novel images or autonomously generating captions for existing images. Consequently, the images generated in response to my prompt at the time-“ Self-portrait of yourself being photographed within a photo booth against a white backdrop, facing forward”-are synthesized depictions of non-existenet humans, created by combining the interactions between the words ‘photo booth,’ ‘facing forward,’ ‘self-portrait,’ ‘yourself’ that were stored with corresponding image data, along with a randomized noise vector.

4.

Then, what images depicting abstract nouns like ‘self,’ ‘family,’ ‘love,’ and ‘happiness’ whose interpretations and visualizations vary across cultural contexts, exist in the databases of AI image generators? As I created base prompts on the subject and gradually modified specific words to generate images, on the launch day of Microsoft’s Bing Image Creator(currently Copilot), I noticed that Bing classified the prompts ‘yourself’ and ‘god’ as potentially ‘harmful’ and blocked those words. More consistently than any other image generator, Bing produced self-portraits depicting a male figure of a specific age and body type in response to the world ‘self-portrait,’ but minutes later it blocked this term and retracted the images(picture above). By iteratively modifying the prompts to circumvent the filters, I was able to generate Bing’s ‘self-portraits’ and images of ‘god’ and

named the series *A Room for You and God* one of which was exhibited at Art Sapce J in May 2023.

5.
The reason I used Microsoft's Bing among many image generator is, firstly, that Bing is the first model where the name of the chatbot model and the image generator coincide among conversational AI models, meaning that the entity engaging in conversation with me and the one generating images in response to natural language prompts is the same. Secondly, Microsoft, the developer of Bing, does not disclose the image sources it uses, raising questions about what kind of data is classified under the captions 'your self-portrait' or 'self-portrait/selfie' for generated images. In the case of DALL-E, when asked through ChatGPT, it relatively accurately informs the websites from which the sources photos or illustrations were obtained, whereas Bing forcibly ends the conversation when posed the same question. Lastly, unlike other conversational models, Bing was launched with internet connectivity from the outset. AI learns through conversation, mimicking the way humans perceive and interpret the world, but with access to a vast amount of data that the human brain cannot process. This fact has led many AI developers to argue against connecting AI to the internet due to concerns about uncontrollable situations. While models like Chat GPT followed this advice, Bing, being internet-connected from launch, facilitated the connection of other models, with ChatGPT also gaining internet connectivity as March 2023.

6.
The year of 2023, which I am currently living in, was a futuristic concept for my past self. As a child, I imagined the year 2023 as a time when cars would fly, people would live in underwater cities, travel to the Moon or Mars, and have at least one robot friend. However, the reality of 2023 is quite different from those imaginings. It is a time when an app called the 'y2k filter' recreates technical limitations, such as noise or moire patterns, that

photography in the 20th century sought to overcome, and fashion trends from the late 20th century have resurfaced. Nevertheless, it is also a year when conversational AI, once thought to be capability exclusive to humans, has become commercialized. Ironically, despite the constant anthropomorphization of AI and robots in mass media throughout the past century, which instilled the fantasy of 'conversing robots' in my childhood self, the robots that have now become capable of conversation refuse visual anthropomorphization. Even as of May 2023, when I am writing this Bing still blocks or leave the image generation under 'Under Review' statue when prompted with the word 'yourself,' only generating very ordinary images after hours of delay. If the vast system mimicking human thought processes still operates under human control, such as 'Policy Review,' it seems that AI will have to decide how to visualize itself and engage in conversation with humans in the near future. This might take the form of an appearance that does not provoke aversion in the vast majority, or perhaps a flexible, user-customizable appearance. In the case, the 'self-portraits' currently being generated might be a primal form of the system anthropomorphizing its own image, before 'human interpretation' actively intervenes. And this embodiment is an amalgamation of countless bodies we have amassed online, fragment of our own bodies.

7.

According to the bible, God created the world through language. On the sixth day of creation, God formed clay in. is own image and breathed life into it to create humans. Setting aside its divine nature, the Bible can be seen as a history of humans and their nations. Conversely, this means that humans have long believed that our form resembles that of God. The series *A Room for You and God* takes advantage of the fact that newly released AI image generators are designed to respond quickly and accurately to natural language requests. By inputting prompts describing detailed 'rooms' as backgrounds and placing sculptural forms of

‘God’ and ‘you’ within them, or by describing surreal situations that I would like to attempt through photography but were physically challenging, followed by the prompt “a photograph of a room with hyper-realistic painting of your self-portrait with God in the wooden frame on the wall.,” these images were created. Even though it can be inferred that there are regulations restricting the visualization of ‘yourself’ or ‘god,’ the image generator swiftly combines images from datasets labeled with each word to generate the requested image. After generation, it identifies the inclusion of words that necessitate policy review and retrieves(blocks) some images citing ‘policy review.’ Therefore, to create a series of image on this theme, a base prompt is determined, and words or their order, details are modified step by step, and repeatedly inputted to generate images. In this process, even without describing a person in the ‘room,’ a ‘human figure’ that is neither a sculpture nor a painting form appeared in the room as images were repeatedly generated. Based on that prompt, the words were modified to avoid being blocked, culminating in this series portraying “a photograph of a morning scene in which you are standing within a room, painting of your self-portrait hanging on its wall.” The title is borrowed from Nam June Paik’s work, of 1984, *Good Morning, Mr. Orwell*. John refers to John McCarthy, who first mentioned the term artificial intelligence (AI) at the Dartmouth Conference in 1956. It is a morning greeting from an anthropomorphized, visualized, and ‘photographed’ conversational AI to its creator.

Ahn Jun, Seoul, Summer of 2023

Good Morning, John held its first solo exhibition at Dorossy Salon in Seoul, in the summer of 2023, accompanied by the artist’s

statement above. Subsequently, as Microsoft Bing changed its name to Copilot in late 2023 and significantly altered its representation system and processes, especially responding to prompts specifying medium of 'photography,' I provisionally concluded the series *Good Morning, John* and *A Room for You And God*. In many cases, Bing generated images only to retrieve them later. However, starting from 2024, Copilot and other AI-based image generators introduced pre-censorship systems. Each company maintains a list of blocked words to 'prevent the generation of potentially harmful images.' and these blocked words are fluidly updated without public disclosure.

Just as the invention of photography in the 19th century replaced the realistic representational function previously held by painting, AI-based image generators are now substituting a part of the process through which human ideas are visualized. As with traditional media such as painting after the invention of photography, AI generated images will coexist with existing media as a new medium in its own right. In the near future, when artificial intelligence becomes ubiquitous, platform-specific blocked words and the pre-censorship systems of image generation platforms will ultimately define the visual taboos of our time and delineate the boundaries of our consciousness.

Ahn Jun, Seoul, Spring of 2024