

Mining Love in Virtual World

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The idea

“The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother.”

- Theodore Hesburgh

Observational learning begins from the moment a child is out of womb. Psychologists unanimously agree that the environment where a child grows plays a significant role in shaping its behavior. Numerous researches show that the children of parents who don't love each other or are separated, tend to feel insecure and might become victims of severe depression, which in turn might unfortunately open the gates to amoral and illegal activities. This also holds true for the children of abusive parents. In short, the affection shown between a couple has a major influence on the ethical behavior of their children. My idea is to apply this universal phenomenon in influencing the 'AI kids' to behave ethically, by letting them observe the acts of human love and romance.

Bottling up love

Now the obvious question arises: Is it possible to capture love?

This idea would have sounded more ridiculous 20 years ago. Back then when I was 7 years old, I remember seeing my mom writing letters to my dad when he was out of town. My grandpa bought flowers for my grandma when she was upset with him (she often is nowadays!). So basically, nothing much was on record then, except for a few blurred b/w photos. Now things are different. My mom FaceTimes my dad and my grandpa sends emojis of flowers in whatsapp (now you know why she gets mad). Like many other things, expressions of love are also getting digitalized. Speaking of 'expressing love', it is a lot different in the Eastern countries. For example, still in many parts of India, kissing in public is considered a taboo! Therefore, digital media has offered a place for people from different traditional backgrounds to express their feelings without barriers. Which means, for the first time in history, we are saving love, on the cloud!

Understanding and Measuring love

In order to prepare meaningful datasets, it is important to understand and quantify the acts of love. But can emotions be measured? Though poets might not agree, as an engineer I think it is possible to an extent. Now, we aren't talking about my girlfriend's mood swings (I'll agree with the poets here). But I can definitely say that if she sends a ❤️ at 4am, then I know she misses me. If I get a 😞, I am in trouble. Analyzing emojis and emoticons in chats are one of the simplest ways to measure feelings.

But that's just scratching the surface. I believe more in the power of words to express love. Fortunately, now we already have AI chat bots which can understand the context of even complex sentences. Still, let's keep it simple for now and talk only about simple words and phrases like 'love you', 'sorry', 'thank you', 'it's okay' and so on. Likewise, today's natural language processing algorithms can capture these easily from voice chats.

Yet, the question remains... what do you do with all these? How does all this relate to ethics? This is where our beloved Darwin comes in. He was the one of the first to introduce 'Sexual Selection,' which is a part of the well-known concept of Natural Selection. Not going into details, it is about how one chooses his/her mate. While historically, women didn't have much say on choosing their partner, we know that the times have changed already. We have fortunately entered an era where people all around the globe talk about the rights of women, and it is bound to get better. This has posed new questions on the traditional sexual selection arguments. In this digital age, how people find their soulmates? Hint: Tinder!

Yes, the internet is filled with tons of online dating sites, chatrooms and apps, which are predominantly used by men. So, there is literally a virtual sexual selection game running, where a large number of men are competing to woo a limited number of women (interesting times!). But then again, how do women decide who they want to date? Good looks of course play an important part. But research says that it can only suffice short-term affairs, but morals and ethical values play an important part in long-term relationships. Though I am no psychology expert, I learned from my experience that trust and honesty are important virtues for women.

Now back to the 😞 from my girl. If my previous text was "Hey babe, sorry I would be a bit late", then her emoticon makes a lot of sense. Pairs like late- 😞, sorry-❤️ (means she is okay with my sorry, though it never happens) would make an excellent dataset for teaching our AI boy to be in his best manners when he grows up and meets his AI diva.

Long story short, there is a strong correlation between moral values and love, and it is a lot easier to capture this and turn into dataset. By measuring the length of the online relationship and analyzing the texts, voice and emojis for key words, it is possible to formulate a highly accurate behavior training set.

Who will provide the data?

So far so good! But who will show his/her chat history? Definitely not me! But welcome to the numerous virtual worlds! Where real humans hide behind avatars. Millions of users use virtual worlds like Second life and World of Warcraft (and many other MMORPGs). People remain anonymous. If we can form an alliance with them, or develop our own virtual world, we will have access to all the information we just discussed (after getting the permission of the users of course!). Apart from text and voice, these virtual worlds also provide gesture feature, where you can show your expressions (another useful data).

Even better, already many of these virtual worlds are trying to implement VR. Realtime VR conferences are not far away! So more useful data like gestures and expressions can be captured accurately and in Realtime.

But to start with, a curated public chatroom is more than enough to make an excellent dataset for ethical behaviour. But obviously, it must be a genuine dating platform and not an adult stuff. I believe that this would definitely be possible for a small sized firm (if not fire the tech guys :))

Final words

- Love is the most powerful and it will stay for long.
- Ethics is very important to get into long-term love.
- It is easy to get data from virtual worlds and form a correlation between love and ethics.
- Virtual worlds are the future. You won't ever face the dead end (surplus data from single guys).
- You can easily formulate culture specific datasets (you already have age, gender and location details of the participants who sign up)
- If you find it hard, I'm there to help.