

# Taste for Words, Childhood, LLMs, and World Models

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## ABSTRACT:

This research offers an interdisciplinary reading of contemporary transformations of language in the era of large-scale language models (LLMs) and so-called world model architectures. By combining Françoise Hérítier's anthropology of language with Alexander Grothendieck's reflections on childhood and invention, it develops the hypothesis that childhood—understood as an epistemic regime of openness, indeterminacy, and receptiveness to reality—constitutes an essential key to understanding both human creativity and the structural limitations of contemporary artificial intelligence. The article shows that, while LLMs exhibit remarkable capacities for linguistic recombination based on statistical regularities, they remain devoid of experiential grounding and are not embodied in the world. Similarly, world models, although they aim to integrate perception, prediction, and simulation, remain embedded in a modeling logic that cannot be equated with a genuine engagement with reality. Drawing on Hérítier's notion of "a taste for words" and Grothendieck's idea of "cognitive innocence," the analysis highlights a fundamental tension between the algorithmic production of forms and the lived experience of meaning. This leads to a reformulation of childhood as a critical epistemological category, allowing us to conceive of creativity as an openness to the not-already-given, irreducible to any computational formalization.

**Keywords:** Language, childhood, creativity, artificial intelligence.

## 1. Introduction

Contemporary transformations of language, driven by large-scale language models (LLMs) and emerging world-model architectures, are not limited to technical evolution: they entail a profound reconfiguration of the very categories from which we think about language, creativity, and, more broadly, intelligence. By producing utterances of unprecedented coherence and fluidity, these systems give the impression of reproducing certain dimensions of human inventiveness. Yet, this apparent proximity raises

a crucial question: what becomes of creativity when it is dissociated from lived experience and its embodiment in the world?

This article unfolds from this question. It proposes a comparative reading of Françoise Hérítier's anthropology of language, the thought of Alexander Grothendieck, and contemporary paradigms of artificial intelligence. The central hypothesis guiding this analysis is as follows: childhood, understood not as a simple developmental phase but as a cognitive regime of openness, innocence, and indeterminacy,

constitutes a key to understanding both human creativity and the structural limitations of current artificial systems.

From this perspective, H  ritier's notion of a "taste for words" allows us to conceive of language as a sensory and embodied experience, irreducible to a simple manipulation of signs. Simultaneously, Grothendieck's reflections highlight a conception of invention founded on a form of cognitive innocence, characterized by the suspension of established conceptual frameworks and by an openness to a reality that is not yet fully structured.

These two approaches converge on the same intuition: creativity is not simply a combinatorial capacity, but involves an original openness to the world, a prerequisite for the emergence of meaning.

It is precisely on this point that contemporary artificial intelligence models reveal their limitations. Language Learning Models (LLMs) produce statistically consistent linguistic forms, but without access to lived experience of language. World models, for their part, seek to simulate the dynamics of reality by integrating perception and prediction, but this simulation should not be confused with a genuine inhabiting of the world. In other words, these systems model the world without ever being exposed to it.

From this point on, a fundamental distinction emerges between two regimes of relating to reality: on the one hand, a modeling regime based on the stabilization of regularities; on the other, an experiential regime characterized by openness to indeterminacy. It is in this gap that childhood acquires decisive theoretical significance.

Far from being a bygone state, it can be understood as a persistent epistemological condition: that which maintains meaning in its incompleteness and which makes invention possible as a transcendence of the already-given. In this sense, thinking about childhood not only sheds light on the nature of human creativity, but also allows us to offer a renewed critique of contemporary forms of artificial intelligence.

The aim of this article is twofold: firstly, to reintegrate reflection on language and creativity within an anthropology of the senses and experience; secondly, to examine, from this perspective, the presuppositions and limitations of current computational architectures. In doing so, the goal is less to oppose human intelligence and artificial intelligence than to clarify the conditions of possibility for meaning in each of these configurations.

## 2. Literature review

This article lies at the intersection of three main fields of research: (i) the anthropology of language, (ii) the philosophy of creativity, and (iii) contemporary studies on artificial intelligence.

Fran  oise H  ritier's work is rooted in an anthropological tradition that foregrounds the embodied, affective, and culturally situated dimension of language. In "Le go  t des mots" (H  ritier, 2013), language is not considered a simple system for transmitting information, but rather a sensory experience of the world, imbued with symbolic resonances and affective charges. This perspective aligns, on a theoretical level, with certain major orientations in the phenomenology of language and pragmatic philosophy.

From a phenomenological standpoint, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945, 1960) conceives of language as an extension of the body and perception, that is, as an embodied mode of accessing the world, irreducible to an abstract combination of signs. Meaning emerges from a perceptual grounding and an inscription within lived experience. In parallel, the pragmatic approaches developed by Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953) and J. L. Austin (1962) shift the analysis of language toward its actual uses. For Wittgenstein, meaning is inseparable from "language games" and the forms of life in which they acquire meaning, while Austin shows, through speech act theory, that speaking amounts to performing situated actions.

Taken together, these theoretical frameworks converge on a conception of language as an embodied and situated practice, in which

meaning is not reduced to a symbolic correspondence, but is constituted in and through use, experience, and forms of life. It is precisely within this framework that the notion of “a taste for words,” understood as a sensory experience of language, finds its place.

Alexander Grothendieck’s reflections on childhood are rooted in a non-formalist tradition of the philosophy of mathematics, attentive to the intuitive, heuristic, and non-procedural dimensions of invention. In “Recoltes et semailles” (2022), creative activity is conceived not as the application of established rules, but as an open-ended process of exploration, driven by a form of “cognitive innocence” that suspends pre-established conceptual frameworks. This approach extends insights already present in the work of Henri Poincaré (1908) and Jacques Hadamard (1945), who emphasized the crucial role of intuition and nonlinear processes in mathematical discovery.

These perspectives resonate with the contributions of genetic epistemology developed by Jean Piaget (1952, 1970), according to which knowledge does not pre-exist in a stabilized form, but is progressively constructed through developing structures. Childhood appears as a phase where cognitive categories are still malleable, in the process of being elaborated, which allows for a greater openness to the configurations of reality. In this framework, “innocence” does not refer to a lack of knowledge, but to a specific mode of cognitive organization characterized by a less rigidity of interpretive schemas.

Research in the psychology of creativity, particularly that of Margaret Boden (2004), extends this analysis by distinguishing different types of creativity, some of which go beyond the simple recombination of existing structures. Invention then appears as a process involving transformations of the spaces of possibility themselves, and not merely internal variations within given frameworks.

From this convergent perspective, childhood can be interpreted as a state of cognitive readiness, marked by an openness to the still

undetermined forms of reality. It constitutes less a stage to be overcome than an epistemological resource for thinking about the very conditions of invention, understood as the capacity to produce something new beyond the frameworks of the already known.

Large-scale language models developed by major players such as OpenAI, Google DeepMind, and Anthropic (Brown et al., 2020; Bommasani et al., 2021; OpenAI, 2023) fall within the broader paradigm of foundation models, characterized by their ability to learn general representations from vast datasets. Recent literature highlights the emergence of unexpected properties at large scales, particularly in terms of generalization, reasoning, and transfer (Wei et al., 2022; Bubeck et al., 2023). Meanwhile, world model architectures (Ha & Schmidhuber, 2018; LeCun, 2022; Hafner et al., 2023) aim to integrate perception, action, and prediction within dynamic internal representations, bringing artificial intelligence closer to more situated forms of cognition.

However, a growing body of critical work highlights the structural limitations of these systems. Bender et al. (2021) characterize language models as fundamentally distributional systems, operating on statistical correlations without access to lived meaning, while Mitchell (2023) and Marcus (2020) emphasize their persistent difficulties with causal understanding and robustness outside of distribution. Convergently, Lake et al. (2017) stress the gap between these architectures and forms of human learning, particularly with regard to sensorimotor grounding and the ability to construct flexible and generalizable models of the world. These critiques suggest that, despite their remarkable performance, current systems remain far from a fully embodied and experiential intelligence.

Despite the richness and diversity of existing research, a persistent blind spot emerges at the intersection of the various fields involved. On the one hand, the anthropology of language—as developed in particular by Françoise Héritier—highlights the sensory, affective, and embodied dimension of linguistic experience. On the other

hand, the epistemological reflection inspired by Alexander Grothendieck, in dialogue with the traditions of developmental psychology and the philosophy of invention, proposes to consider childhood as a specific cognitive regime, characterized by a constitutive openness to the indeterminacy of reality. Simultaneously, contemporary literature on artificial intelligence, whether it focuses on large-scale language models or world-model architectures, has largely been structured around the analysis of performance, generalization capabilities, and, more recently, their structural limitations.

However, these three registers remain, for the most part, treated separately. AI approaches, including their critical versions, rarely question the nature of language beyond its computational formalization, and even more rarely its sensory and lived dimension. Conversely, anthropological and philosophical perspectives on language and childhood have only marginally been used to illuminate the transformations brought about by contemporary artificial intelligence architectures. This results in a theoretical fragmentation that prevents a full grasp of the scope of current changes.

Therefore, what is lacking is not so much the accumulation of knowledge in each of these areas as their conceptual articulation. More precisely, there is a lack of an approach capable of jointly considering: (i) language as a sensory experience and a medium of meaning, (ii) childhood as an epistemic structure of openness and non-closure, and (iii) artificial intelligence systems as forms of meaning production based on the modeling and stabilization of regularities. It is in this interstitial space—still largely unexplored—that the contribution of this article is situated.

By offering a cross-reading of these three dimensions, this article aims to fill this gap, not by juxtaposing heterogeneous theoretical frameworks, but by placing them in tension in order to reveal a common question: that of the conditions of possibility for meaning and invention, at a time when computational technologies tend to redefine the very forms of language.

### 3. Research method

To address the central question—namely, the possibility of simultaneously considering language as a sensory experience, childhood as an epistemic structure, and contemporary architectures of artificial intelligence—this article adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary, and resolutely conceptual methodology. Rather than an empirical approach focused on measuring performance, it favors an interpretative approach aimed at illuminating the conditions of possibility for meaning and invention based on heterogeneous theoretical frameworks, which are presented here in dialogue. This methodology unfolds across three complementary levels of analysis.

The first level rests on a hermeneutic analysis of the texts of Françoise Héritier and Alexander Grothendieck. This involves not simply presenting their explicit theses, but reconstructing the implicit presuppositions that underpin their respective conceptions of language, perception, and creativity.

In Héritier's case, the analysis aims to uncover an anthropology of language centered on sensory experience, where meaning unfolds in an affective and cultural depth irreducible to its formalization. With Grothendieck, the focus is on how the notion of childhood operates as a heuristic framework, revealing a conception of invention based on openness, intuition, and the suspension of established frameworks.

This hermeneutic approach thus makes it possible to identify, beyond disciplinary differences, a common conceptual core: the idea that meaning and creativity emerge in an open-ended relationship with the world, marked by a form of constitutive indeterminacy.

The second level consists of an interdisciplinary comparative analysis, aiming to connect concepts from the anthropology of language and the philosophy of invention with contemporary artificial intelligence architectures, particularly large-scale language models and world models.

This comparison is not based on a superficial

analogy, but on a structural correspondence. It seeks to identify, on the one hand, apparent convergences—such as the capacities for recomposition, generation, or simulation—and, on the other hand, fundamental epistemic discontinuities. Among these are, in particular, the absence of experiential grounding, the dissociation between language and corporeality, and the reduction of meaning to statistical regularities in artificial systems.

The objective of this comparative analysis is twofold: to clarify what aspects of human dynamics AI systems appear to replicate, and to highlight what they structurally elude. This shift allows us to more precisely define the scope and limitations of the analogies often used between human learning and machine learning.

The third level employs a critical approach to artificial intelligence technologies, situated within the fields of AI studies and contemporary philosophy of technology. This approach does not aim to evaluate the technical performance of models—a task already extensively covered by the specialized literature—but rather to question the ontological and epistemological presuppositions that underpin their design and use.

From this perspective, LLMs and world models are understood not only as technical artifacts, but as forms of modeling the world and language, embodying a particular conception of meaning, knowledge, and intelligence. Critical analysis thus focuses on highlighting the reductive effects of these systems, notably their tendency to stabilize regularities at the expense of the indeterminacy inherent in human experience.

By articulating these three levels—hermeneutic, comparative, and critical—the adopted methodology makes it possible to construct a coherent analytical framework capable of accounting for both the richness of the anthropological and philosophical approaches mobilized and the contemporary issues linked to the development of artificial intelligence. Ultimately, it aims to open a space for reflection where technological transformations can be examined using renewed conceptual categories,

rather than simply described in terms of performance or technical innovations.

#### **4. A taste for words as a reflection of linguistic sensitivity**

In "The Taste of Words", Françoise Hérítier develops a conception of language that radically departs from the strictly utilitarian or communicative approach. Language is not reduced to a simple system of signs intended to transmit information, but appears as a fully-fledged sensory experience, inscribed within an affective, bodily, and cultural history. Words are not neutral: they possess their own density, made up of resonances, connotations, cultural echoes, and implicit associations that far exceed their referential function. They carry what could be called a "symbolic texture," where meaning is not limited to what is said, but includes how it is felt, interpreted, and inhabited..

From this perspective, speaking is not simply about mobilizing a shared code, but about entering a universe already structured by rhythms, emotions, and forms of collective sensibility. Language then becomes a space of experience rather than a mere tool of representation. It configures a way of being in the world, by orienting perception, stabilizing certain distinctions, opening up possibilities for association and closing off others. To utter a word is thus to activate an invisible network of memories, social uses, affective tones, and historical stratifications.

This conception breaks with a strictly instrumental view of language, still dominant in many contemporary theoretical frameworks, where language is considered a device for encoding and decoding information. Conversely, Hérítier highlights the fact that language is always already embedded in lived experience: it is laden with affects, images, and values that cannot be entirely reduced to their explicit semantic content. Thus, understanding a language does not consist solely in mastering its grammar or vocabulary, but in internalizing its subtle nuances, implicit inflections, and forms of shared understanding.



It is in this sense that language can be conceived as a living environment rather than a simple code. It is an environment in which the individual is immersed from the earliest experiences of socialization, and into which the child enters even before any capacity for reflective detachment. Language learning is therefore not the gradual acquisition of an external tool, but a form of progressive incorporation of a world already symbolically structured. The child does not approach language as an object; rather, they are first taken in by it, enveloped, and shaped by it.

This initial immersion explains why language possesses a profoundly pre-reflective dimension: it organizes perception even before it becomes an object of thought. The “taste for words” thus designates this singular capacity of language to be experienced as much as to be understood, to produce sensory effects as much as meanings. It therefore opens the way to an anthropology of language where meaning cannot be separated from the lived experience of sense.

### **5. The innocence of childhood as the matrix of inventiveness**

For Alexander Grothendieck, the reference to childhood is neither a matter of biographical nostalgia nor a simple psychological metaphor, but rather a genuine key to understanding intellectual creativity. Childhood appears as a particular mode of relating to the world, characterized by an intensity of perception and a cognitive availability that adulthood tends to gradually overlay with systems of categorization, formalization, and stabilization of reality. It is therefore not conceived as a transitional stage to be overcome, but as a structure of thought capable of illuminating what it truly means to “invent”.

From this perspective, inventiveness is not synonymous with the controlled application of rules or the optimization of existing procedures. Rather, it stems from a shift in perspective, made possible by a form of cognitive innocence: the ability to suspend, at least temporarily, inherited assumptions, rigid conceptual frameworks, and automatic recognition patterns. In this

configuration, the child does not approach the world through pre-established categories that simply need to be applied; on the contrary, they find themselves in a position where the categories themselves are still unstable, in the process of formation, and even constantly reinvented based on immediate experience.

This situation gives childhood a particular heuristic power. The world is not yet rigidly structured by fixed distinctions between the essential and the accessory, the possible and the impossible, the relevant and the irrelevant. Rather, it appears as an open field of possible configurations, where the links between things are not yet definitively fixed. It is precisely this initial indeterminacy that makes possible original forms of recomposition of reality, in which unexpected relationships can be perceived before being disciplined by established explanatory frameworks.

It is important to emphasize that this “innocence” should not be understood as a form of ignorance or cognitive incompleteness. It does not denote a lack of knowledge, but rather a different way of organizing attention and perception. Far from being deficient, it corresponds to a structural openness of the cognitive field, in which the world is not yet entirely filtered through consolidated interpretive frameworks. In this sense, childhood is not the absence of knowledge, but a particular way of relating to what still exceeds established knowledge.

Conversely, adult rationality tends to produce stabilizing effects: it organizes reality into lasting categories, it prioritizes information, it selects what matters and what can be disregarded. While this structuring is essential for action and communication, it also introduces a form of cognitive closure that limits the possibility of seeing what is already there in a new light. It is precisely in this tension that childhood, as Grothendieck uses it, acquires theoretical significance: it does not designate a regressive state, but a critical resource that allows us to think about the very conditions of invention, that is, the capacity to produce something new without

being entirely governed by the frameworks of the already known.

## 6. LLMs: Intelligence without childhood

Contemporary language models (LLMs) occupy a paradoxical position in the landscape of forms of intelligence: they give the impression of replaying, on a massive and accelerated scale, certain dynamics similar to those of human language learning, while radically differing from them in terms of the conditions for the emergence of meaning. Their functioning seems, in fact, to produce a form of creative emergence of language, without, however, fitting into the developmental trajectory that characterizes human intelligence, and in particular without passing through what could be called an “original experience of the world.”

On the one hand, these systems demonstrate impressive recombination capabilities. Drawing on vast textual corpora, they can generate novel associations, connect disparate semantic domains, and produce utterances that did not previously exist in that precise form. This combinatorial plasticity sometimes gives the impression of spontaneous inventiveness, akin to linguistic creativity in action. As in children's language, we observe an ability to explore new configurations, to subvert established usages, and to produce discursive forms that defy simple mechanical reproduction.

However, this analogy quickly reveals its limitations when one examines the underlying conditions of this production. Unlike children, whose language acquisition is inseparable from bodily immersion in the social, sensory, and emotional world, LLMs (Language Learning Masters) have no lived experience. They are not situated in an embodied environment, they do not perceive, act, or have intentions of their own. Their relationship to language is entirely mediated by textual traces, that is, by productions that are already symbolized, detached from any direct sensory grounding.

It is in this sense that we can speak of a “creativity without childhood.” Whereas childhood, for Grothendieck, designates an

original openness to the world, characterized by an absence of premature stabilization of categories, LLMs operate from a fundamentally different structure: a statistical memory of language. Their functioning is based not on a progressive immersion in reality, but on the exploitation of regularities internal to a space already entirely symbolized. They do not discover the world; they recombine the discursive traces left by those who have already inhabited it.

This distinction is crucial: the inventiveness of LLMs is derivative rather than inaugural. It does not stem from an original relationship to the indeterminacy of reality, but from an ability to reconfigure already established linguistic patterns. Even when their productions appear novel, they remain constrained by the statistical structure of the training data. It is therefore not a matter of invention in the strong sense, but of a sophisticated recombination within a pre-defined space of possibilities.

This situation then raises a fundamental question, which goes beyond the purely technical domain to touch upon the very nature of language: can linguistic innovation emerge independently of any experience of the world, or does it structurally depend on a form of pre-linguistic openness to reality? In other words, does the inventive power of human language reside solely in its combinatorial capacity, or also in that more original zone—that of childhood—where categories are not yet fully fixed, thus allowing meaning to be constituted in a still indeterminate relationship to the world?

## 7. World models : towards a simulation of human experience?

World models embody a broader ambition than purely textual language models: to move beyond the simple manipulation of symbolic sequences and construct internal representations of the world capable of supporting anticipation, simulation, and action. From this perspective, the goal is no longer simply to predict the probable continuation of an utterance, but to model the dynamics of reality itself, integrating dimensions of perception, temporality, and causality. These architectures thus seek to bring artificial

intelligence closer to a form of situated cognition, where the system is no longer merely a producer of discourse, but an agent capable of simulating environments and adapting strategies accordingly.

The stakes are considerable: by linking perception, action, and prediction, world models claim to cross a significant conceptual threshold, that which separates the manipulation of linguistic representations from the construction of an internal, "experiential" space. Whereas language learning models (LLMs) operate within an essentially discursive framework, world models introduce a dynamic dimension, in which states of the world are projected, transformed, and evaluated according to their potential consequences. This evolution seems to bring AI closer to a more integrated form of cognition, where language is no longer isolated from perception but embedded within a broader simulation system.

However, a fundamental tension remains, limiting this apparent convergence with human experience. Simulating a world, however faithfully as possible, is not the same as inhabiting it. Simulation always relies on a structural distance between the model and what it represents, even when this distance is minimized by complex interaction loops. It remains an operation of reconstruction, not an ontological immersion in the texture of reality. In other words, the sophistication of the representations does not eliminate the distinction between the lived world and the modeled world.

It is here that the notion of childhood, as it emerges from the combined readings of Françoise Héritier and Alexander Grothendieck, allows us to reformulate the problem at a more fundamental level. Childhood does not simply designate a stage of cognitive development that one could simulate or artificially reproduce. It refers to a mode of being-in-the-world characterized by direct exposure to the uncertainty of reality, without excessive mediation by established categories. The child does not merely represent the world: he is engaged in a still-open relationship with it, where

perception, affect, and understanding are not yet entirely dissociated.

In this sense, childhood cannot be equated with a form of modeling, however sophisticated. Rather, it corresponds to an embodied immersion in a world that is not yet fully objectified. Whereas world models construct manipulable internal environments, childhood involves an experience of the world as a permanent excess in relation to any formalization. This difference is crucial: it marks the boundary between a logic of simulation and a logic of exposition.

Thus, even though world models can produce extremely sophisticated predictive structures capable of anticipating sequences of events or simulating complex interactions, they do not "taste" the world in the sense understood by an anthropology of the senses. They are not affected by it, they are not surprised by its indeterminacy, and they do not experience that fundamental openness that characterizes a child's experience of reality. What they lack is not simply an additional degree of complexity, but that original relationship to the unexpected, where the world is never entirely reducible to what can be modeled.

## 8. Childhood as a critique of AI

Bringing together Françoise Héritier's anthropology of language, Grothendieck's thought, and contemporary artificial intelligence architectures allows a common critical line to emerge, one that stems neither from a technophobic opposition to computational models nor from a simple celebration of human intelligence, but rather from an inquiry into the very conditions of possibility for meaning. This intersection highlights a fundamental point of tension: what current language processing and world simulation systems tend to formalize as computational operations between data states only imperfectly captures the complexity of the human experience of language and creativity.

First, it becomes possible to assert that language cannot be reduced to a probability distribution, however sophisticated. Statistical models can



certainly capture regularities, co-occurrences, and syntactic or semantic structures on a large scale, but they fail to account for the lived dimension of meaning, as H  ritier evokes through the idea of a “taste for words.” Human language is not merely an organization of probable signs; it is permeated by affective, cultural, and historical charges that cannot be entirely exhausted by quantitative correlations. In other words, meaning always overflows the formal conditions of its production.

Secondly, creativity cannot be entirely understood as an optimal recombination of pre-existing data. While artificial systems excel at generating new configurations from existing corpora, this combinatorial capacity should not be confused with invention in the strict sense. From a perspective inspired by Grothendieck, inventiveness implies a rupture in the frameworks of thought themselves, an ability to reconfigure the conditions of what is thinkable, and not merely to recombine what is already given. Human creativity thus involves a dimension of discontinuity, of conceptual bifurcation, which goes beyond the simple optimization of existing structures.

Third, and even more radically, human inventiveness seems to rest on a form of structural innocence, that is, on the capacity not to know in advance what what one perceives means. This original indeterminacy, which can be likened to childhood, constitutes a condition of possibility for surprise, for the emergence of new meaning, and for the reconfiguration of the very categories of experience. Whereas artificial systems operate from already stabilized distributions, human experience includes a fundamental openness to the unforeseen, to that which exceeds available interpretive frameworks.

In this context, childhood should therefore not be understood as a simple biological phase of human development, but as an epistemological position. It designates a way of being in the world characterized by the acceptance of the fact that reality always exceeds the descriptions we can produce of it. This position is not regressive, but critical: it introduces a distance from any

temptation toward descriptive closure, whether linguistic, cognitive, or algorithmic.

Thus, considering childhood as a critical category allows us to reconfigure our understanding of contemporary artificial intelligence. Not to deny its power, but to identify its constitutive limits: those of a system of meaning production based on the stabilization of regularities, whereas human experience, in its most fundamental dimension, remains open to the indeterminacy of the world.

## 9. Conclusion

This article sought to articulate an anthropology of language, a philosophy of invention, and a critical analysis of contemporary artificial intelligence architectures in order to develop a central hypothesis: creativity, whether linguistic or conceptual, cannot be fully understood from purely computational models.

A comparative examination of the works of Fran  oise H  ritier and Alexander Grothendieck first allows us to reconfigure the very notion of language. Language does not appear as a simple system of representation or information transmission, but as a sensitive, affective, and historically situated environment. The “taste for words” thus designates an irreducible dimension of linguistic experience, where to signify always already involves being affected by meaning.

Similarly, Grothendieck's reference to childhood allows us to shift our understanding of invention: it is not solely a matter of mastering rules or recombining existing structures, but rather a form of cognitive innocence, understood as an openness to the indeterminacy of reality and a suspension of the established frameworks of thought.

In this context, contemporary artificial intelligence models appear as powerful systems for producing forms, but structurally limited from the perspective of experience. LLMs produce coherent statements without access to the lived world, while world models simulate environmental dynamics without reaching the dimension of inhabiting reality.

This is where the link between a child's love

of reading and the art of writing becomes crucial. Childhood, as an immersion in language, is first and foremost an experience of reading in the broadest sense: an exposure to worlds of meaning that are not yet fully established. For a child, reading is not simply decoding; it is entering a space for experimenting with meaning, where words retain a power to surprise and transform. This "love of reading" is the condition for the emergence of a vibrant relationship with language.

From a contemporary perspective, Steven Pinker (2014) emphasizes that good writing is not about mechanically applying formal rules, but about making language cognitively transparent, vibrant, and oriented toward the reader's experience. Effective writing relies on the ability to reconstruct a shareable mental world by mobilizing accessible images, intuitions, and thought patterns. In other words, the art of writing involves preserving something of that initial openness to meaning—a kind of "linguistic infancy"—which prevents words from being reduced to mere abstract units.

Thus, the transition from a love of reading to the art of writing can be interpreted as a continuum:

- the child reader inhabits an open language,

- the adult writer, in their most inventive form, seeks to reactivate this openness.

This continuity highlights a fundamental limitation of AI systems: they can optimize text production, but they do not traverse this original experience of language as a lived environment. They lack both the impact of the first reading and the need to make the world intelligible to others based on embodied experience.

The distinction highlighted is therefore not a simplistic opposition between natural and artificial, but a deeper difference between experience and simulation, between inhabiting language and modeling it. Childhood, as an epistemological category, precisely encapsulates this irreducible openness: it designates the capacity to maintain meaning in its incompleteness, to preserve the possibility of being surprised by the world.

In this sense, considering the love of reading, childhood, and writing together allows us to broaden our critique of artificial intelligence: not by denying its power, but by reminding us that all fully meaningful language production is rooted in an experience of the world that always exceeds its formalizations. It is in this excess—and in the capacity to remain open to it—that the deepest condition of invention resides.

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