A note about
Weyl, E.G. and Tang, A. and community. (2024) *Plurality: The Future of Collaborative Technology and Democracy*. No publisher given but assumed to be Plurality Community.
Maybe: RadicalxChange.

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I am in no position to offer a review of this huge (562 page) and important book, but felt that I should at least say something about it.

The book's main aim is to advocate a (world?) governance system which is heavily dependent on AI. This is symbolised by two overlapping boxes which it is deliberately hard to represent in words but can be roughly captured by the term *Plurality.* (In the quotation below it is represented by [-:=1))

The book is directly relevant to the theme of our conference and, in particular, my paper on governance.

Most basically, it introduced me to a whole range of applications of AI that I had never heard of and illustrated their current and possible applications in ways that I found seriously alarming. I have to admit that I still cannot get my mind round this variety of applications, let alone keep track of the acronyms used to refer to them.

However, in support of these Applications, the book is pervaded by a series of detailed discussions of problems arising in many sectors of society (and the ways in which the adoption of *Plurality* could help to resolve them). The topics discussed range from Identity and Freedom, through Democracy, Deliberation, and Business innovation, to voting and social markets. In each case, it describes ways in which variants of AI *are being,* and could be, used to overcome some of the problems – and the further problems which such applications introduce or could introduce.

On page 411 and subsequent pages it summarises ways these applications are being and could be used to transform every aspect of society.

Here is page 411 on the potential impact of AI embedded in the notion of *Plurality.*

Part 6: Impact

From [-:=1) to Reality

[-:=1) has the tangible potential, in the next decade, to transform almost every sector of society.

Examples we study are:

1. The workplace, where we believe it could raise economic output by 10% and increase the growth rate by a percentage point.
2. Health, where we believe can extend human life by two decades.
3. Media, where it can heal the divides opened by social media, provide sustainable funding, expand participation, and dramatically increase press freedom.
4. Environment, where it is core to addressing most of the serious environmental problems we face, perhaps even more so than traditional "green" technologies.

While we do not detail them here, we also expect fundamental effects in a wide range of other areas including:

- Energy, where it can help underpin a fundamental transition from the "hunter-gatherer" model of fossil fuels to the "agricultural" model of directly harnessing solar energy.
- Learning, where it, can upend the linear structure of current schooling to allow far more diverse and flexible, lifelong learning paths.

While, on the face of it, many of these seem laudable, the authors seem to be locked in to current thoughtways.

Most importantly, for all the apparent erudition the authors (of which more later) they do not seem to have stumbled basic information relating to the state of the planet (see e.g. https://dothemath.ucsd.edu/2024/07/mm-7-ecological-nosedive/ for a summary.)

Raising economic output sounds laudable. But do we really want more junk foods, junk detergents, destructive cars, junk education, massive bureaucracy, or laptops and phones which depend on hugely energy-consumptive servers?

Do we really want to extend human life – the most destructive life on the planet – by two decades?

"Press freedom" … that sounds kind-of archaic … and what about censorship and mis-information?

As to the "serious environmental problems we face", I am not at all sure that the authors have the slightest notion of the extent of our "environmental" problems … i.e. the overwhelming destruction of the soils, seas, and atmosphere wreaked by humankind … and the implications of these things for images of what can/could be done to "move forward".

As to energy, the authors, again, for all their erudition, do not seem to have stumbled upon the basic physical laws relating to the conservation of mass and energy. If one uses energy for anything – regardless of where one gets it from – it inevitably results in products that destroy our biosphere. "Green energy", which they continuously advocate, is an oxymoron.

Educational diversity … Here again, the authors do not seem to have grasped the problem. The problem is not to increase internet access to ever-increasing amounts of (largely temporary) formal "knowledge", but to nurture, recognise, utilise, and reward the vast array of talents that are available to us but stifled by the current system.

In short, it seems to me that, for all their apparent erudition, the authors have not escaped from pervasive, and extremely destructive, current thoughtways.

More generally, they do not address the problems posed by mass mental viruses. Indeed, they themselves fall prey to many of them e.g. in relation to the "Climate Crisis", COVID, "pandemics", and centralisation (e.g. WEF and the United Nation's "sustainable development" goals).

More specifically, they seem to have been captured by the Chinese / Taiwanese growth mindset.

In short, the book is extremely informative and thoughtful within particular domains… but frightening in its limitations and advocacies.

But here is an interesting thing.

The book somehow conveys an image of advocating Big Government largely facilitated by Big AI.

But every so often there is reference to what is somehow seen as a kind-of parallel development in Taiwan – **G0V** which is articulated as "Gov Zero".

I have to say that this seems somehow closer to my heart.