

*The Importance of Technology in the Continuity of
Peoples' Histories: Heritage at the Intersection of
Technology and Digitization*

أهمية التكنولوجيا في استمرار تاريخ الشعوب- التراث بين التقنية
والرقمنة-

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Abstract:

National identity, rooted in historical heritage, is essential for a nation's continuity. This article investigates Algerian folk heritage, challenging the notion that development conflicts with tradition. It argues that contemporary technologies, especially digitization and artificial intelligence (AI), are vital for preserving and revitalizing the past.

The research explores how these tools revive heritage, foster cross-cultural understanding, and revalorize history by overcoming temporal boundaries. By examining how AI can bring the past to life through simulated imagery, this paper highlights technology's crucial role in safeguarding folk heritage from being lost, ensuring its relevance for future generations.

Keywords: Folk Heritage, Technology, Digitization, Artificial Intelligence, Solid Memory.

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ملخص:

إن الهوية الوطنية هي مصدر السيادة والمركزية لكل أمة، ذلك أنها تضمن انتماءها وامتدادها في التاريخ البعيد، ف جذور الأمم تثبت بأصولها واستمرارها مرهون بمدى صلابة ماضيها لبناء الحاضر وكذا التطلع للمستقبل، وفي هذا السياق يجري البحث في هذه المقالة حول التراث الشعبي الجزائري وتصحيح بعض الأفكار حول التعارض بين التطور وماضي الشعوب، خوفا على الثقافة من التجاوز وذلك عن طريق البحث وتقصي الظاهرة، ومناقشة الإشكالية التالية: كيف ساهمت التكنولوجيا المعاصرة في إحياء التراث الشعبي؟ وكيف ساهمت التقنيات المعاصرة في التعرف على الثقافات المختلفة، والسماح لها بالتعارف وإثبات كل ثقافة وجودها عن طريق وسائل التواصل؟ وكيف أعيد الاعتبار للتاريخ في الحاضر عن طريق القضاء على الحدود الزمانية والمكانية؟ وكيف استطاع الذكاء الاصطناعي بآلياته المختلفة أن يقرب الماضي عن طريق الصور الحية المقلدة التي ينشرها، وأسئلة كثيرة تناقشها هذه المداخلة في سبيل التأكيد على أهمية التكنولوجيا والرقمنة وكذا آليات الذكاء الاصطناعي في حماية التراث الشعبي من الضياع والنسيان.

كلمات مفتاحية: التراث الشعبي، التكنولوجيا، الرقمنة، الذكاء الاصطناعي، الذاكرة الصلبة.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Technology has successfully permeated all diverse spheres of life. This dominance is a consequence of the breakthroughs it has achieved across all domains, thereby broadly fostering dialogue among cultures, ideas, as well as sciences and forms of knowledge. All of these have transformed the human condition,

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ushering in an era characterized by openness, communication, and de-specialization. Indeed, this transcendence may have dismantled traditional conceptions of the past, present, and future. Consequently, according to technological principles, there is no longer a basis for believing in a linear succession or sequence through which time progresses. Instead, time has become fragmented, contingent upon intensive events devoid of hierarchical or serial relationships.

Hence, time and space no longer exert the same dominion as they once did. Rather, disregarding temporal and spatial boundaries, events are liberated from the constraints of fixed associations. Furthermore, through artificial intelligence programs, it is possible to engage in dialogue with the past and history, and even to reconstruct them in a comprehensible and complete form. This prospect has come to characterize the nexus between history and culture on one hand, and technology and artificial intelligence on the other.

In this context, a central emerges concerning folk heritage—as a paradigm of the past and elapsed history—in relation to the present. This article will endeavor, firstly, to delimit the concepts of "culture" and "folk heritage," and secondly, to explore the capabilities of technology and artificial intelligence. Subsequently, it will discuss the role of artificial intelligence in safeguarding heritage from oblivion and facilitating its restoration, by examining the mechanisms AI employs to this end. Concurrently, this research aims to interrogate the established problematic between heritage and modernity, and the putative antagonism between these domains.

It will do so by leveraging scientific and objective arguments to arrive at a conciliatory perspective that eschews preconceived and facile judgments. The central inquiry thus becomes: how can the perceived adversary, modernity, be transformed into an ally, a companion, and indeed an indispensable necessity for the preservation and continuity of the past, despite the obsolescence of time in its traditional sense?

2. Culture in its Relationship with Technology

Enter the discourse surrounding culture and modernity has long invoked seemingly contradictory entities, each perceived as obscuring the other, under the assumption that they are fundamentally antagonistic and irreconcilable. This is particularly pronounced when addressing the distinct cultures of nations, which constitute identity, specificity, and sacrosanct elements that must not be infringed upon or transcended. Consequently, the era of modernity, in its capacity as a transcendent phase, was perceived—through its principles—as inimical to all that was sacred and established for nations. From this standpoint, the antagonism between the constituents of this dichotomy emerged.

However, in the present context, we address the explosion of technology and technical advancements, and the novelties it has introduced, leaving virtually nothing untouched. An approach that reconciles culture and technology is only feasible after closely examining these concepts. The sudden emergence of technology has overturned all previously prevailing ideas, acting as a profound inflection point across all domains of life. Even modernity, with its foundational principles, was jolted, and its tenets were undermined by this "greatest explosion" that

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encompassed every sphere of life. In record time, technology managed to dominate the entire world, compelling everything to move in its direction, thereby surpassing the real world with its traditional principles. As Al-Dabagh (2016) notes:

Technology has permeated human life more rapidly than any other phenomenon witnessed throughout history. In a relatively short period, informatics has accelerated the convergence of disparate elements, becoming an essential and indispensable component of any human product, whether intellectual or material. Less than twenty years ago, at most, humanity could not have conceived that technology and methods of information exchange could be the primary factor in dismantling institutions and governance systems that had endured for decades, or in creating such intellectual communication and convergence among people in distant corners of the earth. (p. 33)

Thus, technology was an unprecedented event, with no prior indicators or harbingers to signal its arrival. In record time, it achieved widespread dissemination and control. In this context, humanity was not given a choice regarding entry into its realm or adherence to its principles, as it created what was previously unimaginable, having dismantled the concepts of the absolute, certainty, and the traditional methods of Aristotelian logic that had constrained science and hindered its propagation. Technology, therefore, was a monumental event that facilitated openness across all disciplines without exception.

Perhaps one of the most significant features of entering the world of technology, technical advancements, and the adoption

of digital mechanisms is the virtual world, with its vastness and limitless potential. This expansive domain has managed to embrace all human experiences without exception, mediated by an automated intermediary called the computer, which has enabled an interface with the past, present, and future. Today, there is no room for marginalizing or surpassing the past on the grounds that it represents backwardness and regression.

Instead of leveraging technology, it is possible to engage in dialogue with this past. Consequently, the "mechanism" has become the dominant paradigm across life's domains, and existence outside this mechanistic framework is inconceivable. Reinforcing this, Al-Dabagh (2016) argues that any knowledge not processed by computers "is destined for obsolescence" due to the evident "dominance of technological machines over the course of daily life," which in turn "highlights the importance of accelerating the eradication of technological illiteracy and transitioning the peoples of Islamic countries to adopting technology in managing their affairs and elements of production" (p. 41).

This transformation began in the Western world and subsequently spread to encompass all countries, including Arab nations. For reasons linked to the experience itself, technology has been able to answer many difficult questions, simulate human experiences, and realize dreams that were once unattainable, thereby achieving what seemed impossible. This, simultaneously, is what engendered astonishment and a positive form of shock. Stemming from the virtual world that technology has brought into being, history, heritage, and the past are no longer adversaries or obstacles to development that must be

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overcome, as modernity once proclaimed. Instead, diverse human identities can be embraced and restored anew, as a source of pride for peoples, a means of reassembling their lost fragments, and a way to protect them from vanishing into the oblivion of the distant past, according to the traditional conception of time.

In this context, a synthesis between culture and technology becomes possible, arising from the rapprochement and mutual accommodation that has developed between technology/modernity on one hand, and culture/heritage/tradition on the other. It has become feasible to engage with diverse cultures, simulate them within their own temporal frameworks, gather the scattered remnants of civilizations dispersed through time, and achieve the goal of preserving the distinct cultures of peoples. This allows for building a future without severing ties with the past, which has now become a source of pride and a foundation for shaping the future. Before discussing the link between culture and the power associated with peoples, it is pertinent to note that technology has fulfilled the dream of nations in reclaiming their concept of culture and specific heritage. Al-Dabagh (2016) highlights this transformation:

Here, the concept of culture changed, transitioning from merely the quantum of information stored in the minds of a group of individuals or their manuscripts and written heritage, to a concept of culture predicated on production and linked, in some way, to achieving economic gains—that is, a shift from the concept of knowledge associated with social prestige to a concept of knowledge linked to the economy, and thence to

power. (p. 35)

Unquestionably, the retrieval of the past does not imply the elimination of disparities between peoples; the law of the strongest remains tied to the nation most proficient in production and innovation. Perhaps the dissemination of culture in this context is linked to the most advanced of these nations. The issue here pertains to diligent effort and the mobilization of capabilities to shape a present that, in turn, elevates the value of the past/heritage/specific history of these peoples. Thus, the past and present can be unified within a single framework.

The primary manifestation of amity between heritage and technology lies in its openness to heritage and the possibility of dialogue with it. Before discussing the means by which technology fosters this openness, it is imperative to first comprehend the concept of culture and human heritage, which forges the identity of peoples, and the significance it represents for these diverse nations, irrespective of their capabilities and standings. It is the sole constant in the lives of people, and a sacrosanct priority that must not be infringed upon under any circumstances. As Naghli (2025) states:

There is no doubt that heritage offers invaluable worth; it is not merely a repository of past artifacts, but also a source of inspiration for the future. Through its revival, societies can find new avenues for creativity and innovation based on preceding experiences. Heritage also reinforces national belonging and loyalty and promotes unity among individuals in different societies. (p. 363)

The heritage of every nation is considered the foundation of its existence and belonging, and no future can be envisioned

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beyond the confines of its sacred tenets. The dialogue between technology and heritage is what has facilitated the embrace of technological and digital experiences by all people, without exception.

Perhaps the primary apprehension of people during their initial encounter with modernity was the chasm it created between the present and the past; this factor was the reason for the undermining of modernity's principles, as there is no scope for engaging with people outside the bounds of their belonging, identity, and sacrosanct values. Human heritage represents a foremost concern for nations; similarly, for identity, history, the past, and heritage are sources of pride, and no present can exist without firm foundations.

Despite the diversity of cultures that have successively influenced all nations and civilizations—a topic to be discussed later—the history of each nation remains coherent, with no part negating another. This underscores the dialogue that occurs between cultures, which, at certain times, allowed for mutual recognition and peaceful coexistence even without charters or laws protecting rights. Despite the varied cultures that societies have experienced, one can speak of a single, integrated heritage, an indivisible whole, and a constituent of identity such that one cannot speak of a nation without linking it to the set of rituals, customs, and traditions that represent its specificity and source of pride. Perhaps the greatest anxieties of nations concerning this heritage are the fear of its loss, oblivion, and supersession.

Indeed, time, in its traditional sense, is the most encompassing threat to this heritage, as its continuation would

lead to heritage being superseded, viewed merely as an elapsed temporal phase. However, based on the propositions of technology, heritage can persist into the present—a present that can potentiate its capabilities and horizons. Naghli (2025) also points out:

The human heritage of any nation represents its most important cultural component. Sometimes, the matter even extends to the nation's view of heritage as mere awareness of it and positive interaction with it, which is, of course, a limited perspective. Heritage, despite its importance, always represents latent knowledge that can only exist through a natural extension that engages contemporaneity, whether negatively or positively. (p. 55)

Therefore, and from this standpoint, it has become possible to speak of the potential for reconstructing elapsed history through technology, mediated by the virtual world, the sole path that ensures the continuity of history and prevents its decay and effacement from human consciousness, which has long been associated with forgetting.

3. Reconstructing History Through Technology

It may seem illogical to speak of the possibility of retrieving the past in its truest sense, given that the real world we inhabit imposes a set of conditions linked to events in their temporal context. This has caused peoples and nations to harbor apprehensions about the potential supersession of their identity components, particularly concerning younger generations who are increasingly distanced from past eras. However, with the advent of technology, such anxieties have largely become unfounded. In the age of technology, it has become possible to

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create a parallel world—one that is simultaneously more expansive than the real world, namely, the virtual world, accessible through numerous media, chief among them automated interfaces that permit entry into this virtual realm with all its details, events, and future prospects. This virtual world does not solely contain the imaginary; rather, it amalgamates the real and the imagined within a single context through a range of portals provided by the digital medium. As Al-Hamis (n.d.) observes:

Geographical distances have long been a significant challenge in human relations, but technology has succeeded in narrowing this gap. Instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook, and Messenger have made it possible to communicate with anyone, anywhere, and at any time, without needing to wait for days or weeks as was the case with postal services in the past. (p. 3)

Thus, the distancing in human relationships within the real world has been overcome and replaced by communication mediated through the virtual world. In the same vein, a distinguishing feature of technological media is their possession of "solid memory", a memory capacity that surpasses human memory by thousands of folds, with the ability to save and retrieve information in record time by preserving files and protecting them from loss or corruption over time. This characteristic of technology and technical systems is one of the primary foundational properties that has aided in preserving heritage throughout history, without fear of it being forgotten or lost, because in the domain of memory, the machine has far

surpassed the human.

The folk heritage of every nation is a source of its pride, esteem, belonging, and its distinction from other cultures. Specificity pertains to this individual and differentiated aspect that distinguishes one culture from another. The issue in folk heritage is not concerned with general heritage but with the culture of the margins and the common people, which is more significant due to its lack of artificiality and its reliance on the everyday, real-life events of the popular and general strata. Folk culture relates to distinct historical periods, with the initial phase being Berber culture, followed by the colonial period. These are the most crucial periods due to their largely uncodified nature at the time, except for what is found in manuscripts and artifacts. This forms the locus of attention as it depicts customs and traditions from the pre-colonial era as well as the period contemporaneous with it—a phase rich in specificity, and the fear of its loss is commensurate with its importance.

Digitization, as an automated programming of files that stores and retrieves them through a set of markers, icons, or symbols, has become a means of preserving heritage from loss, countering the unreliability of paper-based media, which are fated to be lost, damaged, or forgotten, and are vulnerable to all manners of hazards. Therefore, the technological and digital alternative is the most suitable means for safeguarding personal and national heritage from oblivion across different eras. Naghli (2025) argues:

Although the world is undergoing rapid changes as a result of globalization, the preservation of heritage represents a significant challenge. It is essential for new

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generations to be fully aware of the importance of this heritage and to work towards its maintenance and protection from extinction. Modern technology can contribute to enhancing this awareness by digitally documenting heritage and expanding studies related to it, thereby ensuring its transmission to future generations innovatively and sustainably. The heritage of every nation is its true mirror, reflecting its history and future aspirations. By taking care of it, a balance is achieved between preserving cultural legacy and keeping pace with the spirit of the age and its needs. (p. 363)

The present in which we live contains the past within it, without the need to empty or cleanse memory to store other information, because computer memory is robust enough to accommodate the past, present, and future simultaneously. Today, to learn about stories, customs, traditions, and culture, we no longer need to seek out elders or gather information from grandparents. Instead, a few keystrokes can open a multitude of files replete with diverse history and heritage, narrating an array of stories and tales that allude to ancient times within our current era, without the necessity of searching in libraries or encountering the lacunae that difficult research often entails. This allows for obtaining a history that is complete in its construction. Naghli (2025) further elaborates:

Digitizing heritage means transforming cultural legacy from its traditional form (whether written documents, artifacts, or historical sites) into a digital format that can be stored, processed, and retrieved using modern technology.

This includes the use of techniques such as digital photography, virtual reality, 3D modeling, artificial intelligence, and big data. All these technologies help in preserving cultural heritage accurately and allow new generations to discover and interact with it. By digitizing heritage, we can connect the past with the present in ways that were not possible in previous eras. Technologies like virtual reality and augmented reality offer users the ability to travel through time and experience their history interactively. (p. 364)

Discussing the role of technology and technical systems provides an initial overview of the capacity for preservation and retrieval in record time, for a vast heritage spanning various epochs, without exposure to the dangers that beset the past in the real world. What will be discussed subsequently is an approach to the capabilities of artificial intelligence and, through its diverse mechanisms, how it depicts heritage in a more advanced manner.

The issue concerning technology and digitization pertains to the storage and preservation of heritage in encoded and encrypted files via digital media, which then refer to various segments of this history that have been reorganized and preserved through automated means. Today, it is possible to access diverse events that surrounded civilizations at a certain time within folk heritage through written, visual, or auditory media, which points towards the latest achievements of technology—namely, artificial intelligence—in restoring past and elapsed history in the present era.

4. The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Reviving Heritage

The latest innovations stemming from technology are artificial intelligence (AI) programs, which can engage in dialogue with humans and imitate them, exceeding the functions of machines in the purely digital sense. It was once believed that machines could only operate within a binary digital system, limiting their function to comprehending "yes or no"—symbolized as (1.0). The assumption was that machines were confined to storing, retrieving, and responding only when prompted by button press operating within this (1.0) framework. Artificial intelligence transcends this perception, suggesting that machines, much like humans, can imagine, infer, predict, and even achieve results surpassing human capabilities. This is attributed to the machine's linkage with an infinite solid memory, in contrast to finite human capacities.

Among the achievements of artificial intelligence is the ability to mend gaps in history through likelihood and probability. Reconstructing history by re-reading it through AI mechanisms was once impracticable, as various circumstances had led to the deterioration of manuscripts and artifacts. Hayek (2025) highlights that one of AI's most prominent capabilities lies in analyzing ancient texts, especially those damaged by time, noting that natural language processing (NLP) techniques are "now capable of reading faded manuscripts, reconstructing missing words, and even processing extinct languages, thereby opening a wide door to understanding previously incomprehensible historical texts" (p. 1). Indeed, AI programs have demonstrated their capacity to surpass human limitations by

emulating human abilities, making it possible to find complete artifacts and comprehensible manuscripts that refer to different historical periods.

It has become possible to interact with machines much as we do with humans, by teaching them, after which they undertake tasks of creation, imitation, and simulation. Artificial intelligence is not confined to one domain but encompasses all fields and specializations without exception. Through analogy, imitation, probability, and simulation, its mechanisms reconstruct history from static and inert media, reordering them. As Hayek (2025) further explains, AI's role:

This is not limited to texts but extends to the world of arts and antiquities. In art restoration projects, algorithms are trained to analyze the painting and coloring patterns of master artists, allowing for the reproduction of missing parts of their works in an almost identical style. (p. 2)

Museums also utilize AI models to reconstruct broken statues or missing parts of artifacts based on data from thousands of similar works (Hayek, 2025). This is perhaps what distinguishes AI programs from digital ones: they go beyond what exists to what could be or is probable, mediated by imagination and imitation. These are all means that have enhanced methods of heritage preservation and reduced the likelihood of its loss. On the contrary, heritage has become more closely aligned with selfhood and identity. This is evident in the re-animation of still images and the depiction of features in a way that brings historical figures closer, connecting them to their most significant statements that distinguished them in their time, all part of reordering history.

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The difference here lies between conventional technology and AI programs. While films presented via technological media may feature characters different from their originals; thus immortalizing the event but not linking it to the specific person, AI programs undertake the task of imagining the features and attributes related to the real personality (for whom we might only have a photograph), re-animating them and drawing their features in a way that seems authentic, as if captured from reality at some point in time.

Herein lies the specificity of artificial intelligence: its capacity to reconstruct history and bring it closer to the present. It does not suffice with the existing digitization of peoples' folk heritage but complements and completes it, rendering history clear and evident in our contemporary lives. Despite challenges, Hayek (2025) asserts that:

The potential offered by artificial intelligence is undeniable. Instead of losing heritage to time, we can now restore it not only visually but with new information we might not have accessed without these intelligent tools... artificial intelligence does not erase history, but rather revives it in ways previously not possible, granting us a rare opportunity to see the past through the eyes of the future. (p. 3)

It has thus become possible to visualize the features of the *Ghoula* (Ogress), that symbolic figure from folk heritage associated with a range of events in a past era, yet for whom we possess no clear image. Through AI, this figure can be alluded to in a manner that leaves no doubt as to its potential existence. Despite the diverse cultures that civilizations have passed

through, AI programs reorder these civilizations in a way that harmonizes them, revealing an integrated, coherent, and perhaps even unified culture. This integrative capacity is exemplified by Algeria, which Al-Shayib (2017) describes as "a bridge for cultures and civilizations, an extension of what surrounds it—living and diverse within itself at times... and in its integration with Arab civilization at other times, a continuity that takes its dimension through the interests of this exterior, whether Arab or otherwise" (p. 150). From this, folk heritage can be depicted clearly, revealing in many of its aspects commonalities and intersections with other cultures—avenues for mutual recognition and openness guaranteed by social media, through which cultures become acquainted, find similarities, and reference one another.

All of this is provided by artificial intelligence programs. Specialists in the field have perhaps traced AI's capabilities back to the specificity of human nature; intelligence is originally a human characteristic that machines imitate, operating according to its principles to assist humans, achieve what they find arduous, and accommodate what their memory cannot retain, or their capacity fully grasp. Bonnet (1993) states that the science of artificial intelligence "aims to understand the nature of human intelligence by creating computer programs capable of simulating intelligent human behavior," where the program itself devises methods to solve problems or make decisions based on its diverse inferential processes (p. 11). This is what has distinguished the machine from humans; it has managed to surpass them after humans meticulously crafted and programmed it according to specific data. The machine then "rebelled" against its initial programming by being given the opportunity for

probability and imitation.

AL programs are not distinct from digital programs because they share a common starting point: the notion that human thought is subject to a binary state. The novelty introduced by AI is merely the interstitial zones within this binary condition. However, Bonnet (1993) also suggests that if we look at the human at the neuronal level, "human understanding also relies on a binary state, indicating the possibility of expressing highly complex ideas, perceptions, and concepts... through advanced configurations of these binary states or conditions," and the ability to express complex conceptions via binary codes understood by computers makes simulating decision-making processes feasible (p. 14).

Hence, it can be said that technology has contributed to the preservation of folk heritage in a previously unimaginable way, encompassing both the capabilities afforded by technology and technical systems and those related to artificial intelligence programs, including the methods for restoring elapsed history. This has changed the way modernity, in its traditional sense and with its classical principles, is viewed, ushering in a postmodernity characterized by its technological programs, which have significantly lightened many of humanity's burdens of responsibility, especially those related to the fear of heritage loss and the effort required to preserve it across generations and epochs.

5. CONCLUSION

At the culmination of this study, a series of findings reached by the research can be summarized, stemming from its investigation into the phenomenon of Algerian folk heritage regarding contemporary technology, with its various mechanisms including digitization and artificial intelligence programs, among others.

- With the emergence of technology, the perceived paradox between heritage and modernity—and the antagonism that modernity directed against everything old, traditional, or pertaining to identity in its pursuit of transcendence and the creation of a future detached from backgrounds deemed unhelpful in all their manifestations, championing instead its scientific, rational, and liberal principles—is overcome.

- Culture, in its conceptualization, refers to the specific heritage of people that signifies their identity and specificity. This heritage is regarded as sacrosanct, and continuity is unattainable without relying upon or restoring it, as it is a source of esteem and pride, as well as a factor in the persistence of the present and the shaping of the future.

- Technology, through its diverse mechanisms, has managed to transcend the traditional boundaries between the past, present, and future. This is achieved through the dominance of the virtual world over all aspects of life, providing an expansive realm for retrieving the past without exertion or difficulty, following its storage and digitization. The solid memory in computers has liberated humanity from the apprehension of forgetting and loss that once surrounded its history and heritage. Through the portals of virtual reality,

history can be accessed in a clear form across different generations, despite vast temporal distances.

- Artificial intelligence programs represent a unique means of realizing the dream of restoring the past and history to solidify the foundations of each nation's folk heritage. This is accomplished through the capabilities they offer the recipient. With AI programs, history can be rewritten in a clear and continuous manner. The issue here pertains to the capacity of these programs to infer possibilities for those lacunae in the past, to complete them, and likewise to restore artifacts and manuscripts.

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