DEMOCRATIZATION OF A.I.: FACT OR FANTASY?

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The Security View

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Sam Altman issues call to arms to ensure 'democratic AI' will defeat 'authoritarian AI'

BY **JASON MA**
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OpenAI CEO Samuel Altman testifying on Capitol Hill in May.
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The Security View: Analysis

- The value of democracy directs democratic citizens to protect their societies and institutions from threats.

- AI can empower authoritarian forces with democracy-eroding capabilities:

  - Weaponization (information warfare, cyberattacks, LAWS)

  - Economic dominance

- Therefore, democratizing AI is about maximizing investment in AI capabilities, export controls, and cybersecurity.

- Objection: would keeping AI out of the hands of authoritarian forces render it fully democratic?
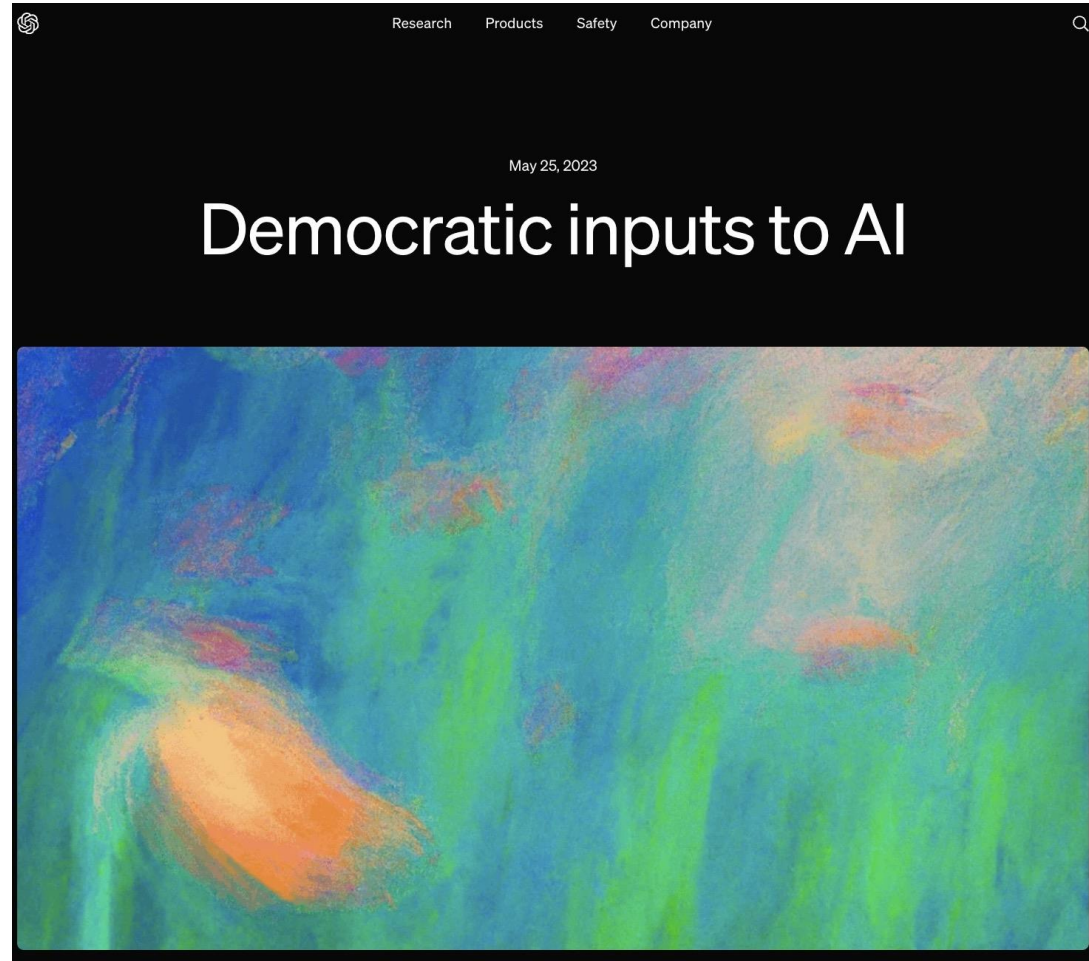
The Access View

The Access View: Analysis

- Claim: mass marketing of AI broadens opportunities; it should be celebrated and encouraged.

- A cynical interpretation: democracy-washing?

- A charitable interpretation: access to AI is becoming a democratic concern because it influences effective participation in society (cf. internet access).

- Objection 1: Is AI accessibility the responsibility of firms?

- Objection 2: Democracy is about power, not (only) access.
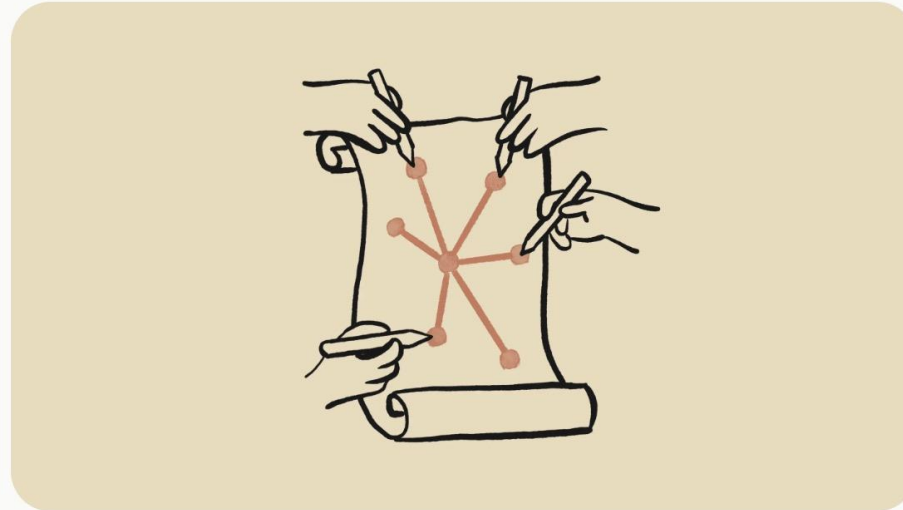
The Input View
(Version A)

Source: https://openai.com/index/democratic-inputs-to-ai/

The Input View
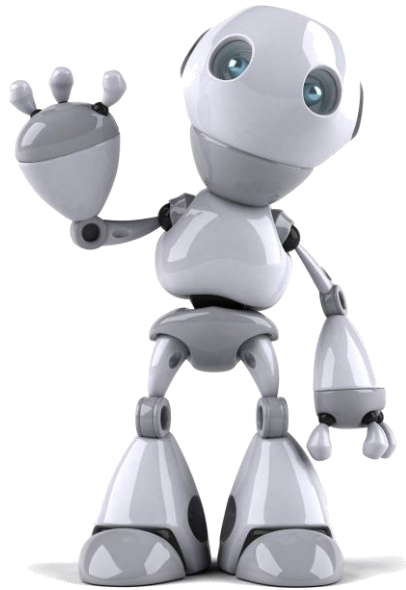## (Version B)

The Input View: Analysis

- Everyone subjected to a sociotechnical system deserves a voice in its governance.

- We are increasingly subjected to foundation models, but governance is concentrated in the hands of a few firms.

- Therefore, big AI firms should create opportunities for public input.

- Three objections:

  1. Firms lack the capacity to provide fair input opportunities.

  2. Firms can't be trusted to respect democratic outcomes voluntarily.

  3. Firms risk reinventing the wheel of democratic governance.

The Public Governance View

- AI access and input are public, not private concerns; they demand government solutions.

- When democratic governments fall short, our first priority should be strengthening public democratic infrastructure.

- Alternatives are acceptable only when public democratic solutions are not realistically achievable.

- Alternatives should be led by independent third parties and enable future transitions to public authority.

Final Thoughts

- "Misnaming things adds to the misery of the world" —Albert Camus

- Democratic AI will remain a fantasy if we continue to use the term loosely.

- It can become reality if we get serious about understanding democracy's meaning and fulfilling its moral demands.

Keep in touch!

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