

Balázs Szegedy:

On the Mathematics of AI and Its Philosophical Implications

Deep learning has become the most successful paradigm in artificial intelligence and the principal mathematical and technological engine behind the recent AI revolution. Its central idea is learning: rather than explicitly specifying the rules by which an intelligent system should operate, we construct highly expressive mathematical models and allow their internal structure to emerge through optimization over data.

This paradigm marks a significant departure from classical approaches to intelligence. A learned system is not assembled from a transparent collection of human-designed rules; its behavior arises from the interaction of vast numbers of parameters distributed across a high-dimensional space. This helps explain both the remarkable flexibility of modern AI and its characteristic “black-box” nature: the system can exhibit sophisticated behavior even when no simple symbolic account of its internal computation is available.

This shift may also have deeper philosophical significance. Intelligence has traditionally been closely associated with logic, symbolic manipulation, and explicit reasoning. The success of contemporary AI suggests that these may not constitute the deepest mathematical layer of intelligence. Logical and symbolic reasoning may instead be emergent phenomena arising from a richer underlying substrate – continuous rather than discrete, distributed rather than localized, and probabilistic rather than strictly rule-governed.

From this perspective, the mathematics of deep learning may offer more than a method for engineering artificial systems. It may provide clues about the mathematical organization of natural intelligence itself. The emerging picture invites us to reconsider the relationship between learning, representation, reasoning, and logic, and raises the possibility that what we recognize as rational thought is a structured, low-dimensional manifestation of a much richer mathematical space beneath it.