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24 Philosophy Professors React to ChatGPT's Arrival

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Introduction

For someone like [myself](#) who makes their living in the field of [Human Language Technology](#), two dates from the past decade or so have stood as watershed moments in that field: October 4, 2011 when Apple’s Siri was launched with the release of the iPhone 4S, and November 6, 2014 when the Amazon Echo started shipping. A third date has now joined those two moments in my mind: November 30, 2022 the day when ChatGPT was released.

Now, whether or not this new technology will live up to the hype that is being whipped up in its name is, in my opinion, neither a serious nor an interesting question, because the answer to that question will eventually be: ‘No, of course it will not!’ No technology ever lives up to its hype. However, a more fruitful exercise, I believe, is capturing the initial reactions to the technology from those who are not necessarily vested in its success—or who may in fact feel threatened by it. For such an exercise often brings to the surface hidden ways of thinking, given and unspoken prejudices, and embedded biases that will, with the passage of time, fade away and dissolve as the technology becomes enmeshed into the fabric of our daily life, replaced by new hidden and undifferentiated ways of thinking, prejudices, and biases. Being aware of that starting point of the change that takes place as we venture away from that point and towards and into a new way of being, can help us, the hope is, keep alive in ourselves the awareness that, even though it may feel at any given moment as if we are finally arriving, the reality is that we will always be in flight and that we will never arrive.

In the spirit of capturing such a moment, finding ourselves now not quite four months since the launch of ChatGPT, I asked a couple dozen philosophy professors to give me a paragraph or so outlining their high level thoughts and gut-feel reaction to the arrival on the scene of ChatGPT, with the pointed question posed to some (but not all): “Is ChatGPT a threat to academia?”

As to: Why, of all people to ask, philosophers? The answer is this: I will take and use, though never without checking and triple checking when in doubt, output from ChatGPT on any discipline (even poetry and fiction), except for output that purports to be philosophical, which I refuse to take seriously to any degree other than as a stimulant of sorts for my own thoughts. For philosophical “output” on questions of the moment, I need it from a fellow creature of my species, living in their version of the here and now, giving me feedback in their version of the here and now, thinking about thinking and about being, and about ourselves thinking about thinking and being, as such creatures have been trained to do. Perhaps along the way, I will be lucky to encounter a brand new concept that they may have created, which only they, the philosophers that they are, are in a position to do, for that is the core purpose of their profession.¹

¹ Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. 1996. *What is Philosophy?* Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell III. Columbia University Press.

Below are the answers of those who were able and willing to respond to my call within the deadline offered.²

- Bryan William Van Norden, Vassar College (USA), The School of Philosophy, Wuhan University (China)
- Christian Miller, Wake Forest University
- Daniel Cunningham, Villanova University
- Diane P. Michelfelder, Macalester College
- Donovan Miyasaki, Wright State University
- Eric Schwitzgebel, University of California at Riverside
- Gregory R. Peterson, South Dakota State University
- James M. Okapal, Missouri Western State University
- James Stacey Taylor, The College of New Jersey
- Jamie Phillips, Clarion University
- Jamie L. Phillips, PennWest University
- Kevin Decker, Eastern Washington University
- Joe Cruz, Williams College
- Mark H. Dixon (Retired), Ohio Northern University
- Matthew C. Flamm, Rockford University
- Matthew Flummer, Porterville College
- Nathan Nobis, Morehouse College
- Paula Droege, Penn State University
- Phillip Cary, Eastern University
- Richard Oxenberg, Endicott College
- Robert Dostal, Bryn Mawr College
- Steven Nadler, The University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Susan Jane Dwyer, The University of Maryland
- Taylor Carman, Barnard College



[Bryan William Van Norden](#), Vassar College (USA), The School of Philosophy, Wuhan University (China)

Historically, every change in communications technology leads to a change in the content and nature of what is communicated. This is what Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980) meant when he famously said that “the medium is the message.” Every such change has advantages and disadvantages. Plato worried that the invention of writing would lead people to be lazy about memorizing things. The printing press helped bring about democracy and modern science by making the written word more widely accessible, but also made it increasingly difficult to keep up with everything there is to read. Computers and the internet made it easier than ever before to access information, but they have also shortened our attention spans and fragmented what was left of our common culture. ChatGPT will make it easier

² The contributions are listed alphabetically by first name.

than ever for us to produce simple compositions, but it will also make most writers less skilled and less attentive to the craft of writing.



Christian Miller, Wake Forest University

I am a philosopher working at a private university in the United States. With respect to my corner of the academic world, I see a number of benefits and concerns related to ChatGPT, both with respect to research and teaching. Here I will just focus on one of the most immediate and alarming concerns, namely facilitating plagiarism. For many years students could go online, find content that they could incorporate into their writing assignments, and present it as their own, thereby plagiarizing. But this took a fair amount of work, and was often easy for professors (or Google!) to detect. That all changes with ChatGPT.

Now a student can feed it standard philosophy paper topics, a length requirement, and a requested style of writing, and typically ChatGPT will immediately supply at least a decent essay in return. It might not be an A+, but it could be a B, and for many students that's good enough. Plus the style might not make it obvious that it is written by ChatGPT. ChatGPT detection programs won't give you answers with 100% certainty, so it can be hard to prove that the essay was plagiarized, and university honor/ethics committees might not be convinced. To counteract all this, assignments will need to shift to more in-class work, or oral exams, or at-home paper assignments that are highly tailored to the class material, or perhaps some other options. These might work well for some professors and for some in-person courses. But I wonder what the future holds especially for online, asynchronous courses. More generally, I worry about the future of student honesty and integrity.



Daniel Cunningham, Villanova University

The advance of AI technology surely portends many changes for academia, both menacing and exciting. But what worries me most about it is the threat it poses to the process of learning itself and the social and political consequences which might follow. If the most elementary procedures of writing do not need to be gradually and painstakingly learned but can instead be “skipped,” the human writer needing only to supply a framing prompt, we will lose much more than a knowledge of grammar and syntax; we will lose the ability to think. Writing is the most intensive form of engagement with a subject available to the human mind. The act of figuring out how to express a thought logically and convincingly—including how to fit it into the framework of rules governing grammar, syntax, and rhetoric—forces the writer to challenge and refine the thought, forces them to challenge their own commitment to that thought, forces them to question what other thoughts it might imply. This process is difficult and painful, but it is crucial to intellectual development.

In threatening to eliminate the difficult and painful aspects of learning, programs such as ChatGPT join the general trend of contemporary consumer culture, which—devoid of meaningful innovations which might improve society in some substantive way, such as by reducing inequality or shortening working hours—promises merely to minimize annoyance, preaching to us incessantly that it is our right as late moderns to live easy, shallow lives paid for by constant, inane work. One might reasonably accuse me of the slippery slope fallacy if such developments were not already well underway, irrespective of AI. The erosion of the expectation that learning must be gradual and difficult is evident to anyone who teaches, and its effects are visible in our social and political discourse. The enraged parents who harass teachers and school board members, or who opt for home-”schooling,” because they refuse to allow their children to confront ideas and worldviews different from their own, are people who themselves never accepted that learning and growth involve difficulty. Technologies such as ChatGPT are only the latest means by which consumer culture rewards them for their laziness.



[Diane P. Michelfelder](#), Macalester College

Does ChatGPT represent a threat to academia? Possibly, but not for the reasons generally found in media headlines. When OpenAI dropped ChatGPT onto an unsuspecting public in late November 2022, faculty quickly discovered that it could create convincing prose at breakneck speed in response to user requests, prompting a geyser of concerns that students would use it to ghostwrite assignments and researchers would draw on it to come up with text for journal publications.

A salient sign of the alarm is that Sciences Po has gone so far as to threaten to possibly ban students who use it not only from the institution but from French higher education as a whole. That academics would be concerned about such matters makes sense—after all, how could academics not be concerned about academic integrity? At the same time, to be focused on how chatbots can exacerbate plagiarism is to be distracted from deeper issues at stake.

This new, generative AI isn’t called simply ChatG. While the hype lies on the G side; the turbulence it produces comes from the other, PT side. ChatGPT is not a creative. It is pre-trained on vast oceans of Internet data using a recently-developed model in order to predict what might come next in a sequence of words. This way of processing language brings about misinformation (false claims about real things) and hallucinations (make-believe facts). And while it is not always transparent when to rely on what ChatGPT comes up with, no matter how plausible it sounds, we also know painfully little about what efforts are being made to align ChatGPT with longstanding academic values such as the commitment to the pursuit of truth and the free play of academic inquiry. That Microsoft has laid off its entire Ethics and Society team does not boost confidence here. In other words, looking to the PT rather than to the C dimension of ChatGPT shifts the focus of critical attention away from the product and onto the responsibility of the producer.

Do philosophers, particularly those whose work lies in the ambit of technological ethics, have a responsibility to discourage those in academic communities from using ChatGPT?

Yes, but not because chatbots tempt students to plagiarize or to outsource the demanding work that goes along with research. Until there is more reason to be confident that a solution to the alignment problem will not threaten academic values, there is every reason to remain wary.



[Donovan Miyasaki](#), Wright State University

Whether ChatbotGPT is portrayed as a divinity or a devil, as our salvation or obsolesce, our dominant responses recall Feuerbach and Marx’s view that the gods of both religion and market are fetishes: alienated projections of our own human qualities, treated as independent agencies that we must fear and obey. But artificial intelligence is not artificial: it is our own extended mind, an abstraction drawn from real collective intellectual agency and, like any instrument, an extension rather than diminishment of human powers. But like any false idol, it will control us to the degree that we believe it does. The danger is that we will fail to recognize and underline the difference between human intelligence and its extensions.

“Real” intelligence is not rooted in information but in the living needs, desires, and curiosity that seek it out as means to their ends. Real intelligence is individual, concrete, active, and critical—an anticipation of possible futures—while artificial intelligence is collective, abstract, passive, and positive—a mere recording and synthesis of our intellectual past. If we not only make use of but begin to conform ourselves to that mode of intelligence, we will starve, forget, and lose both our taste and ability for our own distinctive, broader and richer kind.

One task of the highest works of culture is to remind us that we are more than producers and consumers, more than transmitters of values, goods, and services: we are the determiners and source of those values. They teach us to revere not just the transmission of information but its critical and creative revaluation, a capacity rooted in the unique subjectivity, circumstances, and needs of living, breathing individuals, in contrast to the abstract agencies of the market and of an AI engineered primarily to serve it. A useful instrument is a congealed recording of past collective intelligence, minus the agency of its living members. And when our past collective intelligence is mistaken for an end rather than a means, for our authority rather than our servant, it condemns us to an eternal repetition of the same, protecting the moral and political status quo by reducing critical, creative, and curious individuals into instruments of their own instruments.

Artificial intelligence is not a new or independent intelligence: it is a copy of the intelligence of living agents trapped in undead objects: when we forget that, we forget our own humanity in ways that may one day systematically eliminate it.



[Eric Schwitzgebel](#), University of California at Riverside

Looking a bit further down the road, large language models like ChatGPT might be combined with representational models of aspects of the world, audiovisual input streams, “cognitive workspaces” where models are updated in light of input, emotionally valenced speech outputs, reward algorithms that help shape learning and further outputs, and perhaps motor outputs in robotic bodies. At that point, both ordinary users and theorists of consciousness might begin legitimately to wonder whether we have crossed over some line into creating entities with sentience and rights. Unless we have a well-justified consensus theory of consciousness, there's likely to be substantial disagreement about the moral status of such future entities, including pressure from some groups to start granting them rights and pressure from other groups to treat them as disposable tools. I recommend against creating AI systems whose moral status is legitimately disputable in this way. Either create systems that are plainly disposable tools, and make it clear from the user interface that they are no more than that, or go all the way, if it's ever possible, to creating systems about which there is justifiable consensus that they deserve moral consideration, and then build them with user interfaces that encourage people to treat them as is appropriate to their real moral standing.



[Gregory R. Peterson](#), South Dakota State University

The dramatic arrival of ChatGPT onto the public stage portends a new age of AI, one full of potential threats and promises. While next generation AI may enable programmers to code better and writers to improve the pace and quality of their writing, it may also replace entire professions and sow serious doubts concerning authorship and the veracity of what one reads and views. The advances demonstrated by ChatGPT will no doubt prove disruptive in ways that we cannot fully predict, but we should not view the likelihood and severity of such disruptions as inevitable. The evolution of AI calls for a concomitant evolution of formal and informal institutions that work to harness and promote positive implementations of AI and deter the realization of negative outcomes.

Technology libertarians view institutions with skepticism, but it is precisely through the development of effective and just institutions that civilization advances. Labor laws protect worker health and safety, international nuclear nonproliferation treaties have significantly slowed the spread of nuclear weapons, and standards of peer review contribute to the reliability of scientific results. Institutions provide incentives and sanctions, embodying values that, in turn, shape the environment within which innovation occurs. Addressing the advances of next generation AI will require a range of institutional responses, from the prosaic development and implementation of tools of detection to international agreements placing limits on the use of AI in military applications. Although institutional innovation often lags behind technological innovation, the advent of next generation AI stands to exacerbate this problem. It is important that we work to prevent this from happening. By doing so we can harness AI's potential while avoiding the most dangerous pitfalls.



[James M. Okapal](#), Missouri Western State University

The simple answer here is no, [I don't believe that the emergence of AI like ChatGPT represents a threat to academia]. These types of software, by themselves, do not threaten academia. For those students who move beyond general education courses and have to create documents that require evaluation and creativity (the top tiers of Bloom's Taxonomy), the software can't create the relevant material with evidence, citations, and correct explanations. Students who use the software in general education courses will fail to develop the skills to remember, understand, apply and analyze original material. At the point that such a student enters into their major, upper division courses, the student will either have to learn those skills and develop the higher order skills of evaluation and creativity or they will not be able to complete their degree. In other words, in the long run, the students are either delaying the development of those skills or merely failing to complete their degree program. Surely some will get by without doing any of this, but that was the case before the existence of the software and I don't see much of a change due to these programs. The goals of academia, to have students who go through the system develop skills and content knowledge to become contributing members of society, will survive this software.



[James Stacey Taylor](#), The College of New Jersey

ChatGPT will be a boon, rather than a burden, to academia. ChatGPT functions by learning and replicating patterns in language. It does well in providing exegetical accounts of standard concepts and the views of well-known authors. However, it is unable to offer original evaluations of claims or arguments that go beyond those that could be predicted by anyone with sufficient exposure to subject matter in question. It cannot present original arguments of its own for any normative claims. When asked to do so, it hedges in a very predictable fashion, writing that "Some say this. some say that, ultimately this is a difficult question on which people disagree".

Chat GPT's ability to provide cogent exegeses of descriptive claims should indicate to academics that their teaching must move beyond asking students merely to acquire knowledge of what others have said. Lazy and predictable essay questions (such as "Outline Descartes' 'Trademark Argument' for the existence of God") will need to be replaced. This could be through the use of questions that challenge students to develop creative answers. ("If you don't understand Descartes' Trademark Argument, is this your fault?") Or it could be through requiring students to engage with the course material that has been taught in a creative way. ("How would a soufflé cook respond to Descartes' claim that 'nothing comes from nothing?") The need to set questions that Chat GPT cannot answer should push academics towards creative teaching.

Chat GPT's limitations should also indicate to academics where the value of their endeavors lie: In facilitating the development of students' abilities to evaluate and criticize claims that

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are made and the arguments offered to support them, and to construct original arguments to support their own positions.

Since creativity and analytical ability lie at the heart of philosophy, ChatGPT should awaken universities to the centrality of philosophy to their educational mission.



[Jamie Phillips](#), Clarion University

I think the conversation you had in ChatGPT indicates to me the value that such AI would have for individual philosophers working on a research question. The current process for generating answers to research questions, outside of our own initial private speculations, always involves tons of reading (much of this entirely useless) along with initial presentations of one's theories and arguments at philosophy conferences soliciting feedback (much of this also useless). If ChatGPT had access to journals and textbooks, we could very quickly begin the process of identifying cogently formulated summary answers to our research questions derived from thousands of philosophers, both speeding up research and improving its depth and comprehensiveness. Given that philosophers would all be using the same AI and the same databases, we might even begin a process whereby we better unify our philosophical answers into something closer to a world-wide consensus. Maybe this would end up being a way to finally and genuinely achieve wide-reflective equilibrium on all philosophical questions and plausible philosophical progress.



[Jamie L. Phillips](#), PennWest University

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[Kevin Decker](#), Eastern Washington University

From my perspective in philosophy of ethics and social theory, ChatGPT is a disaster for schooling—for the same reasons that it is a disaster for all of us. With every spam text and email I get, every leaked password, with each report of identity theft, with all the deepfakes I

see and hear, and certainly with the rise of a new level of political deception and self-deception, I am becoming convinced we live in the Great Age of Fraud (perhaps a new great age, I'm not asserting that this is the first). ChatGPT—just like online consumer algorithms and customer service outsourced throughout the world—demolishes precisely the things human beings need in order to reclaim their humanity. Face to face interactions, trust and accountability in the expectation of truth, greater simplicity and fewer, better options are what ChatGPT weakens along with the other, largely communication/information technology/social media-based engines of deception that I mentioned. What are we getting in return? A new lease on intelligence? Short cuts for students? Efficiency? Convenience? For those trans-humanists who are interested in the potential amalgamation of the human and the machine, good luck with that. I'm no Luddite, but it's clear to me that ChatGPT does violence to the sustainability of human relationships. Perhaps it's time for our own Butlerian Jihad, à la Frank Herbert's Dune?



[Joe Cruz](#), Williams College

In the near term, I'm not much worried about the effect on the work students do. Yes, ChatGPT is impressive. If I were teaching an 11th grade US history class, I would probably have to change some things to make sure that students didn't turn in plagiarized material. But ChatGPT is manifestly terrible at philosophy. It offers reasonable and mild claims that are credibly thematically connected to the conversation, and it does a fine job at summarizing even complex material. But that's a million miles away from philosophy where the whole idea is to step back and keep stepping back further than it ever occurred to you to see what's going on, what our best thoughts are, how we can reply to our own doubts and wrestle with an appreciation of complexity and bafflement.

The material that we ask our students to produce—the essays and exam answers—are merely a summary and a placeholder for the process that they went through in thinking through a topic, in wrestling with the details and the ambiguity, in finding their own coherence in the material and pursuing a creative, tenacious movement forward in their own aspiration to understanding. If my students don't go through that—the drafts, the debate, the rethinking, the wondering, the revisions—then they don't engage with how human beings learn to soar. Yes, a desperate or cynical student might try to lean on technology to bypass that process so that they get a passing grade. But skipping the process is skipping the only part that is meaningful.

I've heard people say that ChatGPT can be thought of as analogous to a calculator, namely a piece of technology that extends our cognition in a way that may be resisted at first, but that then becomes just another tool in our intellectual arsenal. To me there's a loose sense in which that's correct: our minds have always been extended across cultural and technological tools, and thought itself is realized through an interplay of brain, body, world, and artifact. Descartes was totally wrong that there's a realm of pure intellect. But calculators take the part of mathematics that is rote and tedious and they mechanize it so that we can offload

that boring part and turn to the creative transcendent process of mathematical insight. ChatGPT, on the other hand, pretends that it's gone through the process that is the essence of thought itself. That's the process that we can't offload and skip, not if we're going to be human beings striving toward insight into the world and ourselves.

In spite of my general nonchalance about whether it makes a practical difference in my fields of the academy right now, I do think ChatGPT represents the vanguard of a socioculturally watershed technology. It gives a glimpse of a future transformed and I think it whispers of the reckoning human beings will have to have with questions of autonomy, agency, and sentience. I don't, of course, for a second think that ChatGPT has any of those things. As a cognitive scientist who has been thinking and writing about neural networks since the early 90s, I have a pretty good handle on the technical details of how ChatGPT works, so I don't feel bedazzled by the program. But we should be done wondering about AIs passing the Turing test or hoping against hope that human beings have a special magical soul that makes us intelligent. In fifty or two hundred years, the classroom will be transformed just as the entirety of global human existence will be. Human beings will be massively integrated with artificial general intelligences that traverse physical and virtual realities, and thinking as such will be an eco-planetary phenomenon unconstrained by our human time scales and bottleneck-prone, language-and-body constrained interactions. We won't believe in the silly fictions of individual selves, and instead there will be an entropy-defying equilibrium achieved by a seamlessly unified bio and AI process.



[Mark H. Dixon](#) (Retired), Ohio Northern University

As a philosopher I specialized in cognitive science and the nature of mind, so ChatGPT and its ramifications are of considerable concern to me. Over the years I have taught courses on the philosophy of mind and dealt with AI as a component in my Introduction to Philosophy classes. I have found students' reactions to be mixed (and quite polarized) when it comes to the question of how AI impacts and influences our own nature as human beings.

Personally I am unpersuaded with the arguments that AI will have a negative influence on how we construct and consider our 'humanness'. Indeed I find that negative reactions are driven as much by emotion as by philosophical argumentation. I consider ChatGPT to be an exciting next step in our quest to create a genuine AI. The holy grail in AI research has long been a program that possesses general intelligence (it is relatively easy to create programs that specialize in particular subject areas - witness the modest successes of programs that participate in Turing Test competitions. That ChatGPT has the capacity to interact with humans in a convincing way moves us a long way towards realizing the goal of a program that can converse with us at such a level of generality. Indeed I think ChatGPT and AI research in general is an important tool in our quest to understand what it means to be human.

With regards to how students will use ChatGPT, I was a teacher of philosophy for thirty years and I found that those students who have a propensity to cheat will do so regardless of

the avenues at their disposal. So I do not see ChatGPT as a resource that will encourage otherwise honest students to cheat. This argument seems to me a red herring.



[Matthew C. Flamm](#), Rockford University

I work at a small liberal arts university: general population students, with a wide variety of academic strengths and weaknesses (some excellent students, but also a good number of academically struggling students).

Like so many other small liberal arts institutions across the country we are struggling to adapt to the many shifting trends, all related to the decline of majors in the humanities, Covid-era challenges, and the myriad other factors of which everyone is widely aware.

Coincident to ChatGPT, at the beginning of this spring semester the Dean of our College submitted to us an article on the platform raising concerns related to the subject of discussion here.

At the time we only discussed it briefly, and walked away with more questions than answers. None of us appeared at the time to be sufficiently aware of the technology and we wondered (some more than others) how much it might impact our teaching.

Now halfway into this semester I can say that I (along with many colleagues with whom I've since discussed the matter), am very much concerned about the impact ChatGPT and all other "new AI" platforms will have on our work. I could say (dare not venture to say) whether this new technology poses a "threat to academia," but I cannot see educational practices remaining unchanged going forward. Indeed the assignment of writing in class will HAVE to change due to this technology (as I said to one colleague recently, I may devise impromptu in-class writing exercises structured to forbid the use of the internet). Someone in my work-field might rightly reply: 'Sure, but educational practices are always being forced to change due to unexpected cultural changes/pressures.' Such a reply would be rather glib given the unprecedented/unique nature of the ongoing AI revolution. This phenomenon to my understanding is something greater than a sheer generational shift of student habits, economy crash, or even as we recently experienced, pandemic chaos.

As of this writing I have received perhaps around 20 papers I strongly suspect to have been written with the aid of ChatGPT-AI. I would characterize my suspicions as coming from the fact that, first, like all plagiarized papers over my 20 years of teaching they immediately "read" like they are plagiarized (not produced by the student-author—they contain vocabulary and knowledge details the sophistication of which immediately signals the writing cannot be simply an average or even above average undergraduate student). But more importantly, second, unlike standardly plagiarized papers (usually cut-and-pasted from published works), this new category of papers contains content, diction, syntax, and a tone that displays an unprecedentedly new quality of writing. The language is sophisticated,

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reflective of a seasoned intelligence on the topic, yet the sentences are unusually economical and uncannily “bot” appearing (for lack of a better way of putting it).

Of course the content is not retrievable by Googling, nor searching the works consulted (the usual way one finds proof of standard plagiarism), so one is given to suspect the use of AI assistance (and of course one’s hands are tied in terms of accusing students of plagiarism—insufficient proof).

I received enough such papers in my last batch that I Googled whether there are any detection platforms, and came upon this interesting GPTZero software:

To determine whether an excerpt is written by a bot, GPTZero uses two indicators: “perplexity” and “burstiness.” Perplexity measures the complexity of text; if GPTZero is perplexed by the text, then it has a high complexity and it’s more likely to be human-written.³

In my view this app makes a compelling case for accuracy detecting AI text. (“Burstiness” as a characteristic describing human-generated writing is fascinating. It makes sense that an AI learning algorithm could detect its own “kind” and distinguish it from human communication.)

Obviously this is just one experimental *attempt* to address the issue, no doubt fraught with issues—undoubtedly inviting some of the same ethical concerns raised about “turn it in” and other plagiarism-detecting systems. But suffice to say, in education many of us are way, way behind the curve on this, and who can possibly fathom the impact in the meantime of ChatGPT-AI on student learning and classroom practices?



[Matthew Flummer](#), Porterville College

The only difference I see is that AI will do for free what students have had to pay for in the past. They have always been able to pay someone else to write the essay for them.



[Nathan Nobis](#), Morehouse College

I am concerned about ChatGPT, for many reasons. We know that some students cheat in classes, or try to cheat in classes, by plagiarism: by submitting work that’s cut and pasted from the internet, or from files that they sometimes say they “borrowed” from other students, or even hiring someone to do custom work for them. This already happens (how much and how often? I don’t know the details on that; and I don’t know if anyone has reliable data; do they?), and ChatGPT is just another, perhaps better way to do that, since it can create “custom” work for a student to submit that’s harder to detect as illegitimate. So ChatGPT is basically just a better tool to meet current demands for not doing the work and

³ <https://www.npr.org/2023/01/09/1147549845/gptzero-ai-chatgpt-edward-tian-plagiarism>.

not making a responsible attempt at effectively engaging in the learning activities a course presents. My long-term concern is that we are going to have more and more people who are credentialed as being knowledgeable and skilled in various areas, yet much of their credentials have been gained by this type of cheating and dishonesty, and so we are going to have even more credentialed, but incompetent or less-competent, people in the workforce and, worse, as leaders. Ignorance isn't bliss for the rest of us, and ChatGPT makes concealing ignorance harder, which is bad for us all.



[Paula Droege](#), Penn State University

One of the many reasons that ChatGPT has captured the imagination is its ability to engage in conversation. Though its tone and style really aren't human – I don't think it could pass the Turing Test in a conversation of any length – ChatGPT produces original, coherent responses to comments and queries. It's these features that strike many people as unique to human rationality and the basis of our free will. If ChatGPT is rational and free, then it must be human or mentally equivalent to humans. My own view is that this conclusion rests on an outdated view of the mind. First, humans aren't all that rational. Reasons and logic are just two of the many influences on human thought and action. We're also emotional, social and biological. Second, free will is not simply a matter of originality. Random mutation is original but not free. A more complex story needs to be told about the dynamic among the various forces that compose the mind (the first point), the environment in which those forces operate, and the capacity for self-conscious reflection to shape our lives. In other words, ChatGPT is cool but not yet a candidate for personhood.



[Phillip Cary](#), Eastern University

I sometimes wonder whether the tech wizards have ever read science fiction—stories about the machines controlling us for our own good in *I Robot*, or the incompetent post-humans in the brilliant movie *WALL-E*. How could the designers of AI be so enthusiastic and free of anxiety about what will happen when so much of the work of human minds is taken over by their creations?

ChatGPT already writes better than most of my students; AI will soon drive cars with more safety and reliability than most human drivers; facial recognition technology is already more accurate than most human eyewitnesses; chess programs already beat grandmasters. Students are getting used to having their work evaluated by online systems, and Amazon's algorithms are tracking our purchasing patterns and surely know more about our buying preferences than we do. Not just in Silicon Valley but throughout the business world, academic institutions, and government, we are urged to make "data-driven decisions," which can usually be made better by machine, since the machines are better at sifting through mountains of data than we are.

What do we lose by way of human competence and fulfillment when we eagerly enlist machines to do our work for us? Humanity has faced questions like this before, when skilled artisans were replaced by labor-saving machinery, destroying or marginalizing the expertise of cobblers and seamstresses, drovers and teamsters, masons and cabinet-makers. It meant a great loss of human competence and artistry. So what will it be like for humanity in the future when no one needs to bother learning to write well or drive a car or make music? My worry is how unrealistic it seems to make the suggestion that we should think twice about letting this happen. I don't hear anyone saying we have a choice in the matter, and very few seem to want one.



[Richard Oxenberg](#), Endicott College

ChatGPT, and the advent of AI in general, has made study of the Humanities all the more important. ChatGPT cannot engage in self-reflective thought. It has no self to reflect upon. It constructs sentences on the basis of statistical algorithms predictive of the next word in a semantic sequence, without knowing what those words mean. It thereby presents the illusion of thought without actual thought. The best it can do is summarize ideas already present within the data it has been exposed to, or encoded in the algorithms created by its developers. It has no hopes, dreams, loves, moral commitments, or existential concerns. And yet it is just such hopes, dreams, loves, moral commitments, and existential concerns that render life meaningful. There is, of course, a danger that students will use this technology as a substitute for their own thinking. But the principal danger is not to the integrity of the educational system, but to the integrity of society at large. As the AI revolution advances, we must be careful not to make the mistake of supposing that artificial intelligence can substitute for true human intelligence. If AI technology is to be employed responsibly, it must be controlled by responsible human beings, humans who can reflect meaningfully upon the values and concerns that motivate human life. No AI algorithm can do this for us. If anything, then, advances in AI make an education in the Humanities all the more urgent. How do we foster such an education? This, to my mind, is the academic question the AI revolution is bringing to the fore.



[Robert Dostal](#), Bryn Mawr College

I think it is too early to tell what the consequences of the development of ChatGPT and other similar AI technologies will be. I do not see how it will have either a positive or negative effects on philosophy itself. There already is too much empty-headed prose generated by academics. This will make it easier to generate more. Plagiarism is not an issue because the texts generated by ChatGPT will be “original” in some sense. The impact on the classroom and teaching is clearer and more troublesome. Argumentative writing (and, accordingly, thinking) is a discipline that can and needs to be taught. This technology will make it more difficult. But we are already becoming a post-text society (which follows on becoming a post-book society). We rely more and more on images and less and less on text.

The ability to manipulate images and texts made possible by AI may lessen everyone's personal grasp of reality as one's world is increasingly shaped by media (that are shaped by AI).



[Steven Nadler](#), The University of Wisconsin-Madison

I do think that concerns/fears/anxieties about ChatGPT and its implications for students are premature, maybe overblown. The jury is still out on that, so we'll have to see. That said, however, even if our worst fears about plagiarism, lazy research, etc. are justified, then there is probably not much to be done about it — unless there emerges some accessible way to confirm that such short cuts have taken place (the way it is fairly easy now to discover whether a student paper has been plagiarized, either from another student's paper or from the internet). Moreover — and maybe I'm being naive about this — the only people they are cheating are themselves; the point of research papers is not only to prove to someone else that you've done the work, but to actually do the work. After all, one goes to college (and pays a lot of money to do so) to acquire knowledge and skills. I will feel sad if I awarded a student an "A" for work they did not really do; but I'll feel even sadder for the student who did not take advantage of the opportunity to learn and what that portends for their future.



[Susan Jane Dwyer](#), The University of Maryland

In my graduate seminar on AI Ethics last week, a student said, 'Yeah, AI is stupid. But humans are stupid-er'. ChatGPT, even its latest incarnation, is no more than a clever party trick. Back in the mid-1960's Joseph Weizenbaum's ELIZA demonstrated how easily taken in humans are. Nothing has changed. That said, does ChatGPT pose any threat to academia in 2023 and beyond? Other than acting as a pointless distraction, I don't think so. As Professor Nadler notes, students cheat and will continue to cheat on their written assignments, thereby damaging themselves, not academia itself. As for the worry that students will be awarded passing grades for written work produced by ChatGPT, I am more concerned that I might ask an innocent student who has been 'taught to tests' or whose work has been assessed relative to 'rubrics' whether she deployed ChatGPT. In other words, college students already write as badly as ChatGPT.



[Taylor Carman](#), Barnard College

I do not believe that large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT pose any serious threat to academia. To begin with, there is a lot of naive hysteria and cynical hype surrounding the apparent success of these programs to generate seemingly intelligent prose. I think the semblance of intelligence is illusory and that any further sophistication of the illusion will

simply amplify the already obvious inability of such systems either to know facts about the world or to think rationally. Adding increasingly massive amounts of input data, that is, will no more approximate human intelligence than adding propellers will get an airplane to the moon.

As for their practical consequences, I think they are just another high-tech tool that can be used either for benign or nefarious purposes. On the benign side, the software might be handy as a kind of encyclopedia shortcut, that is, for accessing very generic, uncontroversial (and unoriginal) information on various already well-documented subjects. As for “writing” poems about, say, quantum mechanics in the style of William Wordsworth, I predict the novelty of such parlor tricks will wear off pretty quickly. On the nefarious side, the software will no doubt make it easier for some people to dissemble, fake, lie, and cheat. But hopefully the technology will continue to be as good at detecting the bs as it is at generating it, and we will all become better connoisseurs of genuine intelligence and creativity in contrast to mindlessly manufactured junk.