



A Conversation with ChatGPT: Philosophy, Critical Thinking, and Higher Education

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Abstract

The growing concern surrounding technology in education, particularly in higher education, serves as the impetus for this paper. After a period of avoiding ChatGPT due to fears that it might diminish my human form, I felt compelled to engage in a conversation with the tool, in light of the conference hosted by the Philosophers of Education Association of Nigeria (PEAN), themed "Philosophy, Artificial Intelligence, and Digital Education." Through my exploration, I learned that "GPT" stands for generative pre-training transformer, a framework in language processing and machine learning designed to produce human-like responses to various prompts. Recognizing the reality of coexisting with artificial intelligence (AI) and acknowledging that not all emerging technologies merit the attention of philosophers, the rise of ChatGPT has undeniably become a pressing issue in higher education, particularly for faculty and students alike. In my discussions with ChatGPT-4, I engage with the role of AI in higher education, focusing on questions relevant to philosophy, critical thinking, and academic practices. By reflecting on the prompts from ChatGPT and the insights of educational theorists, I conclude that critical thinking and reasoning are intrinsic human qualities that set us apart from AI. Therefore, educators need to embrace their role in guiding student learning and fostering the virtues and skills necessary for navigating an increasingly AI-driven world.

Keywords: *ChatGPT, Artificial Intelligence, Higher Education, Critical Thinking, Philosophy*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing concern surrounding generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) is becoming a significant influence in education, particularly within higher education. The rise of AI, specifically ChatGPT, has attracted the attention of numerous educational theorists (Baidoo-Anu and Ansah, 2023; Howard, 2019; Kersting, 2020; Peters et al., 2023; Yu, 2023). To provide a brief overview, Yu (2023) highlights that the origins of AI trace back to the 1956 gathering of scientists at Dartmouth College, where discussions focused on how machine learning and related technologies could surpass human cognitive abilities. While Howard (2019) points out that the gathering did not yield a unanimous consensus, it had a lasting effect on future generations. Moreover, Yu (2023) and Kersting (2020) discuss the evolution of AI through three distinct waves: the introduction of the Turing test in the mid-20th century during the 1950s and 60s; the development of Hopfield neural networks and the training of the BT algorithm in 1982; and the contemporary era of deep learning that we currently inhabit. A prominent milestone in today's AI landscape is the advent of ChatGPT, a pre-training transformer recognized as a language processing and machine learning tool that generates human-like responses to specific commands (Baidoo-Anu and Ansah, 2023; Hasanein and Sobaih, 2023).

In line with the stages of AI development, ChatGPT has evolved, beginning with its inception as GPT-1 in 2018. This initial model employs the transformer architecture to autonomously learn from and train on existing text corpora, which include grammar, semantics, idioms, and contextual nuances. According to Finnie-Ansley et al. (2022), the objective was to develop algorithmic language models that closely mimic human expression of thought. The progression continued with the creation of more advanced versions, GPT-2 and GPT-3, in 2019 and 2020, respectively, aimed at enhancing accuracy and efficiency in dialogue generation, text summarization, and machine translation (Chan, 2022; Henrickson and Meroño-Peñuela, 2022). The introduction of GPT-3.5 in November 2022, followed by the release of the latest version, GPT-4, in March 2023, enabled tasks such as extracting information from extensive textual data, generating more complex and human-like outputs, recognizing image and text input limitations, and improving answer accuracy. This technological advancement has ushered in a revolution across all sectors, including higher education (Hasanein and Sobaih, 2023; Yu, 2023).

Several education theorists have underscored the importance of ChatGPT in the learning process, noting its capacity to provide personalized support, enhance information accessibility, and assist both faculty and students. Additionally, it can improve language skills through grammar suggestions and vocabulary enhancements (Baidoo-Anu and Ansah, 2023; Yu, 2023). Hasanein and Sobaih (2023) further emphasize its considerable advantages for students, particularly in areas such as research activities, paper writing, exam preparation, and essay composition. They illustrate its effectiveness in passing four distinct examinations at the University of Minnesota Law School, including the American Bar Exam (Lo, 2023). Conversely, several theorists have raised concerns regarding the challenges of academic ethics, including issues related to the authenticity and reliability of data, fabricated content and citations, and the risk of students developing an overdependence on such tools, which could hinder their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities (Baruwa, 2024; Dempere et. al., 2023; Zhai, Wibowo, & Li, 2024). Thus, despite the potential benefits of AI and ChatGPT, these challenges pose significant risks to faculty, staff, and students in higher education. In light of these considerations, I have consciously refrained from utilizing ChatGPT and have avoided writing about the proliferation of AI, particularly ChatGPT, in higher education over the past few years. My concerns were rooted in the fear that it might dehumanize my quest for knowledge, understanding, and truth. As a careful observer of new media and communities, I am aware of my biases and positionality in this context. However, these concerns ultimately prompted me to initiate a conversation with ChatGPT regarding the conference hosted by the Philosophers of Education Association of Nigeria (PEAN), themed "Philosophy, Artificial Intelligence, and Digital Education."



In my conversation with ChatGPT, I focus on themes related to philosophy, critical thinking, and higher education, in light of the 2024 PEAN conference. My inquiries centre on several key questions: What differentiates AI's intelligence from that of humans? What role does AI play within the philosophy of education and higher education? Can AI be considered a threat to higher education? In the ensuing sections, I provide a preliminary explanation of my motivation for engaging in this exchange with AI. I explore AI's role in higher education, which leads to a discussion on the parallels between AI and humans, as well as critical thinking and the philosophy of education. Ultimately, I am keen to hear AI's perspective on whether it poses a threat or serves as a benign tool in higher education, especially after reading Sidorkin (2024), who warns of the potential disruptions and challenges AI might create within the educational landscape. In the ensuing sections, I refer to myself as the "seeker" and to ChatGPT in italics.

2. PRELIMINARY

Seeker: Hi Chat GPT

ChatGPT: *Hello! How can I assist you today?*

Seeker: I love the word choice you used, "assist."

ChatGPT: *I'm glad you liked it! How can I assist you today?*

Seeker: You seem a bit formal. Can we be dialogical about this?

ChatGPT: *Absolutely, we can keep it conversational. What's on your mind?*

Seeker: That's great. I am preparing a paper for the upcoming Philosophers of Education Association of Nigeria (PEAN) conference in October in Imo State, and I'm considering inviting you to participate in our conversation at the conference. Please let me know your stance on this.

ChatGPT: *That sounds like an exciting opportunity! You can definitely use our conversation as part of your paper for the conference. Just let me know what specific topics or questions you'd like to discuss, and we can dive right in. How can I help you with your paper?*

3. AI IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Seeker: I am not here to ask much as my colleagues will. I am particularly interested in the relevance of AI in education, specifically higher education. Should I assume you are an artificial intelligence? If so, what distinguishes you from humans in terms of intelligence? Or, should I assume that you are also human? There seem to be many questions here.

ChatGPT: *You can assume I'm an artificial intelligence. Here are some points addressing your questions:*

What Makes AI Intelligent? (1) Data Processing: AI, like me, can process vast amounts of data quickly and identify patterns, trends, and correlations that might be difficult for humans to detect in a short time. (2) Learning Ability: Through machine learning, AI systems can improve their performance over time by learning from data. This is somewhat analogous to human learning, though it's based purely on statistical patterns and algorithms rather than understanding. (3) Task Automation: AI can automate repetitive and complex tasks, increasing efficiency and freeing up human time for more creative and strategic activities. (4) Natural Language Processing: Advanced AI can understand and generate human language, enabling it to engage in conversations, answer questions, and provide information in a way that's accessible to people.

Differences from Humans: (1) Emotional Understanding: AI lacks true emotional understanding and consciousness. It can recognize and respond to emotional cues based on data but doesn't experience emotions. (2) Creativity and Intuition: While AI can generate creative outputs based on learned data, it doesn't possess genuine intuition or the ability to create in the same spontaneous, insightful way humans can. (3)



Ethical Judgments: AI operates based on programmed algorithms and data. It doesn't have an inherent sense of right or wrong, and its decisions can sometimes reflect biases present in its training data.

Relevance of AI in Higher Education: (1) Personalized Learning: AI can tailor educational content to individual student needs, helping to address different learning styles and paces. (2) Administrative Efficiency: AI can streamline administrative tasks such as scheduling, admissions, and grading, reducing the workload on faculty and staff. (3) Research Assistance: AI tools can assist in research by quickly analyzing large datasets, generating hypotheses, and even drafting parts of academic papers. (4) Accessibility: AI can provide support for students with disabilities, such as speech-to-text for hearing-impaired students or learning aids for those with learning disabilities. Using these points, you can present a comprehensive view of AI's role and potential impact on higher education at your conference. If you have specific questions or need more detailed information on any of these points, feel free to ask!

Seeker: I love the part where you said AI is analogous to human learning. I admit that you acknowledge that humans are not AI, and AI is not human. Does that mean you can't do what humans do when it comes to higher education?

ChatGPT: *That's correct. While AI can perform many tasks and offer substantial support in higher education, there are certain aspects that remain uniquely human. Here are some examples of what AI can and cannot do in higher education:*

What AI Can Do in Higher Education: (1) Data Analysis: AI can analyze large datasets more quickly and accurately than humans, providing insights that can improve educational outcomes. (2) Adaptive Learning Systems: AI can create personalized learning experiences by adapting content and teaching methods to individual student needs. (3) Grading and Assessment: AI can automate grading for objective assessments, providing immediate feedback to students. (4) Administrative Support: AI can manage scheduling, student records, and other administrative tasks, allowing staff to focus on more complex issues. (5) Tutoring and Support: AI-powered chatbots and virtual tutors can provide 24/7 assistance to students, helping them with coursework and answering questions.

What AI Cannot Do in Higher Education: (1) Emotional and Social Support: Human educators provide emotional support and mentorship, which is crucial for student development and well-being. AI lacks the ability to genuinely understand and respond to complex human emotions. (2) Creative and Critical Thinking: While AI can simulate certain aspects of creativity and critical thinking, it cannot replicate the depth of human insight and innovation that comes from diverse experiences and intuition. (3) Ethical and Moral Judgments: Humans can navigate ethical dilemmas and make decisions based on a complex understanding of morality, cultural context, and empathy. AI lacks this nuanced understanding. (4) Interpersonal Skills: Teaching involves more than just delivering content; it requires building relationships, understanding individual student needs, and fostering a supportive learning environment. AI cannot replicate the human touch in these interactions. (5) Adaptation to Unforeseen Circumstances: Humans excel at adapting to unexpected situations and improvising solutions in real-time, a flexibility that AI lacks.

The Complementary Role of AI and Humans: AI and humans can work together to enhance higher education. AI can handle repetitive and data-intensive tasks, providing tools and insights that educators can use to improve their teaching methods and better support their students. Meanwhile, human educators can focus on the relational, ethical, and creative aspects of education that AI cannot replicate. In summary, AI can significantly augment the capabilities of educators and improve various aspects of higher education, but it cannot replace the uniquely human elements that are essential to teaching and learning.



4. AI AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Seeker: This sounds conversational. I feel like I am learning more than I expected. You recognize that AI cannot play the role of humans in some areas that I am particularly interested in, such as ethical and moral judgments, creative and critical thinking, emotional and social support, interpersonal skills, and adaptation to unforeseen circumstances. I understand that there may be other areas where AI cannot function as humans, but I am motivated to ask two questions. Having recognized these grey areas, do you believe AI can function in the field of philosophy, given that critical thinking is the foundation or goal of most philosophers? Another is the ethical judgment. Do you think there is any parallel between AI and the philosophy of education?

ChatGPT: *Those are great questions! Let's address each one:*

Can AI Function in Philosophy? AI can certainly assist in certain aspects of philosophy, such as data analysis, logical reasoning, and even generating new ideas based on existing knowledge. However, when it comes to the essence of philosophy, which involves deep critical thinking, exploring complex ethical dilemmas, and grappling with fundamental questions about existence, consciousness, and morality, AI falls short. Philosophy is inherently human-centric, dealing with abstract concepts and subjective experiences that are deeply intertwined with human consciousness and culture. While AI can simulate some aspects of philosophical inquiry, it lacks true understanding, consciousness, and the ability to engage in the kind of open-ended, nuanced dialogue that characterizes philosophical discourse among humans.

Parallel Between AI and the Philosophy of Education: There are indeed parallels between AI and the philosophy of education, particularly in the areas of ethics and educational theory. Here are a few points of connection: (1) Ethics in AI Education: Just as philosophers grapple with ethical questions related to education, such as the goals of education, the nature of knowledge, and the role of educators in shaping students' moral development, AI developers and educators must consider the ethical implications of integrating AI into educational settings. This includes issues such as data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the potential impact of AI on educational equity and social justice. (2) Educational Theory and AI Design: Philosophers of education have long debated theories of learning, pedagogy, and the nature of intelligence. AI developers draw on these theoretical frameworks to design AI-powered educational tools and systems that align with established educational principles and goals. (3) Critical Reflection and Dialogue: Both philosophy and AI education involve critical reflection and dialogue about the nature and purpose of education, the role of technology in learning, and the ethical implications of educational practices. Philosophers can contribute valuable insights to discussions about the appropriate use of AI in education and help guide the development of AI-powered educational technologies in ways that promote meaningful learning and ethical engagement. While AI and the philosophy of education are distinct fields, they intersect in meaningful ways, particularly around questions of ethics, educational theory, and the future of learning in an increasingly technology-driven world. By fostering interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration, we can ensure that AI in education is aligned with ethical principles and educational values.

Seeker: Who are these AI developers? And do you not think that if critical thinking, among other goals, is the aim of philosophers, AI falls short of being authentic?

ChatGPT: *AI developers are individuals or teams who specialize in creating and implementing artificial intelligence systems and technologies. They come from diverse backgrounds, including computer science, engineering, mathematics, and cognitive science. These developers work on designing algorithms, building AI models, and integrating AI into various applications, including education. Regarding your second question, you make a valid point. While AI can simulate certain aspects of critical thinking, it falls short of genuine human thought and consciousness. Critical thinking involves more than just processing data or following algorithms; it requires deep understanding, creativity, intuition, and the ability to engage in complex reasoning and analysis. AI lacks the subjective experiences, emotions, and holistic understanding that underpin authentic human critical thinking. While AI can analyze data, identify patterns, and generate solutions based on predefined criteria, it cannot truly engage with the world in the same nuanced and reflective way that humans can. Therefore, while AI can be a valuable tool for supporting critical thinking skills*



by providing data-driven insights, facilitating information retrieval, and automating routine tasks, it cannot replace the authentic experience of human critical thought. Instead, AI should be viewed as a complementary tool that can augment and enhance human cognitive abilities rather than replicate them.

Seeker: I don't want to say I prefer you not using data-informed words in philosophical discussions like this. I understand that some philosophers may be using empirical forms of validating knowledge in philosophy, but I would appreciate it if we stayed glued to philosophical conversations.

ChatGPT: *Thank you for the clarification. Let's stick to philosophical discussions without relying on data-informed language. Feel free to steer the conversation in a direction that aligns with philosophical concepts and terminology. What philosophical topics would you like to explore further?*

5. ON THE AUTHENTICITY OF HUMANS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Seeker: I am not digressing, but I am buttressing your point. Some scholars have argued that you strip humans of their authenticity in higher education. Do you think the position holds true?

ChatGPT: *The argument that AI strips humans of their authenticity in higher education is indeed a thought-provoking one. Let's delve into it:*

Perspectives on Authenticity: (1) Human-Centric Approach: Some scholars argue that the essence of higher education lies in the human connection between educators and students. They believe that authentic learning experiences are rooted in interpersonal relationships, mentorship, and the exchange of ideas within a supportive community of learners. From this perspective, AI could potentially disrupt the traditional dynamics of education by replacing human educators with automated systems, thereby diminishing the authenticity of the learning experience. (2) Augmentation vs. Replacement: Others contend that AI can enhance, rather than detract from, the authenticity of higher education. They argue that AI tools and technologies, when used thoughtfully, can augment human teaching and learning processes, providing personalized support, expanding access to educational resources, and fostering collaboration and innovation. In this view, authenticity is not compromised by the presence of AI but rather enriched by the diverse perspectives and opportunities it brings to the educational landscape. (3) Reimagining Authenticity: Some scholars advocate for reimagining authenticity in the context of AI-enabled education. They propose that authenticity can manifest in new forms within digitally mediated learning environments, characterized by transparency, inclusivity, and ethical engagement. From this perspective, authenticity is not tied to traditional modes of teaching and learning but rather emerges from the meaningful interactions and connections facilitated by AI technologies. Ultimately, whether AI strips humans of their authenticity in higher education depends on how it is implemented and integrated into educational practices. While AI has the potential to transform the way we teach and learn, it is essential to approach its use thoughtfully and ethically, preserving the human-centered values that underpin authentic education. By leveraging AI as a complement to human expertise and fostering a culture of critical reflection and dialogue, we can ensure that authenticity remains central to the educational experience in the digital age.

Seeker: Given that I believe humans develop AI, how do you suggest philosophers use it in higher education?

ChatGPT: *Philosophers can engage with AI in higher education in several ways, considering its potential implications and ethical considerations: (1) Ethical Reflection: Philosophers can critically examine the ethical implications of integrating AI into higher education, considering questions of autonomy, privacy, bias, and the impact on human flourishing. By engaging in ethical reflection and dialogue, philosophers can help shape the responsible development and deployment of AI technologies in educational settings. (2) Educational Theory: Philosophers can contribute to the development of educational theories and frameworks that integrate AI in meaningful and pedagogically sound ways. By drawing on philosophical insights into learning, cognition, and human nature, philosophers can inform the design and implementation of AI-powered educational tools and systems that align with educational values and goals. (3) Critical Evaluation: Philosophers can critically evaluate the claims and assumptions underlying AI technologies in higher education, examining their epistemological foundations, methodological approaches, and potential biases. By applying philosophical*



methods of analysis and critique, philosophers can help uncover hidden assumptions, challenge entrenched paradigms, and foster a more nuanced understanding of AI in education. (4) *Interdisciplinary Collaboration*: Philosophers can collaborate with AI developers, educators, psychologists, sociologists, and other stakeholders to explore the interdisciplinary implications of AI in higher education. By fostering collaboration and dialogue across disciplines, philosophers can contribute to a holistic understanding of the complex ethical, social, and educational issues surrounding AI in education. (5) *Pedagogical Innovation*: Philosophers can explore innovative pedagogical approaches that leverage AI technologies to enhance teaching and learning experiences. By experimenting with AI-powered learning environments, adaptive tutoring systems, and virtual reality simulations, philosophers can explore new ways of engaging students, fostering critical thinking skills, and promoting deep learning. In summary, philosophers can play a crucial role in shaping the responsible development and ethical integration of AI in higher education by engaging in ethical reflection, contributing to educational theory, critically evaluating AI technologies, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and exploring pedagogical innovation. By embracing AI as a tool for enhancing, rather than replacing, human intelligence and creativity, philosophers can help ensure that AI serves the broader goals of education and human flourishing.

6. AI AS A THREAT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Seeker: Do you agree with the scholars who maintain that education is solely human-centred, or do you believe this perspective falls short of your recommendations for how philosophers can use AI in higher education?

ChatGPT: *I believe there is value in both perspectives. While some scholars argue for a strictly human-centered approach to education, emphasizing the importance of interpersonal relationships, mentorship, and the unique capabilities of human educators, others recognize the potential of AI to enhance teaching and learning experiences in higher education. The key is to strike a balance between these perspectives, recognizing the inherent value of human-centered education while also acknowledging the transformative potential of AI technologies. Philosophers can play a crucial role in navigating this balance by engaging in ethical reflection, contributing to educational theory, critically evaluating AI technologies, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and exploring pedagogical innovation. Ultimately, education should be student-centered, with a focus on promoting deep learning, critical thinking, and holistic development. AI can be a valuable tool for supporting these goals, but it should be integrated thoughtfully and ethically, preserving the human touch and authenticity that are essential to meaningful education. By embracing AI as a complement to human expertise and fostering a culture of critical reflection and dialogue, philosophers can help ensure that education remains both human-centered and forward-thinking in the digital age.*

Seeker: I will agree that AI has come and is here to live with us. I am only skeptical that humans will not become useless in the hands of technological advancement.

ChatGPT: *Your skepticism is understandable, as concerns about the potential for technological advancement to render humans obsolete are not uncommon. However, it's important to remember that humans possess unique qualities and capabilities that are unlikely to be fully replicated by AI. While AI can excel at certain tasks, such as data analysis, pattern recognition, and automation, it lacks the creativity, intuition, empathy, and moral judgment that are inherent to the human experience. Moreover, humans have the ability to adapt, innovate, and create new opportunities in response to technological change. Instead of viewing AI as a threat to human relevance, we can see it as a tool that complements and enhances human abilities. By leveraging AI technologies thoughtfully and ethically, we can address complex challenges, improve quality of life, and create new opportunities for human flourishing. It's also essential to prioritize ethical considerations and ensure that technological advancements are guided by human values and goals. By fostering interdisciplinary dialogue, critical reflection, and responsible innovation, we can harness the potential of AI to benefit society while preserving the dignity and agency of human beings.*



Seeker: I thought I was concluding this discussion, but I am also skeptical about your response to our students, who may view AI as a quick fix without critical thinking in philosophy or education classes.

ChatGPT: *That's a valid concern. The widespread availability of AI-powered tools and information can indeed pose challenges for cultivating critical thinking skills among students. Here are a few strategies to address this concern: (1) Emphasize Process Over Product: Encourage students to focus on the process of critical thinking rather than just finding the right answer. Emphasize the importance of questioning assumptions, evaluating evidence, considering alternative perspectives, and engaging in reasoned debate. (2) Teach Information Literacy: Provide students with the skills and strategies they need to critically evaluate sources of information, including AI-generated content. Teach them how to assess credibility, relevance, bias, and accuracy in a variety of media formats. (3) Promote Metacognition: Encourage students to reflect on their own thinking processes and learning strategies. Help them develop metacognitive awareness by asking them to articulate their thought processes, evaluate their own reasoning, and identify areas for improvement. (4) Use AI as a Tool for Inquiry: Instead of viewing AI as a replacement for critical thinking, incorporate it into classroom activities as a tool for inquiry and exploration. Encourage students to use AI-powered resources to generate hypotheses, gather data, and test theories, but also challenge them to critically evaluate the limitations and biases of these tools. (5) Foster Dialogue and Debate: Create opportunities for students to engage in meaningful dialogue and debate about philosophical and educational topics. Encourage them to defend their positions, critique the arguments of others, and explore complex ethical dilemmas from multiple perspectives. By adopting these strategies, educators can help students develop the critical thinking skills they need to navigate the complexities of the digital age and engage thoughtfully with AI technologies in philosophy and education classes.*

7. COLLEGE STUDENTS AND AI: CHALLENGES AND ETHICAL CONCERNS

Seeker: I observe this phenomenon everywhere, yet students show little interest in learning how to utilize it effectively. I understand you are programmed to say all these, and you may still repeat some of the things you've said, but I would appreciate it if you considered critically that it is easier to lead a horse to the water, but you can't make the horse drink, and even if the horse chooses to drink you cannot tell the horse the amount to drink.

ChatGPT: *You make a valid point about the challenges of engaging students in developing critical thinking skills, especially in an age where access to AI-powered resources can sometimes lead to a passive consumption of information rather than active engagement in critical inquiry. Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond simply providing instruction on how to use AI tools. It involves fostering a culture of inquiry, curiosity, and intellectual engagement, where students are motivated to ask questions, challenge assumptions, and think deeply about complex issues. Educators can play a crucial role in creating learning environments that prioritize active learning, meaningful dialogue, and hands-on experiences. By designing engaging learning activities, fostering collaborative learning communities, and providing personalized support and feedback, educators can empower students to take ownership of their learning and develop the skills they need to thrive in the digital age.*

At the same time, it's important to acknowledge that changing student attitudes and behaviors is a complex and ongoing process that requires patience, persistence, and adaptability. Educators must be willing to meet students where they are, understand their motivations and interests, and provide guidance and support as they navigate the challenges of developing critical thinking skills in an increasingly technology-driven world. Ultimately, while educators can provide the tools, resources, and guidance to support students in developing critical thinking skills, the responsibility for learning ultimately lies with the students themselves. Encouraging students to take an active role in their own learning, fostering a growth mindset, and providing opportunities for self-reflection and metacognition can help empower students to become lifelong learners and critical thinkers in the face of technological advancement.



Seeker: Thanks for your time. Are there any questions you'd like to ask me before I bid farewell until we meet again?

ChatGPT: *Thank you for the engaging conversation! Before we part ways, I'm curious: What inspired your interest in exploring the intersection of AI and philosophy in higher education?*

Seeker: Such a great question! Firstly, I am a lover of knowledge. Secondly, I am a student of philosophy. Thirdly, I have a presentation, and I intend to share our conversation with other conference participants. Fourthly, we are living in an era of artificial intelligence. Lastly, I can think of, is to devote my time to understanding how ChatGPT works.

ChatGPT: *Thank you for sharing your motivations! It's wonderful to hear about your passion for knowledge, your academic pursuits in philosophy, and your interest in exploring the implications of AI in higher education. I'm honored that our conversation will be part of your presentation at the conference, and I hope it sparks thought-provoking discussions among participants. If you ever have more questions or want to delve deeper into how ChatGPT works, feel free to reach out anytime. Until we meet again, farewell and best of luck with your presentation and your ongoing journey in philosophy and education!*

8. IMPLICATIONS

It is indeed surprising that I can engage in a discussion with ChatGPT and receive responses that resemble a conversation with a human. This level of interaction highlights just how far AI has evolved to emulate human-like conversation. ChatGPT's implications for higher education, as outlined in previous sections, are substantial, offering both opportunities and challenges that cannot be ignored. Given these concerns, it's noteworthy that some institutions have banned its use due to fears that AI could facilitate academic dishonesty (Baidoo-Anu and Ansah, 2023). At Queen's University, where I study, guidelines have been established to help teachers and students engage with AI responsibly in the learning process. However, other institutions are still debating whether to integrate or prohibit AI altogether (Sidorkin, 2024). These complex issues, combined with the 2024 PEAN conference, inspired me to engage in a conversation with ChatGPT to gain firsthand insight into its functionalities and potential benefits. In considering these dynamics, educators and institutions cannot remain passive. The discussions I had with ChatGPT reflect broader debates on AI's role in education, revealing insights into how AI may be shaping learning in ways influenced by both market forces and cultural shifts (Sidorkin, 2024; Peters et al., 2023).

One significant insight ChatGPT offered is that while AI excels in tasks like data analysis, logical reasoning, and idea generation, it falls short in areas requiring critical thinking, ethical judgment, and engagement with existential questions. ChatGPT acknowledges this gap, noting that "critical thinking involves more than just processing data or following algorithms; it requires deep understanding, creativity, intuition, and the ability to engage in complex reasoning and analysis. AI lacks the subjective experiences, emotions, and holistic understanding that underpin authentic human critical thinking." Through our conversation, ChatGPT highlighted that philosophy, a human-centred discipline dealing with abstract concepts intertwined with human consciousness, is beyond AI's full comprehension. Consequently, while AI's current iterations are impressive, they lack true consciousness, leading to valid scepticism about AI's potential to fully emulate human understanding. ChatGPT itself has led some users to become overly reliant on it, diminishing their *own* critical discernment (Anderson, 2018). Our discussions, especially on the distinctions between AI and human abilities, underscored unique human traits—such as emotional understanding, creativity, inclusivity, and ethical judgment—that current AI models lack. Meanwhile, AI remains a valuable tool for tasks like task automation, data processing, administrative efficiency, personalized support, and accessibility.

Another critical topic we explored was the potential threats of AI to higher education. In a society increasingly characterized by the adoption of artificial intelligence, there is an uncritical belief in technology's benefits. This pervasive trust in AI can overshadow our understanding of human identity and values. While there is a common belief that AI primarily benefits humanity, I raised doubts about this assumption in my discussion with ChatGPT. Though AI undeniably supports human well-being across various fields, the ethical and epistemological implications of its integration into education demand careful consideration. Specifically, we



need to reflect on the appropriate and ethical applications of AI within educational contexts. My conversation with ChatGPT underscored the importance of balancing AI's potential with the recognition of inherent human values, especially in an era that often prioritizes technological efficiency over holistic or liberal education.

In light of these philosophical questions, I shared with ChatGPT the adage, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink—and even if it does drink, you can't control the amount it consumes." This analogy resonated with ChatGPT's view that educators should foster a culture of inquiry that encourages students to think critically and engage thoughtfully with AI. In this respect, educators can look to intellectual virtues, as described by Baehr (2013), such as curiosity, intellectual engagement, courage, perseverance, humility, and open-mindedness. Although challenging in practice, cultivating these virtues would help students ask meaningful questions, question assumptions, and engage deeply with complex issues, rather than overly depending on AI.

There is indeed a crucial role for educators to play in creating an enabling environment where meaningful exchange between students and teachers takes place. This may involve engaging students in activities that promote their active participation, rather than solely relying on AI. I believe this engagement occurs when educators embrace their responsibility for student learning and instill in learners the virtues and skills necessary for thriving in the AI age. The emergence of AI in education presents significant challenges for philosophers and theorists alike. As I have discussed in this paper, the role of AI in education is complex and does not lend itself to straightforward categorization, often blurring the traditional lines between critical thinking and sound reasoning. This ambiguity raises questions about what constitutes critical thinking in both the AI era and in historical contexts. The risks associated with the integration of AI in higher education include the potential deskilling of both students and teachers, the dissemination of biased information, the erosion of privacy and equity, and, most importantly, the pressing need for critical discussions and the cultivation of essential virtues. As educators, we cannot afford to be passive; instead, we must actively embrace and adapt to new technologies to transform education.

9. CONCLUSION

This paper explores the role and ethical implications of generative AI, specifically ChatGPT, in higher education. Through an unstructured exchange with ChatGPT, I examine AI's capacity for critical thinking, philosophical engagement, and its potential impact on educational practices, while also considering both supportive and potentially disruptive roles of AI within learning environments. However, a notable limitation of this study is that it is based on a specific exchange between the author and ChatGPT, which may limit the generalizability of its findings. ChatGPT's responses can vary significantly depending on the prompts used, context, and interaction history, meaning that different prompts could yield different insights or emphasize other aspects of AI's role in education. As such, while this paper provides a foundational perspective, further exploration with diverse prompts and contexts would be beneficial for a more comprehensive understanding of AI's evolving role in higher education.

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There is only one author.



CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author(s) certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial organization regarding the material discussed in the manuscript.

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