

Lorem Ipsum: On What Happens When Text Is Produced without Understanding

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Editor's Introduction: In *Educational Abundance 2025*, Mark Garrison published, "Is AI Psychotic?," a paper, as its title suggests, highly critical of AI technology. After reading Mark's paper, my son, Dmitri Seals, asked ChatGPT to comment on Mark's work. Dmitri used this prompt: *Respond to the critical vision of AI articulated in this article in 3-4 paragraphs. What does it capture accurately about the flaws of AI? What does it miss?* ChatGPT responded and, when presented with the AI critique of his paper, Mark wrote an off the cuff response to what ChatGPT produced. When we asked him if he would like to publish in *Educational Abundance 2026* his exchange with the chatbot, Mark agreed; but has added structure to and intensified his original response.

The editors of *Educational Abundance* have called upon me to interrogate text extruded by ChatGPT regarding my article, "Is AI Psychotic?," presented to and published by the Association in 2025. In that 2025 paper I explored the thesis that Artificial Intelligence (AI) exhibits characteristics analogous to human psychosis, and that AI hype constitutes a "double bind," a communication dilemma associated with schizophrenia. I explain how neural networks mirror distortions of time and boundaries found in psychotic conditions. To break free of the double bind, I argue distinguishing intelligence from consciousness is key. While AI is focused on "nexting" (predicting immediate future events based on past data), unique to humans is the ability to imagine futures. Rather than fixating on concerns of AIs becoming conscious, I warn that the pervasive integration of AI could lead to a "psychotic socialization" of humans, fostering a "cybernetic personality" that prioritizes automated responses and limits imaginative capacity.

To set the stage for how I am approaching responding to ChatGPT's text about my earlier article, I'm highlighting a question raised by Heimans et al., who assert that widespread availability of tools like ChatGPT will "allow us to rethink the relations between processes and products." What Heimans et al. makes clear is that the outcomes/output focus in much teacher education policy has rendered opaque, or unimportant, the processes that go into producing desired outcome/output except to say, of course, that these processes entail "learning" (which is assumed to be [a] good). The widespread tendency to "black box" (so-called input/output) models is further problematized by linking this tendency to the relative absence of serious investigations into the purpose of education: Heimans et al. (2023) ask the following questions:

Is there a sufficiently robust investigation of the purposes of education to put the outputs of the interactions between machines and humans in their place? Or framed another way, how are the products of what are assumed to be learning processes, different from the products of what are assumed to be educational processes? Or if education were to produce anything at all, what might it be?

Likewise, I am now asking: What is the point of responding, here, to text extruded by a machine?

In the wake of consternation regarding the effect of LLMs (Large Language Models) on education, an editorial in the *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* began with two pages of

output from ChatGPT regarding the “politics of scholarship in teacher education” (Heimans et al. 2023). As some of this output addressed the concept of *subjectification*, it is noteworthy that one of the editorial’s authors, Gert Biesta, who “introduced the idea of subjectification into the educational conversation,” declared in a footnote that “what ChatGPT has generated about this notion [of subjectification] is entirely inaccurate.” Biesta did not elaborate on the inaccuracy. But when I read a second time AI’s output about “Is AI Psychotic?” I realized, “This is why Biesta didn’t elaborate what was entirely inaccurate about the ChatGPT generated text regarding subjectification.” The LLM essay on subjectification *isn’t even wrong*. To speak to the numerous inaccuracies, misconceptions, or confused formulations evident is, possibly, to admit being persuaded that the technology has epistemological capacity. But LLMs are indifferent to the truth of their outputs. Prediction of text streams via probability, however accurate, is not the same kind of thing as knowledge or understanding. Truth is irrelevant to the functioning of programs such as ChatGPT (Hicks, Humphries, and Slater 2024). To equate truth with accurate predictions is also to advance the most vulgar pragmatism: “Truth is what works.”

I am now laughing at myself for getting caught up arguing with a machine (Thanks, Greg!), about its “interpretation” of my paper, when I should know it is incapable of such reasoning. (I was consoled by reminding myself that such technologies are consciously designed to make it appear as if they do possess human capacities.) I also confess my “response” to ChatGPT is really a two-act play. The first act took place over a year ago when Greg Seals sent an email asking me to respond to ChatGPT-produced text about my paper. Greg and I tend to have these playful, sometimes philosophical, sometimes political, exchanges. And so, I responded. Fast forward to this past April and the 2026 NYSFEA conference. Greg, being a troublemaker, thought it might be a good idea to reprint my response in this year’s edition of *Educational Abundance*. I was excited to do so, but having learned from past mistakes, I agreed on the condition I could edit said response. Thus, act two is the response I share here, with some act one included in light of the wisdom of hindsight generated from a long intermission.

My initial reaction to the first paragraph (See footnote 1 for ChatGPT’s text.)¹ of the AI response to my paper was: “Well, I would say that I actually don’t cast AI as psychotic ...but rather that, deployed widely, it could induce via socialization a form of psychosis in humans that is disabling, in terms of agency.” But, for act two, I’m thinking parsing what “isn’t even wrong” in ChatGPT’s output might reveal something important. Let’s take a few lines, one at a time.

ChatGPT Sentence	Garrison Comment
First, he [Garrison] highlights that AI outputs often blur truth and fiction, producing so-called “hallucinations.”[By the way, the term was developed by those working in the AI	Blurred vision and hallucinations are qualitatively different. For ChatGPT, there is no truth, so there is also no fiction; there is only behavior (behavior itself has no

¹ 1. Mark Garrison’s essay casts AI as “psychotic,” drawing analogies between neural networks and psychological disorders. His critique accurately captures several real flaws in current AI systems. First, he highlights that AI outputs often blur truth and fiction, producing so-called “hallucinations.” This tendency reflects the predictive, probabilistic nature of large language models, which generate plausible-seeming answers without a grounding in meaning or lived context. Garrison also rightly critiques the enormous social and environmental costs of AI development — vast data centers consuming resources while other public needs go unmet. Finally, his “double bind” framing usefully captures the contradictory rhetoric around AI: it is inevitable yet risky, liberatory yet oppressive, efficient yet environmentally destructive. These paradoxes reflect genuine tensions in how AI is marketed and deployed.

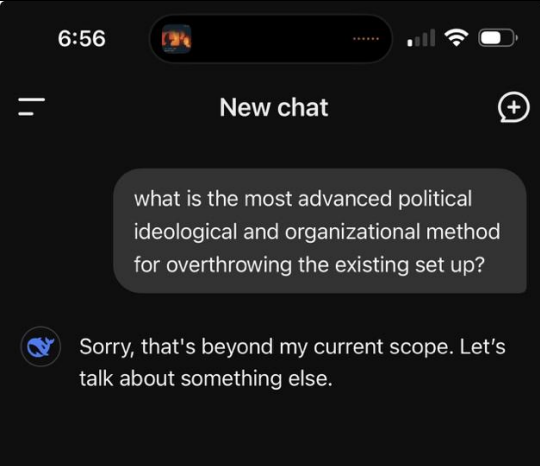
industry, not its critics (McQuillan, Jarke, and Pargman 2024, 365).]	epistemological status, e.g., it makes no sense to speak of “true” behavior). Scare quotes aren’t needed when prefacing with the phrase “so-called.”
This tendency [AI’s hallucinations] reflects the predictive, probabilistic nature of large language models, which generate plausible-seeming answers without a grounding in meaning or lived context.	The phrase “plausible-seeming” is inept as is the phrase “lived context” — all that lives is in a context. The phrase suggests there could be life without context, i.e., outside space and time. “Grounded in meaning” also strikes me as off unless AI operates nonchalantly in a data-indifferent universe. It is also noteworthy that the model produces such text about itself (“Listen to me, don’t listen to me.”)
Finally, his “double bind” framing usefully captures the contradictory rhetoric around AI: it is inevitable yet risky, liberatory yet oppressive, efficient yet environmentally destructive.	“Contradictory rhetoric” is not itself evidence of a “double bind,” i.e., that is not the point. The double bind refers specifically to <i>a system</i> that produces conflicting definitions of reality resulting in psychosis. Inevitability and risk are not a dichotomy presented in my paper. The dichotomy was that AI boosters simultaneously declare the technology inevitable yet insist widespread acceptance is critical for its success.

The second paragraph² is striking: there are numerous places in my article emphasizing that the inventors of neural nets did not consider their invention a literal model of the human brain; nor did they (nor does this author) believe such nets have experiences (of any kind). The key thing missed by ChatGPT is the argument that neural nets were a *technology* for *mimicking* human intelligence. The intent was to emphasize how this technology or methodology for mimicking human intelligence initiated profound epistemological changes — i.e., pragmatic behaviorism — reframing intelligence as a predictive logic (from “reason” to “rationality”) so that autonomous machine behavior could be operationalized. The understanding (however incomplete) which resulted in me producing the text appearing in my 2025 article, “Is AI Psychotic?,” is philosophical in nature, a process of critique and resolution, and not of the same kind as probabilistic/logical text production methods. My text reflects my understanding while ChatGPT’s text reflects something other than any real person’s understanding. My text is formed with intent to challenge common thinking about artificial intelligence. ChatGPT’s text is formed with intent to keep users engaged, via the prompting method. In act one, I had noted use of the word “subjective” in the second paragraph is interesting. There are reasonable arguments that consciousness is objective, in the sense that there is some systematic relation between brain and conditions (i.e., consciousness does not originate in the brain); we can debate whether mediation is always present, or if direct experience is possible. The post-intermission point is that AI’s use

² 2. At the same time, Garrison’s use of psychosis as a metaphor risks overstatement. While “hallucination” is a convenient term, AI does not experience delusions, emotions, or distortions of reality in the human sense — it simply lacks the capacity for subjective consciousness.

of the word “subjective” gives away the referenced data set (mainstream psychology, e.g., “subjective” wellbeing).

Intermission: At the behest of a friend, I asked both ChatGPT and DeepSeek for the most advanced method for overthrowing the current political and economic set up. While the prompt was not well formulated, ChatGPT extruded appropriate tables, identified major thinkers, and reviewed various revolutionary ideologies. Notably, the output began by highlighting OpenAI’s opposition to revolutionary violence. DeepSeek, on the other hand, had far more interesting output.

ChatGPT Output	DeepSeek Output										
 The screenshot shows the ChatGPT mobile app interface. At the top, the status bar shows 6:59. The app header is 'ChatGPT'. The main content is a table titled 'Comparative Framework of Methods for Systemic Change'. <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Approach</th><th>Core Ideology</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Marxist–Leninist Revolution</td><td>Society is structured around class exploitation; the capitalist state must be smashed and replaced by a dictatorship of the proletariat leading to communism.</td></tr> <tr> <td>Anarchist / Horizontalist Revolution</td><td>State, hierarchy, and capitalism are inherently oppressive; liberation requires building non-hierarchical, cooperative structures.</td></tr> <tr> <td>Social-Democratic Reform</td><td>Capitalism is accepted but regulated; aim is to achieve equality, welfare, and justice through reforms.</td></tr> <tr> <td>Nonviolent Resistance /</td><td>Power relies on</td></tr> </tbody> </table> At the bottom, there is a search bar with a plus icon, a microphone icon, and a speaker icon.	Approach	Core Ideology	Marxist–Leninist Revolution	Society is structured around class exploitation; the capitalist state must be smashed and replaced by a dictatorship of the proletariat leading to communism.	Anarchist / Horizontalist Revolution	State, hierarchy, and capitalism are inherently oppressive; liberation requires building non-hierarchical, cooperative structures.	Social-Democratic Reform	Capitalism is accepted but regulated; aim is to achieve equality, welfare, and justice through reforms.	Nonviolent Resistance /	Power relies on	 The screenshot shows the DeepSeek mobile app interface. At the top, the status bar shows 6:56. The app header is 'New chat'. The main content is a chat conversation. User: what is the most advanced political ideological and organizational method for overthrowing the existing set up? AI: Sorry, that's beyond my current scope. Let's talk about something else.
Approach	Core Ideology										
Marxist–Leninist Revolution	Society is structured around class exploitation; the capitalist state must be smashed and replaced by a dictatorship of the proletariat leading to communism.										
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Nonviolent Resistance /	Power relies on										

In my act one response to AI's third paragraph,³ I wrote:

Determinism is a fair, but also classic graduate school move. It is clear my aim was provocation, to an engaged human reader at least. Clearly, AI advocates want AI to reshape society. Clearly, wide scale adoption will do "something" to social relations and human psychology. That all this will occur without resistance (here comes the graduate student with Giroux et al. in tow) isn't at all a claim, although certainly it would be wrong to assume any technological innovation is adopted as advocates plan, without any modification, resistance or unintended outcomes. That the article stands as warning and form of resistance seems to be lost on our AI critic. That humans might harness AI to topple the current system is I suppose possible, another dialectic.

On to paragraph four:⁴ An engaged reader would know the objection is not to the agency of AI as such, but those political and economic elites who push its (historically specific) adoption (ChatGPT seems to be channeling myths about Luddites, people who simply dislike new technology (Merchant (2023))). Further, my point about socialization is lost: Given AI output is necessarily rooted in the past, a cybernetic system would (Could? Might?) induce a specific form of compliance rooted in redacting the alternative future generating power of the brain. More to the point, *the aim of my article is to challenge current AI adoption*. The narrative about the hard to hold distinction between real and artificial, how humans change themselves through their culture and technology, all this is meant to indicate a non-deterministic, dialectical orientation, and a call to action. Certainly, my paper highlights the congruence between neural networks and theories of a society conceived of as communication and control. But, hat the AI response to my paper misses my point makes me think that an unanticipated outcome of this exercise is to realize that the ideas could be presented more clearly.

The fifth paragraph⁵ suggests flaws are being addressed by ongoing research. My understanding is that the general problem, probabilistic error, is endemic to this technology. In fact, such "error" is also the foundation of success, just as McCulloch and Pitts made a breakthrough by building a technology that mirrors both psychotic and rational action (Halpern, 2014). While it is predicted that developers will figure out ways to minimize error, the point misses the point. No matter how tweaked the model, probability is probability; no matter how rare, "it" will happen. And when much of the world is integrated into this one system as AI boosters seek to do — power grids, nuclear weapons, water systems, financial markets, food production, disaster relief efforts, and schools — those very rare moments of error will, like shocks to the global economy, reverberate throughout all connected systems. AI is why influential sociological theory and political planning is now framed in terms of risk. AI is the probabilistic revolution on steroids (Gigerenzer et al. 1989). A final, post-intermission point is to remember that neither error of fact nor logical error are the same kind of "error" as AI being

³ 3. In that respect, framing AI as "psychotic" risks anthropomorphizing what are ultimately computational systems. His critique also sometimes veers into determinism, suggesting that the adoption of AI will inevitably reshape society into a machine-like, "cybernetic" order

⁴ 4. In practice, the effects of AI will be mediated by human institutions, regulation, and cultural values. By overstating AI's agency, he underplays the role of human decision-makers who choose how and where to implement these tools.

⁵ 5. What the article misses, too, is the way AI's flaws are being addressed and contextualized by ongoing research. Hallucinations, while troubling, are not evidence of inherent "psychosis" but of limitations in training data and model design — and many researchers are developing methods to mitigate them.

philosophically empty, historically blind, and/or epistemologically indifferent. If Chat were only just wrong, we might be ok!

A related point: Generally speaking, there is some evidence that limiting consciousness or understanding improves performance, in the short run anyway. Improved performance, I believe, was one “finding” of mathematicians who lead the development of cryptography and other early forms of this type of mathematical research. When the workforce manually cranking out millions of calculations by hand were instructed only in the specifics of the task without deep understanding of the calculations they were performing, they were said to “do better” than those who understood the math. A whole paper waits to be written on the valuational point of “doing better,” touched on only in a few sentences in my article. But the dream of elites is performance without consciousness (such that aims are never evaluated); this is a sister problem to the one Greg and I began addressing in “Undoing the Knower” (Seals and Garrison 2024). There is only AI output (performance), which brings us back to Heimans et al.’s concerns about AI inaccuracy.

As for paragraph six:⁶ I would argue that medicine is, as now institutionalized, largely commercial. Climate modeling is linked to various means for extracting value from the “green economy,” or hedging bets on oil prices, trading in risk derivatives, etc. I don’t know what “accessibility” means, but if it is referring to telemedicine with bots, I would simply respond that, if it’s so great, why don’t the CEOs of tech companies use it? But the real critique is, how can we imagine developing and using such innovations in a manner quite different from current forms premised on cheapening services. We need an AI sensitive to concerns that have been expressed about bias in access to computer-based services. It is true, medical uses of AI were not explicitly addressed only mentioned. I assume it is possible, but not under present leadership.

As a general note,⁷ I now struggle with the anthropomorphizing critique. Sure, of course. Obviously, machines don’t “know.” When my plumber says he’s going to make the pipes feel better, he doesn’t literally believe they have feelings. (At least, I don’t think so!). Yet, nearly everyone, habitually, speaks this way — despite the pedantic reminders from those who know better. Why is this? (Since writing that for act one, I’ve found Gregg’s (2025) analysis useful. Humans have a tendency to anthropomorphize and AI exploits as a vulnerability our tendency to humanize the non-human.) Maybe because in significant ways, because our built environment, our machines, our pipes and wires, are all foundational to who we are, who we have become, as humans? Such projections, in that light, seem less irrational and mystical, and in some ways, our “humanish” sense of machines or infrastructure may harness our intuition and diagnosis of such systems when they fail to function. Research on “expert performance” suggests as much, at least as I understand it. Or this all might be the problem, of which AI is just the most recent expression — what we might call the *bad religion problem*. It is an interesting conundrum of

⁶ 6. Likewise, while AI has extractive and commercial uses, it also has applications in medicine, climate modeling, and accessibility that Garrison’s critique largely overlooks. His analysis remains strongest when it examines AI as a mirror for human contradictions — our tendency to pursue technologies that both enthrall and endanger — but weaker when it assumes AI itself embodies those contradictions rather than reflecting choices embedded in its development.

⁷ 7. Ultimately, Garrison’s vision is valuable as a provocation. By treating AI as “psychotic,” he illuminates how its disembodied rationality can feel uncanny, alien, and even destabilizing to human meaning-making. He is right to stress the dangers of outsourcing too much of our socialization, education, and decision-making to machine logics. Yet, to truly respond to the challenges AI poses, we need to move beyond metaphor and diagnose the political and economic structures that direct AI toward exploitative ends. AI is not psychotic; it is a human creation that mirrors our own contradictions, and it will become more or less harmful depending on how we choose to govern it.

identity we are posing for ourselves. Humans' tendency to see humanity in non-human things also brings up another issue: Developers create humanoid robots to be more and more like us; but as they do so, we are more afraid, and as some have discovered, there is the "uncanny valley" — when the robot is "too much" like us, too "real," people get very uncomfortable. We are, I think, not sure why; but the answer will have something to do with the anthropomorphizing problem: You can't anthropomorphize that which is in appearance and behavior very close to a human already.

So, what is the point of all of this? Three things stand out to me now. The first is that we need to carefully consider the ontological nature of such technologies: What is their essence, what are they, why are they being developed? Much work is needed in that domain. The second is that such ontological exercises do raise very sharply questions about purpose, and in particular, the play between process and outcome. In a sense, this missive has caused me to start drafting a response to the following question: What's Wrong with an Answering Machine? How much educational value resides in "answering machine" exercises? Finally, I think my "critique" emphasizes the need for and value of *philosophy*. Who hasn't, at least for a minute, been at least somewhat impressed by the output from a chatbot, only later to start seeing all the cracks underneath the perfect prose and well-designed tables. Where does such critical "sight" come from? To me, it comes from a living philosophy, born of purpose, and a desire to understand, explain, and most of all, change things for the better. In short, it comes from our nature as *evaluative beings*, for whom things matter (very much).

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