Towards an Ethical Framework in Relation to Generative AI-Tools in Higher Education - A Discussion

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René Schegg
Dr. Sebastian Meisel

From insight to impact.

We live in the mode of referendum, and this is precisely because there are no more referentials. All signs and messages ... present themselves to us in the question/answer format. The social system of communication has evolved from a complex syntactic structure of language to the probing of a binary signaling system (p. 142).

(Translated quote)

Kellner, Douglas, "Baudrillard, Semiurgy and Death," Theory, Culture & Society 4 (1987) 125-46
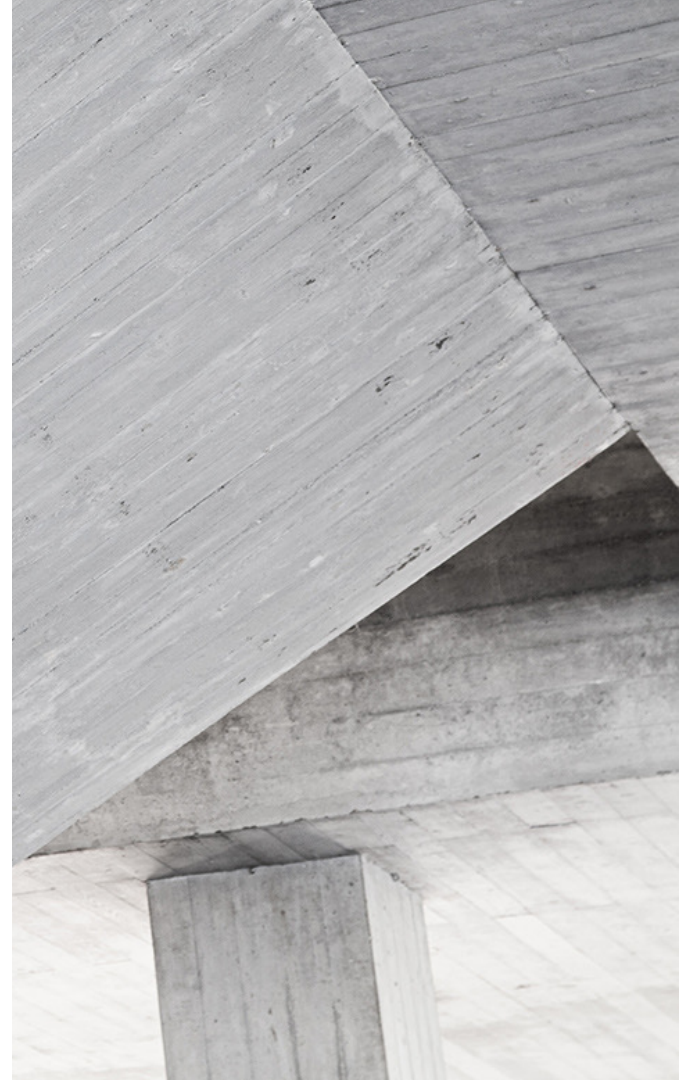
Agenda

1. Problem outline
2. Why is an ethical framework needed?
3. Responsibility and teaching
4. Discussion

Universität St. Gallen/René Schegg und Sebastian Meisel

Problem outline

- Generative AI tools like ChatGPT are already changing the fabric of universities
- At the same time, there is a growing gap between those who use AI tools frequently and those who shy away from them
- Teaching and learning formats will be subject to transformation in the coming months and years
- At the same time, universities tend to be structurally conservative institutions
- Two narrative strands:
  - The cheating (by students and in small numbers by researchers)
  - Creative use (by lecturers and students)

- The question is therefore:
  - How can the narrative of fraud be broken in favour of a creative use of AI tools?
  - How can trends be shaped at and by universities?

"The belief in this kind of AI as actually knowledgeable or meaningful is actively dangerous. It risks poisoning the well of collective thought, and of our ability to think at all. If, as is being proposed by technology companies, the results of ChatGPT queries will be provided as answers to those seeking knowledge online, and if, as has been proposed by some commentators, ChatGPT is used in the classroom as a teaching aide, then its hallucinations will enter the permanent record, effectively coming between us and more legitimate, testable sources of information, until the line between the two is so blurred as to be invisible. Moreover, there has never been a time when our ability as individuals to research and critically evaluate knowledge on our own behalf has been more necessary, not least because of the damage that technology companies have already done to the ways in which information is disseminated. To place all of our trust in the dreams of badly programmed machines would be to abandon such critical thinking altogether."

The stupidity of AI
By James Bridle
https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/mar/16/the-stupidity-of-ai-
artificial-intelligence-dall-e-chatgpt

Why is an ethical framework needed?

Considerations

- Every new technology will sooner or later be provided with guard rails, in some cases this happens too late (social media)
- The capital of the university is trust, based on four pillars
  - The students in the lecturers (knowledge advantage)
  - The lecturer in the students (Next generation of scholars/citizens)
  - The lecturers/researchers among themselves (scientific honesty)
  - The social environment into the university (expertise)
- The basis for this trust is personal and identifiable **responsibility**
- This responsibility arises from a **rational relationship** between people, in mutual recognition **as human beings**
- Thesis: ChatGPT transforms the field of responsibility in which, on the one hand, it also appears as a reasonable (conversational) partner (simulacrum, Baudrillard) and, on the other hand, its functioning is not sufficiently understood (lack of transparency).

Proposal for an "ethical framework"

1. AI tools like ChatGPT are not accountable
   1. Handling and responsibility for handling must remain with the individual
   2. AI instruments must be treated like "tools" in the sense that they are useful in their specific field of application, but can be harmful in any other field
2. AI tools should not be anthropomorphised
   1. A talking output of an AI system only appears human because it is supposed to, but is based on other paradigms
   2. AI tools are therefore also not "conversation partners", but tools of one's own thinking in the sense of an ordering function
3. There is a need for ethics in *dealing with* AI tools
   1. Taking into account a "heuristic of fear" (H. Jonas), the most pessimistic scenario must also be considered
   2. Teaching and learning, *education,* must continue to be oriented towards making sense of and (rationally) opening up the world in order to be able to continue to guarantee the assumption of responsibility.

It follows: The appreciation of human interaction in the construction of knowledge and in the tapping of (super)complex realities.

Responsibility and teaching

What consequences does this have for teaching and learning?

- AI literacy, in the sense of a critical approach to AI applications, must be implemented in the university curricula.
  - The focus must not only be on time-saving, but also on basic modes of operation and their ethical classification
- AI tools must be understood as tools in the true sense and not considered for their own sake (exception: targeted AI research)
- The formation of a critical consciousness among students must be fostered
- Social learning (person to person) must be strengthened and intensified
- Assessment formats must be reviewed and, if necessary, changed; pure knowledge reproduction must be replaced - not only but also against the background of AI - by innovative practices of learning
- Basic structures of the university (teaching development and administration) must anticipate trends more strongly and develop a "strategic foresight".
- Limitations and boundaries of AI tools must be considered
- A culture of trust (between students and lecturers as well as among each other) must be created, replacing the culture of suspicion

Questions? Discussion

What do you think about the ethical framework suggested and its underlying approaches?

Does your university think along the same lines or would you like to share different perspectives?