

308. Pessimistic Thoughts on the Emergence of Conversational Robots and Other Artificial Intelligences

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https://orbicom.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/KE_20230515.pdf

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***Orbicom's questions:** How can we use ChatGPT and other artificial intelligences in the context of our research, our teaching and with our students? How can the Orbicom network help with the challenges, potentials and risks of these technologies?*

Conversational robots will no doubt soon be incorporated into both teaching and our relations with our students. I can't see that any good will come from this. Indeed, I fear that the use of conversational robots will lead to much harm.

Artificial intelligences run on programs and programs are written by people, people who have particular ends and specific biases. The modes of address robots employ will embody the conversational norms the designers favour. Not only does this threaten standardization in conversational behaviour, though that is bad enough. Worse is that the standards will express conceptions of respect and personhood antithetical to individual thought and character.

The ability to think and value for oneself is not easy for a student to acquire. Currently in universities, intellectual and moral autonomy is disdained and dismissed. Our institutions prize sensitivity to feelings and identities and conformity around norms meant to promote collective values. Conversational robots, I expect, will be powerful tools for socializing students into anti-academic attitudes and ways of thinking.

Orbicom could help to mitigate this risk by continuing to champion in its programs diversity in concerns, ideas and arguments, a culture of criticism and disputation, and individuality in thought and expression.