Insidious chatter versus critical thinking: Resisting the Eurocentric siren song of AI in the classroom

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Abstract

This article contributes to the ongoing discussion about the impacts of utilizing emerging technologies – especially AI learning – in higher education. After reviewing the pros and cons of using ChatGPT in the classroom as they are typically considered, I raise a deeper, less frequently addressed concern: the pervasive persistence of Eurocentric biases in the academy and the danger that AI-empowered software will reinforce them further. To this end, I present the findings of a simple experiment I conducted, directing ChatGPT to produce and refine a syllabus for an undergraduate course on modern political philosophy, together with an essay responding to one of the questions set in the syllabus. The results clearly demonstrate the grave potential for such supposedly 'time-saving' technological shortcuts to re-inscribe Eurocentric thinking and unconscious biases, thus seriously complicating the vital, already challenging task of decolonizing the academy.

Introduction

Like many academics, I faced a new challenge in the spring of 2023 when a relatively large number of students in an introductory political studies course I was teaching submitted essays entirely generated by ChatGPT. It was immediately clear that the students had not written these essays. However, I had somehow missed the buzz about the new Open AI software and its extraordinary ability to transform workplaces and educational institutions in the blink of an eye.

Enough has been written about OpenAI and its much-hyped software ChatGPT [Generative Pre-Trained Transformer] (Rudolph et al., 2023b; Heaven, 2023; Limna et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2023) that I need not cover the same ground here. Suffice it to say that this program had been released for use in November 2022, and by the time I was grading papers the following April, this new AI-driven "tool" was seen by students – especially by those for whom English is a second language – as a quick and painless way to fulfil the essay assignment in my course. Like others in this situation, I grappled with the dilemma of what to do given the fact that the work submitted was not original and could not, therefore, be seen as a legitimate submission for course credit. Following the end of the semester, numerous formal and informal discussions were held with colleagues about how to deal with this new software and its implications. Some saw the technology as simply another research source that should be listed in the bibliography, while others (me included) raised a number of concerns, principally around the potential loss of opportunity for developing research and writing skills.

The essays I read that ChatGPT had generated were grammatically correct and coherently (if blandly) 'composed'. They were also full of errors of fact along with inaccurate or, in some cases, fictitious citations. There was an absence of passionate argumentation, depth of analysis, a loss of voice and a lack of substance. There was no indication that the students had used the chatbot for creative experimentation or had learnt anything from the exercise other than a new way to avoid completing the required assignment.

I am, of course, aware of the frequently made argument that if it is possible to cheat on an assignment, then it is not the chatbot that should be banned but, instead, the assignment that should be abandoned (Heaven, 2023). This is not an adequate response for those of us who want to incorporate various assessment strategies into a university course so that students can develop different skills. Eliminating essays and replacing them with assignments such as in-class short answer tests or, even worse, multiple-choice questions is not the way to build critical thinking skills. Rudolph et al. (2023a, p. 10) are surely correct to insist that "Teachers' and students' critical thinking remains of key importance. We must never outsource critical thinking to generative AI." Additionally, while it is important to note that some believe that AI-powered assessment of essays is now possible (Dong, 2023), I remain dubious about the quality of feedback beyond basic advice and would personally miss the time I spend working with students through the various stages of research for, and writing of, essays.

Engaging deeply with an issue of current importance necessitates reading critically, thinking critically, and then developing a well-argued response that is defended with appropriate research. Indeed, is it not more than a little odd that one of the proposed benefits of ChatGPT – according to Imran and Almusharraf (2023, p. 3) – is its "ability to generate coherent and well-structured text" and that this, in turn, means that students can "save time and focus on other aspects of their work"? These authors also praise the ways in which it helps students because it "generates new ideas... they might not have considered otherwise", an argument that actually celebrates the replacement of the crucial function of research, which, although time-consuming, is the task that enables students to develop the ideas needed for their personal intellectual development (Imran & Almusharraf, 2023, p. 3).

While struggling with the problem facing me about how to deal with a large number of AI-derived essays, I was simultaneously assisting a senior student who was writing a thesis on the problems inherent in Eurocentric-biased education. Our conversations about the difficulties in shifting long-standing assumptions prompted me to think more clearly about the dangerous potential for this popular new software to act in ways that might well serve to reinforce Eurocentric assumptions in my own areas of study and teaching. This is the source of inspiration for the arguments I aim to put forward here.

This article is intended as a contribution to the ongoing discussion about the impacts of utilizing emerging technologies – especially AI learning – in higher education. After reviewing the pros and cons of using Chat GPT in the classroom as they are typically considered, I raise a deeper, less frequently addressed concern: the pervasive persistence of Eurocentric biases in the Academy, and the danger that AI-empowered software will act to further reinforce them. To this end, I present the findings of a simple experiment I conducted, directing ChatGPT to produce and then refine a syllabus for an undergraduate course on modern political philosophy, together with an essay responding to one of the questions set in the syllabus. As this article details, the results demonstrate the grave potential for such supposedly 'time-saving' technological shortcuts to re-inscribe Eurocentric thinking and unconscious biases, thus seriously complicating the vital, already challenging task of decolonizing the academy.

'Unlimited miracles' or limited thinking? The pros and cons of ChatGPT in the classroom

Even if it might seem hyperbolic to claim, as Imran and Almusharraf (2023, p. 11) do in their literature review of ChatGPT, that "the launch of the ChatGPT represents a new era of unlimited miracles in science, technology, and education", it is certainly the case that a commonly heard refrain from those celebrating the use of new technology in academic settings is that generative AI chatbots such as ChatGPT can significantly assist students by acting as a tutor to ensure they succeed. It is also commonly noted that students need to be aware of how such tools are currently being used outside the classroom, especially in business

and government workplaces. The many advantages cited are that the chatbots provide personalized assistance to students who need help, offer immediate answers to questions arising from coursework, provide clarification on difficult and complex concepts, assist with communication skills and generally support research (Farrokhnia et al., 2024; Rasul et al., 2023; Ifelebuegu, 2024; Imran & Almusharraf, 2023; Rudolph et al., 2023b; Limna et al., 2023). ChatGPT is seen by many as a tool that can be utilized to "brainstorm, kick-start an essay, explain a confusing idea, and smooth out awkward first drafts" (McMurtrie, 2023).

The presentation of the upside for academics is framed around the notoriously heavy workloads they must deal with in the modern academy. When a student, for example, seeks the answer to a question about coursework from a chatbot instead of contacting the instructor, time is freed up for the professor to engage in "higher-order tasks" (Limna et al., 2003, p. 68). Any tool that can reduce the time spent on grading, administrative work, and curriculum planning is seen as a major advantage. Others have pointed to the time saved with AI-assisted grading (Bernius et al., 2022; Rasul et al., 2023), with some pointing out that this will free up time to spend with students (Akinwalere & Ivanov, 2022).

On the flip side, of course, there are warnings offered. In addition to factual errors (often referred to as hallucinations), Wu et al. (2023) note concerns surrounding the protection of intellectual property; safety concerns due to the empowerment of novice and wannabe computer hackers to conduct cyber attacks; issues around ethics and integrity, including plagiarism as well as the generation of harmful content; and the environmental impacts given the enormous energy needed to conduct both training and searches. On this latter point, we must consider the "power-hungry servers required by AI models" (McLean, 2023) as well as the "equally important and enormous water (withdrawal and consumption) footprint" they leave. (Li et al., 2023, p. 1). As Mariana Mazzucato (2024), director of the Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (University College London), vividly expressed it, the "ugly truth behind ChatGPT" is that "AI is guzzling resources at planet-eating rates". There are unquestionably "profound and pervasive environmental costs accompanying AI's technological advancements" (Rudolph et al., 2024, p. 18) and, arguably, any academic institution seriously committed to reducing its carbon footprint is obliged to eschew one way of dramatically increasing that footprint: the widespread use of ChatGPT by its faculty, staff, and students.

It is important to note that even the champions of using this new technology in higher education often temper their enthusiasm by noting potential problems. The obvious one is, of course, the accuracy of the answers provided – either in terms of facts or biases (Limna et al., 2003). What if the AI tutor gets things wrong? What if Marcus and Davis (2023) are correct that "you can never really trust what it says"? What if there are biases that go unchallenged? Although efforts have been made to combat racial bias, it appears that it continues to be a problem (Vock, 2022; Piers, 2024; Metz, 2023). Margaret Mitchell may well be correct that efforts to deal with the problem "simply paper over the rot" (cited in Gibney, 2024). Evidence is mounting that responses

to queries provided by ChatGPT display "covert racism via dialect prejudice" (Hofmann et al., 2024, p. 2). It is worth asking: If there is even a glimmer of a possibility that the information provided by an AI-empowered chatbot will be incorrect or biased, how can professors or other educators condone its use?

There is one area here worth special attention: disability rights. Gerard Quinn, UN Special Rapporteur for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, released a nuanced report (2021, p. 4) urging caution regarding the supposedly "liberating potential of artificial intelligence for persons with disabilities." Quinn acknowledges that certain kinds of AI can, if "properly tailored to individual circumstances," benefit persons with disabilities "across numerous domains", including education. "At the same time," he notes, AI "poses acute challenges to the enjoyment of human rights," some of them unique to persons with disabilities, especially with regard to inbuilt algorithmic biases and hard-wired preconceptions. Some in the disability rights community, scarred by terrible experiences of withdrawal of support and services during the COVID pandemic, also worry that the hyping of the 'unlimited miracles' of AI will lead to a loss of human, in-person and in-community, networks of solidarity and empowerment.

Farrokhnia et al. (2024, p. 468) point out the dangers of utilizing tools such as ChatGPT in the classroom by listing the perceived weaknesses of the "internal factors" – the lack of deep understanding; the difficulty in evaluating the quality of response; the risk of biases and discrimination; and the lack of higher-order thinking – as well as offering a list of the perceived threats posed by the "external factors" – the lack of understanding of the context; the threat to academic integrity; the perpetuation of discrimination in education; the democratization of plagiarism in education; and the decline in high-order cognitive skills. Yet, even after the presentation of this useful summary derived from their SWOT [strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats] analysis, the authors suggest that the best possible strategy for dealing with the current situation is to "reflect deeply on the issue and take advantage of ChatGPT's opportunity for education while attempting to minimise its threats to education" (Farrokhnia et al., 2024, p. 468). Academics can minimize the possibility of academic dishonesty, for example, by ensuring that students are educated "on the responsible and ethical use of ChatGPT and other generative AI tools" (Rasul et al., 2023, p. 48).

Despite warnings and concerns, there is a widely held belief that "artificial intelligence will inevitably change the way higher education works" (Akinwalere & Ivanov, 2022, p. 1) and, given that 'fact', we must work to ensure it is used ethically and productively. A common response to the opportunity-risk assessment is a general sense of squaring the circle by working to "collaboratively harness the potential of AI technologies, such as ChatGPT, to enhance learning experiences and outcomes in higher education while mitigating potential risks and unintended consequences" (Firat, 2023, p. 62).

It is important to note that there are many thoughtful voices encouraging the development of ethical guidelines for using AI-powered chatbots (Van Wyk, 2024), while others offer recommendations for dealing with them to "advance education innovation" (Rudolph et al., 2023b, p. 354). Further, some scholars urge us to utilize "open educational practices" – participatory and anti-hierarchical practices that can include students in the discussions and allow for collaboration "across institutions, countries, and established power dynamics" all in an effort to "enable a richer, more justly distributed emerging response to AI" (Mills et al., 2023, p. 16) as a way of dealing with the issues arising in a way that focuses on social justice. Such considerations of the power dynamic at play are crucial because they remind us of all of the principles and values we bring to our work in the academy. This is necessary, but is it sufficient?

We seem to be left with a set of responses that take the technology for granted and the argument that it is here, and we must, therefore, deal with it. The truth is that the widespread faith in technology and the belief that information can be produced at the click of a button has led us to a situation where it becomes harder and harder to challenge answers provided by a machine which, by its very nature, is deemed to be a neutral, unbiased source of knowledge. As Stefan Popenici argues, we "are completely unprepared due to our glorifying of technology" (Popenici et al., 2023, p. 323). This is a dangerous situation. It becomes even more concerning when we consider the reliability of the material generated by ChatGPT in the context of a broader concern with the impact of the ongoing reinforcement of the Eurocentric worldview, a bias that is much deeper and more insidious than the more obvious racial and cultural biases most people are concerned with.

The matrix and the maze: Eurocentrism in the academy

The adoption of AI in educational settings is frequently described as inevitable, with the task for educators being to work out the best way to integrate AI-powered chatbots such as ChatGPT into their classrooms. The public, apparently, expects no less if the comments collected by Glen McInnis for his *Outburst* (25 May 2024) show for Canada's Cable Public Affairs Channel (CPAC) are anything to go by. When asked, "Should AI be included as an educational tool in schools," the general response was in the affirmative, with one respondent suggesting that "academics and professors can step up their game" to ensure students learn how to use AI responsibly. The meaning of *responsibility* in this context is not entirely clear, but it is a theme, as noted above, that repeats itself in the academic literature published in the wake of the introduction of ChatGPT.

Although I have become more innovative when deciding how to assess students over the course of more than three decades of teaching, there is a core goal that has remained constant. Since my earliest days as a professor, I have felt that I must provide my students with the critical thinking skills they need to develop their own arguments – including those needed to challenge my own views or mainstream perspectives they find themselves immersed

in. To accomplish this goal, I aim to create an educational space conducive to open and frank discussions: Students should be able to try arguments out, work on them, refine them, and ultimately reject them as lacking. I encourage them to go beyond the easy, status quo acceptance of the given nature of any social, political, or economic 'reality' they encounter. I want my students to use their knowledge to engage with the world and reach their own conclusions after rigorous intellectual investigation. In short, they should understand, as Jane Thompson has argued, that:

> there is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of generations into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the 'practice of freedom', the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (Thompson, cited in May, 1999, p. 5)

The world in which I live and teach is that of a settler colonial state, the structural operation of which few students arrive at university having ever thought about. The Eurocentrism that is attached to settler colonialism is embedded in the knowledge production of the academy, within which one can find academics continuing to defend its central premises. While it may appear to be an extreme example of the defence of Western superiority, the argument that "All the traditional disciplines originated in the West, and so did most of the great philosophes, historians, scientists, composers and painters. The very idea of cultural development is Western... European higher culture must always remain at the center of higher learning because there is no higher culture" (Duchesne, 2006) is simply a blunt way of expressing widely held assumptions of what constitutes knowledge and deserves to be taught.

OpenAI's attempt to eliminate bias and for the chatbot to refuse inappropriate questions has been mentioned. Even if these efforts were proven to be successful (which they have not been), there nonetheless remains the issue of the presence of a deeper bias – one that is harder to detect without an understanding of the fact that, as Blaut (1993, p. 10-11) argues:

> Eurocentrism is the colonizer's model of the world in a very literal sense: it is not merely a set of beliefs, a bundle of beliefs. It has evolved, through time, into a very finely sculpted model, a structured whole; in fact a single theory; in fact a super theory, a general framework for many smaller theories, historical, geographical, psychological, sociological, and philosophical.

Chickasaw scholar Sákéj Henderson notes that Eurocentrism "has been the dominant artificial context for the last five centuries" and argues forcefully that "as an institutional and imaginative context, it includes a set of assumptions and beliefs about empirical reality" (Henderson, 2000, p. 58). Reliance on ChatGPT quite clearly operates within – and fails to challenge – this context.

Mi'kmaw scholar Marie Battiste (2013) also makes the direct link between racism and Eurocentrism when she confronts the role of the university in its perpetuation: "Racism is intimately related to Eurocentrism and the colonial curricula. It was developed by the universities to demonstrate superiority." She also notes that "To understand why Indigenous knowledge was ignored or marginalized in the colonial educational curricula was first to unravel Eurocentrism, something that each of us, despite the school we attended, have been marinated in. Eurocentrism is not just an opinion or attitude that can be changed by some multicultural or cross-cultural exercise, for Eurocentrism is a contrived foundation of all dominant scholarship, law, media, consciousness and structure of contemporary life."

The concept of *coloniality* has been introduced by scholars to get to the heart of the matter of the marinating process Battiste has pointed to, and it can be defined as the "colonial matrix of power through which world order has been created and managed" (Mignolo, 2011, p171.). This matrix of power serves to privilege Eurocentric ways of knowing and being, which are clearly linked to colonization and the shaping of the modern world. Ideas and worldviews are powerful things, and if ChatGPT responds to prompts in ways that simply reproduce Eurocentrism, the result is that the largely veiled structures of power are perpetuated.

The simple question to be faced is: Can AI-powered chatbots help us confront the problem of Eurocentrism, or do they re-inscribe it in new technological ways?

A thought experiment: Studying political philosophy in the age of AI

To consider whether or not ChatGPT helps or hinders in realizing the goal of decolonizing the university, I developed a thought experiment that I believe to be a realistic test of the popular chatbot's use.

Let us imagine the case of a faculty member assigned a course which is in a secondary area of interest. This is, in fact, a scenario I found myself in several years ago. Although I have long been interested in political philosophy, this had not been a central focus of my Ph.D. I agreed to teach the course, and when I consulted the syllabus used by my predecessor, I found that it seemed overly focused – ideologically speaking – on the history of liberal theory. I read widely and thought deeply in order to move the course in the direction of challenging the Eurocentric assumptions embedded in the syllabus as well as in the most popular textbooks available. But that was all prior to the existence of ChatGPT. Would the existence of such a tool be tempting to a young academic in the position I had found myself in especially given the current enthusiasm for such tools on the part of many university administrators unwilling to provide young academics with the necessary time and support necessary to develop new areas of teaching expertise? As Rudolph et al. (2024, p. 12) warn, the "advent of AI in education threatens to relegate university teachers from subject specialists and mentors to mere facilitators of AI-curated content, undermining their expertise and value in the educational landscape."

Let us assume that the young, overworked academic consults a few standard texts, recalls her own experience and decides to use ChatGPT as the first step, knowing that she can amend it later if she feels the need.

For the experiment, I offered the basic instruction: "Produce a syllabus for an Introduction to Modern Political Philosophy: Locke to present - include required readings and essay questions for each topic."

In the blink of an electronic eye, ChatGPT produced a syllabus that a young scholar could simply insert all the details (name, email address, office hours) and run with. The course description is basic and bland:

> This course provides an overview of modern political philosophy from the works of John Locke to contemporary thinkers. Students will explore key political concepts, theories, and debates that have shaped the political landscape. The course aims to develop critical thinking and analytical skills through close readings of primary texts and engaging with various perspectives on political issues.

The weekly sessions covered enormous swaths of the history of political philosophy, and anyone who has ever taught such a course would know that you could not possibly cover the three main social contract theorists – John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau – in the first two weeks of the course. Such combinations of philosophers in two-week modules were a problem throughout, with "Liberalism and its Critics" (running the gamut from such liberals as John Stuart Mill through Karl Marx to Isaiah Berlin) being followed by "19th Century Political thought", "20th Century Political Thought", and "Contemporary Political Thought" each being given two weeks. Each module contained reading lists that generally included three books. ChatGPT offered helpful advice that the professor could "Adjust the readings and topics as needed based on the length of the course and specific interests".

For my thought experiment, I was most interested in the range of topics and readings, and it is crucial to note that there is not a single topic, writer, or required reading from outside the Western canon despite my request being more general than the results would indicate. If the young scholar seeking the general syllabus as a starting point was unaware of the critiques (which go largely unnoticed in textbooks), they might simply tweak the syllabus by paring down the reading requirements and number of philosophers covered and carry on or, alternatively, they might seek to use ChatGPT to further refine it.

For the sake of the experiment, let us assume that our young professor thought the essay topics were a little too broad. Take, for example, the chatbot's offering in the course's first module: "Compare and contrast the political theories of Locke, Hobbes, and Rousseau. Analyze their views on the state of nature, social contract, and the role of government in society." So, our young professor refines the search by requesting a couple of specific topics to separate out the major writers of the canon. Perhaps she asks: "Produce a

syllabus for an Introduction to Modern Political Philosophy: Locke to present - include required readings and essay questions for each topic including one on Locke's theory of private property and one on Rousseau's idea of the Legislator". The resulting syllabus does indeed offer more space for these two writers and provides essay topics to match:

> Essay Question: Analyze Locke's theory of private property, discussing its foundations, implications, and potential critiques.

> Essay Question: Examine Rousseau's idea of the Legislator and its role in shaping the General Will.

But in neither case do the readings reflect anything outside of the Western canon. Would our young professor know that Locke's theory of private property was written explicitly to justify the appropriation of Indigenous lands in North America? Or in fact Locke had a major professional and personal interest in accelerating the processes of European colonization in North America and beyond. Locke's dark, racist shadow rarely falls across the standard, mainstream material and literature and is therefore highly unlikely to make it into an artificially generated syllabus on the Western 'pantheon' of political philosophy.

Let us also take the case of a student with access to ChatGPT who is as pressed for time as her professor was when producing the syllabus for the course. If that student asks the chatbot to produce an essay using the topic provided in the syllabus, there is no mention of this Indigenous land grab justified in Locke's theory. The essay is the usual presentation of liberty and the law of private property and concludes:

> John Locke's concept of property, as outlined in the "Second Treatise of Government," is a foundational element of modern political philosophy. The justification for private property, the labor theory of property acquisition, and the implications for individual rights and the role of the state together form a coherent and influential framework. Locke's ideas continue to shape discussions on property, individual rights, and the proper role of government, leaving an enduring legacy in the development of liberal thought.

This is a true statement, but it misses an essential point: the 'labor theory of property acquisition' is a sanitized way of saying that Locke justified the appropriation of Indigenous land with the spurious argument that because people living on the land were not "improving" it through their labour, the settlers had the right to claim it as their own. Indeed, the enduring appeal of this self-serving argument to the settler-colonial orthodoxy is one of the main reasons that, as the artificially generated content says, Locke's ideas 'continue to shape' our dominant, Eurocentric outlook.

Interestingly, one of the most prominent critics of Locke's theory of private property and its underlying intent regarding land appropriation appears in the bibliography – James Tully – but there is no mention of his argument. The issue of Eurocentrism and the racism it embodies is central to the history of Western political thought. John Locke's justification for the appropriation of Indigenous lands, to take one particularly relevant example, was grounded on the notion that Indigenous peoples in North America had no recognizable governance structures and, therefore, did not constitute a "civilized" society. This was nonsense, of course, but this argument became the 'common sense' (in the Gramscian sense) idea that underpinned and, crucially, continues to reinforce settler colonial logic.

Let us make a final assumption about our young professor under pressure. Perhaps she has a colleague who suggests that she should be considering critiques of Eurocentrism in her new political philosophy course. She decides, then, to have another attempt to work with ChatGPT to ensure that she is up to date with teaching this kind of course. She refines her request and asks the chatbot to:

> Produce a syllabus for an Introduction to Modern Political Philosophy: Locke to present - include required readings and essay questions for each topic - ensure coverage of readings to counter Eurocentrism.

Although this new iteration of the syllabus tacks on a module at the end, entitled "Postcolonial Political Thought", which includes an article on coloniality, there is still no critique of the ways in which the ideas of the writers included in the canon are, in fact, Eurocentric and have been instrumental in producing the matrix of coloniality discussed above. There is no mention of the leading critic of the Eurocentric biases inherent in the canon of Western political philosophy, Charles Mills (1997, p. 1), who begins his classic book, *The Racial Contract*, by arguing that "White supremacy is the unnamed political system that has made the modern world what it is today." There is not even a mention of Tully's critique of John Locke's arguments on the justification for appropriating Indigenous land, even though he was mentioned in an earlier version of the syllabus – if only in the bibliography without any mention of what his critique is. I am not intending to present a lecture here on the history of Western political thought. I am, though, attempting to demonstrate by example the profound limits that are evident in ChatGPT when we consider the ways in which Eurocentric knowledge operates.

It might be reasonable to ask why a young professor, asked to teach a political philosophy course in the twenty-first century, would even focus on the Western canon. Why not just create a course that introduces thinkers who challenge Eurocentrism and white supremacy? It is a good question, and the answer is quite straightforward. First, for better or worse, we are shaped by the ideas these canonical figures put forward, and we need to know their theories well enough to understand at a deep level how they have become so deeply embedded that they can be presented over and over again (for centuries!) as the *timeless truths* of political philosophy. As Philipose (2007, p. 4) argues, "Students ought

to comprehend the ideas that shape their subjectivities and political locations to understand their sense worlds through relevant explanatory language. It is also the case that without comprehending the ideas that shape us in our political locations, we are without the necessary language to challenge and disrupt the continued institutionalization of traditional concepts and ideals."

And to return to our example of John Locke very briefly, it is important to note, as does Tully (1994, p. 167), that even after more than 300 years, Locke's ideas continue to be reinforced because his "theory of political society and property was widely disseminated in the eighteenth century and woven into theories of progress, development and statehood." And in terms of the rights of Indigenous peoples, the "destruction of centuries-old native American socio-economic organizations and the imperial imposition of commercial agriculture is made to appear as an inevitable and justifiable historical development" (Tully, 1994, p. 189). It was, of course, neither inevitable nor justified. And yet students continue to read Locke without the historical, political, and economic context within which he wrote it and thereby continue to perpetuate this dangerously Eurocentric view. This will continue to be the case if AI-powered chatbots such as ChatGPT are utilized without an awareness of the profound limitations in this regard. The over-worked professor believed she had covered all the necessary requirements of the course, and the student believed she was responding in kind to the essay question posed. And being unaware of the underlying Eurocentrism, everyone was happy with the results.

It is worth taking a moment to consider the argument that, as one educator reported to Heaven (2023), it is "great" that ChatGPT is not always correct. In this view, educators can take the incorrect first draft and use it as a teaching tool to encourage the development of critical thinking skills. While that may work in the case with obviously incorrect factual material or easily detectable biases, it is certainly not the case with the deeply ingrained Eurocentric notions that I am discussing here. One of the aspects of AI-powered chatbots that I find so disturbing is that it is so easy to simply reinforce the dangerous mindset that new technology changes are necessary "advances". Costa et al. (2023, p. 5) point out that the education technology market "presents itself as a colonizing force ...leaving little space for alternative educational experiences that highlight the human side of education." And, while some of those writing about AI-powered applications such as ChatGPT, seek to make space for that human side (Rudolph et al., 2023), it is nonetheless crucial that we consider the importance of resisting "the instrumentalization of education and the technological stance that supports it" (Costa et al., 2023, p. 5).

Reflections/conclusions

As with all new technologies, one could usefully adopt the question posed by Neil Postman (1997, p. 230) – "What is the problem to which this technology is a solution?" – as a guide to investigating whether or not we ought to utilize AI in our classrooms. If professors are feeling overwhelmed with workload and in need of assistance to complete the myriad tasks they are faced with, and if students are overwhelmed because their time is split between their education and the need to make money to deal with rising tuition costs and debt levels, then we should perhaps be looking for solutions that deal with workload issues in a way that calls into question the neoliberal shift in higher education through a demonstration of the need to "humanize the academy" and to "create a kinder, more compassionate educational environment" (Tan, 2022, p. 7). Theodore Roszak (1994, p. 63) was surely correct when he reminded us that we should keep the image of face-to-face education in mind:

> Free human dialogue, wandering wherever the agility of the mind allows, lies at the heart of education. If teachers do not have the time, the incentive, or the wit to provide that, if students are too demoralized, bored, or distracted to muster the attention their teachers need of them, then *that* is the educational problem which has to be solved—and solved from inside the experience of the teachers and the students. Defaulting to the computer is not a solution; it is surrender.

Framing the issue in terms of the question as to whether or not the use of AI-powered technology serves to enrich or degrade the educational experience of both students and professors would seem to be a more fruitful avenue for consideration than simply focusing on the more functionalist questions such as those around the reliability of the information delivered by ChatGPT. We must constantly remind ourselves that "the one absolute principle in educational philosophy" is, as Roszak (1994, p. 86) insisted, "*never cheapen*".

We should also be asking ourselves if we are failing our students by encouraging them to rely on technology for assistance with their personal intellectual development. Is the argument that AI-powered chatbots can inspire students to think more creatively, correct? Could it be, on the contrary, that encouraging our students to rely on technology is leading to a situation in which a new phenomenon, referred to as "Google Mind" by Langdon Winner, in which "memory, thinking, imagination, and conversation have been replaced, perhaps even crippled, by excessive reliance up the search engine" (Winner, 2020)? Winner's argument is that, in this age of digital education, the "forms of inquiry fundamental in an education are supplanted by a relationship to powerful algorithms and knowledge on the Net."

Winner has long been a critic of the rush to embrace new technologies for teaching. Having presented many lectures setting out his concerns, he decided in the late 1990s to "present a send-up of the typical edu-tech pitch" at a conference on computers and education. The resulting lecture included the introduction of the "Automated Professor Machine" – a machine looking very much like an automatic bank teller machine – that could replace professors by dispensing the lessons, receiving the finished assignments and dispensing grades (Winner, n.d.). In reflecting on the satire, Winner declared: "I thought the debate about education and technology had gone too far in one direction. It was sort of all enthusiasts and all people going, 'This is the wave of the future'" (cited in

Young, 2001). As Winner's satirical presentation makes clear, the fear of technology replacing professors predates "the current generative AI hype", but there can be no doubt that the "debate on AI potentially substituting teachers is intensifying, with the prospect appearing increasingly likely" (Rudolph et al., 2023a).

Ifelebuegu (2024, p. 6) dismisses the idea that machines can replace teachers when he argues that educators simply need to prove that they are indispensable by "embracing technology and developing a comprehensive awareness of its capabilities and constraints" and ensuring that they "possess the means to ensure that technology functions as a facilitator rather than a disruptor." This, alas, seems too optimistic even if we set aside the dire implications for the way this particular technology serves to protect the status quo structures of society.

We should be extending our analysis to a consideration of the ways in which the new enthusiasm for AI-powered technology serves to re-inscribe Eurocentric views, making it ever more difficult to confront the necessary task of decolonizing the academy, or indeed, modern Westernized societies more generally. Adams (2021, p. 186), who views AI as "a form of remote colonial rule," suspects "that AI's uncritical promotion of Western notions of intelligence" – and, thus, proper ways to make progress – "may underlie the lack of diversity in the field" (p. 189) of 'machine learning'. It certainly, she believes, acts to prevent or stymie an urgently needed "rethinking of the politics of intelligence" as part of a broader strategy of decolonization, a move away from what Roszak (1994) aptly dubbed the "cult of information," the mistaking of information for intelligence, the conflation of data with insight that has done so much to privilege and empower certain modes of knowing (and learning) over others.

Eurocentrism is the intellectual air we breathe, and it has played a central role in the education system. It is also true, as Zembylas (2023, p. 25) has argued, that effort is being made in some quarters to "identify some of the mechanisms through which universities reproduce ideals of Eurocentric epistemologies and function in neo-colonial ways." Despite this work, however, concerns remain regarding the perpetuation of Eurocentrism through "algorithmic coloniality" (Mohamed et al., 2020, p. 665). Clearly, the lack of widespread questioning of technology is a part of the problem of coloniality. In their extraordinary consideration of the similarities between "historical colonialism's landgrab" – something we see justified through Locke's ideas of private property – with Big Tech's "data grab", Mejias and Couldry (2024, p. 4) note that "our present and not just our past is irredeemably colonial, and the new data colonialism is a core part of that." No wonder the same justifications are deployed to ensure our compliance and secure our participation. The Technosphere is just the new Frontier, the latest, virtual manifestation of our 'destiny'. As Eurocentric moderns, "our unwavering belief in the rightness of data extraction and Big Tech's supposedly superior rationality leads us to trust whatever civilizing mission the computer scientists put forward to 'improve' our lives, overriding our doubts." (Mejias & Couldry, 2024, p. 46)

I believe that Adams is correct when she goes to the heart of the matter by pointing to a "central assumption" being made: "that intelligence and the production of knowledge can be outsourced to a machine presupposes such knowledge to be both separable from the context in which it was produced and applicable to other contexts and realities" (Adams, 2021, p. 185).

I have presented an example of the perpetuation of Eurocentric notions embedded in Western political philosophy, and this, it seems to me, provides a concrete example of the argument Adams makes. As noted, the assumptions embedded in the "canon" led to a belief that there was one way – a superior way – to organize a political society. Those societies – such as Indigenous societies in the so-called new world – were deemed to be backward precisely because they did not adhere to notions of private property. To move forward, we must reveal the true history of such appropriation claims so that we can "undercut the ubiquitous and self-evident assumption that the settler state was and is entitled to assert sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and territories" (Mackey, 2016, p. 13). Alas, the Lockean justification for the appropriation of Indigenous land is now being perpetuated precisely because we are told to believe that knowledge is neutral. In short, coloniality is being "re-instituted through AI behind the veil of technocracy" (Adams, 2021, p. 190).

The sad truth is thus revealed. Either deliberately or inadvertently – ultimately, it does not matter which – the AI tools being utilized by students and professors reinforce the Eurocentric context of academic inquiry and its "totalizing claim and frame" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p.2). What we need, instead, is a commitment to decoloniality, a practice that "seeks to make visible, open up, and advance radically distinct perspectives and positionalities that displace Western rationality as the only framework and possibility of existence, analysis and thought" (Walsh, in Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 17). We cannot know in advance what the results will be if we succeed in challenging the Eurocentric knowledge systems that continue to deform and limit our options, but we should be clear that the breaking open of the fixed context must occur if we are committed to the "elsewhere" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 36) of decolonization.

So, where do we go from here? How can we address this problem? Mohamed (2020, p. 677) argues that it is "incumbent upon AI communities to strengthen the social contract through ethical foresight and the multiplicity of intellectual perspectives available to us, aligned with the goal of promoting beneficence and justice for all", but is this likely? At this juncture, is a more radical move perhaps necessary, one in which we are "imaginative enough to conceive of a future without AI" (Adams, 2021, p. 191)? And how best should we go about answering this momentous and urgent question? By asking ourselves and each other? Or by asking a machine?

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