Introduction

"[The Student] should be on the lookout to see if [his or her] teacher is not capable of reaching independent opinions but is in the habit of repeating the opinions of the different schools and the comments which have been made concerning them because the influence of such a teacher is more misleading than it is helpful" (Al-Ghazali 1966).

The quote above by the twelfth-century Muslim philosopher Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali should remind most readers of one of the core criticisms of LLMs as knowledge distributors or with students treating LLMs like trusted information dispensers. Until about thirty years ago, when you wanted to research something, you had to physically go to a library or ask someone you trust to suggest a resource. Even at the library, you might have to recruit a librarian's help to find books or articles. By the late nineties, the Internet had grown significantly.

Since the inception of the Internet, the paradigm of seeking information evolved from trusted teachers, experts, and authority figures to publicly available digital information uploaded by anyone. However, even with the proliferation of the Internet, the user had to do some legwork to find the desired and relevant results. They had to read, comprehend, and analyze whether the information was relevant to their essays. Then, the students had to combine that information coherently by following some structure like the 'five-paragraph essay.'

This was the past that almost all of us remember. The invention of commercially available LLMs as information search tools shifted how we "seek information." More than dispensing information, users can have LLMs write what they desire. Some are worried that LLMs are eroding trust, proliferating misinformation (Zhou et al., 2023), providing false information, and perpetuating stereotypes. John Symons (Symons 2022) says that we risk undermining students' capacity to assess and think critically by circumventing the development of cornerstone skills cultivated through writing. By delegating writing to LLMs, we risk harming the future generations of workers in any industry.

We also risk demeaning the art of writing and fostering an existential crisis for artistic professions. At a recent conference in Graz, Austria, I met a journalist and author from Spain. One of his primary worries was that LLMs output passable writings, poems, and novels, but the text lacks humanness. For instance, the author's emotions, lived experience, and interpretations of that experience are represented in words, which LLM-produced texts lack. So, at worst, some worry we risk eroding the human out of writing. This issue of Teaching Philosophy investigates many timely topics, ranging from questioning the necessity of utilizing writing as an evaluative tool to the pedagogical integration of LLMs in the classroom. It also includes empirical studies, one of which assesses the students' perception of LLMs.

Suppose that by normalizing delegating 'writing' to LLMs, students will deem writing an unnecessary exercise. We can call this the "perceived practical irrelevance."[1] Perceived practical irrelevance is where one might find something or some act, though important otherwise (aesthetically pleasing), unnecessary for practical purposes. With LLMs, writing is an impractical skill irrelevant to future work and a relic of an inefficient past. Smithson and Zweber highlight this point in this issue concerning philosophy papers. They say it is possible that "Some students do not see philosophy papers as valuable at all." However, the mindset is likely applicable to other writing-intensive courses. They suggest that when students no longer find value in some pedagogical exercise, and we couple this with affordable tools like ChatGPT, it is reasonable to infer that many students will utilize LLMs as writing assistants.

Other entries tackle this concern besides Smithson and Zweber, who suggest reviving a version of oral exams but using LLMs for assistance. Ricky Mouser makes a similar suggestion in his contribution. Mouser suggests using ChatGPT as a dialogical partner. Instructors open to implementing LLMs in their courses will find Mouser's "dialogical framework for teaching students to write with LLMs" helpful and easy to implement in their class. The framework has five sections: brainstorming, prompt, critique, reprompt, and hand-polish. Mouser provides a detailed explanation of how to implement this framework in class.

Another contributor, Benjamin Mitchell-Yellin, challenges the idea that LLMs will undermine writing courses and the development of writing skills. As Mitchell-Yellen describes it, one reaction is advocating for strict regulations, investing in AI text detection tools, and creating other approaches in academic settings to catch and discourage students from cheating. Some professors find that it is entirely the student's responsibility to assure the instructor that their paper is not AI-generated. This latter suggestion is untenable and unserious. It makes one wonder about their motivation to teach. Take what Mitchell-Yellin says,

> If your initial reaction to hearing about tools like ChatGPT was to consider ways to catch/penalize/prevent your students from using them to plagiarize, I invite you to think about what this shows about your relationship with your students.

These introspective questions are important for all writing intensive course instructors. It highlights that somewhere in the last few decades, some of us forgot our motivations and the underlying reasons for teaching. Do we teach to have the students write one or two papers for the course, and if the student does well on these, we judge 'mission accomplished'? How much did they learn from the class if our assessment is mainly based on one or two writing assignments?

In addition to the theory, the issue also provides empirical data. Bada Kim, Sarah Robins, and Jihui Huang, assess students' attitudes toward using GPT-3 by asking two questions. 1) what are the students' general attitudes toward LLMs? 2) whether the students thought college assignments should change in light of LLMs. The results are such that both the pessimists and the optimists will find support. Additionally, Markus Bohlmann and Annika Berger tested whether teachers could

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[1] See: (Morito 2018), who also uses this phrase.

differentiate between AI-generated and human-written text. In an insightful turn, the authors claim that the teachers used an "inverted Turing Test and are no longer looking for rationality in machines but for irrationality in humans."

One contributor to this issue takes a slightly different approach. Lilian Abadal offers a way for instructors to keep the essays as assessment methods. Abadal proposes using a scaffolded approach instead of simply asking students to write an essay on some topic (provided or self-chosen). The essay is written chiefly in-class over several weeks, transforming a passive learning assessment into an active learning exercise. Abadal provides a detailed framework for using essays and utilizing LLMs simultaneously.

LLMs are a new way to obtain and dispense information. In this special issue, most entries provide ample resources and pedagogical strategies for teachers to implement LLMs in their classrooms. The overall attitude is optimistic and how to make the best of LLMs, a technology that is here to stay in some modality. Perhaps, as an educator, you hope that eventually you will have a robust and resilient AI to catch cheaters, or you might decide to be stricter by assigning more in-class handwritten essays. Alternatively, you might adopt other strategies driven by fear and worry. You are likely in for a long and exhausting future ahead. We might soon have highly accurate generative AI detectors. However, that detector will become obsolete as technology progresses, and the cycle will continue.

Perhaps we can help our students become ethical users of LLMs and effectively teach them the material. LLMs have many ethical issues, and we should continue challenging the developers to address these concerns. However, the positive and critical approaches are not mutually exclusive. We can do both and stay true to our motivations and reasons for becoming educators – to grow and cultivate the intellectual growth of our students and future society.

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