



## Conference: The Guardian Live 23 May 2023

On Tuesday 23rd May, Marshall Leaver (SCA NSW Committee Member) attended an online conference by the *Guardian* discussing the implications for Artificial Intelligence across numerous areas of society. The notes below were taken by Marshall and are not a verbatim record, but do attempt to capture core messages from each participant.

### PANEL

**Kriti Sharna** (KS): Legal expert, Founder of *AI for Good* See <https://ai4good.org/>

**Stuart Russell** (SR): Professor of Computer Science, UCLA, co-author of text *AI – A Modern Approach*

**Carl Frey** (CF): Assoc Professor of AI and Work, Oxford University

**Convenor: Alex Hern**, Technology Editor, The Guardian

### INTRODUCTION

#### Recent developments:

- ChatGPT launched in October 2022 and by February 2023 had 100 million users.
- Open Letter from leading tech experts called for a pause in development of super powerful AI
- Geoffrey Hinton, considered a grandfather of AI, recently resigned from Google and expressed concern that this technology could be a real risk to humans.
- Emerging fear of apocalyptic potential of impact of AI.

#### Q: Please share your thoughts on AI now compared to this time last year

**KS:** There seems a balance of chills and thrills with this new level of experience with AI. With questions of the safety of using AI there are options for improved access to justice and health care where access to AI can promote the social good, but also a huge concern with increase in possibility for misinformation.

**SR:** LLM (Large Language Model) largely unknown a year ago but were used for smoothing out problems with dictation to text. Since the 'open letter' the focus has changed with need to bring humanity back into the office after ignoring significant AI issues. Governments are now trying to catch up but this is also a challenge.

**CF:** Big tech was in charge a year ago, they had resources and the computing power but this is now not so clear now with so many start-up groups and with events like Facebook's LLM being leaked and this technology was actually subsequently improved by other users. Will this democratise access to AI? CF not so confident of that.

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: SHOULD WE BE WORRIED OR EXCITED?

### Q: What is AI?

**KS:** AI makes machines intelligent. “I’ve been talking to an AI” statements reveal the personifying of the process and asks the question: do users know if they are interacting with AI or not? This is now a task to challenge users – experiencing Avatars in a new way.

**SR:** LLM has been conflated as AI just as ChatGPT is just one example of AI in operation. However, LLM ignores much of what has been assumed as AI for decades as they don’t have reasoning or planning algorithms, decision making or consistency across a world model. We don’t know if they hold any kind of representation of the world at all. Self-driving cars don’t use LLM even though they do learn to read signs and notice pedestrians in a similar way to how a chess program works in choosing safety and best route to destination. It is LLM that has generated so much attention in recent times.

**KS:** Yes people are now identifying and holding expectations they are conversing with AI, for example to find them an apartment but we are in a place where there is a lack of clarity for users about who or what they are interacting with.

**CF:** It’s now a decade on from when CF predicted 47% of American jobs are at risk from automation. How does it stand up? Truck drivers and cashiers could soon be replaced by AI. Many jobs will not be fully automated but there will be a likely reduction in human input and also support human input. A relevant example is the rise of Uber was facilitated by tech to complete the detailed taxi driver knowledge of the cities where they worked. Anyone can get behind the wheel with the Uber tech program as all that is required is a driver’s license. This meant more people working in this area but for lower wages. So it’s relevant to ask: How exposed is your job to ChatGPT? You may not immediately lose your job but some of the skills required could move to AI.



Unsplash image by Google Deepmind

### Q: Is enhancement with AI a risk or a benefit?

**KS:** New developments are not just doing work like AI driving a car but doing knowledge work, such as lawyer and tax accountant where cognitive work is required. An example is for a lawyer the billable hours are costly – this could be reduced by allowing for improved productivity with AI generating first draft of brief and client only paying for closer to final draft of the legal brief. This may allow for greater access for more people to a legal service, but may also impact the work load and opportunities for junior associates in a legal firm. The future in health care where there are real and predicted significant shortages of trained medical experts may also be shaped by such a process. How will current curiosity of AI actually change how people work or are trained at law and medical school? How can AI be guided to use only credible sources of knowledge?

**SR:** Will it alter education and work? Currently strike at moment with Hollywood/ Netflix script writers to aim to stop AI taking their work writing and post-editing scripts. The seeming boom in content already available through screening services may feed into this conflict.

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: SHOULD WE BE WORRIED OR EXCITED?

### Q: How will AI progress over the next year or two?

**SR:** Despite pressure from CEOs wanting to reduce staff and costs the reality is that AI currently cannot replace human function and decision making. It is important to realise that with ChatGPT even the creators don't know how it works – it is not intelligent – it has to be trained by its developers to not make mistakes like racist remarks or behave in an antisocial way. You can convince it that 1 plus 1 is 3 and letting it loose might see it doing something illogical like trying to sell insurance on Pluto. The advice from GPT is to not use the program in 'high stakes' applications. Best solution may be that it must refer to trusted databases that are authoritative if not it can draw from any random or poor quality source. If it does not know the answer it will make it up.

There is currently £10 billion per month of investment into start-ups aiming to create AI that will surpass human ability in every dimension. The belief is that technology will get us there and that LLM is just a piece in that ongoing model. There is the belief that is driving investment.

### Q: What is the hope for AI?

**KS:** Big issue is how to solve the trust problem. How to avoid AI making stuff up – if we can't then it will not be widely used in real world scenarios other than for 'fun' and entertainment purposes. We need AI using more grounded and trusted sources of data. For example with law only using information from precedent cases, law texts, statutes and actual laws so that real world problems can be solved.



*Unsplash image by Andy Kelly*

### Q: Is there a future proof job?

**CF:** Will AI affect the current jobs and work market or will it be used to invent new industries and work. It needs to be the latter if we are to grow and develop the economy. It's hard to imagine what will be included in this job creation – so many new roles have been invented in the past that people never could have predicted.

**SR:** There will be a strong demand for robotics very soon. Robotics is a dam going to break particularly as the software is developed as we already have the hardware – the mechanical means. This might mean robots taking over: stocking supermarket shelves, mowing lawns and call centres. The warehouse giant Amazon can replace 1 million 'object pickers' to get stuff off the shelf and into dispatch.

Where is the comparative advantage? Jobs where a human is preferred and not to be done by a robot. That is where there are interpersonal roles, that is careers where you are genuinely interacting on a one to one basis to make life better. For example Executive Coaches, or new roles such as life architect, professional 'launcher' (someone who is charming and brilliant at interacting and will make your lunch a fun occasion). However, many current interpersonal jobs are low status jobs like child care and aged care. The future could require these roles to have higher function with the human and scientific understanding and skill training that many are currently lacking.



## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: SHOULD WE BE WORRIED OR EXCITED?



*Unsplash image by Boba Javanovic*

### Q: How to manage and regulate AI nationally, across international borders and across jurisdictions?

**KS:** The need for clarity and legal status on what machines can and cannot do is urgently required. We need to build trust and certainty but there is concern that the UK is lagging, whilst China, EU and USA are stepping up. Who owns the sources that AI accesses? Creators need guide rails as we now have organisations generating their own principles. Governments must make a start soon or the power will shift to those who control this technology.

**CF:** Important that companies are accountable and that they report on what they are undertaking. But issues remain: do we want AI in the hands of just a few corporations so it is easier to control or to have access more 'democratised'?

**SR:** The EU AI Act is to be out later in 2023. General push by tech companies is that 'general purpose AI' not be regulated. However, humans have a right to know if they are interacting with a human or a machine. That needs to be right. This question is crucial when examining the apparent business model of the Metaverse to build a strong connection with a 'fake' friend (avatar) who six weeks into that interaction sees that friend selling/ suggesting products to consider and purchase. So this business model would be eliminated if the AI presence had to be declared and that the AI is in the pay of a particular vendor.

Legislation needs to be international, not just national and be enforced globally. Each nation needs a regulatory agency but those agencies would have a coordinating body on a global scale similar to the International Atomic Energy Agency to promote best practice and help on how to write legislation. Current UK approach is to let existing organisations manage AI in their own jurisdiction as it affects them and there is no centralised policy or control. This may not work.

### POSTSCRIPT

The discussion in this conference was focussed on social, employment and economic implications of AI. Existential issues such as the potential impact of AI for military use was not overtly addressed but may need to be a significant consideration for the near future. However, the insights are certainly relevant to these section of HSC Core in Society and Culture syllabus:

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: SHOULD WE BE WORRIED OR EXCITED?

### CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

**The following points are to be integrated across the study of *Social and Cultural Continuity and Change*:**

- use examples drawn from contemporary society
- examine the impact of technologies, including communication technologies, on continuity and change

And

#### ***The nature of social and cultural continuity and change***

- the nature of continuity and change:
  - change is a complex process
  - ‘evolutionary’ change
  - ‘transformative’ change
  - resistance to change

And potentially applicable to any country study for:

#### ***The near future (5 to 10 years)***

Students are to:

- determine current trends and suggest probable future directions for the aspect of the country studied in the focus study
- evaluate the impact and implications for the aspect of the country studied of:
  - likely changes
  - probable continuities
- predict the importance of technologies to the country studied.



### ADDITIONAL READING

*AI poses ‘risk of extinction’ on par with nukes, tech leaders say* SMH May 31, 2023 by Aaron Gregg, Cristiano Lima and Gerrit De Vynck  
[https://www.smh.com.au/technology/ai-poses-risk-of-extinction-on-par-with-nukes-tech-leaders-say-20230531-p5dct6.html?utm\\_content=in\\_other\\_news&list\\_name=E2446F7A-1897-44FC-8EB8-B365900170E3&promote\\_channel=edmail&utm\\_campaign=am-smh&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_term=2023-06-01&mbnr=MTM1MDkzMTg&instance=2023-06-01-06-45-AEST&jobid=29672814](https://www.smh.com.au/technology/ai-poses-risk-of-extinction-on-par-with-nukes-tech-leaders-say-20230531-p5dct6.html?utm_content=in_other_news&list_name=E2446F7A-1897-44FC-8EB8-B365900170E3&promote_channel=edmail&utm_campaign=am-smh&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_term=2023-06-01&mbnr=MTM1MDkzMTg&instance=2023-06-01-06-45-AEST&jobid=29672814)

*Unsplash image by Ameer Basheer*