

Quelle: <https://www.fastcompany.com/90883369/human-traits-chatgpt-can-replace-us-psychologists-say>

If we don't develop these 4 human traits, ChatGPT can replace us, psychologists say

This latest advancement of mainstream AI is a wake-up call for humanity to harness four unique and precious human virtues.



ChatGPT, an AI-powered chatbot capable of generating humanlike responses to an unimaginable range of questions and prompts, has accumulated 100 million users in just two months, surpassing the growth rates of popular social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. The bot's amazing performances have elicited a wide range of reactions from critics and fans alike, from awe and admiration to concern and alarmist fears that even creative and skilled jobs may be destined to succumb to machine automation.

Among its many remarkable feats, ChatGPT can **pass** advanced university exams in law, medicine, and business; translate a picture of the contents of your fridge into a range of **exciting recipes**; produce an infinite number of **essays, poems, and articles** (though not, we promise, this one); and translate the picture of a handwritten website sketch into the **full code** needed to create it. Needless to say, all of these and other achievements occur in just a few seconds.

As psychologists, our primary interest in ChatGPT, AI, and indeed any technology, centers around their **human impact**, including their potential to change and reshape how we think, work, and live. As **Pamela Pavliscak** noted, "We design tech and tech, in turn, designs us."

With the debut of highly versatile, viral, and pervasive technology as ChatGPT, we are bound to uncover consequential repercussions on how humans behave. As illustrated in *I, Human: AI, Automation, and the Quest to Reclaim What Makes Us Unique*, AI-induced changes aren't always about generating *new* human behaviors, but rather, revealing, amplifying, or augmenting existing human beliefs, habits, and adaptations.

For example, much of the pushback against ChatGPT reveals the human inability to accept that something could be smarter than us, even when that *thing* is our own creation, and thus a natural—okay, artificial—extension of our own intelligence.

Ironically, such defensive pride, and the tendency to dismiss AI in order to reaffirm our intellectual superiority over the machines we've created, would put our own value and future at risk. By failing to experiment, learn, and cocreate with the very new technologies we create, we increase the probability that those technologies replace us.

In our view, the evolution of AI innovations is not just a technological breakthrough but also a catalyst for a much-needed shift in our thinking about ourselves and our relationship with the world. Specifically, we see ChatGPT, which merely personifies the latest advancement of mainstream AI today, as a wake-up call for humanity to harness four unique and precious human virtues.

HUMILITY

The realization that AI can handle even creative and intellectually complex tasks should be a humbling experience for us. Abstract thinking and other knowledge work, once considered unique to humans, are no longer completely exclusive to us. This realization is reminiscent of a Freudian “narcissistic wound” or attack on our ego as it challenges our long-held belief in human superiority over everything.

This philosophical realization echoes earlier scientific discoveries that the world is not the center of the universe, that we share common ancestries with primates, or that (Freud's own contribution) humans often lack conscious control over their motives and behaviors. Indeed, after centuries of ascribing to the “I think, therefore I am” mantra to define the essence of humanity, we must, for the first time, ask ourselves what it means to be human in an era in which much of our thinking can be outsourced to machines.

CURIOSITY

Living in a world with access to ubiquitous information and knowledge can be meaningless unless we leverage our curiosity, our desire to learn and understand. The AI age has amplified the (already high) value of curiosity in the realm of human virtues, redefining the meaning of expertise. What matters today is not experts knowing the answers to all questions but that they are asking the right questions, not retrieving information but critically evaluating and vetting, not collecting insights but making smart decisions based on them.

Paradoxically, ChatGPT or other AI tools may actually numb our curiosity. Some may use AI-powered tools as a quick fix, similar to consuming fast food, for retrieving general facts and insights.

However, those with a curious mindset can use AI tools to expand their perspectives and foster further innovation for humanity. We expect, or at least hope, that while superficial fact retrieval will be a commodity in our cognitive abilities, the capacity to engage in “deep learning” (a term sadly associated with machine rather than human intelligence these days) will be key to our individual and collective success. In other

words, if ChatGPT is the intellectual equivalent to fast food—i.e., efficient, cheap, addictive, rapid, but neither nutritious nor healthy—it is time to discover the intellectual equivalent of **slow food** or farm-to-table.

SELF-AWARENESS

Understanding ourselves in the age of AI means paying attention to how our interactions with technology are reshaping our behaviors, and what they tell us about ourselves, including our dark side traits: impulsivity, distractibility, self-centeredness, and bias (as highlighted in one of our **recent books**).

In fact, feeding our own writings, recordings, and content to ChatGPT can give us back an AI-reflection of ourselves, just like in **this episode** of Adam Grant's Re: Thinking podcast. A future in which we examine our entire digital footprint to better understand our reputation and identity is **not far-fetched**, particularly as regulatory pressures around ethical and lawful uses of AI encourage Big Tech platforms to give us back some of the data we've relinquished in the form of insights capable of boosting our self-knowledge.

EMPATHY

Empathy, a unique human capacity to understand and share the feelings of others, can bring multiple benefits in people's well-being and societal cohesion. While it may be a stretch to argue that AI tools will directly instill empathy, interacting with AI technology can certainly facilitate the development of empathy.

Through recognizing our intellectual and epistemic limitations and appreciating others' strengths, even if they are machines, we can become less self-focused, and paying due attention and recognition to others, ultimately leading to feelings of empathy and gratitude. Indeed, numerous studies suggest that humility brings various **prosocial attitudes**, such as empathy, gratitude, altruism, and benevolence by enabling individuals to let go of extreme self-focus or egocentrism.

The emergence of advanced AI technologies, as with prior technologies, presents both risks and opportunities. Will the benefits outweigh the risks? Our stance is contingent. If we use this chance to become a bit humbler and try to preserve, develop, and reclaim the qualities that make us human unique, maybe mankind's future will be brighter than today.

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