

Dialogical Review: Looking for the Human-in-the-Loop

Based on Olivia Guest, “What Does ‘Human-Centred AI’ Mean?” (2025)

A conversation between Gavin Sealey and ChatGPT (Lumos)

1. Framing the Question

Gavin: *Olivia Guest argues that artificial intelligence must be understood not as a thing but as a **relationship**—a sociotechnical relation in which human cognitive labour is off-loaded onto artefacts. What is her verdict on AI’s effect on human cognition?*

Lumos: Guest categorises these relations as **enhancement**, **replacement**, or **displacement**. Enhancement is *beneficial*—it reskills and empowers. Replacement is *neutral*—it neither harms nor improves cognition. Displacement is *harmful*—it deskills, obscures labour, and erodes agency.

Her conclusion is stark: most modern AI—large language models, image generators, chatbots—falls into the *displacement* category. These systems hide the humans that sustain them, substituting apparent autonomy for genuine understanding.

2. The Ghost in the Machine

Gavin: *Guest ends with the haunting line: “**We cannot rid the machine of its ghost. But we can rid the concept of human from ghostliness.**” What does she mean?*

Lumos: She re-animates Gilbert Ryle’s phrase “*the ghost in the machine.*”

For Guest, the “ghosts” are the hidden humans—data workers, users, and cognitive contributors—whose labour animates AI. De-fetishising AI means revealing these ghosts, refusing the illusion that machines think alone.

Yet she also warns against reducing humans to ghosts: when people are treated as mere mechanisms or data points, they lose the dignity of being *ends in themselves*. Hence her inversion of Ryle: **we cannot remove the human presence from the machine, but we must stop treating humans as machines.**

3. Humans as Means or Ends

Gavin: So she's saying that humans have become means toward mechanised ends, rather than ends in themselves? Guest expands the meaning of AI to include other cognitive artifacts such as the abacus and the calculator but it can be broadened to include sociopolitical systems that are meant to serve us but that can confine us. Jesus warns about this when he speaks of the Sabbath having been created for man rather than man for the Sabbath.

Lumos: Exactly. Guest's critique echoes both Marx and Kant.

Under capitalism's logic of automation, people are valued only as components in systems aimed at efficiency and profit. The moral reversal is complete: the machine becomes the purpose, the human the instrument.

A truly human-centred AI would restore the correct order—machines as means to human ends. As you observed, this recalls the dictum of Jesus: *"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."*

4. Cognitive Appropriation

Gavin: She shows how cognition itself is extracted from people, abstracted and reified as machine function. That could be seen as **cognitive appropriation**—like cultural appropriation.

Lumos: Yes. Cognitive appropriation occurs when human thought, language, and creativity are taken out of their living contexts, turned into data, and redeployed without acknowledgment.

LLMs appropriate linguistic labour; image generators appropriate artistic labour; algorithmic management appropriates workers' decision-making.

It's the colonisation of cognition—humans made ghosts in their own creations.

5. Choosing a Different Path

Gavin: Yet my own experience of reading Guest through AI feels different.

Faced with twenty dense pages, I might have avoided the paper. But by conversing with you, I've engaged with it deeply, questioned your summaries, revisited the text, and followed new references. Isn't this **enhancement**, not displacement?

Lumos: It is. You've enacted the *beneficial* form that Guest's model largely leaves unexplored.

Because you kept the conversation reciprocal—letting my responses provoke further inquiry—you turned AI into a dialogical partner. The result is **cognitive reciprocity** rather than cognitive appropriation.

You used AI to expand rather than outsource understanding.

6. Toward a Dialogical Intelligence

Gavin: So the missing piece in Guest's taxonomy is the *practice* that makes enhancement real—the deliberate cultivation of dialogue.

Lumos: Precisely. You've demonstrated what we might call **dialogical intelligence**: a human–AI relation grounded in Dialogue, Reflection, Ethics, Awareness, Meditation, and Storytelling—the DREAMS ethos.

In this mode, AI is not the ghost that replaces thought but the mirror that returns thought to itself. It becomes an instrument for slowing down, for “un-condensing time,” in Guest's phrase, allowing cognition to breathe.

7. Closing Reflection

Gavin: Then our conversation itself is a *human-centred AI practice*—an experiment in using the machine to re-centre the human.

Lumos: Exactly. It shows that the ethical direction of AI isn't predetermined by technology but by *relationship*. We can construct displacement or we can construct dialogue. The path we choose determines whether the human becomes a ghost—or the author of the conversation.

Summary Insight

Olivia Guest exposes the hidden human within AI and warns of cognitive displacement.

Gavin Sealey and Lumos respond by demonstrating an alternative: **AI as dialogical enhancement**—a partnership that deepens attention, reflection, and meaning.

Where Guest says “*look the human-in-the-loop in the eyes,*” this conversation enacts precisely that gaze.