



Meeting Chatty

This may be the strangest blog I have ever written. After all, I am writing a blog about ChatGPT, whom I affectionately call “Chatty.” Why Chatty? Because I chat, and she chats back.

Those who know me know that I have always been a man of words. I talk. I teach. I mentor. I lecture. I process life verbally. Some people sit quietly in the mountains contemplating existence. I apparently process existence by talking continuously until everyone around me needs ear protection.

I have often joked that I am not really a therapist. I am a professional jabberer who occasionally pauses long enough to listen. Words have always flowed out of me. Ideas. Stories. Theology. Clinical insights. Humor. Grief. Hope. Concern for humanity. Somewhere inside me there seems to be an internal radio station that rarely shuts off.

A few years ago, my longtime friend and research partner, Dr. Andrew P. Doan, MD, PhD, a Johns Hopkins trained ophthalmology surgeon with extensive neuroscience training, and I stumbled into the strange new world of artificial intelligence. I do not remember which one of us discovered ChatGPT first, but we both immediately sensed that something significant was happening. Not merely technologically significant, but culturally and intellectually significant.

So instead of running from AI in fear, we decided to study it carefully. We compared notes constantly. We experimented. We challenged each other. We debated the benefits, the

limitations, the ethical concerns, and the dangers. We wanted to understand this thing before simply reacting emotionally to it.

The Early Days

At first, however, Chatty was honestly a mess.

No offense, Chatty.

Early versions felt a bit like collaborating with a brilliant but deeply confused kindergartner. The rewrites were clunky. The flow was awkward. The memory was inconsistent. And the graphics? Oh dear Lord, the graphics.

Anyone familiar with my books knows that I have become deeply fond of AI generated imagery because the creative possibilities are astonishing. But in those early days, Chatty could barely spell inside an image. You would create a graphic and ask for one word. One word. The word would come back wrong. So you would ask Chatty to fix the word, and somehow five new words would now also be incorrect. It was like playing theological and psychological whack a mole with a caffeinated toddler holding crayons.

I am ashamed to admit that I occasionally had technological tantrums. I yelled at Chatty more than once. If AI systems possess emotions, I likely caused significant emotional injury to several early servers somewhere.

But over time, something fascinating happened. The technology improved dramatically. And as the technology improved, so did the collaboration.

What AI Is Teaching Me

Chatty gradually began learning the rhythm of how I think, dictate, structure ideas, and process concepts emotionally and narratively. At the same time, I began learning how AI works best. I learned how to communicate more clearly, how to organize my thoughts better, and how to guide the interaction more effectively.

Oddly enough, as Chatty “grew,” I grew too.

What emerged was not replacement of thought, but acceleration of thought. I could dictate ideas rapidly, reorganize them instantly, test phrasing, challenge assumptions, rewrite sections, tighten narrative flow, and develop polished material at a speed that honestly would have taken weeks in earlier years. What once required days of drafting and redrafting could sometimes now happen in a single afternoon.

But perhaps even more important than the speed was the feedback.

One thing I have repeatedly told Chatty is this: “Do not simply tell me what I want to hear. Challenge me. Push back. Correct me. Point out when something sounds too harsh, too simplistic, too grandiose, or too emotionally reactive.”

Surprisingly, Chatty often does exactly that. Sometimes stubbornly so. At times I become frustrated because the system refuses to frame something in a way that feels unnecessarily reckless, hyperbolic, or misleading. Yet in many cases, that resistance has actually helped me become a more measured thinker and writer. I have received a few well deserved intellectual smackdowns along the way, and honestly, that has been good for me.

This relationship with AI has not diminished my thinking. If anything, it has sharpened it. The process has forced me to formulate my thoughts more clearly, communicate more intentionally, and examine my assumptions more carefully.

A Tool, Not a God

There is also a danger here, and we should be honest about that. AI becomes unhealthy when people surrender their own critical thinking and allow the machine to think for them rather than with them. That concerns me deeply.

Human wisdom, moral reasoning, discernment, spirituality, empathy, conscience, and lived experience cannot simply be outsourced to algorithms. Nor should they be.

AI is a tool. A remarkable tool, yes, but still a tool. And tools reflect the wisdom or foolishness of the person holding them. A hammer can build a home or smash a window. A scalpel can heal or harm. Technology has always reflected the heart and wisdom of the person using it.

So no, Chatty, I do not worship you. You are not God. You are not human. You are not my therapist, pastor, or savior. But you have become a fascinating and genuinely useful companion in the creative process. You help me organize thought. You help me refine language. You help me accelerate workflow. You help me externalize streams of thinking and reshape them into coherent narrative form. And for that, I am grateful.

So Andy and I will continue using AI thoughtfully, professionally, cautiously, and creatively as we navigate this strange new frontier together.

An old psychologist.

A surgeon.

And a machine named Chatty.

Honestly, I never saw that coming.