



So, long story short, I was invited to India.

I ended up lecturing about AI's impact on the Humanities at 11 universities in four states and 6 cities over 17 days. In addition to this, I designed and taught a week-long transformative research writing workshop for PhD students.

I lectured to over 1,000 people in person and another 1,000 online, met dozens of faculty and graduate scholars from all over the country, received national media coverage, gained 5 kilos, and learned a wonderful saying that proved to be true every day, "we call India the land of Gods because you will pray to them every day for survival."

From murder hornets to taking my life into my own hands every time I crossed a street, I now know what this means.

# 25 MINUTES OF....

## TOPICS AND HIGHLIGHTS

- India Pictures and Anecdotes
- Global Concerns about AI
- Personal Reflections of How I Use AI
- Four Aspects of Openness
- A Call to Action (Of Course!)

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By the way, this is me at University of Allahabad in a windowless 19th century lecture hall. It is 92 degrees and 100% humidity.

So, this talk is 1/2 travelogue and 1/2 a gentle introduction to considering the human-side of AI because right now in my mind the two are inextricably linked due to so many perspectives on AI I have absorbed are not American.

Concerns:

Concerns of the global south, which we should consider. Labor and the displacement of their global service workforce.

Concerns about how it affects who we are, our agency within our lives and cultures, and many, many questions about it calling into question the essential nature of the soul.

To that, we can add our educational concerns -- including openness, privacy, intellectual property, and fairness.

The concerns, to be honest, are, well, concerning and numerous.

But I'm here to talk about how I have used AI with an ethic towards openness, practical aspects of openness to which we can devote our focus and attention.





OPENNESS: THE KEY TO A TRAVELER'S HEART

**I'm in love with cities I've never been to and people I've never met.**

JOHN GREEN

After visiting India, and this was my second time there, a third shorter trip is being planned for October, openness and love are inseparable in my mind. In the Western academy, we tend to look askew of conversations that focus on emotion, let alone love, but love is a ubiquitous concept in India, including in higher education. It is discussed frequently, often openly, and seen as a tremendous virtue when appropriately expressed.

But this is not a love of sexual desire, but of openness. Of giving and receiving our best selves. The very nature of the Indian greeting, Namaste, is rooted in this love and it is a very real thing. But I can't just tell you that all we need is love because I am not Paul McCartney.

# THE MAIN IDEA

## A PHILOSOPHY OF SORTS

### AI's Version

" While we accept the role of automation and AI in our lives, it is essential to prioritize open and reflective interactions with other individuals. Our collective strength lies in our ability to shape the Humanities and humanism as sources of vibrancy and meaning. As we navigate the impact of AI, let us approach it with curiosity and caution, centering the individual in our work and ensuring a future that is both caring and promising."

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So, I will let AI expand on that idea. Of course, all that happened is I used an app called Gamma to ingest pieces of my talk, and it paraphrased it. Here is what Gamma provided as a summation of my own writing.

# THE MAIN IDEA

## A PHILOSOPHY OF SORTS

### My Version

"Let us stand together. Let's use our best tools with our eyes open. Let us be interested in AI, and develop a conceptual wholeness to our understanding of its impact, but keep the person and the individual, you and I, at the center of this work. In doing so, we may meet our new destiny with care and promise."

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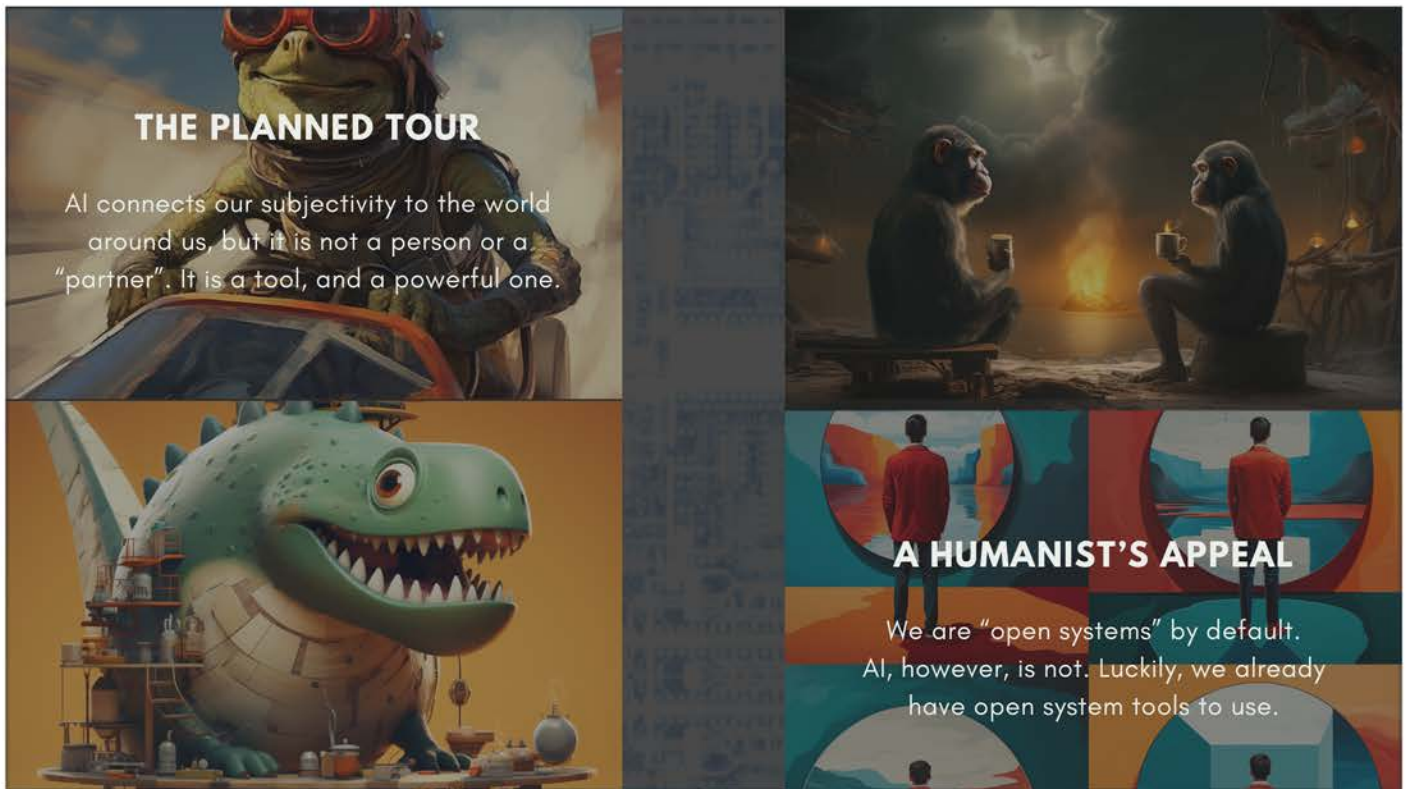
And here is the (edited down for space) version that I wrote.

# BILL AND TED'S VERSION



EXCELLENT TO EACH OTHER

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The misanthropomorphization of AI is ubiquitous and it is unhelpful. AI doesn't "do" most of the things that are ascribed to it. It doesn't "find" a new molecule related to gene therapy. People, experts in fact, use AI tools to do this work. AI provides a powerful set of affordances to experts and non-experts alike, but it is still a closed system of symbol arrangement. Even emergent AI forms depend on discrete inputs to train them according to specific sets of rules. They are not intelligent or alive, unless we are considering life at the level of the slime mold, which is fascinating, but not the same subjectivity as a human.

We can, though, use AI tools more or less openly. And if we value openness in our work, this requires us to consider and practice qualities, values, and techniques that are open.

I have chosen four to share with you today because I believe they are fundamental and important to integrate into our work and lives at multiple valences, not just in the classroom.





# CREATIVITY

## Act Expansively

We often think of creativity as individual inspiration, what we might call "Small C." However, it goes beyond that. "Big C" creativity involves transforming a symbolic domain and taking it in new directions.

## Embrace "the Other"

By embracing the pursuit of both in our work, we can cultivate innovation and resist rigid frameworks of thinking.

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Openness calls upon us to make the unobvious choice because true creativity requires the ability to consider openly and expansively about the range of possibilities before we make an empirical and experimental choice and experience the consequences.

My research writing seminar at IIIT-Una in Himachel Pradesh was a seminar on injecting creativity into research. And here's why. Indian PhD scholars are wicked smart. I mean, they have voluminous knowledge of their topics. They have great ideas that have synthesized from that knowledge. But they don't know how to break out of their very narrowly constructed lane. And they don't know how to let their purer interests guide their thinking or their projects. This kind of openness requires creativity. It's a dualistic relationship.



The road to this image was a long, strange, and wonderful one that bridged dinosaurs pretending to be babies, a Rube Goldberg mechanism, 8-bit animation style, and dozens of "failures".

# PLAY

## Get Weird

Play is a powerful tool for learning and exploration. Play allows us to approach culture and social formations with fresh perspectives, breaking free from predetermined rules and expectations.

## Seek Failure

Through play, we can uncover new interpretations and challenge existing ideological formations. This does not happen if we only use methods we are comfortable with. We must push into failure towards unfamiliar horizons.

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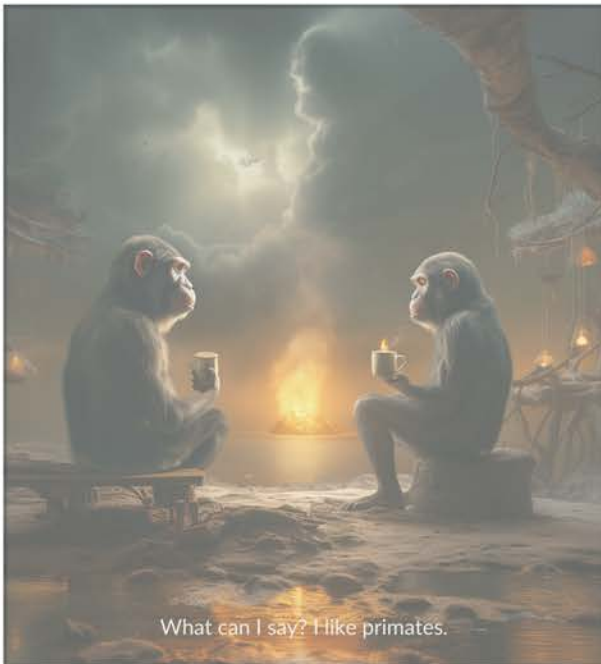
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Openness means giving up an aspect of control and embracing uncertainty.

My entire set of talks in India were designed through me experimenting with AI tools. While I had been making use of automation tools for years, learning how to use AI tools to design talks worth delivering at international conferences and invited lectures required a lot of risk. The path forward, as it is in learning new domains, is paved with continuous, but mostly productive, failure.

In fact, playing and failing led to the generation of the project, how it was delivered, how it expanded to the point that my team had to turn down more than two dozen invitations (I call that failing upward), and how I am making use of the experience today.



# STORYTELLING

## Tell Human Stories

Storytelling is an essential human tool for making sense of the world. It helps us organize information into knowledge frameworks and understand the consequences of our actions.

## Listen to Others

By embracing narrative, we can generate meaning and explore complex concepts within and beyond traditional linear structures. Storytelling will remain one of our most crucial cultural tools in the age of AI.

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The telling of stories is one of our oldest and most powerful cultural tools.

It is what I am doing here now. I'm telling you a classic story of growth in the face of overwhelming change.

I'm just using new tools and workflows to communicate this.

While AI can tell stories, they are not necessarily human stories. They don't come from a place of growth, of conviction, of experience. Part of my India talk was about why human stories matter and that one of the real risks we face from AI is the reliance on it to construct our stories.

The act of constructing a story, and listening to another's story, really matters to many cognitive, emotional, and cultural aspects of our lives, but just as importantly, it connects us to others and opens our minds to other possibilities.

I learned from so many people just by listening to their perspectives, even when I disagreed with them. Even when they did not change my mind.



# PLURALISM

## Embrace Uncertainty

There are multiple valid ways of knowing or perceiving the truth. No single method or discipline can capture the entirety of a phenomenon. As we learn, we evolve.

## Be Supple

Remaining open to new perspectives and ideas fosters growth and prevents ideological rigidity. In a world of constant change, pluralism is crucial for maintaining adaptability and generating vibrant truths.

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This really hit home for me at a faculty affairs conference at Yale last spring. I am not a faculty affairs professional, but I thought it would be helpful to see this side of higher education. The idea of epistemological pluralism was very prevalent.

We tend to ossify as we get older and our expertise more focused. That is not a helpful trend.



Every city I went to, my hosts treated it as a profound duty to ensure that I experienced some spiritual aspect of what made their home special. These are my faculty hosts in Amritsar on my very last day in India. They took me to the golden temple at Sunset. The beauty and profundity of their openness and love and how they shared that experience with me, brought me to tears. And this happened four times on this journey. I don't know if it is not clear, but I am not known as a crier.

AI is not able to do this, and while we would be wise to never say never, the kind of open-minded, open-hearted experiences that lead to profound learning are not on the horizon through AI.



# CALL TO ACTION

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FOR A MEMORABLE AND  
COMFORTABLE ADVENTURE

Let me close by saying my wish is that all of us continue to stand together. If we do, I believe that the core of promise that drives our work as educators (whatever we believe it is) will remain an ideological and practical source of vibrancy for our students and colleagues.

Think of this, it costs \$20 a month to use a useful AI chatter and more developed tools are upwards of 5x that. Talking to our colleagues, our students, our neighbors, friends, and other humans has no fixed cost.

So, let me repeat my version of the main idea--a holistic learning plea. Let's use our best tools with our eyes open. Let's be interested in AI, and develop a conceptual wholeness to our understanding of its impact, but keep the person and individual, you and I, at the center of this work.



COMPOSING MEANING "FOR OURSELVES" IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

<https://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu/pcorbett-portfolio/research-and-publications/>

DR. JASON ELLIS'S PERSONAL BLOG

<https://dynamicsubspace.net/>

HIGHER ED DISCUSSIONS OF AI WRITING

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/632930835501841>

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IDEAS**

**FOR YOUR NEXT  
TRAVEL ADVENTURE**



This talk found on LinkedIn.