


Chapter 16

The Authenticity Gap and the Challenge of Distinguishing AI in Personal and Professional Dialogue

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ABSTRACT

The rapid proliferation of Large Language Models (LLMs) has dissolved the linguistic boundaries distinguishing human from machine expression, precipitating a “crisis of authenticity”. This chapter explores the dual challenges arising from this technological inflection point. First, it analyzes the practical “arms race” between generative models and forensic tools, arguing that reliable detection is increasingly infeasible due to the statistical convergence of human and machine text. Second, it examines the ethical and psychological fallout: in personal relationships, the inability to verify authorship erodes trust, while in professional spheres, it threatens institutional integrity. The chapter concludes by proposing a framework for “digital authenticity” that moves beyond futile detection efforts toward cryptographic provenance, digital literacy, and new norms of human-AI collaboration.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The release of advanced Large Language Models (LLMs), such as OpenAI's GPT-4, Anthropic's Claude, and Google's Gemini, has fundamentally altered the landscape of digital communication. For the first time in history, machines are capable not merely of processing information, but of mimicking the nuance, tone, and empathy of human dialogue with a fidelity that often renders them indistinguishable from biological agents (OpenAI, 2023). This technological inflection point has precipitated a crisis of digital authenticity, creating what we term the *Authenticity Gap*. We define the Authenticity Gap as the expanding cognitive and technological divide between a human's assumption that a message originates from a biological author and the hidden reality that it was generated or heavily mediated by an artificial system. As the visual and textual markers of humanity disappear, this gap creates a vacuum of trust, obscuring the origins of everyday communication—whether a heartfelt email, a professional assessment, or a creative work.

Historically, the ability to discern human from machine was anchored in the Turing Test, a theoretical benchmark that posited intelligence could be inferred if a machine could successfully deceive a human evaluator (Turing, 1950). In the contemporary era, however, this benchmark has become less of a test of machine intelligence and more of a daily dilemma for human users. We have entered the age of AI-Mediated Communication (AIMC), where algorithms do not simply transmit messages but actively co-create, modify, or autonomously generate them (Hancock et al., 2020). As LLMs achieve “human-level performance” on various professional and academic benchmarks, the linguistic “fingerprints” that once betrayed machine authorship—such as repetitive phrasing, lack of context, or grammatical rigidity—are rapidly vanishing.

This blurring of boundaries presents a dual challenge. First, there is the practical and technical challenge: the “arms race” between generative models and detection technologies. As generative models become more sophisticated, existing detection tools—whether based on statistical perplexity or watermarking—face diminishing returns and high false-positive rates (Sadasivan et al., 2023). Second, and perhaps more consequentially, is the ethical and psychological challenge. The inability to verify the human origin of a message threatens the foundation of trust required for social bonding and professional integrity. If a message of support is algorithmically generated, does it retain its emotional value? If a professional critique is machine-authored, does it carry the same weight of accountability?

This chapter explores these profound implications. It argues that the current pursuit of purely technical solutions to “catch” AI text is insufficient and that a broader framework involving ethics, policy, and digital literacy is required. The following sections will first analyse the technical mechanisms of LLMs that make detection

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