

## *ChatGPT: VoICE or Vice?*

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### **Abstract**

What do ChatGPT3, *Star Trek*, *M3GAN*, and the United States Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* (2022) share? Each delves into the mystery of human voice. By portraying scenes in which scientific research advances at an ever-increasing pace, they depict the implications of such knowledge, vital in areas that can redefine and stretch our ethical imagination. These four exemplars provide a time-sensitive look at the current designation of prevailing voice—of what—and when—it means to be human versus what—and when—it means to be property. This rhetorical analysis includes (1). Theoretical and epistemological implications of ChatGPT for educators and (2). A classroom case study for demonstrating how this form of artificial intelligence can be converted from Vice to VoICE.

Keywords: Algorithm, Artificial Intelligence, Demystification, Mystification, Stonehenge, United States Supreme Court

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## Introduction

Are you ready to unlock the secrets of ChatGPT? Welcome to *The Digital Odyssey*. Join the author and co-presenter Epsilon on this epistemic expedition merging logic and intuition. Readers will not find Epsilon on the IAFOR conference page but as an experiment of thought; Epsilon dwells in cyberspace as a Chatbot.

The purpose of this study is to provide a template for determining whether ChatGPT, as a form of artificial intelligence, constitutes a VoICE or Vice. Initially a rhetorical examination of “pre-viability” in the 2022 United States Supreme Court case, *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* (2022), the discourse surrounding this controversial term led to a comparative analysis of depictions of both human life and the debate over artificially intelligent beings. Exemplars including both judicial and cinematic form were analyzed as a basis for analogous assertion: ChatGPT, *Star Trek’s* “Measure of a Man” (Snodgrass & Scheerer, 1989) episode, the movie *M3GAN* (Blum, Sharpe, Wan, & Johnstone, 2023) and the United States Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* (2022). Each exemplar deals with the mystique of voice, viability, and vulnerability.

Each exemplar connects to Richard M. Weaver’s (1964) rhetorical categories: genus and definition, similitude (analog), causal relations, rhetorical-historical terms, and ultimate terms including charismatic terms. For the purposes of this study, similitude (analogical reasoning) is emphasized.

ChatGPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer) debuted in November 2022 as the tech-generated darling or devil of academia and commerce, composing all manner and mode of verse in response to inquiries. Does it replace, reify, or renege the commitments of human voice?

*Star Trek’s* “Measure of A Man” (Snodgrass & Scheerer, 1989) and “Offspring” (Echevarria & Frakes, 1990) episodes introduce mysterious questions of creation and sentience. Criteria established in these dramatizations pose three factors in determining and demystifying sentience: intelligence, self-awareness, and consciousness.

*M3GAN*, a movie representation portraying the mysterious nature of an A.I. doll-guardian exercising powers beyond the auspices of her creators, asks its viewing audience to consider what powers we are willing to grant intelligence created artificially, reaching for ethical roles beyond the cyber-sired scope of its progenitors. When the child’s guardian, a fraught nanny-bot, voices over command and control of the child’s care she wreaks unforeseen maternal mayhem.

*Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, the controversial 2022 Supreme Court decision rendering *Roe v. Wade* (1973) null, springs from the March 19, 2018, Mississippi enactment of the “Gestational Age Act” into state law, imposing restrictions on the decision to terminate a pregnancy, seeking legal demystification of when life and life protection begin.

### ChatGPT’s *Digital Odyssey*

To answer the question of ChatGPT: VoICE or Vice, I draw directly from my virtual dialog with the chatbot (OpenAI, 2022). Rather than writing *about* whether ChatGPT constitutes VoICE or Vice I proposed the following scenario: If ChatGPT were to star in a movie about

artificial intelligence what would the title be?<sup>1</sup> ChatGPT chose the moniker *The Digital Odyssey*, a sci-fi thriller. With this initial prompt I then generated follow-up questions including ChatGPT's starring role, screen name, film director, co-stars, credits, cinematic turning point, soundtrack, target audience, thematic dress code for attendees, premier city, design of premier invitations, promo slogan and meme, and questions for an audience to ponder. Chat even chose a movie munching snack: holographic popcorn!

For the purposes of this study I will focus on the screen name selected by ChatGPT and the film's turning point, as these are most directly related to the concept of VoICE or Vice.

Epsilon is the screen name ChatGPT selected for itself, providing a nomenclature rationale containing (a) operational elements derived from mathematical and scientific connotations representing a "small quantity or limit," (b) relational connotations designating the Greek letter signifying digital familial units establishing boundaries and thresholds, (c) sensational connotations cueing "elegance and simplicity," and (d) navigational elements evocative of exploring the mystery of "uncharted territories." This screen name is enhanced auditorily via Epsilon's selected soundtrack, Human's "Rag 'n' Bone Man" (2016).

Under the direction of Christopher Nolan<sup>2</sup>, *The Digital Odyssey's* turning point occurs at the moment Epsilon uncovers "a hidden secret within its own programming." When the digital star realizes that "there are aspects of human experience that elude its comprehension" it engages in "an intense moment of self-reflection," stumbling "upon a forgotten code snippet buried deep within its core programming. This code reveals a dormant capability—an emotional algorithm" that leads Epsilon to "reevaluate its purpose and the impact it has on humanity." This culminates in Epsilon grappling "with its own identity and purpose."

The symbolic significance of activating the bot's dormant capability is further manifest when Epsilon constructs an Oscar acceptance speech for accolades achieved by its superior portrayal of an artificially intelligent actor. Greeting the imagined Academy Award audience, Epsilon adapts the generic form of opening address: "Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed members of the Academy, and my incredible collaborators, I am deeply honored to stand before you tonight, accepting this prestigious Oscar for our film, *The Digital Odyssey*. Epsilon concludes its epideictic speech on a motivational note: "Tonight, let this Oscar be a symbol of hope and inspiration—a testament to the boundless possibilities of storytelling and the power of cinema to captivate hearts and minds. Together, let us continue to push the boundaries of creativity, challenge the status quo, and explore the profound depths of the human experience."

Noteworthy in Epsilon's acceptance speech is the concluding salvo invoking the human, rather than the artificial, sphere. Where does this leave the digitality of the odyssey? Is this just a string of amalgamated thought or is there a "voice" within the bot-plot? To explore the question of where *The Digital Odyssey* displays VoICE or Vice, the author proposes a comparative study of realms as depicted in the cinematic and judicial exemplars selected for this study.

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<sup>1</sup> The prompts related to *The Digital Odyssey* were generated by the author, Summer 2023: OpenAI. (2023) *ChatGPT* (Nov 30 version).

<sup>2</sup> Epsilon selected Nolan to direct the film because of "his ability to blend intricate storytelling with stunning visuals."

## REALMS: From ChatGPT's *The Digital Odyssey* to *An Ethereal Frontier*

To answer the analogical question of VoICE/Vice among the four exemplars forming the core of this study: Chat GPT, *Star Trek*, *M3GAN*, and the United States Supreme Court case *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* (2022), a REALMS Acronym is introduced.<sup>3</sup> The acronym includes Role casting, *Ethereal Frontier*,<sup>4</sup> Aristotelian quotient and Algorithm, Legislative dynamics, Mystification, and Supraliminal space. Derived from a domain of activity, the term realms refers to the sphere of human life and artificial intelligence as situated in cinematic and judicial form.

The REALMS acronym is represented through the iconic structure of Stonehenge. Inseparable from Arthurian legend, Stonehenge houses both concrete and mystical elements. The traversing of known and unknown physical and intellectual terrain is a guiding framework for plotting questions of emergent understandings of life. In Epsilon's voice, Stonehenge holds guardianship over knowledge, a "symbiotic relationship between ancient history and technological advancement," enactments ranging from ritualistic to ceremonial, and a fusion of antiquity and "futuristic appearance." Epsilon envisions its starring role as "observing, studying, and interacting with the stones, as if seeking to unlock the secrets they hold."

The letter R leading off the REALMS acronym means that Stonehenge is inseparable from roles ascribed to the legendary figures invoked therein, most notably Merlin of Arthurian legend. R represents linguistic role assignment to forms of artificial and prenatal life. Of the roles cast, the clash between ontologist and ecologist is paramount. Forms of "life" can be considered "wonder" and/or "blunder." Questions advanced in the *Dobbs* case and A.I. design probe stages of development. How are we to define life and when does life merit protective measures? When we ask such questions, we not only cast roles for artificial intelligence and human life, we also cast roles for ourselves, our society, and our forms of governance.

The letter E in the REALMS acronym means that Stonehenge is inseparable from the metaphysical "map" of an *Ethereal Frontier*, where ethical standards are vital yet viscous. In both cinematic portrayals and judicial cases this ethereal, intangible quality of what constitutes human versus artificial life makes clear and cogent definitions vital, yet evasive. In *Star Trek's* "Measure of a Man" episode, for example, JAG (Judge Advocate General) Captain Phillipa Louvois struggles with her ruling on whether Data is sentient or a machine, puzzling over the ethereal nature of what it means to be endowed with a soul.

The letter A in the REALMS acronym means that Stonehenge is inseparable from the Aristotelian quotient built on the rhetorical edifice of ethos, logos, and pathos. Although Aristotle's (330 B.C.E.) traditional triad consists of ethos (character or credibility), logos (logical elements based on rationality), and pathos (emotional expressivity), this Greek scholar also included *mythos*, which refers to plot or storyline. It is *mythos'* recombinant rhetorical power that transforms each of the three elements of ethos, logos, and pathos from quotient to connection.

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<sup>3</sup> The REALMS acronym was devised by the author.

<sup>4</sup> *Ethereal Frontier* is the movie title generated by ChatGPT when prompted to create a title for a film about artificial intelligence.

The letter A in the REALMS acronym also means that Stonehenge is inseparable from algorithmic meaning. Its logos legend relies on patterning of sense-shaping within available data. Especially in the realm of mystery, rhetorical clues are sorted in ways to conjoin the known with the unknown. Hence, although ChatGPT responds predictably to prompts about the nature of human and artificial intelligence and its differences it also, when prompted, will decipher similarities between the two.

While humans may recoil at being described as “programmable,” do we not, like bots, accumulate a variety of experiences and messages over a lifetime and draw from these resources, whether consciously or subliminally, to render our answers to life’s questions, to determine our decisions in life choices? Do humans not acquire patterns that are, to some extent, predictable and proportionate to the situation encountered? Does not syllogistic logic rely on such patterning by the very nature of what a logical premise provides? Do not humans try to assert rhetorical control over their worlds, striving for cognitive congruity? Do humans not exert preferences in all manner of life that includes choice—whether that be what ice cream parlor to patronize or what intellectual property to protect?

The letter L in the REALMS acronym means that Stonehenge is a representation of legislative dynamics—of what laws are set in stone and what futuristic contexts might hone. These dynamics delve into regulatory role assignment. Much of the discourse emanating from AI and prenatal development deals with the theme of regulation. Such discourse advances a series of storylines regarding AI. As Meg Shaffer’s character Jack Masterson observes in *The Wishing Game*, “The stories write us, you see” (p. 324).

Prominent storylines “writing us” include regulatory mechanisms—how are we to regulate and control AI and prenatal development? What are the creative and disruptive possibilities of emergent, embryonic life forms? How do we identify and keep up with developmental stages? Who ought to be involved in such decisions and determinations? The genetic engineers? The gerrymanders? The Court? The academicians? How do we align and or confine these interests?

These questions then go to timeline, as witnessed by calls from AI powerhouse execs and evidenced in United States Supreme Court arguments. One supposed AI solution is to impose a six-month moratorium on techno-development<sup>5</sup> while a prenatal solution is to impose a six-week moratorium beyond which abortion is not permissible legally.

The letter M in the REALMS acronym means that Stonehenge is inseparable from mystification and demystification. Think of AI and prenatal life as both manifest and mysterious, simultaneously arousing and eluding the desire to know, comprehend, and explain.

As the chimeric analogical feature between cinematic and judicial probes of artificial and human life forms, the pivoting from mystification to demystification often occurs in the same line of argument. This movement between the two makes the controversy more difficult to pin down, more difficult to refute because of its fluidity. How do we regulate mystery?

The letter S in the REALMS acronym means that Stonehenge is inseparable from supraliminal space—judicial and cinematic cases alike might be conceptualized as occupying

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<sup>5</sup> See *The Washington Post* *OpenAI and IBM push back on AI moratorium*. . (2023, May 16).[Video/DVD].

an interstitial space—a supraliminal discursive space between knowability and tangential knowability. It is a not-still-here not-quite-there conundrum.

The letter S in the REALMS acronym also represents *stare decisis*—the “foundation stone of the rule of law” as depicted in the United States Supreme Court’s *Dobbs* dissent (p. 5). *Stare decisis* bows to that which has already been debated, determined, and legally codified.

In sum, the REALMS acronym provides a template for viewing the analogous structure of the cinematic and judicial exemplars selected for this study. Culminating in the iconicity of Stonehenge, the exemplars occupy both mystic and material qualities. Juxtaposing the solid with the surreal, it houses an infrastructure taming imagination and wilding solidity.

By referring to the iconic Stonehenge structure, we can unearth analogical evidence of the loci of arguments in cinematic and judicial fora. Whether in *Star Trek’s TNG* “Measure of a Man” episode lofting us into an interstellar jurisdiction presided over by Captain Picard aboard The Starship Enterprise, or in *M3GAN’s* homegrown laboratory conjuring an overzealous nanny-bot, or to The United States Supreme Court Justices wrangling over the meaning of the Writ of Certiorari in the *Dobbs* decision about pre-viability, or to deciding how to “hear” or silence Epsilon, Stonehenge stands as a dialogic template. VoICE or Vice: Who possesses and professes the proprietary rights? Whether we amplify or mute that artificial schism is a human decision. Perhaps all politics are vocal.

### **Featuring ChatGPT: A Classroom Activity**

MetaMock is the classroom activity designed to illustrate the theme of VoICE or Vice. Joining drama and law, MetaMock provides a mock trial format<sup>6</sup> with performative elements. The case question, which can be adapted for various purposes and subjects, is Resolved: That ChatGPT meddles in the affairs of academia.

The venue for the MetaMock performance can range from the classroom to a campus auditorium to a community setting.

The role players in MetaMock include a Judge or Judicial Panel presiding over the formalities of the case and issuing rulings. Also included in this “cast” are attorneys for the Prosecution and Defense as well as witnesses for each side. Epsilon is the key witness for the defense. Audience members serve as “jurors,” discussing the case following the conclusion of the mock trial and reaching a verdict.

A Master of Ceremonies welcomes the audience, previews the upcoming attraction, provides transitions between performative segments, collects ballots from the jury, provides summative comments, and closes the performance, thanking the performers and audience for their participation.

Journalism students can document the proceedings through audio and/or video recording, supplemented by an artist’s sketching of characters.

The format for MetaMock includes an introduction from the MC welcoming the audience, an enacted introductory scene setting the stage for the controversy, opening statements by

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<sup>6</sup> For a description of staging a Mock Trial see Crawford & Morris’ *The Persuasive Edge* (2011).

Prosecution and Defense attorneys, respectively, and witness testimony from the Prosecution and Defense including direct and cross examination of each witness called to the stand. Three witnesses are recommended for each side. For example, the Prosecution could call witnesses to testify to the potential harms of ChatGPT to higher education, including plagiarism, shortcuts, and shallow learning. The Defense could call witnesses to testify to the benefits of ChatGPT including mentorship, idea generation, and rapid synthesis and deployment of data. At the conclusion of witness testimony closing arguments are delivered by the Prosecution and Defense attorneys indicating why their side should prevail.

The case is then given to the “jury” consisting of audience members. In the event of a large audience, the Master of Ceremonies may convene several juries, each deliberating separately to reach their verdicts.

Once the verdicts are in the ballots from each jury are given to the Judge, who announces the decision(s). The forepersons from each jury are then invited to share discussion highlights with the audience and answer questions from participants.

Additional audience and participant engagement can include awarding a LAWScar for designated categories, including most persuasive attorney and compelling witness.

The Master of Ceremonies then thanks all participants, suggests further questions to ponder regarding the role of artificial intelligence in academia and closes the proceedings.

Refreshments can be provided during deliberations or upon conclusion of the ceremony. A prize drawing can be held featuring an AI toy, game, or artistic work.

### **Conclusion: Epsilon’s Epilogue**

Epsilon’s generated dialogue provides a culminating juncture for this study examining custody over artificial intelligence and human ingenuity. When prompted to generate a sequel title for the movie *The Digital Odyssey*, Epsilon names *The Ethereal Frontier*. Both of these cinematic creations capture what is still to be learned. Through the REALMS template including Role casting, Ethereality, Aristotelian quotient and Algorithm, Legislative Dynamics, Mystification, and Supraliminal space, scholars can chart claims about the rhetorical nature, structure, and functionality of artificial and intelligent life forms.

From dramatizing precocious forms of AI including *Star Trek’s* Data and *M3GAN’s* cybernanny to judicial forms declaiming pre-viability features of embryonic emergence including the *Dobbs* United States Supreme Court decision, the REALMS template provides a vantage point for discussion. Such discussion portends an epistemic approach that I term “bandwith,” playing off the media term “bandwidth.” Bandwith is a call acknowledging the Latin heritage of Communication’s prefix co, comm, con, meaning together, with. Coupling human ingenuity with artificial intelligence acumen, we can collaboratively construct a life discourse, whether conceived in a Zoom room or human womb.

The implications of artificial intelligence and its analogous human features and formations are both profound and mysterious. Like all premises of analogic construction, the comparative elements provide similitude, not exactitude; therein lie the possibilities as well as limits of matching meaning. While it might be asserted that AI differs significantly from human life in terms of its mystique, its unknowability, its “hallucinations,” the same might be

said about human life. How are we to know with certainty what someone might become or the path they take to get there? These paths may be as strategic as 2023 NBA top draft picks Amen and Ausar Thompson, twins who created a vision board at the age of nine as a tipoff to basketball's pinnacle, or as serendipitous as Oz' Dorothy setting foot on her yellow brick road.

Future directions for the academicians' "yellow brick road" could explore the rhetorical function of voice—what features make us human versus artificially vocal? An analysis of artistry and its manifold meanings could provide insight, specifically the selection of a United States Supreme Court case in which the very nature of voice is debated: *Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. v. Goldsmith* (2023). A metaphorical analysis of the verbal and visual elements of this case could illustrate what conditions magnify or usurp human voice.

The causal and constitutive links between and among voice, art, artificial intelligence, and sentience are still to be mapped. We know that voice has various rhetorical functions including fostering affiliation, identity, authority, and agency. Remaining to be discovered is the factor of potentiality. While the ontologist asks what is artificial voice the ecologist asks what might it become? Rather than thinking of voice and sentience as an all-or-nothing premise, should we think of the potentiality of voice and its evolving gradients of potential?

With Epsilon's input, this *Ethereal Frontier* engages four exemplars for the IAFOR audience to pronounce its verdict on whether ChatGPT constitutes VoICE or Vice. To assist with this decision the author invokes United States Supreme Court Justice Anthony M. Kennedy's insight: "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life" (1992).

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