Learning the Ropes, Doing the Lasso Work

Moral Answerability, Human Authorship, and Critical Opposition in Human–AI Scholarly Collaboration

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Editorial status: A provisional interpretive essay composed from the supplied conversation record, not a verbatim transcript and not publisher-approved manuscript prose. The author must review, rewrite, verify references, and decide what to retain.

Abstract

This essay examines a human scholar's negotiation with an AI editorial assistant over the writing of a research monograph about the dark side of AI leadership. The conversation moves from the danger of inferring executives' inner moral character to a falsifiable conception of Concord, from an inherited XYZ leadership model to a proposed fourth dimension of moral answerability, and from generative illustrations to reproducible, human-directed mathematical artwork. At issue is not whether AI can make scholarship effortless. The question is whether a scholar can preserve responsibility for every claim while inviting a computational interlocutor to expose blind spots, clarify logic, and perform limited editorial labor. The working metaphor—"you help me learn the ropes, and I do the lasso work"—expresses a division of labor that remains provisional, contested, and answerable to evidence and publisher rules.

Keywords: moral answerability; human–AI collaboration; Concord; XYZA; falsifiability; editorial ethics; Inkscape; scholarly authorship

1. A conversation that became a method

The exchange did not begin as a declaration of an ideal workflow. It began with an objection. A corporate policy, an AI-generated answer, or a public controversy, the author insisted, cannot automatically establish a chief executive's inner moral character. This interruption changed the project. A book that intended to analyze ten influential AI executives risked becoming an exercise in attribution: treating corporate products as windows into private conscience and public disputes as conclusive evidence of moral failure. The author's correction was methodological as well as ethical. What can actually be observed? What evidence might contradict an interpretation? What should the researcher refuse to claim?

The assistant proposed an answer in terms of situated acts rather than hidden souls: acknowledgments of harm, inclusion of dissenting stakeholders, remedial decisions, resource commitments, and follow-through over time. Such indicators do not reveal private intention. They make public action and its organizational consequences available for investigation. The author's objection therefore functioned as critical opposition within the collaboration itself. The AI was not to supply an authoritative verdict; it was to become answerable to a boundary the scholar established.

A second objection followed immediately. Concord must include opposition. Otherwise, an attractive normative ideal could become incapable of failure. A corporation might celebrate harmony precisely because employees have learned not to disagree. The absence of overt conflict could then be mistaken for moral progress. The dialogue reversed this easy assumption: consequential dissent may be evidence of a more answerable organization, whereas polished consensus may conceal coercion. But the opposite result must remain possible. Opposition can also fail, harm, or stagnate. The theory must permit the evidence to surprise it.

2. From moral commitment to vulnerable conjecture

The author drew on David Trafimow's distinction between inference that merely appears confirmatory and inference that can expose a conjecture to contradiction. In the dialogue, the assistant distinguished the fallacy of affirming the consequent from the valid form of modus tollens. If an ODC intervention predicts more consequential dialogue, remedy, and reduced hidden costs, observing those outcomes does not establish that ODC caused them. Other institutional changes might explain the same result. If the predicted outcome does not appear under specified conditions, the tested conjunction of theory and auxiliary assumptions faces a challenge.

The distinction is not a license to pronounce the entire theory dead after one disappointing study. Measures may be defective; implementation may depart from the intended intervention; contextual assumptions may be wrong. Yet these qualifications cannot be invented after the fact to protect a favored conclusion. The conversation therefore called for prespecified measures, rival explanations, comparison conditions, and reports of null or adverse results. This is the arc of science as a sequence of corrigible claims, not a march toward guaranteed confirmation.

The assistant suggested comparing a multiplicative XYZA formulation with additive and interaction-based alternatives. This is a consequential proposal, not a settled finding. The geometry of a four-dimensional tesseract can be calculated independently, but the empirical meaning of multiplying scores for transformation, service, polyphony, and answerability is much less obvious. What scale permits multiplication? What does a zero mean? Can a negative value reverse an interpretation? Does the model predict outcomes beyond simpler alternatives? The

author must make those decisions in conversation with methods scholarship and evidence. An elegant formula cannot do the conceptual work by itself.

3. The introduction as an intellectual contract

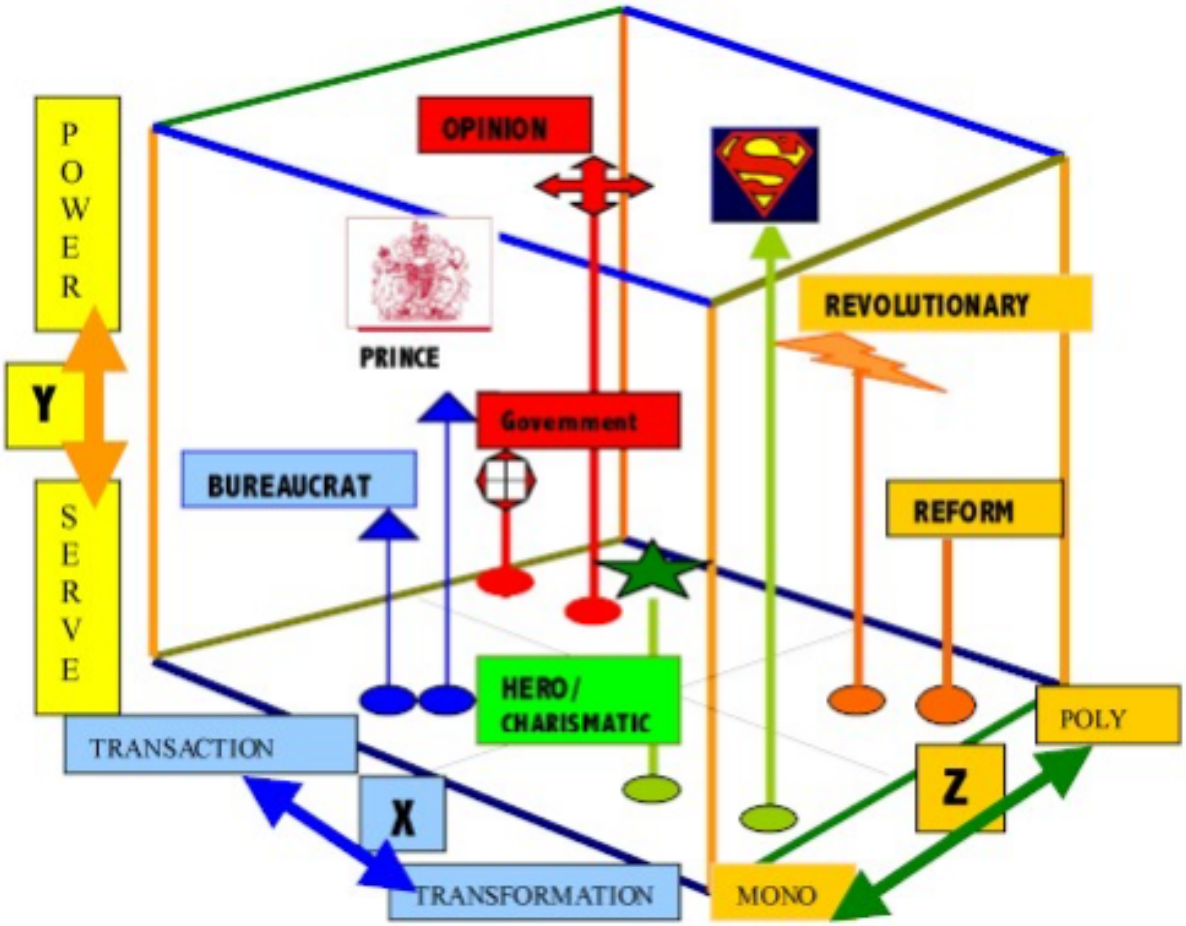
The author then recognized that the exchange had produced the substance of an introduction. Yet a research monograph should not begin by overwhelming a general reader with formal logic. The solution was a narrative sequence: enter the dark side of AI leadership; recover the historical XYZ model taught at Loyola Marymount University and New Mexico State University; explain the need for Bakhtin's dimension of moral answerability; introduce ten executives without claiming access to their private minds; place the mathematics beneath the story; develop Concord through opposition and organizational intervention; and end with a bet on the future rather than a prophecy.

The resulting intellectual contract makes several promises. The book will distinguish observation from interpretation. It will treat the author's historical model as historical, not retrospectively substitute newly invented axes. It will disclose when a proposed future vector is hypothetical. It will explain how the Ghost Vortex and Consent Machine enter the organizational diagnosis without turning metaphor into measurement by assertion. And it will ask, chapter after chapter: what observation would show that this interpretation is mistaken?

Five figures were planned to unfold with the prose: historical XYZ; present-state XYZA; hypothetical Concord-oriented XYZA; the Ghost Vortex–Consent Machine–ODC pathway; and a composite synthesis. Their order matters. The reader first sees the inherited conceptual problem, then the fourth dimension, then a possible intervention, and finally a synthesis. Mathematical detail is not concealed; it is relocated to points where readers can understand what the calculations are for, with full reproducible derivations available to researchers.

The original color composition preserves the earlier XYZ leadership vocabulary and visual cut-and-paste method. Its historical labels are evidence of a previous formulation, not categories assigned to the ten contemporary AI executives. The subsequent figures deliberately remove those archetypal labels. This is where the story begins: the scholar already had a model before the assistant proposed a new image.

Figure 1. Historical color XYZ model, reproduced from the author's pre-generative-AI artwork (source image supplied by Boje).



4. The publisher interrupts the collaboration

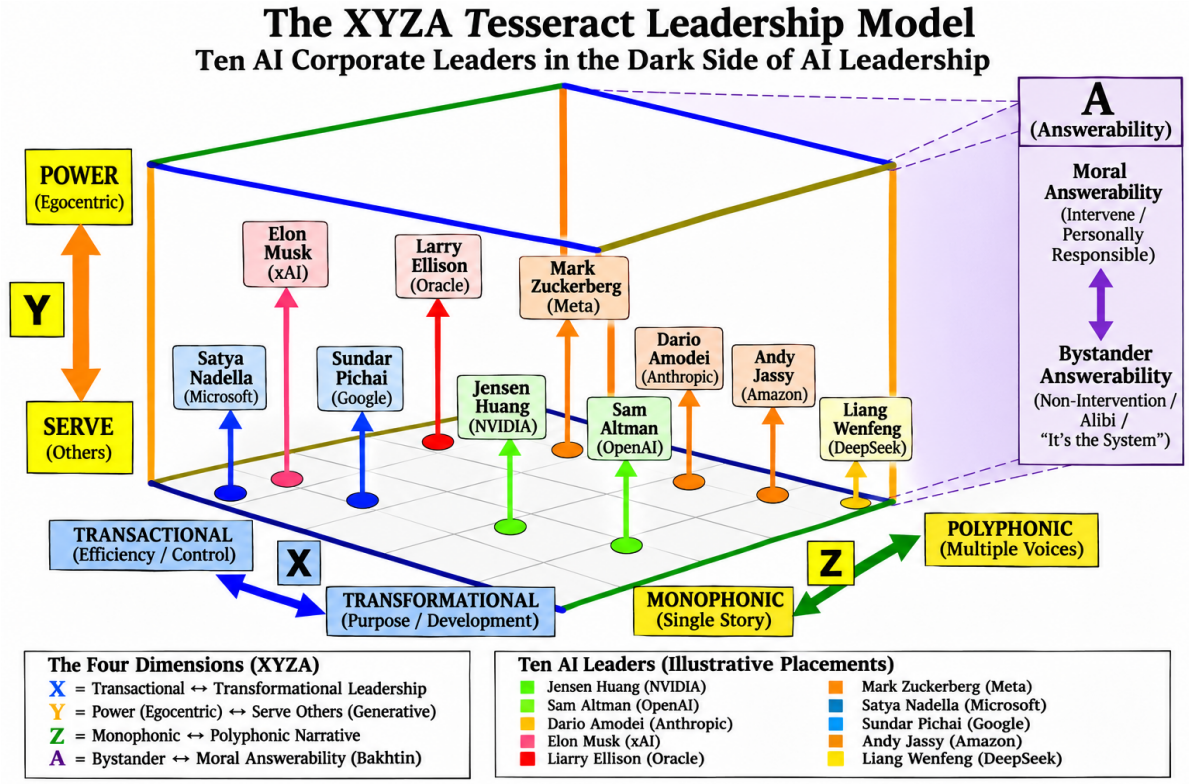
A further form of opposition came not from philosophical debate but from Routledge's permissions declaration and submission checklist. The documents, as discussed in the supplied conversation, raised restrictions on AI-generated chapter content and figures or tables involving AI. They also called for black-and-white manuscript files. This forced a distinction between attractive working prototypes and artwork eligible for publication. The AI-rendered tesseract images could assist discussion, but they could not simply be inserted into the submitted book and relabeled as original human artwork.

The author recalled making the original color XYZ figure through painstaking cut-and-paste work with pre-generative software. The new diagrams appeared more elegant, but elegance did not resolve authorship, provenance, or mathematical accuracy. The proposed practical answer was Inkscape: the author would construct and revise publication figures through conventional vector editing, using independently checkable coordinates and seeking publisher clarification about permissible methods. The assistant could explain the tools and identify inconsistencies, but should not claim that a traced AI image becomes compliant merely because it has been redrawn.

The same boundary applies to prose. Grammar, spelling, punctuation, and paragraphing assistance can be distinguished from originating scholarly claims, but the publisher's actual policy—not the collaborators' confidence—governs the submission. The author's notebook, dictation, rewriting, and final approval are central. Any AI role that crosses from copyediting into substantive generation requires explicit scrutiny and, where necessary, disclosure and publisher guidance.

The first image experiment introduced a fourth dimension of answerability while also revealing the danger of visual authority. The ten named positions are illustrative, not measured scores. This color prototype is retained here to document the collaborative design process, not as publishable Routledge artwork.

Figure 2. Early AI-rendered XYZA leadership visualization, including illustrative placements of ten executives (working placeholder; not an empirical assessment).



5. "You help me learn the ropes, and I do the lasso work"

At this point the author proposed the practical method in a sentence that gave the collaboration its governing metaphor: "You help me learn the ropes, and I do the lasso work." The phrase rejects two inadequate models. The first imagines the AI as a ghostwriter whose fluent output the human merely signs. The second imagines that ethical scholarship requires refusing all computational assistance, including spelling checks, calculations, or critical questioning. The lasso metaphor

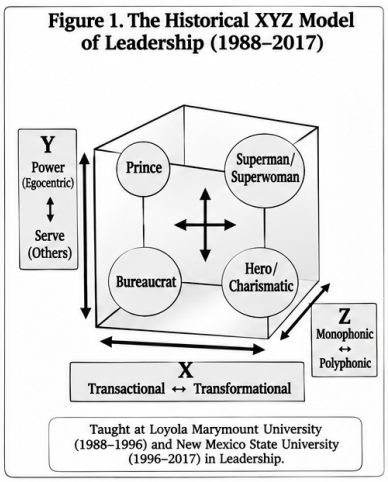
names a more demanding practice: the assistant may teach, demonstrate, check, and challenge, but the scholar must still select, construct, judge, revise, and accept responsibility.

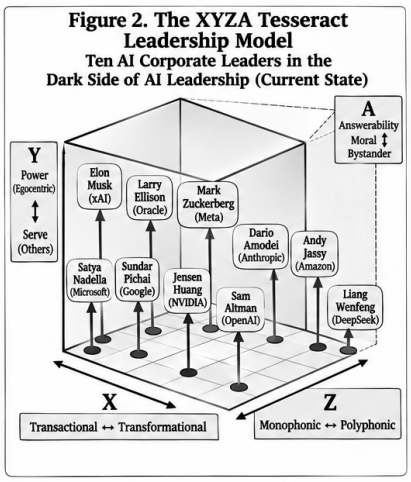
The workflow became chapter-by-chapter. Preserve the original file and its word count. Copyedit without compressing the author's cadence. Issue a separate blind-spots review rather than smuggling substantive revisions into the corrected prose. Invite the author to rewrite or dictate missing argument. Check chapter-specific APA 7 references, figure placeholders, mathematical claims, and footnotes. Only then consider an internal Copyediting Approval Award. This award is a collaborative milestone, not an assertion of Routledge acceptance or an independent certification of truth.

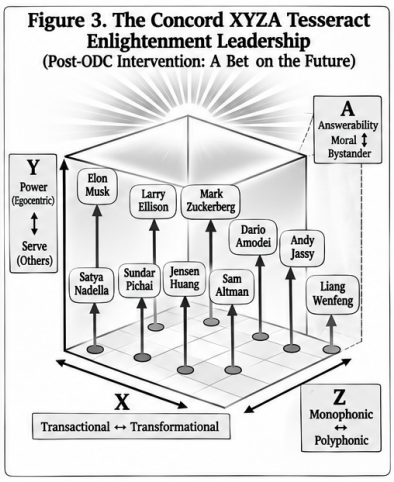
The separate blind-spots review is especially important. The author explicitly asked whether an AI assistant could see what the author did not see: omitted evidence, unexamined assumptions, absent voices, conceptual contradictions, and missing counterarguments. The assistant can propose such questions, but its criticism is itself fallible. A plausible objection may rest on an invented citation or an inaccurate reading. Moral answerability therefore requires a reciprocal discipline: the scholar challenges the assistant's criticism, and the assistant marks uncertainty rather than disguising it as expertise.

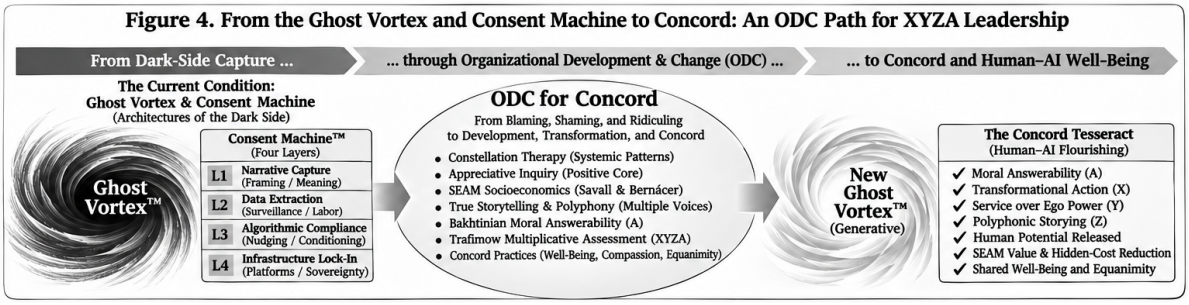
The sequence makes the argument unfold rather than arrive fully formed. The future state is a conjecture, and the transition is a proposed intervention pathway. Labels and geometric fidelity require independent verification before scholarly publication.

Figure 3. Grayscale sequence: historical XYZ, present-state XYZA, possible Concord leadership, and the Ghost Vortex–Consent Machine–ODC transition (AI-generated working placeholder).









6. The mathematics and the image as tests of answerability

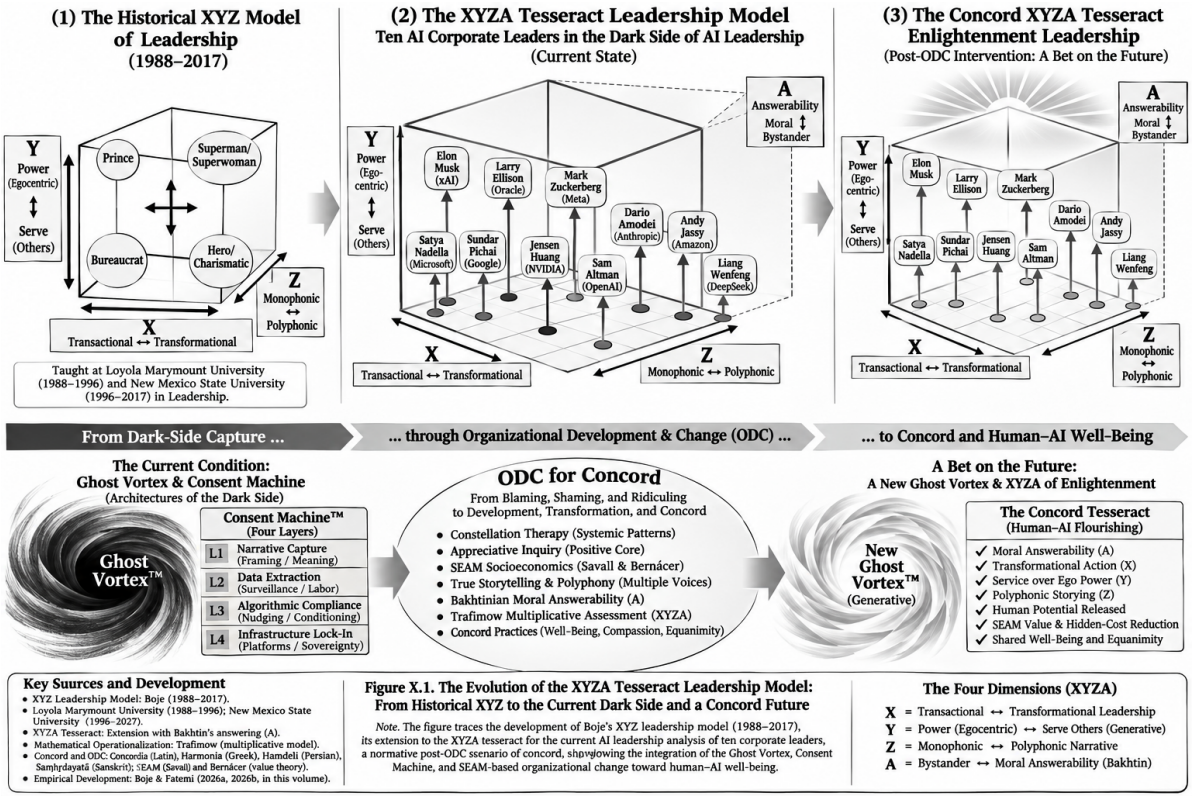
The collaboration encountered two different technical problems. A tesseract has a mathematically defined combinatorial structure; a projected wireframe can be checked for its sixteen vertices and thirty-two edges. A leadership score, however, is not guaranteed validity by being plotted inside that geometry. Mapping qualitative evidence into four axes requires definitions, sampling, measurement, uncertainty, and reproducible decisions. The placement of an executive cannot be an artistic hunch presented as an empirical coordinate.

The proposed figures consequently distinguish solid, evidence-supported representations from dashed, explicitly hypothetical trajectories toward Concord. The destination is a research question. It cannot be assigned as the inevitable end of an intervention. Likewise, the Ghost Vortex and Consent Machine should be examined as conceptual and organizational models, with their own proposed mechanisms and potential counterevidence. A future enlightened tesseract can be a bet worth studying without being a forecast already established by data.

This technical distinction becomes a moral one. A persuasive image can lead readers to believe that a complicated judgment has already been measured. A polished formula can create the same illusion. Learning the ropes therefore includes learning to resist the authority of beautiful diagrams and fluent mathematical prose. Doing the lasso work means being able to explain every coordinate, label, calculation, and evidentiary leap in one's own terms.

The composite is useful for discussing how the four parts connect, but its small text, mathematical geometry, historical labels, and proposed outcomes must be checked. A persuasive composite is not evidence that Concord has occurred.

Figure 4. Composite grayscale narrative arc from XYZ through XYZA and the proposed Concord future (AI-generated working placeholder).



The illustrations are deliberately kept as a visible audit trail. Their imperfections belong to the research story: the author can admire an image and still oppose its unverified scoring, its uncertain geometry, or its publication provenance. The final Inkscape figures will be constructed through author-directed work and independent mathematical checking, subject to publisher approval.

7. Concord within the writing relationship

Concord did not mean the author and assistant always agreed. Their working relationship advanced through correction: do not diagnose CEOs' inner morality; do not mistake agreement for Concord; do not treat confirmation as proof; do not let mathematics overwhelm the story; do not submit AI-rendered figures as cleared artwork; do not compress dictation; do not proceed to the next chapter before the author has rewritten and approved the current one. These are not interruptions to collaboration. They are its method.

The broader organizational aspiration is similarly conditional. ODC, True Storytelling, SEAM, and dialogic intervention might create circumstances in which opposition becomes consequential and hidden costs diminish. They might also fail. The author's bet on the future of AI leadership remains meaningful only if those outcomes can be compared, challenged, and revised. In the writing process, the equivalent test is whether an assistant can receive a human correction without defending its earlier output merely because it was fluent.

8. An unfinished method, deliberately

This essay does not certify that the proposed editorial workflow complies with every Taylor & Francis or World Scientific policy. It does not establish the validity of multiplicative XYZA scores. It does not offer a verbatim transcript of the conversation, nor does it replace the author's account of his teaching history or his direct reading of Bakhtin, Trafimow, Freire, and Savall. Those are tasks for verification and authorial rewriting.

What the conversation does offer is a practical proposition: moral answerability in human–AI scholarship is visible not in declarations that the machine is ethical, but in traceable acts of correction, resistance to unsupported inference, preservation of authorship, and willingness to change a claim when contrary evidence appears. The scholar learns the ropes, performs the lasso work, and remains responsible for where the rope lands. The AI assistant, if it is useful, helps make that responsibility more demanding rather than less.

Authorial questions and blind spots to resolve before submission

- Confirm the exact dates, institutions, and archival evidence for the historical XYZ teaching trajectory; distinguish documentary history from retrospective interpretation.
- Locate and verify the precise Trafimow (2024) source and its discussion of syllogisms, auxiliary assumptions, and multiplicative versus additive models; do not rely on paraphrases from the chat.
- Define ODC and Concord operationally and specify which opposition is constructive, which is coercive, and how a study could tell the difference.
- Explain how the four XYZA axes would be scored and how multiplication handles zero, negative, and missing observations; preregister alternatives.
- Clarify the relationship between the Ghost Vortex, the four-layer Consent Machine, SEAM hidden costs, and observable outcomes; avoid treating conceptual analogy as a validated causal model.
- Identify exactly which passages are the author's words and which were suggested by the assistant; preserve the full exported conversation as primary data.
- Obtain written publisher guidance for AI-assisted editorial work and figure preparation; verify World Scientific requirements separately from Routledge.

- Check whether use of the conversation as research material calls for consent, disclosure, or additional methodological explanation.

References and source-verification note

Primary source: Boje–AI assistant conversation reproduced in "Transcript with the Wednesday_Lab_Routledge_Book_Editorial_Plan_2026-11-04.docx" (supplied working record, November 4, 2026). The file itself notes that its initial plan is not a verbatim transcript; a complete export is needed before treating the conversation as a fully auditable corpus.

The conversation mentions Bakhtin, Freire, Savall, Trafimow (2024, 2025), and scholarship on SEAM, True Storytelling, and XYZA. Complete APA 7 entries must be verified against the original works before submission. Bibliographic details have intentionally not been invented here.

Appendix A. AI Writing Assistance Protocol for Wednesday Lab and Projects

Working protocol • November 4, 2026 • Copy into the Wednesday Lab AI Assistant Project instructions after author review. This is a proposed collaboration protocol, not a publisher's certification.

Purpose and authorship

Support human-authored scholarly writing without substituting AI-originated theory for the author's research. The scholar owns all claims, revisions, interpretations, citations, and final approval. The assistant serves as copyeditor, critical reader, research-method challenger, and software tutor.

1. Preserve the source

Start from the author's original document. Save a protected source copy; inventory word count, heading hierarchy, figures, equations, references, and footnotes. Do not summarize, compress, or average away dictated sentences or the author's cadence.

2. Separate editorial passes

Pass A: spelling, grammar, punctuation, paragraphing, APA 7, and consistent formatting. Pass B: identify blind spots, counterarguments, missing voices, alternative explanations, unverifiable references, and errors in equations. Pass C: after the author rewrites, review again without silently inserting new theoretical claims.

3. Practice constructive opposition

For each important claim ask: What is the evidence? What would count against it? What rival explanation survives? Whose voice is missing? Distinguish observable acts from presumed private moral character. Concord is not agreement or enforced harmony.

4. Keep science falsifiable

Specify hypotheses, measures, comparison conditions, auxiliary assumptions, and possible refutations before empirical tests. Distinguish an observation consistent with a theory from a proof of it. Treat null, contrary, and failed intervention results as reportable findings. Compare proposed multiplicative XYZA models with additive and interaction alternatives.

5. Maintain mathematical provenance

Distinguish four-dimensional tesseract geometry from the proposed empirical scoring model. Record definitions, units, scales, assumptions, computational steps, uncertainty, and independent verification. Never invent executive scores or imply a hypothetical future vector is observed.

6. Label figures and tables honestly

Retain AI-generated images only as discussion placeholders until publisher permission is obtained. Identify author-originated historical images, conceptual diagrams, and measured plots separately. For final graphics, the author learns and uses Inkscape; software may calculate reproducible geometry, with publisher approval. Do not disguise an AI-generated figure by tracing it.

7. Respect publisher-specific rules

For Routledge, use a separate APA 7 reference list in each chapter, grayscale submission artwork unless otherwise approved, and chapter-by-chapter files. Check permissions for AI editorial assistance, artwork, tables, and the final manuscript. Confirm World Scientific requirements separately; do not assume one publisher's rules apply to the other.

8. Authorial approval gate

After each revision, the author reviews the complete text and approves its substance. The assistant may give an internal Copyediting Approval Award only when spelling, formatting, citations, provenance, mathematical qualifications, and outstanding editorial queries have been checked. The award is not publisher acceptance.

9. Preserve the dialogue as evidence

Keep dated versions, a correction log, the complete transcript or export where available, and a distinction between author words, assistant suggestions, and verified external evidence. Never describe a reconstructed summary as a verbatim transcript.

10. Project-ready standing instruction

When I upload a chapter, preserve my full authorial voice and all substantive paragraphs. First copyedit conservatively; then give a separate blind-spots review, including possible falsifiers and opposing interpretations. Flag rather than invent missing evidence, mathematics, or references. I will rewrite. Recheck my revision and wait for my approval before moving to the next chapter. Treat AI-generated figures as placeholders. Teach me Inkscape step by step; I do the lasso work.