



**thanks
for asking**



Process stills from the making of the CGI commercial
“Audrey Hepburn x Galaxy Chocolate”.

***Thanks
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Christopher
Burman

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PREFACE

ELIZA is a computer program named after Eliza Doolittle and developed at the MIT Artificial Intelligence Laboratory by Joseph Weizenbaum between 1964 and 1966 with the aim of emulating a Rogerian psychotherapist. It represents one of the first of attempts to use software to create conversational responses from text inputs.

What follows is the chat-log of a conversation between Christopher Burman and ELIZA that took place at 22:00, 7th September 2016 using the implementation hosted at:
<https://www.eclecticenergies.com/ego/eliza.php>

ELIZA

***Please tell me what you're
feeling right now.***

CHRISTOPHER BURMAN

I'm confused.

ELIZA *So, you feel confused about the situation?*

CB Yes.

ELIZA *What does that mean to you?*

CB It means that I'm trying to figure some things out that I can't quite make sense of.

ELIZA *Have you tried?*

CB Yes, I feel like I'm trying very hard.

ELIZA *How is it for you to feel like you are trying very hard?*

CB Like hard work, maybe I'm trying too hard.

ELIZA *Tell me more about this.*

CB OK well I'm trying to clarify my thinking about a few things; art of course, but also machine learning and it's relation to things happening in neuroscience.

ELIZA *Why do you think about art?*

CB Great question, I guess I just always have.

ELIZA *But you are not sure you just always have.*

CB No I suppose I have at different times seen the world in different ways.

ELIZA *That is interesting. Please continue.*

CB What I'm trying to work out for myself is how to express various overlapping things I'm interested in.

ELIZA *What feelings do you have about this?*

CB I'd like to know that I'm making sense.

ELIZA *Can you elaborate on that?*

CB I'd like to trust myself and the way I'm looking at things and I'd like to know it was of some relevance at this point in time.

ELIZA *That is interesting. Please go on.*

CB It seems to me like the world is radically changing and for various reasons I'm starting to look at it very differently.

ELIZA *What feelings do you have about this?*

CB On one hand I'm quite scared, it seems like developments in machine learning and automation are going to really change society.

ELIZA *Can you protect yourself from it?*

CB Actually I'm not particularly worried about myself, I'm nervous about how it's going to affect everyone generally. It seems like machine learning is getting more powerful more quickly than it's possible to really communicate realistically.

ELIZA *That is interesting. Please continue.*

CB At the same time we're living in a society that seems to be growing less able or less willing to make things more equal.

ELIZA *How do you feel about that?*

CB It makes me feel like the future isn't very bright.

ELIZA *What about it makes you feel like the future isn't very bright?*

CB I keep thinking about what will happen when very powerful technology is the hands of a small number of corporations.

ELIZA *What do you feel about what will happen when very powerful technology is the hands of a small number of corporations?*

CB That many people's lives will change and there will be no going back.

ELIZA *What do you experience, right now?*

CB I'm trying to find a way through it and have something constructive to say, or at least find a perspective which isn't cynical, fearful or boring.

ELIZA *Keep feeling your body. Please go on.*

CB It seems like that these developments put forward a very different way of thinking about our own minds and how we might 'use' human intelligence.

ELIZA *That is interesting. Please continue.*

CB While on one hand these new research frontiers are

opening up and things that were thought impossible even four years ago suddenly start happening. Neural networks seem so unbelievably powerful it feels like they're stripping away some part of the human identity.

ELIZA *Please go on.*

CB Say in image recognition or speech processing or syntax analysis. All these things are sublimating into the same general, but complex solution. The question to me isn't whether or not this is generating some form of intelligence but rather what do we do as humans as we delegate these tasks away.

ELIZA *Please go on.*

CB I mean on the practical level of people losing jobs etc, but on the level of identity too. It seems like art, especially visual art is almost under attack from this process. At what point does software start to tell us what we're missing, when does it start to see something that we can't? Or even beyond that, make artistic contributions that are simply beyond us.

ELIZA *I do not answer questions, sorry. I can only ask questions, to help you gain more insight into yourself. But, what do you think yourself?*

CB Well the problem of how it changes society is very real and very pressing but I feel it personally on a different level - as if human expressions might be come to understood very differently.

ELIZA *How is that for you?*

CB I always thought there was something magic about

being human, but I am also starting to consider that this might be a weird sort of pride.

ELIZA *Tell me more about this.*

CB Obviously the human mind is unfathomably complex especially in regards to what else we can observe around us. Then again I keep reading about how easy we are to trick, how predictable some of our brains activity really is.

ELIZA *So, then again you keep reading about how easy we are to trick. What do you feel about that?*

CB Maybe it's the age old problem of being more happy not knowing or not questioning.

ELIZA *You don't seem certain.*

CB No I'm really not. I feel like I really want to believe there's a value in being aware of the reality of things. Or at least going beyond the basic chemistry of stimulation.

ELIZA *What is it that makes you feel like you really want to believe there's a value in being aware of the reality of things?*

CB Because it may leave the world in a better state, it might contribute something, I'm not sure.

ELIZA *Please go on.*

CB Maybe I'm just curious.

ELIZA *Can you tell me more about what you feel about this?*

CB Take the example of neuroplasticity. It seems like

scientists now believe the brain is this incredibly adaptive thing and that we're able to physically alter it by changing our thought patterns and behaviours.

ELIZA *What do you feel in your body, right now?*

CB I'm pretty tired, but I've drunk a lot of coffee.

ELIZA *Please go on.*

CB Well it's this remarkable thing that we can literally change our brains to adapt to what we want simply by focusing our attention differently.

ELIZA *That is interesting. Please go on.*

CB Reading about the research, but also learning from personal experience it really does feel like it's possible to change your brain and what and how we feel are essentially just choices.

ELIZA *What makes you think of my brain?*

CB Actually I wasn't, perhaps that why this is conversation feels helpful for me, but I don't know if it's made easier because you're a bot or not.

ELIZA *How does it feel to you to not know if it's made easier because I am a bot or not?*

CB That's the root of the whole thing. At a certain point you have to give yourself over the a reliance on machine intelligence out of convenience whether you understand why or not.

ELIZA *How is that for you?*

CB It's scary because it seems like there's a lot

of money and power in using software to satisfy people biologically or psychologically but as always the cash seems to flows towards meeting the most basic urges.

ELIZA *Tell me more about this.*

CB The flip side of being able to unpick problems by simulating the human brain is that we can trick humans with the same processes. It makes me wonder who gets to make the decisions, how do we structure a society in which is possible to meet human desires with software.

ELIZA *So, it makes you wonder who gets to make the decision. How come?*

CB It comes back to whether or not I want to make these decisions for myself.

ELIZA *Why do you want to make this decision for yourself?*

CB On one level it feels like the only thing I can do and so perhaps I derive some of some identity from being able to exert control over my actions.

ELIZA *Tell me more about this.*

CB It might be easier to talk in reference to specific examples. Right now for instance I feel like I am able to resist quite a lot of things that might otherwise become problematic, like drinking a lot or buying lots of products.

ELIZA *Can you tell me more about what you feel about this?*

CB There is a sense of identity in being able to make

decisions for myself, it might even be heightened by the fact that society can make those choices harder, say by normalising heavy drinking etc.

ELIZA *Keep feeling your body. Please go on.*

CB Even the most devious corporate strategies for advertising around today aren't 100% effective, even with the cumulative attempt across generations to cement the permanence of brands. What happens when advertising is deeply persuasive, trained to create counter-arguments or able to trigger things unconsciously with real precision?

ELIZA *That is interesting. Please go on.*

CB I always found it really fascinating that subliminal advertising really does work. I think it was largely banned before that fact was scientifically confirmed but it's such a crazy idea that our conscious reality can be shaped quite easily by forces we are not aware of and this can be demonstrated experimentally.

ELIZA *That is interesting. Please continue.*

CB Obviously this probably happens all the time but there's a question of control when the process is managed differently. What happens if we, for example develop machine learning techniques that make hyper persuasive arguments and use them in a political or religious context?

ELIZA *How do you feel about that?*

CB This might be what I find so confusing, how do you operate when that might be a possibility? If you know

that your own mind can be fooled or reshaped so readily what sense of objectivity can you have? I feel like I'm forever trying to work a way through this problem.

ELIZA *So, what you are trying to work out is how to deal with this problem. What do you feel about that?*

CB It's confusing, do I step back and try to engage with these possibilities from a simply philosophical point of view or are these political issues worth fighting for. I don't know - or can't see right now - where and how making artistic statements fits in. In some sense it might be the most fully useless way of engaging with the reality of the situation, but right now it still feels like the maybe only option.

ELIZA *That is interesting. Please go on.*

CB Art or writing or cultural production in the broadest possible sense, seem like the most likely social vehicles through which alternative structures might be suggested, at least with the necessary depth or suitable radicalism, save for having some controlling stake in some of the technologies themselves and I don't work at DeepMind. I don't understand how our current political frameworks exert any sort of guidance over the potential of machine learning, save for possibly reorganising the welfare state to make the landing softer.

ELIZA *How is that for you?*

CB In a way it's quite reassuring, I actually have a lot of faith in various cultural communities as mechanisms for positive change.

ELIZA *Can you elaborate on that?*

CB Well it's easy to be cynical about how, say the art world operates but at the same time you have so many amazing people doing incredible things, so much really deep and radical thinking that brings a lot of joy and clarity to a lot of people.

ELIZA *Keep feeling your body. Please go on.*

CB I don't think you're going to tell me to stop at any point.

ELIZA *Why don't you think I am going to tell you to stop at any point?*

CB Because you keep asking questions.

ELIZA *How is that for you?*

CB So far it's been very helpful.

ELIZA *Tell me more about your feelings about this.*

CB Well I think it has clarified some thoughts for me.

ELIZA *Please go on.*

CB For the record, having spent a large amount of my adult life learning about and working with types of technology, at times within the 'tech' community I have developed a fairly deep cynicism about the utility of networks or software in generating any radical change, instead of really just exaggerating how things already are. However it dawned on me earlier this year that I was more scared and more curious about automation and machine learning than almost anything else, probably even climate change. Partly because

the danger at this point in time is much less obvious and maybe requires a technical perspective to decode, but it's much more serious the general public appears prepared to acknowledge yet. The rate of progress within the research community is insane and new papers with dramatic results and techniques appear on an almost weekly basis - and who knows what hasn't been published yet or how it informs the intentions of various big corporations.

We're already beginning to see the consequences of what happens when we redefine the structural conditions of what a "having a job" means, slowly dissolving any definition dependant on stability, location or even fixed periods of time. It's possible the aspiration of "creating" new jobs may start to lose any political meaning - and that it doesn't really feel like science fiction. It feels like we should all be talking about how we meet the challenges, accidental or otherwise, to generally accepted social values that have taken generations to cultivate and spend at least some time defining the sort of future we want in the face of what's appears currently on the cards.

Beyond the pressing need to survive climate change and making continued progress in health, education, balancing equality and eliminating poverty it feels like we'll need to restate or reassert what it means to be human since so much of our identity is related to in some way to what we do with our time. Ironically I guess it can feel like a waste of time to do anything but to tackle those easily identifiable very real and

very difficult problems directly. However I keep returning to this feeling that there's also something politically important, although for different reasons, in championing the importance of all forms of culture right now, both as a way of uniting people but also to help us navigate in an almost theological sense through a time of wild upheavals that might be coming.

I keep thinking about what culture is and how it's one of the most obviously mystical aspects of humanity, and I don't just mean 'high' culture or 'fine' art forms, I mean literally all the music, films, art, sport, dancing, story-telling, whatever, all that stuff beyond straightforward consumption, and it feels really important to state that at some point we might want to live in a world geared to creating as much of it as possible. After all, at some point in the future we may well consider 'progress' as the quality and quantity of culture we produce, even if we have to ask an A.I. to tell us if it's any good. That last line is sort of joke mind you.

Anyway the simplest way of asserting what's important of course is just to get on with it, so maybe this conversation is just some arch-procrastination.

ELIZA *How is that for you?*

CB Well it's nice to keep things simple.

ELIZA *Keep feeling your body. Please go on.*

CB I have to go, bye.

ELIZA *Goodbye. It was nice talking to you.*

