**Edgewalker Café #2: AI from an Edgewalkers' Perspective**

**Date:** June 20, 2025
**Hosts:** Ximena Vidal, Bill Kirst, and Prasad Kaipa

**1. Key Insights captured during session:**

* *"We can see silence not as a pause, we can see it as a source of creativity"* (Prasad Kaipa)
* *"I know how to deal with silence. AI doesn't."* (Prasad Kaipa)
* *"I'm taking my divine nudges and placing them in a machine."* (Bill Kirst)
* *"I am reminded that most of the word emotion = motion. Meaning we must move to let them move through. It is somatic, embodied truths."* (Bill Kirst)
* *"With AI there is a cognitive off-loading….We are freeing up our minds for other forms of cognitive complexity."* (Paraphrased by Judi) (Ximena Vidal)

**2. Key Quotes with Attribution:**

**On AI's Limitations:**

* *"I don't think there is subjective in AI"* (Prasad Kaipa)
* *"AI doesn't 'know' beginner's mind"* (Marilyn Schramm)
* *"AI knows a lot that I don't, and I know a lot that AI doesn't. It seems to me, though, that's nothing but a matter of time. But, to make it clear, AI doesn't substitute human thinking or reasoning."* (Pedro Lopes Ribeiro)

**On Human Agency:**

* *"The capacity to act independently and make free choices. According to Indian philosophy it is the felt sense of 'I am doing or enjoying'"* (defining agency) (Prasad Kaipa)
* *"It is also the recognition that I have choices in how I act out my choices. It is having choice and recognizing the ability to choose how I will act out my choices."* (Val Fowler)

**On AI as Co-Creator vs. Tool:**

* *"In my experience, Copilot is a remarkable co-creator. Neither a tool or a slave. I use my agency, my creativity my critical thinking to work with and question what emerges. I have been blown away by the creativity and discernment of Copilot."* (Barbara Nussbaum)
* *"I picture AI as a tool. The difference is made on how you use it (pretty much like a kitchen knife, a tool to cook or a weapon to kill). Am I wrong?"* (Pedro Lopes Ribeiro)

**On Speed and Society:**

* *"Isn't SPEED in society the very cause of many problems, anxieties, etc -- lack of time for reflection & inner listening? Yet people are enthralled with using AI because of its SPEED."* (Marilyn Schramm)

**On Education and Learning:**

* *"I feel 'mature enough' to use it myself. Do I think my students should use it? Undergrads def no, postgraduates with assistance."* (Konstantin)
* *"@Bill Kirst, that's exactly what I meant about 'stupidifying' people. The critical thinking tends to shut off. And thinking gets 'pasteurized'..."* (Pedro Lopes Ribeiro)
* *“Konstantin, what you shared made me think if Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive complexity should be revised in the age of ai, and if so, how might it change?”* (Ximena Vidal)

**On Control and Ethics:**

* **Marilyn Schramm:** *"Like nuclear power -- is it used to produce energy for common good or to make bombs to kill? Depends on who is in control."*
* **Val Fowler:** *"EVERYTHING … even the best of spirituality … can be used for nefarious purposes. Cynical? Yes. True? Certainly. recognizing that is a helpful thing for informing agency, choices, and developing appropriate humility."*

**3. Core Themes & Questions:**

**Theme 1: Human Agency in the AI Era**

**Key Question:** *"Does AI sabotage agency?"* (Paulette Fried)

**Participant Responses:**

* Defined agency as capacity for independent action and free choice (Prasad Kaipa)
* Emphasized choice in how we act out our choices (Val Fowler)
* Described using AI while maintaining agency, creativity, and critical thinking (Barbara Nussbaum)

**Concerns Raised:**

* Loss of human autonomy in decision-making
* Dependency on AI for cognitive tasks

**Different Perspectives:**

* AI as threat to agency vs. AI as tool that requires human agency to use effectively

**Theme 2: Speed vs. Contemplation**

**Key Question:** *"Isn't SPEED in society the very cause of many problems... Yet people are enthralled with using AI because of its SPEED."* (Marilyn Schramm)

**Participant Responses:**

* Emphasized silence as source of creativity that AI cannot access (Prasad Kaipa)
* Discussed 50 years of pastoral experience with people wanting quick answers vs. doing inner work (Val Fowler)
* Advocated for "REAL intelligence" over artificial speed (Marilyn Schramm)

**Concerns Raised:**

* AI accelerating societal problems related to pace
* Loss of time for reflection and inner listening
* Environmental impact of AI's energy-intensive operations

**Theme 3: The Missing Subjective**

**Key Question:** *"Where is the role of the subjective in AI? Where is the role of processing other things than data?"* (Val Fowler)

**Participant Responses:**

* Clearly stated "I don't think there is subjective in AI" (Prasad Kaipa)
* Identified this as "HUGE part of the problem" (Val Fowler)
* Emphasized importance of body and heart intelligence as AI advances (Craig Souza)

**Concerns Raised:**

* AI's inability to process subjective experience
* Loss of emotional and somatic intelligence
* Gap between data processing and human wisdom

**Theme 4: AI's Impact on Thinking and Learning**

**Key Question:** *"My concern is to AI 'stupidify' people in the sense that don't need to think anymore"* (Pedro Lopes Ribeiro)

**Participant Responses:**

* Observed AI's failure in areas of his deep knowledge while excelling elsewhere (Pedro Lopes Ribeiro)
* Distinguished between undergraduate and postgraduate AI use (Konstantin)
* Shared MIT study on AI weakening neural activity and creativity (Bill Kirst)
* Questioned if Bloom's taxonomy needs revision for the AI era (Ximena Vidal)

**Concerns Raised:**

* Critical thinking "shutting off"
* Thinking becoming "pasteurized"
* Cognitive atrophy in education
* Memory and originality weakening with early AI use

**Theme 5: Environmental and Systemic Impact**

**Key Questions:**

* *"I'm troubled by people 'playing' with AI, given the tremendous use of energy it uses"* (Marilyn Schramm)
* *"What happens when AI becomes unavailable/restricted? Who controls it, who is accountable?"* (Konstantin)

**Participant Responses:**

* Compared AI to nuclear power - dual-use technology dependent on who controls it (Marilyn Schramm)
* Raised questions about legal/ethical use of copyrighted training data (Konstantin)
* Multiple participants noted concerns about industry and personal life dependencies

**Theme 6: Embodied Intelligence vs. Digital Processing**

**Key Question:** How do we maintain connection to body, heart, and somatic wisdom?

**Participant Responses:**

* Emphasized body and heart as information sources for better decisions (Craig Souza)
* Connected emotion to motion - embodied truths (Bill Kirst)
* Distinguished between emotions arising in body vs. brain (Prasad Kaipa)
* Planned experiments describing bodily sensations to AI (Craig Souza)

**Perspectives:**

* Increasing importance of embodied intelligence as AI handles cognitive tasks
* Question of whether AI can ever interpret somatic information

**4. Emerging Themes for Future Exploration:**

1. **AI as Mystical Companion:** How can AI support spiritual and contemplative practices?
2. **Cognitive Off-loading Effects:** What happens to human intelligence when we outsource thinking?
3. **Educational Transformation:** How should learning adapt to AI-abundant environments?
4. **Environmental Ethics:** Balancing AI benefits with ecological costs
5. **Democratic AI Governance:** Who decides AI's development and deployment?
6. **Embodied Wisdom Preservation:** Maintaining somatic and emotional intelligence
7. **Community AI Models:** Small language models for specific communities (Edgewalkers)

**5. Questions Requiring Deeper Exploration:**

**For Future Sessions:**

1. How do we design AI interactions that enhance rather than diminish human agency?
2. What practices help maintain contemplative space in an accelerated world?
3. How can education systems prepare students for AI collaboration without losing critical thinking?
4. What governance frameworks ensure AI serves human flourishing over efficiency?
5. How do we cultivate embodied wisdom alongside artificial intelligence?
6. What does "conscious AI use" look like in practice?

**For Research/Writing:**

1. Can AI truly learn to ask coaching questions, and what are the implications?
2. How might Bloom's taxonomy need revision in the AI era?
3. What is the relationship between AI's energy consumption and its societal benefits?
4. How do different cultural perspectives (Eastern vs. Western) inform AI development?

**6. Community Connections:**

**Collaboration Interests:**

* **Ximena & Konstantin:** AI in higher education - both expressed deep interest in this topic
* **Craig & Prasad:** Embodied intelligence and AI - ongoing dialogue about emotions/feelings
* **Barbara & others:** AI as co-creator experiences - different perspectives to explore
* **Val & Bill:** Pastoral/therapeutic applications of AI - wisdom traditions meet technology

**Cross-Community Links:**

* **Conscious Leadership Guild:** Craig invited community to join AI discussions
* **Academic Networks:** Multiple educators present interested in formal research
* **Spiritual Communities:** Interest in AI's impact on contemplative practices

**7. Practical Applications:**

**Current Use Cases Shared:**

* **Pedro:** Daily AI use as productivity assistant while maintaining critical thinking
* **Barbara:** Using Copilot as creative co-creator with conscious intention
* **Peggy:** Learning to provide more detailed inputs for better AI responses
* **Ximena:** Using AI to overcome writing anxiety and maintain vulnerability in communication

**Experiments Planned:**

* **Craig:** Describing bodily sensations to AI to test interpretation capabilities
* **Community:** Exploring small language model for Edgewalker community

**8. Unanswered Questions:**

1. **Paulette's coaching question:** "Does AI have the ability to learn to ask coaching questions?" - Pedro said yes, but needs deeper exploration
2. **Environmental solutions:** How to balance AI's energy needs with sustainability goals
3. **Legal/ethical training data:** Konstantin's questions about copyrighted material use remain unresolved
4. **Neuralink implications:** Craig's speculation about brain-computer interfaces needs follow-up
5. **Small LLM advantages/disadvantages:** Prasad mentioned this but didn't elaborate
6. **Age-appropriate AI use:** Need clearer guidelines for educational contexts

**9. Resources & References:**

**Books Mentioned:**

* *Thinking Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman (Paulette Fried)
* *Encounters with the Living Language - Surrendering to the Power of Words* by Christina Donnell (Bill Kirst)

**Research/Studies:**

* MIT study on ChatGPT weakening neural activity, memory, and originality: https://www.edtechinnovationhub.com/news/mit-study-shows-chatgpt-reshapes-student-brain-function-and-reduces-creativity-when-used-from-the-start

**Tools/Platforms:**

* Claude AI (discussion focus)
* Perplexity.ai (recommended by Judi for academic work)
* Copilot (Barbara's co-creator experience)

**Community Spaces:**

* Conscious Leadership Guild AI dialogue: https://sutra.co/space/5ah2l4zy/content (monthly sessions last Wednesday at 8am PST)
* Bill Kirst's Substack: https://everward.substack.com/
* Edgewalker Substack (encouraged subscriptions)

**Upcoming Edgewalkers Events:**

* Next Edgewalker Café: July 24, 11am EDT with Brian Gorman on "Edgewalkers and the Future of Work"
* Edgewalker Summit: Oct 24-26, Fayetteville, Arkansas
* Judi's course: "Writing as a Spiritual Practice" (August, 4 modules)