

Disaggregating Authorship: A Multidimensional Theory for AI-Assisted Writing

Donglin Liang

Cloud Technologies Consulting Inc

Minneapolis, MN 55446 USA

donglin.liang@cloudtech-consulting.com

Abstract

The rapid integration of generative artificial intelligence into writing practices has renewed debates about authorship. Existing discussions often frame the issue as binary: either AI displaces the human author or it functions merely as a tool. This paper argues that such framing obscures the structure of the problem. Authorship is not reducible to textual production but consists of multiple normative dimensions, including intention, evaluative judgment, accountability, origination, identity, labor, and closure. Crucially, the relative weight of these dimensions varies according to the purpose of writing and the expectations readers attach to authorship within specific domains.

Drawing on legal doctrine, publication ethics, philosophical theories of authorship, and recent 2025 scholarship on AI-assisted writing, the paper develops a purpose-relative framework. In communicative and operational contexts—such as academic research, legal drafting, and technical documentation—authorship primarily functions as a marker of governance and responsibility. In these domains, AI-assisted production does not undermine authorship so long as meaningful human evaluation and accountability are retained. In expressive and literary contexts, however, authorship is closely linked to stylistic singularity and identity-bearing origination. Here, AI's capacity to simulate linguistic form destabilizes the interpretive bridge between text and perceived interiority.

The paper concludes that AI neither universally preserves nor destroys authorship. Instead, its impact depends on which dimensions of authorship are normatively central within the writing practice at issue. By disaggregating authorship and situating it within purpose and reader expectation, the analysis provides a structured basis for evaluating AI-assisted writing across domains.

I. Introduction

The rapid integration of generative artificial intelligence into everyday writing practices has revived a foundational question: *Who is the author when AI generates the words?* As large language models increasingly draft research articles, legal documents, journalistic reports, marketing copy, and literary fiction, established assumptions about authorship have come under renewed scrutiny. If a system produces grammatically coherent and stylistically persuasive text, does authorship remain with the human user, shift to the machine, or dissolve into a hybrid category?

At first glance, the issue appears procedural: either a human wrote the text or an AI system did. Yet this framing presupposes that authorship is a singular and stable concept. Much of the contemporary debate proceeds on that assumption. Legal institutions emphasize human originality and creative contribution. Publication ethics bodies foreground responsibility and accountability. Critics of AI-assisted literature invoke expressive authenticity and lived experience. Defenders characterize generative systems as sophisticated tools, continuous with earlier technologies such as word processors or search engines.

These positions frequently appear irreconcilable. Some argue that AI assistance inevitably dilutes authorship because the human did not compose every sentence. Others maintain that authorship persists so long as a human directs and approves the output. The resulting discourse often oscillates between technological determinism and instrumentalism, without clarifying what authorship is meant to signify.

This paper contends that the apparent impasse arises from a deeper conceptual problem: authorship is treated as monolithic when, in fact, it is multidimensional. Authorship encompasses intention, evaluative judgment, accountability, origination, identity, labor, and closure. Different writing practices weigh these dimensions differently. Academic authorship centers on responsibility and defensibility; technical documentation prioritizes institutional validation; literary authorship is often linked to stylistic singularity and expressive identity. When these distinct normative criteria are collapsed into a single question—“Who wrote this?”—participants in the debate inevitably talk past one another.

Moreover, authorship functions not only as a production category but as a social signal. For readers, the attribution of authorship conveys expectations. In communicative contexts, it signals reliability and accountability. In expressive contexts, it signals voice and individuality. Generative AI destabilizes these signals unevenly, depending on which expectations are normatively central within the practice.

The central thesis of this paper is that authorship is purpose-relative. The criteria that define authorship vary according to the function of writing and the reader expectations associated with that function. In communicative and operational domains—such as academic research, legal drafting, and technical documentation—authorship is grounded primarily in evaluative governance and responsibility. In these contexts, AI assistance does not inherently undermine

authorship, provided that a human agent exercises meaningful judgment, assumes accountability for the final text, and brings the process to deliberate closure. By contrast, in expressive and literary domains—such as fiction and poetry—authorship is more closely tied to identity-bearing origination and stylistic singularity. Here, AI's capacity to simulate linguistic form generates deeper tension, not because responsibility disappears, but because the interpretive bridge between textual style and perceived interiority becomes less secure.

By disaggregating authorship and situating it within the purposes writing serves, this paper offers a domain-sensitive framework for evaluating AI-assisted work. Rather than asking whether a human physically produced every word, the analysis shifts to questions of governance, responsibility, and the normative role authorship plays within specific practices. This reframing clarifies why AI appears to threaten authorship in some contexts but not others and provides a principled basis for ongoing institutional and cultural negotiation.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. Section II reviews legal, institutional, philosophical, and empirical scholarship on AI and authorship. Section III develops a multidimensional account of authorship as a cluster concept. Section IV introduces the purpose-relative framework and integrates reader expectations. Section V analyzes generative AI as a production-expanding technology that does not assume responsibility or closure. Section VI applies the framework across representative writing domains. Section VII addresses potential objections. Section VIII concludes by reflecting on the implications of purpose-sensitive authorship in the AI era.

II. Related Work and Theoretical Background

Debates about AI and authorship span copyright law, publication ethics, philosophical theories of creativity, and emerging empirical studies of human–AI collaboration. While these literatures converge on the question of how generative systems affect writing practices, they often rely on different and sometimes implicit conceptions of what authorship entails. This section surveys these strands and identifies the conceptual gap that the present paper seeks to address.

A. Legal Approaches: Human Authorship and Originality

Legal scholarship has largely framed the AI-authorship question in terms of copyright eligibility and originality thresholds. Policy guidance issued by the U.S. Copyright Office (2023, 2025) affirms that copyright protection requires human authorship. Works generated entirely by AI without meaningful human creative input are not registrable, whereas works involving substantial human selection, arrangement, or modification may qualify for protection.

Scholars have proposed structured approaches to evaluating AI-assisted works. Fritz (2024) suggests examining degrees of control, iterative refinement, and the locus of creative decision-making. Comparative analyses similarly assess how different jurisdictions operationalize originality requirements in AI contexts (Gaidartzi, 2024). Abbott (2020), in his broader work on artificial intelligence and legal doctrine, argues that existing legal categories may adapt to AI without abandoning the centrality of human responsibility.

These legal frameworks provide valuable criteria but tend to treat authorship as a binary legal status. The focus remains on originality and intellectual contribution rather than on the broader normative functions authorship serves in social and cultural practice.

B. Publication Ethics and Institutional Accountability

Parallel to copyright debates, academic and editorial bodies have clarified that AI tools cannot qualify as authors. The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE, 2023) explicitly states that AI systems cannot assume responsibility, disclose conflicts of interest, or respond to scrutiny, and therefore cannot meet authorship requirements. Similar guidance from the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME, 2023) and major publishers such as Elsevier (2024) permits AI assistance but requires disclosure and affirms full human accountability.

Recent scholarship reinforces this institutional emphasis. Raitskaya and Tikhonova (2025), in a scoping review of generative AI in scholarly publishing, document the emergence of transparency norms centered on oversight and ethical responsibility. Yoo (2025) analyzes editorial policies across scientific journals and similarly concludes that accountability remains the decisive criterion for authorship attribution.

Within this literature, authorship is primarily defined through responsibility and governance. The author is the agent who stands behind the work. While this approach effectively addresses institutional integrity, it does not fully resolve questions arising in expressive or cultural contexts.

C. Philosophical Accounts of Authorship and Creativity

Longstanding theoretical debates complicate attempts to define authorship solely through production or intention. Roland Barthes (1967) famously challenged the centrality of authorial intention in meaning-making, while Michel Foucault (1969) reframed the author as a functional principle within discourse—a socially constructed role that organizes attribution and interpretation.

Intellectual historians such as Woodmansee (1984) have shown that modern notions of authorship emerged alongside economic and legal transformations that elevated originality and individual genius. This historical contingency suggests that authorship criteria are neither timeless nor uniform.

Contemporary philosophy of AI extends these debates. Coeckelbergh (2020) questions whether machine-generated artifacts can satisfy conventional accounts of creativity, while Danaher (2022) examines whether artificial art threatens established aesthetic categories. Boden (2016) provides a foundational analysis of computational creativity, distinguishing combinational novelty from genuinely transformative innovation.

More recently, Hajibayova (2025) revisits authorship in light of generative AI, drawing on Foucauldian insights to argue that authorship remains a regulatory and ethical construct even as production technologies evolve. Chaudhari (2025), in a systematic review of AI in creative writing, highlights tensions between originality, authorship, and machine assistance in literary domains.

This philosophical and theoretical literature foregrounds origination, identity, and creativity, but it often treats authorship as a unified concept across domains rather than as a practice-sensitive construct.

D. Human–AI Collaboration and Writing Practice

Empirical studies of AI-assisted writing demonstrate that generative systems are typically used in iterative, collaborative workflows. Bozkurt (2023) documents educational and scholarly uses of conversational AI systems, noting that human oversight and revision remain central. Raitskaya and Tikhonova (2025) further observe that AI is often deployed for drafting, summarization, and language refinement rather than for unexamined content generation.

This research challenges simplistic narratives of full automation. In practice, authorship often involves distributed production coupled with retained human evaluation. However, empirical accounts tend to describe evolving norms rather than offer a systematic framework for evaluating when AI assistance preserves or undermines authorship.

E. Conceptual Gap

Across legal, institutional, philosophical, and empirical literatures, distinct dimensions of authorship are emphasized: originality, responsibility, identity, creativity, or collaborative practice. What remains underdeveloped is a unified account explaining why these dimensions appear decisive in some contexts but not others.

Existing scholarship largely treats authorship as either a legal status or a philosophical essence. It rarely addresses how the purpose of writing and reader expectations shape which dimensions matter most. The present paper addresses this gap by disaggregating authorship into multiple normative components and situating those components within the functional contexts of writing. By doing so, it provides a domain-sensitive framework capable of integrating legal doctrine, institutional ethics, philosophical theory, and reader reception into a coherent analysis.

III. Authorship as a Multidimensional Concept

Debates about AI and authorship often proceed as though authorship were a singular property—something either present or absent. This assumption obscures the fact that authorship functions as a cluster concept composed of multiple normative dimensions. Legal doctrine, institutional practice, literary culture, and everyday discourse emphasize different aspects of this cluster, leading to disagreement that is frequently conceptual rather than empirical.

This section disaggregates authorship into analytically distinct but overlapping dimensions: intention, evaluative governance, accountability, origination, identity, labor, and closure. These dimensions do not operate independently. Rather, they interact in practice, with varying degrees of normative weight depending on context.

A. Intention

Authorship is commonly associated with intentional action. To author a text is to produce it with the aim of communicating something. Intention distinguishes authored text from accidental inscription or purely mechanical output. In many philosophical accounts, intention anchors agency in creative production.

However, intention alone does not settle questions of authorship in AI contexts. A user may intend to publish AI-generated text without having shaped or evaluated it in a meaningful way. Intention is therefore necessary but insufficient. It establishes agency at the level of initiation, but not at the level of normative control.

B. Evaluative Governance

Evaluative governance refers to the capacity to assess, revise, and endorse textual content. It includes critical scrutiny, correction of error, adjustment of tone, and the integration of claims into a coherent position. This dimension captures the active exercise of judgment over what is said and how it is said.

In AI-assisted writing, evaluative governance becomes particularly salient. Generative systems can produce fluent and plausible language, but they do not verify truth, anticipate downstream consequences, or assume normative responsibility. The human agent who reviews, modifies, and ultimately endorses the output exercises governance over the text. This governance distinguishes meaningful authorship from passive transmission.

C. Accountability

Accountability concerns responsibility for the consequences of publication. The author is the party who can be questioned, challenged, cited, or held liable for what the text asserts. Institutional and legal frameworks consistently rely on this dimension. Academic authors answer to peer review; legal drafters answer to courts and clients; journalists answer to editors and readers.

AI systems cannot assume accountability. They cannot respond to criticism, clarify intent, or bear reputational or legal consequences. Authorship in institutional settings therefore requires a human agent who stands behind the text and accepts its implications.

D. Origination

Origination refers to the generative contribution of content or form. It is closely linked to originality in copyright law and to creativity in aesthetic theory. Origination is often invoked when authorship is associated with invention or imaginative production.

In human writing, origination has rarely meant creation from nothing. Authors draw upon shared language, inherited genres, and cultural conventions. Origination typically involves novel arrangement, reframing, or synthesis. AI complicates this dimension because it expands the range of available formulations while drawing upon vast corpora of existing text. Whether human selection among machine-generated options constitutes sufficient origination depends on how strongly a given practice values generative contribution over evaluative control.

E. Identity

Identity connects authorship to the attribution of voice and perspective. In many literary and cultural contexts, the author's name signals a distinctive sensibility. Stylistic patterns, structural decisions, and thematic preoccupations are interpreted as expressions of individuality.

This dimension explains why authorship often carries expressive weight beyond responsibility. Readers may treat particular phrasings or narrative structures as indices of consciousness. When generative systems can reproduce stylistic patterns independently of lived experience, the interpretive link between textual form and personal identity becomes less stable. The tension arises not because governance disappears, but because the identity-signaling function of authorship is altered.

F. Labor

Labor captures the effort and time invested in producing a work. Cultural narratives about authorship often emphasize struggle, revision, and craft. Creative labor is sometimes regarded as part of a work's value, especially in artistic domains.

Technological mediation has always transformed labor conditions. Word processors, search engines, and collaborative platforms have altered how effort is distributed without eliminating authorship. AI introduces further transformation by accelerating production. Whether diminished manual effort undermines authorship depends on whether labor is treated as normatively central within a given writing practice.

G. Closure

Closure refers to the decision to release a text into the public sphere. Writing is inherently revisable; no text is immune to further refinement. Authorship becomes publicly legible at the moment an agent determines that a particular articulation is sufficient to represent their position.

Closure involves risk. Once published, the text may be interpreted, criticized, or misused in ways the author did not anticipate. The agent who enacts closure assumes this risk. Generative systems can propose endless variations, but they do not decide when a text is ready to stand as a claim or artifact. Closure therefore marks a distinctly human threshold in the authorship process.

H. Interdependence and Contextual Weight

These dimensions are analytically separable but normatively interdependent. Intention without governance is thin. Origination without accountability is incomplete. Labor without closure does not produce authorship in a socially recognizable sense. In practice, authorship emerges from the interaction of these dimensions rather than from any single element.

Importantly, the normative force of each dimension is not fixed in abstraction. It is shaped by the purposes writing serves and by the interpretive expectations that structure how texts are received. In some contexts, accountability and governance dominate; in others, identity and origination carry greater weight. Recognizing this variability is essential for evaluating the impact of generative AI on authorship across domains.

IV. The Purpose of Writing as Normative Anchor

The multidimensional account developed in the previous section establishes that authorship cannot be reduced to a single criterion such as production, intention, or originality. Yet identifying these dimensions does not determine how authorship should be attributed in practice. The decisive question concerns normative prioritization: which dimensions of authorship carry authoritative weight in a given writing context, and why?

This section advances the central structural claim of the paper: authorship is purpose-relative. Writing practices are embedded within institutional, cultural, and interpretive frameworks that define what counts as successful authorship. These frameworks determine whether readers and institutions treat evaluative governance, accountability, origination, identity, labor, or closure as normatively decisive. Generative AI affects authorship differently depending on how these priorities are structured.

Authorship, therefore, is not merely a property of production; it is a role within a social practice. To attribute authorship is to attribute responsibility, authority, or expressive ownership according to the values internal to that practice.

A. Communicative and Operational Writing

In communicative and operational domains, writing serves instrumental purposes: coordinating action, recording decisions, specifying obligations, or transmitting information. Academic research articles, legal documents, policy memoranda, technical manuals, software requirements, and meeting summaries exemplify such practices.

In these contexts, authorship primarily signals evaluative governance and accountability. Readers seek assurance that claims have been verified, arguments have been examined, and institutional responsibilities are traceable. The function of authorship is epistemic and procedural rather than expressive. What matters is whether the text can be trusted, defended, and relied upon.

This normative orientation reshapes the relevance of the production dimension. Whether a paragraph was drafted manually or generated through AI assistance is secondary to whether a competent human agent exercised meaningful governance over it. If the author reviews, revises, integrates, and formally endorses the content, authorship retains its institutional function. The locus of legitimacy lies in evaluative control and closure, not in the mechanical act of typing.

The danger in such domains is not technological assistance per se but the erosion of substantive oversight. If outputs are accepted without domain expertise or critical scrutiny, authorship becomes nominal. The weakening arises from abdicated governance, not from the mere involvement of generative systems.

Importantly, readers in communicative contexts rarely interpret stylistic distinctiveness as evidence of personal identity. Clarity and precision are valued precisely because they minimize idiosyncrasy. In such settings, AI's capacity to produce standardized and grammatically coherent language may even align with the practice's functional aims.

B. Expressive and Aesthetic Writing

Expressive writing operates within a different normative economy. Literary fiction, poetry, memoir, and certain forms of reflective essay writing are valued not merely for propositional content but for the distinctive manner in which experience is rendered. Here, authorship carries identity-bearing significance.

Readers of literary works often interpret stylistic features—lexical choices, syntactic rhythms, narrative structures—as manifestations of an author’s sensibility. Authorship functions as a mediating concept between textual form and perceived consciousness. A work is encountered not only as language but as an articulation of perspective.

In this domain, origination and identity assume heightened normative weight. Creative labor is often culturally intertwined with authenticity; struggle and revision are treated as part of artistic meaning. The act of crafting language is not merely instrumental but constitutive of value.

Generative AI destabilizes this structure by decoupling stylistic production from a lived perspective. When a system can replicate narrative cadence or metaphorical density without interior experience, the interpretive bridge linking form to identity becomes less secure. Even where a human exercises evaluative governance and enacts closure, readers may question whether the expressive features they value genuinely originate from the attributed author.

The tension is therefore not reducible to questions of legal ownership or institutional responsibility. It concerns whether authorship continues to function as a reliable index of identity. In expressive domains, this indexing role is central to reader valuation. AI assistance does not eliminate authorship, but it alters the interpretive conditions under which authorship is understood.

C. Hybrid and Transitional Practices

Many contemporary forms of writing resist clean classification. Narrative journalism, long-form analysis, public intellectual essays, and certain academic genres blend communicative rigor with expressive style. Readers expect both accountability and a recognizable interpretive voice.

In such hybrid contexts, authorship performs multiple functions simultaneously. It signals governance and responsibility while also signaling perspective and individuality. AI assistance interacts with these functions unevenly. Support for drafting, summarization, or structural organization may not threaten authorship so long as evaluative governance remains intact. However, if stylistic distinctiveness—the element through which readers recognize a particular author—is substantially automated, the expressive dimension of authorship may be attenuated even if accountability persists.

This hybridity illustrates that authorship is not binary but scalar. Different dimensions may be partially preserved or partially transformed. Evaluating AI-assisted writing requires examining which aspects of authorship are central within the practice and how readers are likely to interpret the resulting text.

D. Normative Differentiation

The purpose-relative account does not impose a uniform standard across all writing. Instead, it clarifies that disputes about AI and authorship often arise from unacknowledged shifts in normative emphasis. When critics argue that AI undermines authorship, they frequently appeal—explicitly or implicitly—to expressive criteria grounded in identity and origination. When defenders characterize AI as a tool, they appeal to communicative criteria grounded in governance and accountability.

Both positions capture legitimate dimensions of authorship. The disagreement reflects differences in practice rather than simple confusion. Recognizing the purpose-sensitive weighting of authorship dimensions allows for a more precise evaluation of AI's impact across domains.

This differentiation prepares the ground for the next section, which examines generative AI structurally as a production-expanding system that does not itself exercise evaluative governance, assume accountability, or enact closure.

V. Generative AI as Production-Expanding System

Having established that authorship is multidimensional and purpose-relative, we now examine generative AI structurally. The key question is not whether AI produces text—it clearly does—but which dimensions of authorship it can and cannot instantiate.

Generative systems such as large language models operate through statistical pattern recognition and probabilistic continuation. They generate linguistically coherent sequences by predicting likely token arrangements based on prior training data. This capacity dramatically expands the production dimension of writing. It accelerates drafting, multiplies possible formulations, and introduces syntactic and stylistic variation at scale.

Yet expansion of production does not entail assumption of governance.

A. Production Without Governance

Production concerns the generation of textual form. Governance concerns the normative assessment of that form—its truth, coherence, appropriateness, and consequences. These functions are conceptually distinct.

A generative system can propose arguments, synthesize summaries, or produce stylistically compelling prose. It cannot determine whether the claims it advances are defensible within a

particular disciplinary framework, ethically acceptable within a professional context, or strategically prudent within a political environment. It does not assess whether a metaphor trivializes suffering, whether a legal clause introduces unintended liability, or whether a citation is fabricated.

Evaluative governance requires situated judgment. It presupposes awareness of norms, goals, risks, and accountability structures. While AI systems can simulate evaluative language, they do not occupy positions within institutional or moral communities. They do not bear consequences for error.

This asymmetry between production and governance is foundational. AI modifies how text is generated; it does not assume responsibility for how text functions once released.

B. Accountability and the Absence of Risk

Authorship entails exposure to risk. Once a text enters the public sphere, its author may face criticism, legal liability, reputational harm, or professional sanction. Accountability is not an abstract property; it is a relational condition within social institutions.

Generative AI systems cannot be sanctioned, sued, embarrassed, or dismissed. They do not respond to inquiry, clarify ambiguity, or defend interpretation. Even when integrated into workflows, they remain tools embedded within human accountability chains.

This absence of risk-bearing capacity explains why institutional guidelines uniformly refuse to recognize AI systems as authors. Authorship presupposes a subject who can answer for the text. AI systems lack that standing.

The implication is not that AI assistance negates authorship, but that authorship cannot migrate fully to the machine. Responsibility remains anchored in human agents who exercise governance and enact closure.

C. Iteration Without Closure

Generative AI also alters the temporal structure of writing. Because systems can produce endless variations, drafting becomes effectively infinite. Prompts can be refined indefinitely; alternative phrasings can be regenerated without exhaustion.

Closure, however, is not reducible to exhaustion of possibilities. It is a decision under conditions of incompleteness. To close a text is to determine that it sufficiently represents one's position despite remaining imperfections and uncertainties.

AI systems do not decide when a text is ready to stand as a claim, argument, or artistic artifact. They can continue generating variants, but they do not enact release. Closure remains a human act that converts possibility into commitment.

This distinction is philosophically significant. Authorship becomes publicly legible at the point of commitment, not at the point of production. AI expands possibility; humans delimit and endorse it.

D. Expansion, Not Replacement

Understanding generative AI as production-expanding rather than governance-bearing clarifies its role across domains. The system widens the field of linguistic options available to the human agent. It accelerates drafting and can introduce formulations the writer might not have independently conceived. It may influence stylistic patterns or structural organization.

But influence does not equal displacement. The decisive dimensions of authorship—evaluative governance, accountability, and closure—remain human-centered. The normative question is therefore not whether AI participates in production, but whether human agents retain substantive control over endorsement and responsibility.

This structural analysis explains why AI appears compatible with authorship in governance-centered domains yet destabilizing in identity-centered ones. In communicative practices, production expansion does not undermine accountability. In expressive practices, however, the expanded production capacity may intersect more directly with identity and origination concerns, complicating reader interpretation.

E. Structural Asymmetry and Normative Evaluation

The core asymmetry can now be stated precisely: generative AI participates in the production dimension of authorship but does not instantiate evaluative governance, assume accountability, or enact closure. Its integration into writing practices therefore alters the distribution of labor and the mechanics of composition, but not the fundamental location of responsibility.

Whether authorship is preserved depends on whether the human agent meaningfully occupies the governance and accountability roles that remain indispensable. Where governance is substantive and closure is deliberate, authorship persists even if production is technologically mediated. Where governance is abdicated, authorship becomes attenuated—not because AI writes, but because no accountable agent stands behind the writing.

This structural understanding provides the conceptual bridge to the domain analysis that follows. Having clarified what AI can and cannot do within the authorship cluster, we can now evaluate how these asymmetries manifest differently across academic, legal, technical, journalistic, commercial, and literary practices.

VI. Domain Analysis: Authorship, AI, and Reader Expectations

With the multidimensional account of authorship in place and the structural asymmetry of generative AI clarified, we can now examine how these dynamics unfold across concrete writing domains. The purpose-relative framework developed earlier implies that AI's impact on authorship cannot be assessed uniformly. Instead, it must be evaluated in light of the specific dimensions that readers and institutions treat as normatively central within particular practices.

Across domains, a consistent pattern emerges. Where authorship primarily signals evaluative governance and accountability, AI-assisted production does not inherently destabilize authorship. Where authorship functions as an index of identity and origination, AI integration generates more substantial tension. The analysis below traces this differentiation.

A. Academic Research and Scholarly Writing

Academic research writing is structured around epistemic accountability. Articles, conference papers, and monographs aim to advance claims that can be scrutinized, replicated, or contested. Within this domain, authorship signals responsibility for methodological rigor, interpretive coherence, and evidentiary accuracy. The author's name anchors the work within institutional networks of review and critique.

Readers of scholarly writing rarely treat stylistic distinctiveness as central to authorship. While clarity and precision are valued, the primary expectation is that claims have been critically examined and defensibly articulated. In this setting, evaluative governance and accountability dominate the authorship cluster.

Generative AI may assist with drafting, summarizing literature, or refining language. Such assistance modifies the production dimension but does not alter the underlying requirement that a human scholar verify citations, defend arguments, and accept reputational and professional risk. If evaluative governance remains substantive—if the author critically examines AI-generated text rather than transmitting it unreviewed—authorship retains its normative function. The decisive factor is not who composed each sentence, but who stands behind the intellectual claims.

B. Legal, Policy, and Technical Documentation

Legal drafting, policy formulation, and technical documentation are similarly governance-centered, though often with higher stakes. Contracts, regulatory frameworks, user manuals, and software specifications must be internally consistent, legally sound, and

operationally precise. In these contexts, authorship signals institutional authorization and traceable responsibility.

Readers—judges, regulators, engineers, compliance officers—do not approach such texts seeking expressive individuality. Instead, they expect clarity, consistency, and enforceability. The normative weight falls squarely on accountability and closure. A clause’s validity does not depend on whether it was initially drafted by a human or generated through AI assistance; it depends on whether accountable agents reviewed and endorsed it with sufficient expertise.

AI systems can generate template language or summarize complex regulations, thereby expanding the production dimension. However, they cannot assume liability for drafting errors or anticipate context-specific legal consequences. The structural asymmetry identified in Section V becomes especially visible here: production can be automated; accountability cannot. Authorship therefore persists so long as identifiable human agents exercise evaluative governance and formally enact closure.

C. Journalism and Public Commentary

Journalism occupies an intermediate position. In routine reporting—financial summaries, sports coverage, weather updates—reader expectations align closely with communicative norms. Accuracy, timeliness, and clarity take precedence over stylistic singularity. AI-assisted drafting, when subject to editorial oversight, does not inherently undermine authorship because accountability remains anchored in identifiable journalists and editors.

However, in investigative reporting, long-form analysis, or opinion writing, authorship carries an additional interpretive dimension. Readers may follow particular journalists for their analytical framing or narrative sensibility. In such cases, authorship signals both governance and perspective. AI assistance that merely supports research or structural organization may leave this dual function intact. By contrast, if stylistic and interpretive elements are substantially automated, readers may perceive a dilution of the authorial presence they value.

Journalism thus illustrates how authorship can be layered. The communicative dimension ensures factual accountability; the expressive dimension shapes interpretive authority. AI interacts differently with each layer.

D. Commercial and Organizational Communication

Marketing materials, corporate communications, internal reports, and public relations statements primarily serve strategic communicative purposes. In these contexts, authorship is often attributed to organizations rather than individuals. What matters is coherence with brand identity, regulatory compliance, and message effectiveness.

Readers do not generally interpret stylistic features in such texts as reflections of personal interiority. Instead, authorship signals institutional backing and strategic intent. Generative AI

can efficiently produce drafts aligned with established brand guidelines, thereby expanding production without displacing governance. Provided that responsible agents review and approve the output, authorship remains institutionally grounded.

The normative question here concerns transparency and oversight rather than expressive authenticity. AI's influence is operational rather than existential.

E. Literary and Expressive Writing

Literary writing presents the most conceptually complex case. In fiction, poetry, and memoir, authorship is frequently intertwined with identity and origination. Readers often approach literary texts as encounters with a particular consciousness. Stylistic idiosyncrasy—lexical choice, syntactic rhythm, narrative experimentation—is interpreted as expressive of lived perspective.

In this domain, the production dimension is not merely instrumental. The crafting of language is itself part of what is valued. Creative labor may be treated as constitutive of artistic meaning. Authorship signals not only accountability for content but participation in a tradition of expressive articulation.

Generative AI destabilizes this structure by expanding the production dimension in a way that intersects directly with stylistic formation. Because systems can replicate or approximate distinctive linguistic patterns, the interpretive bridge between textual form and personal origination becomes less secure. Even when a human exercises evaluative governance and enacts closure, readers may question whether the stylistic features they attribute to an author genuinely originate from that author's sensibility.

The tension here does not stem from a loss of accountability. The author may still stand behind the work and accept responsibility for its publication. Rather, the instability arises at the level of identity and origination. Where expressive individuality is central to reader valuation, AI assistance affects authorship more deeply because it reshapes how textual distinctiveness is interpreted.

F. Comparative Perspective

Across these domains, the structural asymmetry of AI remains constant: it expands production without assuming governance, accountability, or closure. What varies is the normative weight assigned to each authorship dimension.

In governance-centered domains, authorship survives technological mediation so long as human oversight remains substantive. In identity-centered domains, AI integration challenges the interpretive expectations through which authorship is recognized. The difference is not technological but normative. It reflects the purposes writing serves and the values readers attach to authorship within those practices.

This comparative analysis reinforces the central thesis of the paper: authorship is neither universally preserved nor universally displaced by AI. Its status depends on which dimensions are treated as decisive in the context at hand.

VII. Objections and Replies

The purpose-relative framework advanced in this paper may invite several objections. Some challenge the sufficiency of evaluative governance as a basis for authorship; others question whether expressive practices impose stricter conditions that governance alone cannot satisfy. Still others contend that reader expectations or originality norms should override the proposed domain-sensitive account. This section addresses these concerns in turn.

A. Objection 1: Governance-Based Authorship Is Too Thin

A first objection holds that grounding authorship in evaluative governance risks reducing authorship to mere approval. If a person prompts a system, receives output, performs minimal review, and then publishes the result, can authorship genuinely be said to persist? On this view, authorship requires substantive generative contribution, not simply endorsement.

This concern is serious and must be taken carefully. The account developed here does not equate authorship with passive acceptance. Evaluative governance entails meaningful engagement: critical scrutiny, correction of inaccuracies, integration of arguments, and willingness to defend the resulting claims. Governance must be substantive rather than nominal. A user who lacks the competence to evaluate the output meaningfully cannot plausibly claim authorship merely by attaching their name.

The framework therefore distinguishes between technological mediation and abdication of responsibility. AI assistance does not thin authorship if governance remains active and informed. Authorship becomes attenuated only when human agents fail to exercise the very dimensions—judgment, accountability, closure—that define their role.

B. Objection 2: Literary Authorship Requires Embodied Origination

A second objection focuses on expressive domains. Critics may argue that literary authorship is inseparable from embodied origination. Even if a writer selects and edits AI-generated material, the creative act itself has been displaced. On this account, governance cannot substitute for generative authorship.

This objection draws strength from long-standing cultural understandings of artistic creation. Literary authorship has often been associated with imaginative risk, stylistic struggle, and the transformation of lived experience into language. If production is substantially automated, the authenticity of origination appears compromised.

The purpose-relative account does not dismiss this concern. Rather, it clarifies its domain-specific force. In literary contexts, origination and identity indeed carry heightened normative weight. The framework therefore predicts greater tension in such practices. However, the historical record complicates any claim that authorship requires solitary origination. Collaboration, editorial intervention, adaptation, and translation have long shaped literary production without dissolving authorship.

The relevant question is not whether any assistance invalidates authorship, but whether the identity-signaling function of authorship remains credible. Degrees of AI involvement, transparency about process, and the preservation of stylistic intentionality may become normatively salient in this domain. The framework allows for these gradations rather than imposing an all-or-nothing criterion.

C. Objection 3: Reader Expectations Should Be Decisive

A third objection emphasizes reception. If readers approach expressive texts with the expectation that stylistic distinctiveness reflects a singular human consciousness, then AI involvement may undermine authorship regardless of governance. On this view, authorship is constituted by interpretive belief; if that belief is destabilized, authorship itself is compromised.

Reader expectations are undeniably central to how authorship functions socially. As argued earlier, authorship operates as a signal linking textual form to identity and responsibility. However, reducing authorship entirely to perception risks collapsing normative analysis into fluctuating audience sentiment. Interpretive frameworks evolve. What readers expect from authorship has changed historically and may continue to change in response to technological developments.

The purpose-relative account incorporates reader expectations without allowing them to become absolute. In governance-centered domains, readers primarily value accountability; AI assistance does not contradict that expectation when oversight remains human. In identity-centered domains, readers may indeed value origination more heavily; here, AI integration introduces genuine tension. The framework therefore acknowledges the interpretive dimension while retaining structural criteria grounded in governance and accountability.

D. Objection 4: AI Undermines Originality Entirely

A further objection contends that because generative models are trained on vast corpora of existing texts, AI-assisted writing is inherently derivative in a way that undermines originality

across domains. If originality is diluted at the level of production, authorship becomes conceptually unstable.

This objection presupposes that originality requires independence from prior material. Yet human authorship has never operated under such a standard. Writers draw upon shared vocabularies, inherited genres, and cultural traditions. Originality has historically been understood as distinctive arrangement, perspective, or synthesis rather than creation *ex nihilo*.

Generative AI intensifies the visibility of derivation but does not fundamentally alter the intertextual nature of writing. The normative issue is whether human agents meaningfully shape, evaluate, and endorse the final articulation. Where governance and closure remain substantive, authorship does not collapse simply because production involves patterned recombination.

E. Clarifying the Scope of the Claim

These objections reveal the limits of the present account. The claim is not that AI use automatically preserves authorship, nor that governance suffices in every expressive context. The claim is structural: generative AI transforms the production dimension while leaving evaluative governance, accountability, and closure irreducibly human. Whether this transformation undermines authorship depends on which dimensions are normatively decisive within the practice at issue.

Disagreement about AI and authorship therefore reflects deeper disagreements about the purposes of writing and the values readers attach to authorship. By making these normative commitments explicit, the purpose-relative framework offers a way to evaluate AI-assisted writing without collapsing communicative and expressive practices into a single, undifferentiated standard.

VIII. Conclusion

The integration of generative artificial intelligence into writing practices has unsettled long-standing assumptions about authorship. Public debate frequently frames the issue in binary terms: either AI displaces the human author or it functions merely as a neutral tool. This paper has argued that such framing obscures the structure of the problem. Authorship is not reducible to the physical production of sentences. It is a multidimensional normative role composed of intention, evaluative governance, accountability, origination, identity, labor, and closure.

The central contribution of this analysis has been to demonstrate that these dimensions do not carry equal weight across writing practices. Authorship is purpose-relative. In communicative and operational domains—such as academic research, legal drafting, technical documentation, and organizational communication—authorship primarily signals governance and accountability. Readers in these contexts seek reliability, defensibility, and traceable responsibility. Generative

AI expands the production dimension of writing but does not assume evaluative governance, bear risk, or enact closure. Where human agents retain substantive oversight and stand behind the final text, authorship remains intact in the sense that matters within these practices.

In expressive and literary domains, however, authorship performs additional functions. It signals identity and origination; it links stylistic form to perceived interiority. Readers may approach literary works as encounters with a particular sensibility. In such contexts, AI's capacity to simulate linguistic patterns complicates the interpretive bridge between textual distinctiveness and personal authorship. The tension here does not arise from a loss of accountability but from the destabilization of authorship as an index of embodied perspective.

The purpose-relative framework clarifies why disagreements about AI and authorship often appear irreconcilable. Participants in the debate rely on different normative criteria grounded in different writing practices. When expressive values are projected onto governance-centered domains, AI appears unnecessarily threatening. When communicative criteria are projected onto identity-centered domains, concerns about authenticity appear overstated. By disaggregating authorship and situating it within the functions writing serves, the analysis reveals that AI neither universally preserves nor universally erodes authorship. Its impact depends on which dimensions are treated as decisive.

Generative AI expands linguistic possibilities. It accelerates drafting, multiplies formulations, and alters the distribution of labor. What it does not do is assume responsibility, deliberate about risk, or decide that a text is ready to stand as a public commitment. Those acts remain human. Authorship becomes visible not at the moment of token generation, but at the moment of endorsement—when an agent accepts accountability for the words that enter the public sphere.

Future institutional and cultural negotiations will continue to refine disclosure norms, ethical standards, and aesthetic expectations. Yet any stable framework must distinguish between production and governance, between linguistic generation and normative commitment. The enduring question is not whether machines can produce language, but how human agents choose to govern, endorse, and represent the language that circulates under their names. In that choice, the structure of authorship persists—even as its tools evolve.

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