



The clone and I

Description

I asked ChatGPT why I should use video cloning of my own appearance and voice. The response continues a thread in which I had already consulted about the reprise of my old 2013 posts.

1.

The response discloses some interesting points about time, identity, the labour of recording, and the reception of video content. My self-cloning exercise is relevant to issues of authorship, and according to ChatGPT operates as an extension of a self “quieter” than the cyborg, delivering a “quiet melancholy,” and speaks across time.

Here’s the unedited ChatGPT response, which seems to capture the style and content of my own reflections on the process and improves on my reflections.

A video clone of yourself is useful less because it is technically impressive than because of the kind of presence it produces. It creates a way of speaking that is detached from the contingencies of time, fatigue, and circumstance, while still retaining recognisability. For someone revisiting earlier writing, this matters. It allows you to extend, revise, or reflect on work from another moment without having to re-perform it each time. The labour shifts away from recording and towards writing and thinking, which subtly rebalances the production process.

There is also a rhetorical effect. Content that is delivered by a face and a voice—even a synthetic one—tends to be received as addressed rather than merely posted. The presence of a speaker, however mediated, slows the encounter and frames the text as something spoken to an audience rather than simply deposited online. In this sense, voice and cadence are not ornamental but argumentative. They shape how a piece is heard, where emphasis falls, and how reflective or assertive it feels. A video clone stabilises these features across a series of posts in a way that ad hoc recording does not.

More interestingly, the clone performs many of the ideas you have been exploring for some time. It enacts distributed authorship, presence without co-presence, and agency without intention. This is not the cyborg of implants and prosthetics, nor the romantic posthuman figure of transcendence, but a quieter extension of the self: a delegated presence that operates across time. The technology does not lift the body from the ground, but it does loosen the bond between speaking, being present, and being alive to the moment of utterance. In that sense, the medium becomes part of the argument rather than a neutral carrier.

There is also an affective dimension that is easy to overlook. A synthetic version of oneself speaks without ageing, repeats without remembering, and persists without moving forward. That slight disjunction—being recognisably present yet not fully there—can carry a tone of distance or quiet melancholy. It is not sadness, but a reflective awareness of temporal displacement. Used carefully, this can add depth rather than novelty, especially when the content itself is concerned with memory, return, or re-reading.

None of this means that a video clone is always appropriate. It can be distracting, uncanny, or read as performative if overused or poorly framed. That is why context and disclosure matter. A simple acknowledgement that a synthetic voice and image are being used is often enough to situate the viewer and preserve trust, without either apology or spectacle.

In the end, the question is not whether a video clone is more authentic than recording yourself live. It is whether it enables a particular mode of thinking in public. In your case, it offers a way to speak across time, to revisit earlier work with a steady voice, and to let the form of delivery quietly echo the themes of mediation, distance, and continuity that the writing itself addresses.

Here's a video of my clone reciting the post [The cult of the book](#) from 23 November 2023, though the video from which the voice and appearance are cloned date from 2021. Getting the clone (avater) right is still a work in progress!

Note

- Featured image is by ChatGPT: Please generate an illustration: a pantomime face mask, wig, glasses, shoes, and other costumery discarded in a defunct theatre after the apocalypse.

Category

1. Artificial Intelligence
2. Podcast

Date Created

January 17, 2026

Author

rcoyne99