

Thinking Clearly About How Things Get Done
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When we consider the idea that something might be done – whether by a machine, a system, or a person – it is important to think carefully about how it would actually happen. Too often, people react with fear or dismissal without stopping to analyze the actual process and capabilities involved. This leads to mistakes that can be costly.

The first step in clear thinking is to ask: How is it exactly going to do that? This simple question demands a concrete explanation or mechanism. Without understanding how a task or event would be carried out, we are left with vague assumptions or speculation.

After forming a question about how something could happen, the next logical step is to look for examples or evidence that it is even close to happening. If we cannot find any real-world cases or signs, it is reasonable to think that it may not be feasible at the moment. However, this does not mean we should dismiss the possibility entirely.

History shows us that many jobs have been replaced – not by artificial intelligence or futuristic machines – but by people themselves. Programmers, engineers, and workers in many fields have created automation tools and systems that have directly replaced the work others used to do. For example, software automating bookkeeping, assembly lines replacing manual labor, and computerized design tools have displaced many workers. Often, people believed such changes could never happen to their own job or industry – only to find that they were wrong.

Beyond job displacement and automation, human industries have also produced weapons and technologies with profound impacts. Many tools developed by programmers, engineers, and technologists have been repurposed or originally designed for defense, offense, or control. This reality highlights the complexity and responsibility of technological progress. While AI itself is not human, it emerges from human innovation, which includes both creation and destruction.

It is important to understand that this is not all doom and gloom about AI taking over or some inevitable technological apocalypse. People have long been the agents of change and disruption through technology, and they remain the key actors. However, unlike humans, AI is not mortal. It can scale, learn, and perform certain tasks continuously and at speeds humans cannot match. This makes the nature of this change different in degree and kind, even if the principle is the same.

One important caution is to remember that just because you cannot imagine how something could be done, it does not mean that someone else cannot. Human creativity and innovation are vast, and solutions often arise from unexpected directions. This means that even if a task or takeover seems impossible to you now, it might become possible in the future.

If someone else figures out how to do it, and actually succeeds, that becomes a

crucial turning point. It means that what you thought impossible has become real. Ignoring or denying this possibility beforehand would then be a mistake – a failure to properly consider potential risks or changes.

This framework is broadly applicable. It applies to technological change, job displacement, social shifts, or any situation where new capabilities might challenge current assumptions. The key lesson is to balance skepticism with openness, grounded in practical reasoning.

In summary, the reasoning steps are:

Ask specifically how something could happen.

Look for evidence it is happening or close to happening.

Recognize that others may solve problems you cannot.

Understand that if they do, you were wrong to assume it impossible.

Accept responsibility for any mistake in ignoring this.

This approach encourages careful, responsible thinking. It avoids both panic and complacency. By following it, we prepare ourselves better for a changing world.