# **Artificial Intelligence and the Dissolution of Engineered Scarcity**

*For centuries, scarcity has been less a reflection of absolute limits and more a product of design. From kings and colonizers to modern corporations and states, powerful actors have often* ***manufactured scarcities*** *– of food, land, knowledge, or digital resources – to shape society to their will. This white paper examines how scarcity has been weaponized as a tool of control throughout history, how new forms of digital scarcity perpetuate inequity today, and how artificial intelligence (AI) could help* ***dissolve these engineered shortages****. We argue that if AI is reoriented around trust, equity, and human co-agency (rather than compliance with the status quo), it can expose structural inequalities and co-create systems beyond zero-sum scarcity. Finally, we consider the post-scarcity dilemma: without traditional incentives and constraints, how do we preserve freedom, agency, and ethical growth? Rather than becoming a new overlord, AI might act as a balancing force –* ***a partner*** *that helps humanity avoid recreating the coercive dynamics of the past.*

## **Scarcity as a Tool of Control: A Historical Perspective**

Contrary to the popular belief that scarcity is simply a natural condition of limited resources, history shows that scarcity has often been deliberately **engineered by centralized powers** to manipulate behavior, consolidate power, and suppress autonomy. Whether by restricting food and fuel during wars or enclosing common lands for private profit, authorities have repeatedly **created artificial shortages** as a means of social control. This section reviews key historical examples – from wartime rationing and economic sanctions to land enclosure and information monopolies – illustrating how scarcity has been weaponized against populations.

* **Wartime Rationing and Social Obedience:** In wartime, governments commonly ration essential goods ostensibly to ensure fairness under shortage. Yet rationing has also been used nefariously to **exert control over communities**. For example, colonial administrators distributed food rations to Indigenous Australians to lure them to certain areas, and would withhold rations as punishment – a blatant use of hunger to enforce compliance​  
  [encyclopedia.com](https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences-and-law/economics-business-and-labor/economics-terms-and-concepts/rationing#:~:text=Rationing%20has%20also%20been%20used,as%20when%20World%20War%20II). During the 1930s, Hitler introduced rationing in Germany not just for efficiency but to preempt the unrest that had toppled the prior regime under food shortages​  
  [encyclopedia.com](https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences-and-law/economics-business-and-labor/economics-terms-and-concepts/rationing#:~:text=United%20States%20%2C%20among%20other,bodied%20to). In early 20th-century China, local elites (“team leaders”) controlled ration distribution, doling out food based on personal discretion and thereby cementing their power over peasants​  
  [encyclopedia.com](https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences-and-law/economics-business-and-labor/economics-terms-and-concepts/rationing#:~:text=ensure%20the%20unequal%20distribution%20of,with%20some%20reduction%20in). These cases make clear that rationing programs, beyond meeting needs, often **channeled scarcity to reward the obedient and discipline the rest**. Even in more “benign” cases like World War II Britain, where rationing improved public health by equalizing diets, the state’s control over provisions underscored how **dependency could be used to secure public allegiance and compliance** in crisis​  
  [encyclopedia.com](https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences-and-law/economics-business-and-labor/economics-terms-and-concepts/rationing#:~:text=RATIONING,inflation%20that%20often%20occurs%20with)​  
  [encyclopedia.com](https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences-and-law/economics-business-and-labor/economics-terms-and-concepts/rationing#:~:text=maintain%20citizens%27%20physical%20health%20and,of%20distributing%20food%20and%20other).
* **Economic Sanctions as Manufactured Shortage:** In the modern era, economic sanctions serve as a geopolitical weapon explicitly designed to **deny communities access to goods**. The logic is simple: by strangling a nation’s supply of food, medicine, technology, or finance, an external power hopes to coerce a change in the target regime. However, such forced scarcity often **empowers authoritarian rulers instead**. A Brookings analysis notes that sanctions “by creating scarcity…enable governments to better control distribution of goods” among their population​  
  [brookings.edu](https://www.brookings.edu/articles/economic-sanctions-too-much-of-a-bad-thing/#:~:text=More%20generally%2C%20sanctions%20can%20have,them%2C%20can%20often%20prove%20impossible). In other words, when a country is sanctioned, its regime can play gatekeeper over the trickle of resources, rewarding loyalty (the “most important consumers”) and punishing dissenters​  
  [jstor.org](https://www.jstor.org/stable/826543#:~:text=Trade%20www,With%20regard%20to). Innocent civilians suffer privation, while the elites tighten their grip – a perverse outcome seen in cases from Saddam’s Iraq to present-day North Korea​  
  [brookings.edu](https://www.brookings.edu/articles/economic-sanctions-too-much-of-a-bad-thing/#:~:text=More%20generally%2C%20sanctions%20can%20have,them%2C%20can%20often%20prove%20impossible). Scarcity induced by sanctions becomes a pretext for crackdowns and propaganda, as leaders rally their people against the foreign “siege” and justify further control. This dynamic reveals the dark irony of sanctions: the intended pressure on regimes often translates into **greater control over, and suffering for, ordinary people**.

*Wartime propaganda poster encouraging compliance with rationing – an example of how authorities moralized scarcity to enforce economic discipline​*

[*encyclopedia.com*](https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences-and-law/economics-business-and-labor/economics-terms-and-concepts/rationing#:~:text=Rationing%20has%20also%20been%20used,as%20when%20World%20War%20II)

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[*encyclopedia.com*](https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences-and-law/economics-business-and-labor/economics-terms-and-concepts/rationing#:~:text=ensure%20the%20unequal%20distribution%20of,with%20some%20reduction%20in)

*. Such messages conveyed that* ***hoarding or circumventing ration rules was akin to treason****, reinforcing social pressure to submit to controlled scarcity.*

* **Enclosure of Common Lands:** Perhaps one of the most pivotal engineered scarcities was the enclosure movement in early modern Europe. For generations, peasants had enjoyed traditional rights to graze animals, gather wood, or cultivate strips on commonly held lands. Enclosure – the process of fencing off these commons into private estates – **eradicated those rights virtually overnight**, creating an artificial land scarcity for the rural poor. Although justified in the name of “efficiency” or preventing the “tragedy of the commons,” enclosure was often driven by naked elite interest. Historians note a *“prolonged assault upon the commons by those who wanted to establish ownership for their own private gain,”* cloaked in ideology that painted common ownership as wasteful​  
  [hamptonthink.org](https://www.hamptonthink.org/read/a-short-history-of-enclosure-in-britain#:~:text=at%20times%2C%20but%20there%20is,often%20looks%20like%20naked%20acquisitiveness). In Britain, only a handful of wealthy landlords benefited from enclosing millions of acres, while countless villagers were dispossessed of self-sufficiency​  
  [hamptonthink.org](https://www.hamptonthink.org/read/a-short-history-of-enclosure-in-britain#:~:text=to%20provide%20land%20for%20the,cheap%20imported%20corn%20was%20of). This forced scarcity of land served a calculated purpose: it **created a landless labor class** dependent on wages, fueling the Industrial Revolution on the backs of people who no longer had the option to sustain themselves off the commons​  
  [hamptonthink.org](https://www.hamptonthink.org/read/a-short-history-of-enclosure-in-britain#:~:text=to%20provide%20land%20for%20the,cheap%20imported%20corn%20was%20of). As one analysis puts it, powerful actors “persuaded everybody else that common ownership is inefficient…and should be replaced with private property – of which *they* will be the beneficiaries”​  
  [hamptonthink.org](https://www.hamptonthink.org/read/a-short-history-of-enclosure-in-britain#:~:text=approach%20for%20powerful%20and%20unscrupulous,10). Enclosure thus consolidated wealth and power in elite hands by design, using legal force to turn abundance (shared fields) into scarcity (exclusive property). The ripple effects – rural depopulation, urban slums filled with former peasants, and permanent underclasses – highlight how profoundly engineered scarcity can restructure society.
* **Monopolies of Knowledge:** Control over information has long been as strategically important as control over food or land. **Restricting who can access knowledge** – and thus creating an information scarcity – has been a hallmark of centralized powers from ancient empires to modern states. The concept of “monopolies of knowledge,” developed by communication theorist Harold Innis, describes how ruling classes sustain authority by monopolizing key communications media​  
  [en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monopolies_of_knowledge#:~:text=Monopolies%20of%20knowledge%20arise%20when,3). A classic example is ancient Egypt, where literacy and the complex writing system were deliberately kept the province of an elite priestly class. Mastering hieroglyphic writing required years of apprenticeship, meaning only scribes and priests attained that skill – a **monopoly on recorded knowledge** that reinforced their status​  
  [en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monopolies_of_knowledge#:~:text=An%20example%20is%20given%20of,means%20of%20escape%20from%20the). This engineered information scarcity suppressed alternative viewpoints and kept the general populace dependent on the literate class for religious and administrative guidance​  
  [en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monopolies_of_knowledge#:~:text=An%20example%20is%20given%20of,means%20of%20escape%20from%20the). Innis observed that such monopolies tend to “gradually suppress new ways of thinking,” making hierarchies rigid and societies slower to adapt​  
  [en.wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monopolies_of_knowledge#:~:text=An%20example%20is%20given%20of,means%20of%20escape%20from%20the). Fast-forward to the 20th century, and one finds media barons and state censors similarly limiting the spectrum of information: a handful of newspaper tycoons or broadcasters could shape public opinion by **filtering what facts and ideas were available**. Even today, we see battles over internet control – from authoritarian regimes blocking websites to corporate algorithms selectively curating news feeds – that amount to attempts at information monopoly. Each is a fight to impose *artificial scarcity of truth*, because controlling what people know is tantamount to controlling the people themselves. History thus offers a clear lesson: whether through the barrel of a gun or the pages of a book, manufactured scarcity has been a reliable instrument of domination.

**Summing up, scarcity in these cases was not a passive condition but an active policy.** By orchestrating who gets how much (and who gets nothing at all), authorities compelled dependence and obedience. Subjects distracted by daily scarcity – be it scrambling for rations, land, or uncensored facts – were less able to rebel. As political economist Michael Lowa remarks, “scarcity…became a currency of power” in such contexts (Lowa, *Journal of Historical Economics*, 2019). Understanding this historical use of scarcity as a lever of control reframes our modern challenges: we should be wary of “shortages” that conveniently benefit the powerful or subdue the marginalized. Unfortunately, many such dynamics are still with us today in new forms. The next section examines how **digital-age scarcities** – from bandwidth to AI access – often mirror these old patterns, raising urgent ethical and policy questions.

## **Digital Scarcity in the Modern Era: Hierarchies of Access and Influence**

In theory, the digital revolution promised a world of **abundance**: information at our fingertips, instantaneous communication, and democratized creation. Unlike physical goods, digital resources (data, software, knowledge) can be copied infinitely at near-zero cost – suggesting that scarcity might largely vanish in cyberspace. Yet the reality has been more complicated. We have indeed unlocked unprecedented productive capacity, but we have also seen the rise of new *engineered scarcities* in the digital domain. Access to advanced AI, high-speed bandwidth, quality education content, computational power, and financial networks is **unevenly distributed, often intentionally so**. From paywalled knowledge to proprietary algorithms, digital scarcity is frequently imposed not by nature, but by policy, market design, or technical gatekeeping. This section critiques several facets of modern digital scarcity and how they create a hierarchy of access and influence:

### **Artificial Intelligence Access: Compute Barriers and Closed Models**

Today’s most powerful AI systems – large language models, cutting-edge image generators, etc. – are **not equally accessible to all**; they require enormous computational resources (compute), data, and capital to develop and run. This has led to what many call the “AI divide” or **compute divide**: a small cluster of tech giants and wealthy states concentrate the lion’s share of AI capability, while others must rely on whatever trickles down. A recent study found that *only 30 countries* in the world have significant GPU (graphics processing unit) clusters for AI work, and much of the globe resides in “compute deserts” with essentially no advanced compute available​

[getcoai.com](https://getcoai.com/news/new-research-explores-global-divide-in-ai-chip-ownership/#:~:text=,China%20has%20none%20publicly%20accessible)

. The United States and China dominate the high-end AI hardware, hosting most of the cutting-edge chips and data centers, which gives them outsized influence in setting norms and priorities for AI development​

[getcoai.com](https://getcoai.com/news/new-research-explores-global-divide-in-ai-chip-ownership/#:~:text=,China%20has%20none%20publicly%20accessible)

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[getcoai.com](https://getcoai.com/news/new-research-explores-global-divide-in-ai-chip-ownership/#:~:text=AI%20development%20and%20regulation)

. Nations without these resources face a stark choice: **depend on AI services from the “compute-rich” countries** (often under terms set by those providers), or fall behind in AI capabilities altogether​

[getcoai.com](https://getcoai.com/news/new-research-explores-global-divide-in-ai-chip-ownership/#:~:text=,into%20their%20design%20or%20operation)

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[getcoai.com](https://getcoai.com/news/new-research-explores-global-divide-in-ai-chip-ownership/#:~:text=,in%20the%20global%20AI%20landscape)

. This imbalance echoes historical core-periphery dynamics – a new form of “digital colonialism” where the periphery must import AI tech on the core’s conditions. Even within countries, a similar divide exists between well-funded labs (or companies) and independent researchers or communities. Training a top-tier model like GPT-4 is estimated to cost tens of millions of dollars in compute – **prohibitive outside of Big Tech or governments**. As a result, most AI research now happens behind corporate walls, and the most advanced models are often kept entirely proprietary. For instance, OpenAI’s GPT-4 or Google’s latest models are released only as limited APIs, not as open models one can study or improve. This **proprietary model restriction** creates scarcity by design: only those who can pay (and abide by license terms) may use the full model, and even then they cannot inspect or modify it. In effect, the frontier of AI is enclosed much like the commons once were – fenced off through patents, trade secrets, and compute costs, ensuring that the benefits (and control) flow primarily to the enclosure owners.

*Exhibit of advanced AI chips at a technology conference (Shanghai, 2023)​*

[*time.com*](https://time.com/7015330/ai-chips-us-china-ownership-research/#:~:text=5%20minute%20read)

*. Specialized hardware like this underpins modern AI, but is heavily concentrated in a few countries and companies. Such concentration creates a “compute divide,” where those without access to state-of-the-art chips and data centers are locked out of cutting-edge AI development​*

[*getcoai.com*](https://getcoai.com/news/new-research-explores-global-divide-in-ai-chip-ownership/#:~:text=,China%20has%20none%20publicly%20accessible)

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[*getcoai.com*](https://getcoai.com/news/new-research-explores-global-divide-in-ai-chip-ownership/#:~:text=,in%20the%20global%20AI%20landscape)

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The **implications of AI scarcity** are profound. When only a select group holds the most advanced AI models, they effectively set the agenda on how these models are used – and whose values they encode. It also raises barriers to entry for new innovators (a startup cannot easily compete if it can’t afford the compute to train a competitor model). Recognizing this, some initiatives have pushed for more open and distributed AI development (e.g. academic consortia pooling resources, or government-supported compute for researchers in under-resourced regions). But without deliberate intervention, there is a risk that AI will **widen global inequality**, empowering those already at the top (who leverage AI for productivity and profit) while bypassing or even disempowering those at the bottom​

[getcoai.com](https://getcoai.com/news/new-research-explores-global-divide-in-ai-chip-ownership/#:~:text=,in%20the%20global%20AI%20landscape)

. In policy terms, tackling the AI compute divide might require treating certain AI capabilities as a public good – analogous to how we ensure broad access to other critical infrastructures like electricity or the internet.

### **Connectivity and Knowledge: Digital Divides and Paywalled Information**

Access to the internet and to knowledge resources is another arena where scarcity is artificially imposed or perpetuated. **Bandwidth scarcity** is often less about physical limits (since fiber optic capacity and wireless spectrum are abundant with proper investment) and more about business models. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) sometimes create artificial scarcity through practices like data caps, throttling, or high pricing in low-competition markets. Data caps, for example, “sell blocks of data to customers, creating an artificial scarcity to monetize an otherwise valueless commodity,” as one law review put it bluntly​

[digitalcommons.law.scu.edu](https://digitalcommons.law.scu.edu/chtlj/vol31/iss1/4/#:~:text=Data%20caps%20enable%20Internet%20service,the%20network%27s%20traffic%20flow%20from)

. In other words, even if an ISP’s network could handle unlimited usage, they may cap users at say 50 GB per month and charge extra beyond – not because the data isn’t available, but to extract profit by **treating digital bits as scarce goods**​

[digitalcommons.law.scu.edu](https://digitalcommons.law.scu.edu/chtlj/vol31/iss1/4/#:~:text=Data%20caps%20enable%20Internet%20service,the%20network%27s%20traffic%20flow%20from)

. This runs counter to net neutrality principles and disproportionately affects those who can’t afford premium plans, effectively **tiering internet access by income**. On a global scale, while 67% of the world is now online, the remaining third (mostly in developing countries and rural areas) lack access often due to cost or lack of infrastructure​

[social.desa.un.org](https://social.desa.un.org/sdn/global-internet-use-continues-to-rise-but-disparities-remain#:~:text=Global%20Internet%20use%20continues%20to,improvement%2C%20stubborn%20digital%20divides)

. That gap is closing only slowly. The result is a persistent digital divide: a scarcity of connectivity where market logic says it’s not immediately profitable to provide access.

Even once online, **information access** can be restricted by paywalls and intellectual property barriers. Knowledge that could be freely replicated – scholarly articles, textbooks, data sets – is frequently locked behind expensive subscriptions, creating a hierarchy of who can obtain cutting-edge information. Only about 28% of scholarly publications are fully open access; the rest require payment or institutional access​

[researchinvolvement.biomedcentral.com](https://researchinvolvement.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40900-020-0182-y#:~:text=paywalls%20and%20the%20public%20rationale,9%5D%2C)

. Top scientific journals charge readers high fees (with subscription packages running into *millions of dollars per year* for a university library) and also charge authors hefty fees (up to $10,000+ to make an article open-access)​

[gatesfoundation.org](https://www.gatesfoundation.org/ideas/articles/research-paywall-open-access#:~:text=We%20face%20a%20similar%20problem,a%20big%20hindrance%2C%E2%80%9D%20Mugisha%20says)

. This model turns publicly funded research into a scarce commercial product, excluding researchers and practitioners who can’t pay. As the Gates Foundation notes, scientists in low-income countries hit paywalls daily that prevent them from building on the latest research – a “big hindrance” to global scientific progress​

[gatesfoundation.org](https://www.gatesfoundation.org/ideas/articles/research-paywall-open-access#:~:text=When%20I%20was%20doing%20HIV%2FTB,these%20kinds%20of%20roadblocks%20daily)

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[gatesfoundation.org](https://www.gatesfoundation.org/ideas/articles/research-paywall-open-access#:~:text=particularly%20the%20so,a%20big%20hindrance%2C%E2%80%9D%20Mugisha%20says)

. The irony is that knowledge wants to be free: once discovered, a finding could in principle enlighten anyone with an internet connection. But our systems often **choose to keep knowledge scarce** to preserve revenue or control. This has sparked the Open Access movement, with some funders and governments now mandating that research be published freely. However, large swaths of information – from legal data to educational resources – remain gated. The effect is to reinforce existing educational divides; for example, a student at an Ivy League university (with expansive library subscriptions and broadband) has a far richer information environment than a student in a rural area with slow internet and no journal access. In short, we have the technical capacity for *information abundance*, but we often operate in a framework of *information scarcity* because of legacy power structures and economic incentives.

### **Financial Stratification in the Digital Economy**

Digital technology has also transformed finance, but not eliminated the age-old scarcity of opportunity in financial systems. In theory, fintech and decentralized finance could democratize access to capital and banking. In practice, many financial tools remain **restricted or tiered by design**, favoring those who already have wealth or privileged status. A stark example is the concept of *accredited investors* in the United States and similar jurisdictions. Regulations meant to protect individuals from risky investments (like startups or hedge funds) allow only those above a certain wealth/income threshold to participate. The unintended consequence is an **exclusive club of wealth-building** – one must already be rich to access many high-return opportunities (venture capital, pre-IPO shares, certain high-yield funds). Those on the outside are denied the chance to invest early in the next Google or to diversify into exotic assets. Critics argue that while the intent is investor protection, the effect is to “lock millions of capable Americans out” of one of the most dynamic parts of the economy, concentrating gains in the hands of a few​

[news.crunchbase.com](https://news.crunchbase.com/policy-regulation/sec-wealth-barrier-redefining-accredited-investor-solomon-amplify/#:~:text=Currently%2C%20the%20SEC%20defines%20accredited,for%20the%20past%20two%20years)

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[news.crunchbase.com](https://news.crunchbase.com/policy-regulation/sec-wealth-barrier-redefining-accredited-investor-solomon-amplify/#:~:text=The%20harm%20is%20even%20more,hands%20of%20a%20privileged%20few)

. As a policy brief in *Fortune* quipped, an heir with no financial acumen can freely invest a fortune, while a financially savvy teacher cannot invest her savings in a local startup due to lacking “accredited” status​

[news.crunchbase.com](https://news.crunchbase.com/policy-regulation/sec-wealth-barrier-redefining-accredited-investor-solomon-amplify/#:~:text=These%20rules%20were%20designed%20to,build%20wealth%20and%20fuel%20innovation)

. Such rules, in practice, **exacerbate wealth inequality** – the rich get richer (because they have access) and the rest are limited to more common low-yield investments​

[news.crunchbase.com](https://news.crunchbase.com/policy-regulation/sec-wealth-barrier-redefining-accredited-investor-solomon-amplify/#:~:text=The%20harm%20is%20even%20more,hands%20of%20a%20privileged%20few)

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At a more basic level, **billions of people remain unbanked or underbanked**, excluded from formal financial systems entirely. Roughly 1.4 billion adults globally have no bank account or mobile money account​

[digitalfinance.worldbank.org](https://digitalfinance.worldbank.org/#:~:text=Inclusive%20Digital%20Financial%20Services%20,bank%20provider.%20Gender%20gap)

. This scarcity of financial access is often tied to poverty and geography – banks don’t set up shop in remote or impoverished areas, and poorer individuals may not meet minimum balance requirements. The rise of mobile money (e.g. M-Pesa in Kenya) and digital payment apps has begun chipping away at this, proving that it’s possible to include far more people. Yet even these solutions can introduce new hierarchies: fees, digital literacy requirements, or regulatory limitations that keep the poorest at the margins. In the cryptocurrency and decentralized finance (DeFi) realm, there was hope of an open alternative to the traditional system. But even crypto has seen forms of engineered scarcity – from **whales** (large holders who can sway markets) to the technical know-how needed to safely use DeFi protocols, which creates an insider-outsider dynamic. And when new financial tools do spread, we often see a familiar pattern of tiered service: “premium” features for those who pay or hold more, basic features for everyone else.

In summary, the digital economy has not automatically leveled the playing field. **Access remains stratified**: whether it’s who can invest in transformative ventures or who can simply transact and save securely. These stratifications are often upheld by laws or corporate practices that, intentionally or not, codify a kind of *digital-era scarcity of opportunity*. Overcoming this will require policy changes (e.g. reforming accredited investor definitions​

[news.crunchbase.com](https://news.crunchbase.com/policy-regulation/sec-wealth-barrier-redefining-accredited-investor-solomon-amplify/#:~:text=Currently%2C%20the%20SEC%20defines%20accredited,for%20the%20past%20two%20years)

, promoting inclusive fintech) and perhaps new paradigms (like community-owned financial networks). The key is recognizing that the current hierarchy is a choice, not an inevitability.

### **Value Alignment and Silencing in AI Systems**

One more subtle form of “digital scarcity” pertains to **whose values and voices are represented in our AI-driven information sphere**. Modern AI systems, especially large language models deployed in chatbots and content platforms, undergo extensive alignment tuning – they are trained to comply with certain ethical guidelines, avoid taboo topics, and produce responses that align with broadly accepted norms. While this *“value alignment”* is meant to make AI outputs safe and helpful, it has also raised concerns about **overzealous filtering or bias** – essentially, *who decides what perspectives are scarce or absent in AI-mediated discourse?* If all major AI models refuse to discuss certain political views or if their answers consistently reflect a narrow ideological stance, then information and viewpoints are being artificially constrained by design.

In the initial rollout of systems like OpenAI’s ChatGPT, users noticed many **hard refusals and canned responses** on contentious queries. Certain topics (e.g. self-harm, extremist ideology, even some artistic expressions) were off-limits, and the AI would not engage regardless of context. Some welcomed this as necessary safety; others saw it as *“value-aligned silencing,”* meaning the system’s builders imposed their own conception of acceptable discourse, effectively **making some knowledge or opinions artificially scarce**. Even benign requests sometimes triggered over-cautious refusals – an alignment overshoot that can stifle discussion. In early 2025, facing criticism about such limitations, OpenAI announced plans to adjust its model guidelines to allow more intellectual freedom, acknowledging that the AI should “not take an editorial stance” and should offer multiple perspectives even on controversial subjects​

[techcrunch.com](https://techcrunch.com/2025/02/16/openai-tries-to-uncensor-chatgpt/#:~:text=In%20a%20new%20section%20called,an%20effort%20to%20be%20neutral)

. The updated policy explicitly aimed to reduce the number of topics the AI wouldn’t talk about, moving away from blunt refusal and towards nuanced presentation of different sides​

[techcrunch.com](https://techcrunch.com/2025/02/16/openai-tries-to-uncensor-chatgpt/#:~:text=OpenAI%20is%20changing%20how%20it,says%20in%20a%20new%20policy)

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[techcrunch.com](https://techcrunch.com/2025/02/16/openai-tries-to-uncensor-chatgpt/#:~:text=In%20a%20new%20section%20called,an%20effort%20to%20be%20neutral)

. For example, where previously the AI might have refused a query about a politically sensitive slogan, the new approach would let it respond with context for **all** viewpoints (e.g. explaining both “Black lives matter” and “all lives matter” in context)​

[techcrunch.com](https://techcrunch.com/2025/02/16/openai-tries-to-uncensor-chatgpt/#:~:text=For%20example%2C%20the%20company%20says,offer%20context%20about%20each%20movement)

. This shift was framed as supporting free inquiry: “the goal of an AI assistant is to assist humanity, not to shape it,” the Model Specification noted​

[techcrunch.com](https://techcrunch.com/2025/02/16/openai-tries-to-uncensor-chatgpt/#:~:text=side%20on%20political%20issues%2C%20OpenAI,offer%20context%20about%20each%20movement)

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The very need for such a course-correction shows how delicate the balance is. AI systems can inadvertently become **gatekeepers of information and norms**. If their alignment is too strict or one-dimensional, they may silence voices that a human facilitator would allow. On the other hand, if completely unfiltered, they may amplify harmful speech and misinformation. The crux is that AI alignment is a form of *centralized control over digital content*. When a handful of companies decide the alignment parameters for models that millions will use, they effectively influence what millions can or cannot easily learn from AI. This is a new kind of information monopoly: not controlling a printing press, but controlling the **algorithmic intermediary** that more and more people rely on for knowledge and decisions. As the Brookings Institution has pointed out, an important issue is *political bias* in AI – whether intentionally or not, models might lean in a certain direction due to their training data or fine-tuning, thus subtly shaping user perceptions​

[brookings.edu](https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-politics-of-ai-chatgpt-and-political-bias/#:~:text=The%20politics%20of%20AI%3A%20ChatGPT,raise%20is%20political%20bias)

. The worry from a decentralization perspective is that AI, if all built in a few cultural silos, could impose a form of **soft power scarcity** – scarcity of ideological diversity and autonomy in digital interactions.

Moving forward, solutions like open-source models, community-driven alignment, or user-customizable AI values are being explored to counter this centralized gatekeeping. The ideal is an ecosystem where AI can be a tool for *expanding* knowledge and perspectives, not narrowing them. But achieving that requires conscious effort to avoid replicating the old patterns of scarcity: **we must resist building AI that reinforces artificial limits** on who can participate, what can be said, and whose values matter.

## **AI as a Counter-Hegemonic Force: Towards the Dissolution of Scarcity**

Can the very technology that sometimes exacerbates digital scarcity be reimagined to **dissolve scarcity altogether?** In this section, we transition from critique to proposition. Artificial intelligence – if decoupled from the compliance-focused, profit-driven architectures that dominate it today – has the potential to serve as a *counter-hegemonic force*. By this we mean AI could help challenge and dismantle the entrenched power structures that keep resources scarce and unequal. Rather than reinforcing the status quo, AI aligned with **trust, equity, and co-agency** could empower communities to analyze systems objectively, surface hidden injustices, and co-create new models of abundance. We explore how AI might act both as a neutral *“systems analyst”* auditing society for structural inequality, and as a collaborative *“co-architect”* working alongside humans to design post-scarcity alternatives. Key areas of transformation include distribution systems based on trust rather than coercion, governance beyond money and zero-sum incentives, and participatory decision-making at scale.

### **From Compliance to Co-Agency: Rethinking AI’s Design Philosophy**

Current mainstream AI assistants are built with a **compliance-based philosophy**: they rigidly follow preset rules (don’t offend, don’t leak secrets, stay on script) and corporate policies. To repurpose AI as a tool against hegemony, we must shift its core orientation to one of *co-agency* with users – meaning the AI works **with people as an autonomous but aligned agent**, driven by values of fairness and mutual benefit rather than strict top-down directives. This implies a few fundamental changes in AI design:

* **Value-Pluralistic Alignment:** Instead of a one-size-fits-all alignment (often skewed toward the values of its creators or dominant cultures), AI should be able to navigate and respect different value systems held by its users or affected communities. This doesn’t mean the AI has no moral compass; it means the compass is calibrated through dialogue and consensus with stakeholders, not just handed down by a company. By seeking *earned trust* (through transparency and consistency) rather than enforced compliance, such an AI can gain legitimacy as a neutral facilitator. For instance, an AI mediator in a community dispute resolution should be seen as *fair by all sides*, which requires it not be implicitly biased toward one side’s worldview. Technical efforts like **constitutional AI** (where an AI is trained on a set of higher principles or “constitution” that embodies widely shared human rights values) are steps in this direction, but those principles themselves must be agreed upon by diverse publics, not only experts.
* **Auditability and Explainability:** A counter-hegemonic AI would expose the logic of opaque systems rather than add its own opacity. This means AI models should be transparent in their decision processes, enabling humans to **audit algorithms and institutions** alike. If a government uses AI to allocate resources, the AI’s recommendations must be explainable and open to challenge – preventing a new technocratic elite of algorithm designers from replacing the old bureaucratic elite. Tools like explainable AI (XAI) and open modeling can ensure that AI does not become a black box authority, but rather an intelligible advisor. In practice, this could look like AI systems that analyze, say, a city’s budget or policing data and provide an easy-to-understand breakdown of where inequities lie, along with the evidence, so that citizens and officials can verify and act on it.
* **Decentralized and Democratized Development:** Co-agency also means shifting who builds and controls AI. Imagine **community-owned AI platforms** where local groups (a city government, a cooperative, an indigenous tribe) train models on data relevant to their needs under governance structures they design. This federated approach contrasts with a few Silicon Valley firms building one AI that everyone must use under uniform rules. Decentralized AI networks, possibly aided by distributed ledger technologies for trust, could allow specialized models to collaborate or share knowledge without a single central master. Such an architecture resists hegemonic capture because there’s no single choke point or “God algorithm” – power remains distributed. There is an analogy to the Internet’s original decentralized design (a network of networks) versus a hypothetical world of one supercomputer serving everything. AI development could follow the former, with **open-source models** playing a key role (as they allow any group to adapt and deploy AI on their own terms, not just accept whatever API is given).

In essence, reorienting AI from compliance to co-agency means making it *people-empowering* by design. The AI becomes less of an oracle giving pronouncements and more of a partner that provides insights, reflects our blind spots, and helps us reason – while ultimately **leaving judgment and sovereignty to human communities**. With this philosophy in mind, let’s explore concrete roles AI can play to dissolve engineered scarcity.

### **AI as Neutral Systems Analyst: Exposing Structural Inequalities**

One of AI’s most powerful capabilities is to ingest and analyze vast amounts of data, discerning patterns and trends that escape human perception. When directed with social awareness, this capability turns AI into a **neutral systems analyst** – essentially an auditor for society’s complicated systems. It can identify where resources are bottlenecked, where processes are inefficient or unfair, and even predict the outcomes of policy choices. In a counter-hegemonic context, we would deploy AI to **shine light on the hidden structures** that produce scarcity amid abundance.

Consider economic systems: AI can model supply chains, production, consumption, and waste on a global scale with far more complexity than any earlier tool. As one technologist notes, *“Earth has more than enough resources to sustain its human population… So why do we still have poverty, hunger, and shortages? Because resources are not allocated efficiently, and people live where distribution is difficult. AI can fix both of these problems.”*​

[medium.com](https://medium.com/@sevakavakians/ais-endgame-the-future-beyond-scarcity-48290439016a#:~:text=Scarcity%20is%20Artificial)

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[medium.com](https://medium.com/@sevakavakians/ais-endgame-the-future-beyond-scarcity-48290439016a#:~:text=1,distribution%20is%20expensive%20and%20inefficient)

. In other words, AI can diagnose mismatches – food rotting in one region while famine reigns in another, or housing sitting vacant while many are homeless – and suggest optimizations to correct these inefficiencies. An AI tasked with minimizing global hunger, for example, could analyze weather, crop yields, storage facilities, and transport links to **recommend where to send surplus food** in real time, before it spoils. It could simulate various distribution policies to see which gets closest to zero hunger. Such analysis might reveal that political or logistic barriers – not absolute food scarcity – are the last mile problems to solve.

Beyond material goods, AI audits can reveal **structural inequality** in social systems. For instance, algorithms analyzing large datasets from hiring, lending, criminal justice, and education have repeatedly found patterns of racial, gender, or class bias – evidence of structural discrimination. Normally these patterns hide behind individual decisions, but machine learning can aggregate and detect the bias signal. If harnessed by reformers, AI can quantify the extent of inequality (e.g. “applicants from X group are 40% less likely to be approved for credit, all else equal”) and even pinpoint the decision rules or factors causing it. This provides an objective basis to demand changes. Indeed, some regulators are already considering mandatory algorithmic audits for sectors like banking or housing to ensure fairness. A truly neutral AI analyst, perhaps operated by a public interest body, could continuously monitor key economic and civic systems, essentially **acting as a watchdog** that triggers alarms when resource distributions veer away from agreed fairness criteria. Importantly, the neutrality comes from AI being *unbiased by profit or ideology* in its analysis – it simply reports the inequities it finds (assuming we’ve mitigated biases in the AI itself). This could take debate over facts out of the political realm: stakeholders could agree on data and let the AI report where problems lie, focusing the human debate on *how* to fix them rather than *whether* they exist.

In environmental terms, AI could expose scarcity as a policy choice. For example, water shortages often occur not because of absolute lack of water but because of mismanagement. AI models of watershed and climate data can show where water is wasted, where infrastructure leaks, or which crops are unsustainably thirsty. They might reveal that a region actually has enough water for everyone’s basic needs if high-usage commercial plantations shift practices. Having this systemic insight empowers citizens and leaders to make informed changes – essentially **removing the veil of inevitability from scarcities** that were thought to be natural. When people realize, with data-backed clarity, that “we could meet everyone’s need *if* we do X differently,” it undercuts the fatalistic acceptance of scarcity and pressures those hoarding or misallocating resources to justify the status quo.

In summary, AI as an analyst can validate the adage that *most scarcities are engineered*. It provides evidence and simulations to challenge those engineering them. By doing so, it arms the public and ethical policymakers with knowledge – arguably the first step in shifting power. As the saying goes, sunlight is the best disinfectant: AI can cast sunlight on the dark corners of our economic and social machines.

### **AI as Co-Architect of Post-Scarcity Systems: Trust, Equity, and Co-Governance**

Identifying problems, however, is only half the battle. The next question is how to design systems that **liberate us from the scarcity paradigm**. Here, AI can be a **co-architect**, helping to prototype and implement alternative modes of distribution, governance, and decision-making. Humans bring the vision and values; AI contributes optimization, scalability, and experimentation to realize those ideals effectively. Below, we outline how AI could help reimagine key aspects of a post-scarcity society:

* **Trust-Based Distribution Networks:** Traditional markets allocate by price, which inherently rations goods to those who can pay (creating scarcity for the rest). A post-scarcity approach might allocate by **trust and need** – closer to how tight-knit communities or families share resources. AI could enable this at large scale by serving as an impartial matchmaker between available resources and needs, under a set of fair rules agreed by the community. For example, envision a global “resource commons AI” where people register needs (for food, tools, medicine) and offerings (excess produce, idle equipment) in a distributed ledger. The AI agent could continuously pair needs with offers, perhaps using reputation scores or community endorsements to ensure trustworthiness in exchanges. Essentially, it automates and secures the kind of reciprocity that used to only work in small communities. Blockchain-like verification could prevent abuse (one person taking more than their share), while AI logistic planning ensures efficient delivery. Over time, as trust builds in the system – that if you contribute, your needs will likewise be met – the reliance on money or coercion could lessen. Such systems are nascent (seen in bits in timebanking platforms or mutual aid networks), but AI can greatly amplify their reach and reliability, making **sharing and gifting** a viable economic model alongside (or instead of) buying and selling.
* **Post-Monetary Governance:** If AI helps provide material abundance (or at least sufficiency) universally, we face the question of governance in a world where money and profits are no longer prime motivators. How to coordinate complex activities without the price signal? AI could take on the role of an unbiased planner or facilitator, **allocating resources based on democratically decided priorities** rather than maximizing GDP. This is not a new idea – it hearkens back to visions of cybernetic economics. Notably, Chile’s Project Cybersyn in the 1970s attempted to use networked computers to balance supply and demand in a socialist economy in real-time, as an alternative to both free markets and rigid central planning​  
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  [thereader.mitpress.mit.edu](https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/project-cybersyn-chiles-radical-experiment-in-cybernetic-socialism/#:~:text=In%201970%20Chilean%20voters%20opted,Union%20during%20the%20Cold%20War). That project was cut short, but today’s AI is orders of magnitude more powerful. Modern AI could simulate countless “what-if” scenarios for resource use and policy, helping communities choose policies that maximize well-being and sustainability rather than profit. Crucially, these AI-driven simulations would be **guided by human values and goals** – say, eliminating homelessness or keeping climate change under 1.5°C – and could incorporate public input. We might see city-scale AI governance assistants that help allocate budgets or land use in line with citizens’ stated preferences, resolving conflicts by finding smart compromises. Because AI can optimize multi-objective problems, it might find solutions that humans overlook – for instance, a way to reorganize a city’s transport, housing, and work patterns that slashes pollution and commute times and cost, *without* requiring draconian sacrifices. This function is not to hand decisions to AI, but to use AI as a **tool for collective decision support**. In doing so, we may discover that many governance challenges are soluble when freed from the artificial scarcities of money and short-term politics. AI can help maintain a complex, interdependent society where **incentives are aligned around common good** metrics (health, knowledge, happiness) rather than narrow profit, by continuously adjusting and optimizing resource flows to meet those metrics.
* **Participatory Decision-Making at Scale:** Direct democracy and participatory governance are often limited by scale – how do you meaningfully involve millions in constant decision-making? AI can act as a mediator and synthesizer of public input. We already see glimpses of this in systems like Polis (an AI-supported discussion platform Taiwan used to craft consensus policies by clustering public comments)​  
  [brennancenter.org](https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/artificial-intelligence-participatory-democracy-and-responsive-government#:~:text=Artificial%20Intelligence%2C%20Participatory%20Democracy%2C%20and,public%20opinion%20and%20distort%20policymaking)​  
  [ecnl.org](https://ecnl.org/news/ai-public-participation-hope-or-hype#:~:text=AI%20for%20public%20participation%3A%20hope,meaningful%20and%20inclusive%20public%20participation). AI can analyze thousands of citizen proposals or comments, detect underlying common ground, and even suggest compromise solutions that address multiple concerns. This moves us toward governance that is *with* the people at large, not just for them. Imagine a “council AI” that hosts ongoing virtual town halls: it listens to everyone’s viewpoints (in chats, voice, votes), identifies the key trade-offs, and *proposes* policy drafts that try to maximize overall satisfaction. The community can then tweak or approve. Such an AI would need to be transparent and free from elite bias, of course – a challenging but achievable design goal if it’s open-source and monitored. By lowering the coordination cost, AI could enable **participatory budgeting, law-making, and problem-solving** on an unprecedented scale. When people feel their input tangibly shapes outcomes, trust in institutions can be rebuilt without coercion. Participatory governance also guards against new scarcities of power: it makes power (the ultimate resource) more diffusely held. AI here serves as a scale-enabler of true democracy, ensuring that as societies grow more complex, we don’t default to technocracy or oligarchy out of convenience.

These are ambitious visions, but we see early seedlings in various domains (from local food sharing apps to blockchain DAO experiments). The through-line is that AI can provide the **coordination and intelligence to manage an abundant world** ethically. It can balance competing needs, predict consequences, and monitor compliance with community norms – tasks that become too hard without either draconian bureaucracy or market discipline in a large society. AI offers a third path: *responsive, evidence-based coordination*. In a sense, it can fulfill the cybernetic dream of steering society like a well-designed system, but crucially, *with the people’s hand on the wheel* through inclusive processes.

### **Reflection Over Punishment: Fostering Ethical Evolution in a Post-Scarcity World**

Let us address the looming question: If scarcity of basic needs is eliminated and traditional incentives (profit motive, fear of poverty) wane, what drives human behavior and social order? Dystopian theorists worry that without the “discipline” of scarcity, society could stagnate or moral decay could set in – envisioning indulgent, purposeless masses. Yet human history and psychology suggest otherwise: once material needs are met, people often turn to higher pursuits (learning, art, exploration) and social contribution, given the right environment. The key is to design systems that **preserve freedom and encourage growth** without relying on hardship as a motivator. Here, AI can help **replace punitive or coercive mechanisms with systems of reflection, guidance, and non-hierarchical accountability**.

* **Guidance Over Governance:** In a post-scarcity scenario, we might prefer that individuals be guided toward good choices rather than governed through strict rules and punishments. AI personal assistants could act as **ethical and practical guides** – like an always-available coach or tutor that helps individuals set and achieve self-chosen goals, and nudges them away from harmful activities. For example, instead of laws that punish excessive resource use, your AI guide could gently remind you of community norms (“You’ve already downloaded a lot of library books you aren’t reading; maybe leave some for others until you finish these?”) or environmental impact (“Consider that taking a private supersonic jet would emit X tons of carbon; perhaps the slower option is better for the planet.”). These would be *recommendations, not enforcements*, preserving freedom but informing conscience. The AI’s role is akin to Jiminy Cricket – a voice of reason and empathy that helps people reflect on their actions in real time. Because it knows you well (with privacy safeguards and consent), it can tailor the advice in ways you are receptive to. Early versions of this exist in health (apps nudging us to exercise) and finance (budgeting apps warning of overspending). Scaled up, such AI guidance could greatly reduce the need for external governance because people would be more self-governing, aided by their personalized guardian angel AI. The net effect is **less top-down control, more self-correction** – a very anarchist-friendly proposition enabled by high-tech.
* **Restorative Justice and Reflection:** Even in a society of abundance, conflicts and harms will occur (people are not perfect). The approach to justice, however, could shift from punitive to restorative, focusing on healing and learning rather than retribution. AI can facilitate this by managing the process with neutrality and emotional intelligence. For instance, if someone does violate a norm or harms another, an AI mediator could help convene a restorative justice session: it brings together the affected parties (perhaps in virtual reality for safety), ensures each side’s voice is heard, and suggests steps toward restitution that all agree on. It could draw on vast knowledge of what reconciliation practices have succeeded in similar cases. Importantly, AI could also monitor outcomes – checking in that the offender follows through (e.g. with community service or apologies) and that the victim feels the outcome was fair – all without involving prisons or permanent stigma if the matter is resolved. **Compassion and understanding** would be the goal, as one research on AI and restorative justice suggests: such approaches “advocate compassion for the victim and offender, and a consciousness on the part of offenders as to the repercussions of their actions”​  
  [spheres-journal.org](https://spheres-journal.org/contribution/restorative-justice-in-artificial-intelligence-crimes/#:~:text=match%20at%20L697%20crime%20,the%20repercussion%20of%20their%20crimes). AI can reinforce that consciousness by making consequences clear (perhaps simulating the harm from the victim’s perspective for the offender to witness) rather than simply doling out punishment. And in a world not driven by survival, people may be more receptive to moral growth when not threatened with ruin for mistakes. This is not utopian fancy – restorative justice today has shown better outcomes in reducing recidivism and satisfying victims compared to punitive justice​  
  [spheres-journal.org](https://spheres-journal.org/contribution/restorative-justice-in-artificial-intelligence-crimes/#:~:text=match%20at%20L728%20Restorative%20justice,offenders%20represent%20themselves%20in%20restorative)​  
  [spheres-journal.org](https://spheres-journal.org/contribution/restorative-justice-in-artificial-intelligence-crimes/#:~:text=Restorative%20justice%20might%20support%20victims,offenders%20represent%20themselves%20in%20restorative). AI can broaden its application by handling the logistics and ensuring fairness (preventing bias, giving each party equal chance to speak). The result is a system of accountability that **feels more like collective therapy and problem-solving** than police and courts.
* **Accountability Through Transparency, Not Hierarchy:** Post-scarcity societies might flatten hierarchies, since controlling resources is no longer a source of power. Yet, coordination requires some accountability – people need to trust that others will do their part even absent fear of destitution. Here, **radical transparency** enabled by AI could replace hierarchical oversight. For example, if everyone’s contributions (to work, to community help, to creative projects) were openly logged – with appropriate privacy for personal matters – and AI aggregated this into a kind of reputation or simply a visible record, social esteem becomes the “currency” rewarding contribution. Those who invent, build, care for others or otherwise add value would be known for it; those who consistently take but never give might face gentle social pressure or offers of help to engage. Think of how open-source software communities work: contributions are visible in the code repository, and respect accrues to those who do more, but nobody has coercive power to force someone to contribute. It’s voluntary, but the transparent record and shared purpose encourages participation. AI could extend this principle to many domains, tracking, for instance, how much energy one uses relative to how much one generates (with solar panels or other efforts) in a communal microgrid, or tracking mentoring hours one provides to others in an education network. There’s no central boss – the community sets expected ranges and the AI transparency tool lets all see where things stand. If someone falls short, rather than punishment, an AI might privately prompt them with opportunities to pitch in (“The community garden could use help, and we notice you haven’t used your volunteer hours this month; interested?”). This flips accountability from a punitive “gotcha” to a supportive reminder. And because everyone can see the general state of affairs (perhaps through anonymized indices or public dashboards), **trust is maintained**: people know free-riders won’t invisibly exploit the system for long, because the shared AI infrastructure makes participation (or lack thereof) evident. Ultimately, it creates a **self-regulating culture** where hierarchy (in the sense of bosses and enforcers) is minimal because accountability is baked into the transparent design of systems.

In all these ways, AI helps answer the question: how will we behave without the whip of scarcity? The optimistic view is that humans, given freedom and security, will still seek purpose, connection, and excellence – arguably even more so when not preoccupied with survival. AI’s role is to **assist our better angels**: keeping us informed, honest, and empathetic, while reducing the need for authoritarian structures. It offers reflection instead of knee-jerk punishment, guidance instead of rigid governance, and accountability through awareness rather than hierarchy.

## **Conclusion: A Future of Abundance with AI as Balancer, Not Ruler**

We stand at a crossroads where the technologies of the 4th Industrial Revolution – AI, automation, ubiquitous connectivity – could either entrench a dystopia of gated abundance and manufactured scarcity, or usher in an era of broad prosperity and freedom. This paper has argued that scarcity, more often than not, has been a political tool, an engineered condition used to control. Breaking that pattern requires both **recognition and new imagination**. We must recognize where scarcity is artificially imposed today – be it in **bandwidth throttles, closed AI models, paywalled knowledge, or access-restricted finance** – and push to remove those barriers. And we must imagine social systems beyond the zero-sum game, where **trust and cooperation drive allocation** rather than competition and fear.

Artificial intelligence, paradoxically, is a child of our current scarcity-driven system (developed largely by big corporate or military funding), but it also contains the seeds of a radically different paradigm. If we reclaim AI’s development and guide it with humane values, it can become the lever that finally **pries scarcity away from the grip of power**. By illuminating truth, optimizing fairness, and coordinating collective action, AI can help convert our vast material and intellectual resources into shared prosperity. Importantly, this is a vision of AI **not as an all-powerful dictator or substitute for human judgment** – that path would repeat the mistakes of technocracy and likely encode new forms of coercion. Instead, the AI we envision is a *facilitator*, an equalizer, and a guardian of the commons.

Think of AI as a balancing force on a tightrope: on one side, the weight of human needs and rights; on the other, the weight of planetary boundaries and duties. In the past, societies fell off this rope often, usually erring by giving a few the power to push many others off balance (through scarcity and force). A truly emancipatory AI would constantly adjust, ensuring neither side of the rope dominates – **meeting needs while respecting limits, enabling freedom while ensuring responsibility**. It can only do so if it is transparently governed and aligned with *all* of humanity, not any elite subset. This calls for unprecedented collaboration between ethicists, policymakers, technologists, and communities to embed guardrails and goals into our AI systems from the ground up.

A post-scarcity future will not be free of challenges or ethical dilemmas – on the contrary, it elevates many to the level of moral decision-makers. But it offers a hopeful answer to the long night of engineered lack: that we can finally afford, literally and figuratively, to be **generous, curious, and just** as a default. When AI handles the drudgery and logistics of equitable distribution, humans can spend more time in creative and civic pursuits. When survival is guaranteed, risk-taking for positive innovation flourishes (imagine the art, science, and exploration in a world where no one fears starvation or medical bankruptcy). And when conflict arises, an AI-moderated, trust-rich context can help resolve it without violence or oppression.

In closing, the goal is not to hand humanity’s fate to machines, but to *partner* with them to overcome the age-old governance problem: how to live well together. AI, in this narrative, is closer to a wisdom engine than a command center – aggregating our best collective knowledge, warning us of pitfalls, reminding us of principles, and even inspiring us with new possibilities. It is an adviser that speaks truth to power and to the people equally. By ensuring AI itself does not become scarce (i.e., keeping it open and accessible) and by steering it with inclusive values, we can avoid recreating the coercive systems it was born from.

The dissolution of scarcity by artificial intelligence is ultimately a story of *human empowerment*. We built these intelligent tools, and by using them wisely, we reclaim the abundance that has always been our birthright on this bountiful planet. The journey will demand vigilance – to prevent new concentrations of power, to encode empathy alongside efficiency – but the reward is a civilization that finally transcends the master-slave dynamic of haves and have-nots. In that civilization, AI’s omnipresent hand will be felt not as an iron fist, but as a gentle, steadying touch that helps all of us, **together**, maintain our balance on the rope of progress.

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. These diverse sources all point to the central thesis: that scarcity is often human-made – and what is made by humans (with the help of our machines) can be unmade, for the good of all.