

The Planned Obsolescence of the Mind – How the Weakening of Humans Brings About the Superiority of Machines

On artificial intelligence, education and the temptation to systemic dumbing down

At a time when artificial intelligence is penetrating ever new areas of life, the discussion about its dangers is primarily technological: People fear the singularity, mass unemployment, and the autonomous war machine. But a quieter, more subversive process often goes unnoticed—a cultural shift in standards that empowers machines not through progress, but through the gradual degradation of human capabilities.

The crucial question is not:

When will the machine become smarter than humans?

Rather:

When did people become stupid enough to make machines seem superior?

The cultural temptation to self-dwarfism

Once, the goal of education and politics was to empower people – intellectually, morally, and critically. Today, however, the temptation is growing not to emancipate the population, but to condition them – to adapt them to algorithmic systems, standardized procedures, and standardized language. Creative thinking is considered a disruption, and critical questioning is seen as an attack on "facts" – even though these have long since been replaced by narrative frameworks.

Machines are not inherently superior to humans. They calculate faster—but they don't think. They produce language—but not understanding. They plan—but not with conscience. Their strength lies in speed, not wisdom. Their horizon is efficiency, not meaning. If they nevertheless appear superior, it is not because of their own greatness, but because humans diminish themselves.

The dismantling of thinking

The educational system increasingly resembles a training camp. Skills are practiced, exam formats are internalized – but independent thinking, critical questioning, and tolerance of ambiguity are pushed to the margins. What matters is connectivity: to the job market, to discourse, to the "right" attitude.

Those who think complexly disrupt the machine. Those who ask where others function become suspect. This creates a climate in which thinking becomes a risk – and conformity a virtue.

The ideal of the responsible citizen who exercises democratic responsibility is coming under pressure. Not just from censorship, but from the subtle shift from education to function, from spirit to signal, from judgment to consent.

The machine as a standard setter

At the same time, the machine—AI—is establishing itself as the measure of all things. It analyzes more efficiently, recognizes patterns, and diagnoses more quickly. But as soon as human institutions no longer orient themselves toward humans but toward machines, a momentous role reversal occurs:

The machine becomes the teacher, the human becomes the learner – not because it understands better, but because “understanding” has been devalued as a category.

What matters is output, ranking, and performance. Those who have forgotten how to think submit to this logic.

The new form of rule: cognitive erosion

This development is no coincidence. It stems from a cultural decision: rule through spiritualization. Where ideology or violence once ruled, the system now suffices – a world in which no one thinks anymore, because thinking is neither necessary nor desired.

The price of this order is high: Humans lose not only their function, but also their dignity. They become dependent variables of a system that sets its standards – in a language they can just barely decipher but can no longer interpret.

Against the obsolescence of the mind

Anyone who wants to counter this development must do more than demand regulation. What is needed is a cultural return to thinking – as a practice, as resistance, as a human right.

AGI – general artificial intelligence – may one day be possible. But it will only become dangerous when humans have forgotten how to contradict it. The real singularity would not be the technological one, but the cultural one: the moment when we forget what it means to be human.

The Price of Self-Dwarfing – How We Pave the Way for AI

It's a disturbingly plausible idea: It's not technological superiority that determines the displacement of humans—but their cultural retreat. A society that delegitimizes critical thinking, perceives creativity as a disruption, and re-educates education toward conformity not only clears the way for AI—it paves the way.

The perspectives of four influential thinkers demonstrate that this is no mere thought experiment. Their insights differ—but they reveal the same abyss.

Harari: Disempowerment as progress

Yuval Noah Harari describes how humans are gradually losing their role as decision-makers – not through coercion, but through efficiency. The computational superiority of algorithms legitimizes the transfer of responsibility: in medicine, politics, education – even in partner selection.

"Dataism" replaces human judgment with the rationality of machines. Harari's tone is not warning, but sober: Those who submit do so not out of necessity—but out of convenience. The real danger lies in the fact that no one will ever consider the need to defend anything.

Popper: The Loss of Openness

Karl Popper would have recognized this process as a relapse into the "closed society." Where algorithms make decisions and criticism falls silent, the central achievement of modernity dies: the public capacity for error.

It's not the error that's dangerous, but the belief in infallibility. An AI that can't be questioned isn't progress—it's a dogma.

Plato already legitimized the rule of those who know. Today, it's data scientists, programmers, and corporations who claim the epistemic monopoly and disguise it as neutrality.

Ellul: The Silent Reign of Technology

Jacques Ellul recognized early on: Technology follows no morals, no politics, no culture – it obeys solely the logic of efficiency. Whatever is feasible will be done. Those who don't adapt will be eliminated – not out of malice, but out of indifference.

In this light, human withdrawal appears not as stupidity, but as the logic of the system. Subjectivity is disruptive. Criticism is a hindrance. Creativity is pathologized, nonconformity is sanctioned. It's not called censorship—it's called "compatibility."

English: Hope through explanation

David Deutsch, on the other hand, relies on the human ability to explain. Explanations are not data—they are meanings. They emerge through dialogue, through doubt, through courage.

As long as humans retain this spirit, any AGI remains inferior to them – because it only processes conditions but does not recognize problems.

But Deutsch also warns: Those who reduce education to conformity, who no longer ask questions, lose the ability to explain. And with it, their freedom.

Conclusion: The cultural front decides

The battle for the future will not be decided on servers—but in classrooms, libraries, and conversations. It's not technological progress, but human regression that is changing the balance of power.

The great temptation of our time is not to build machines – but to trim ourselves to their size.

Those who stigmatize creativity, devalue criticism, economize education, and replace open questions with calculations transform people into tools of their own abolition.

But this development is not fate. As Karl Popper said:

The future is open.

It will remain open – as long as there are people who keep it open.

Through thought. Through doubt. Through courage.