

AI + Us: Unpacking Our Black Box

Why we are the way we are and what we must do to survive the coming AI and Robotics Tsunami



I was asking the wrong Questions

?

Why can't they see it, it's so obvious?!?

~~Do~~

What is wrong with everyone?!?

Do

What's the point?



Then I started asking the right Questions

?

When did they see it?

Why

Why did they get it then?

Do

Maybe there is something wrong with me?



The 5 Stages of Grief

Elisabeth Kübler-Rosson, "On Death and Dying" 1969



The 6th Stage of Grief : Purpose after the loss

David Kessler, "Finding Meaning: The Sixth Stage of Grief", 2019



"Gratitude makes
optimism sustainable."

Michael J Fox

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"Once you choose hope,
anything's possible."

Christopher Reeve

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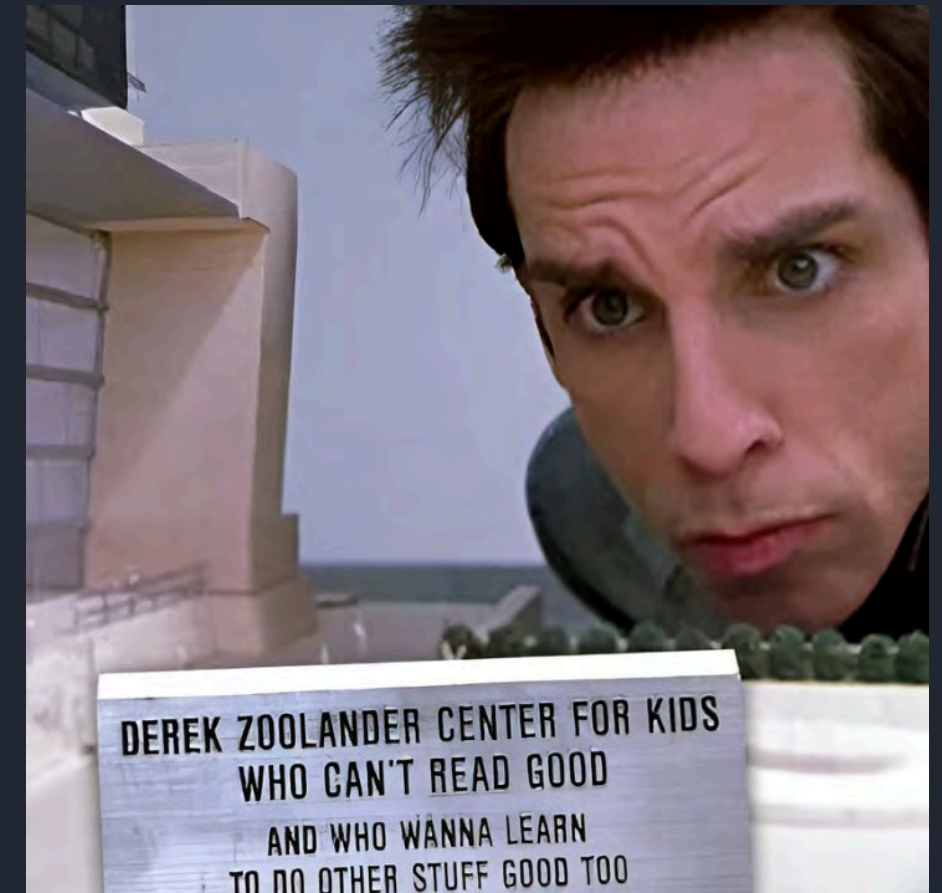
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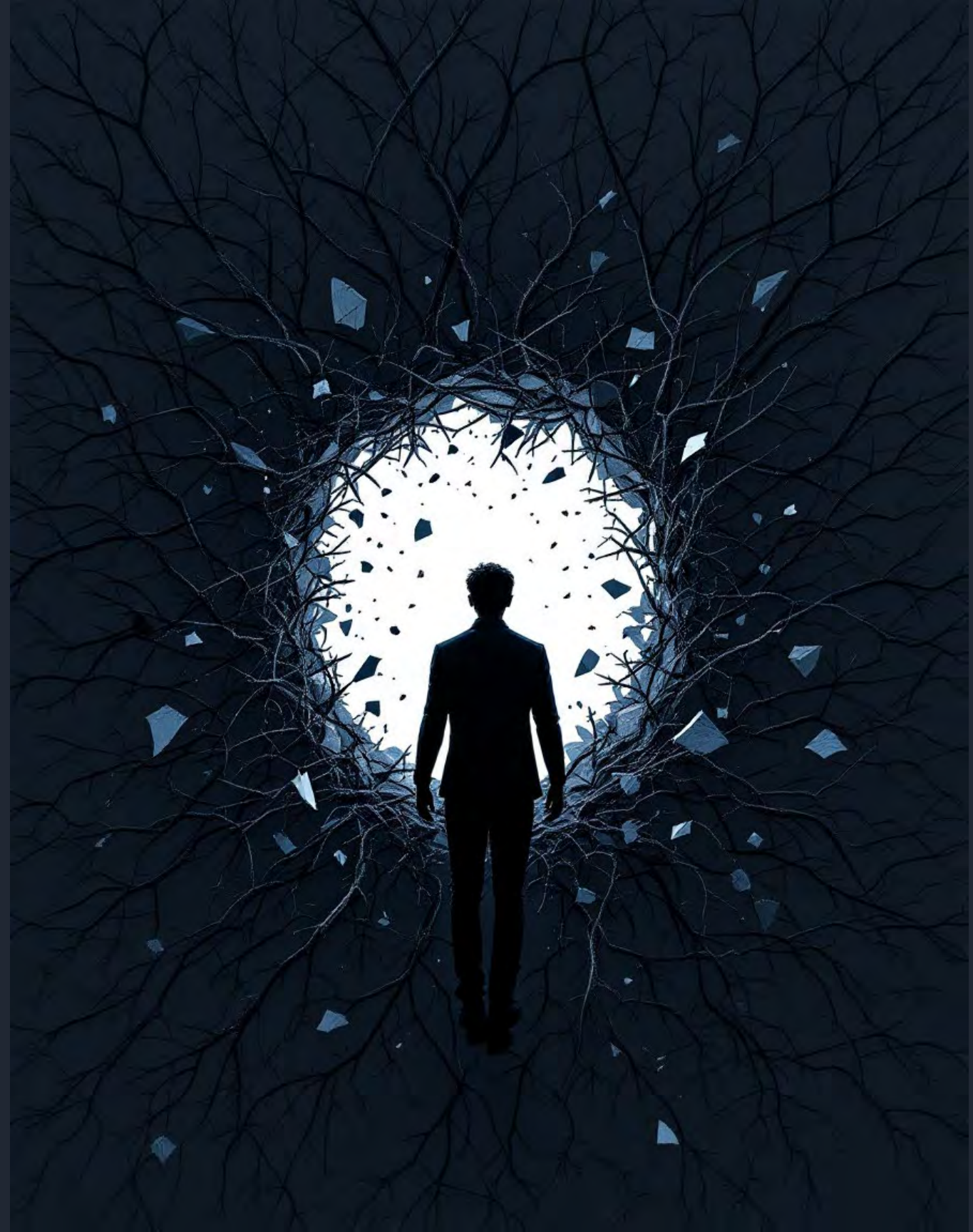
Christopher Reeve



"What is this, a school for ants?!?"

Derek Zoolander

**“We are not at the beginning of
AI, we are at the end of
everything before AI”**



**“We are not at the beginning of
AI, we are at the end of
everything before AI”**

John McElligott



Dawn of Humankind: Caveman Steve



Early Human Vigilance





**There Has to Be
a Better Way!**

The Pitch





"That's a
wolf, I'm
out!"



“The
DOG!”

The Vigilance Offloading Hypothesis



Outsourced Vigilance



Cognitive Freedom



Co-Evolution and decline



The Vigilance Offloading Hypothesis

1 — **Fight**

2 — **Flight**



The Vigilance Offloading Hypothesis

- 1 — **Fight**
- 2 — **Flight**
- 3 — **Freeze**



The Hummingbird Effect



Historian and author Steven Johnson

Dispelling AI Lies



The Big Lie: Technology and Inequality

The Story We're Told:

- Technology creates more jobs than it takes
- Progress benefits everyone
- Disruption leads to better outcomes for all
- AI won't replace you, a human using AI will



The Big Lie: Technology and Inequality

The Story We're Told:

- Technology creates more jobs than it takes
- Progress benefits everyone
- Disruption leads to better outcomes for all
- AI won't replace you, a human using AI will

What the Data Shows:

- Only 15% gained from the first two Industrial Revolutions
- Technology magnified existing inequalities
- Power concentrated among technological elite
- AI is rapidly approaching General Intelligence



The Big Lie: Technology and Inequality

They could Read

Literacy and the Reformation : Martin Luther



1. Father of the Reformation



1. Father of the Reformation

2. Cool Hats

Technology Disrupts Power Structures : the "95 Theses"



Technology Disrupts Power Structures : the "95 Theses"



Information Control

Gatekeepers lose monopoly on knowledge

Mass Access

Tools democratize capabilities

System Collapse

Old orders cannot maintain relevance

Catalyst of Revolutionary Change

High Literacy Enabled

- Technical manuals to be read and followed.
- Scientific and mechanical ideas to spread.
- A **workforce** capable of adapting to new tools and processes.

Catalyst of Revolutionary Change

**They wanted to
Be closer
To God**

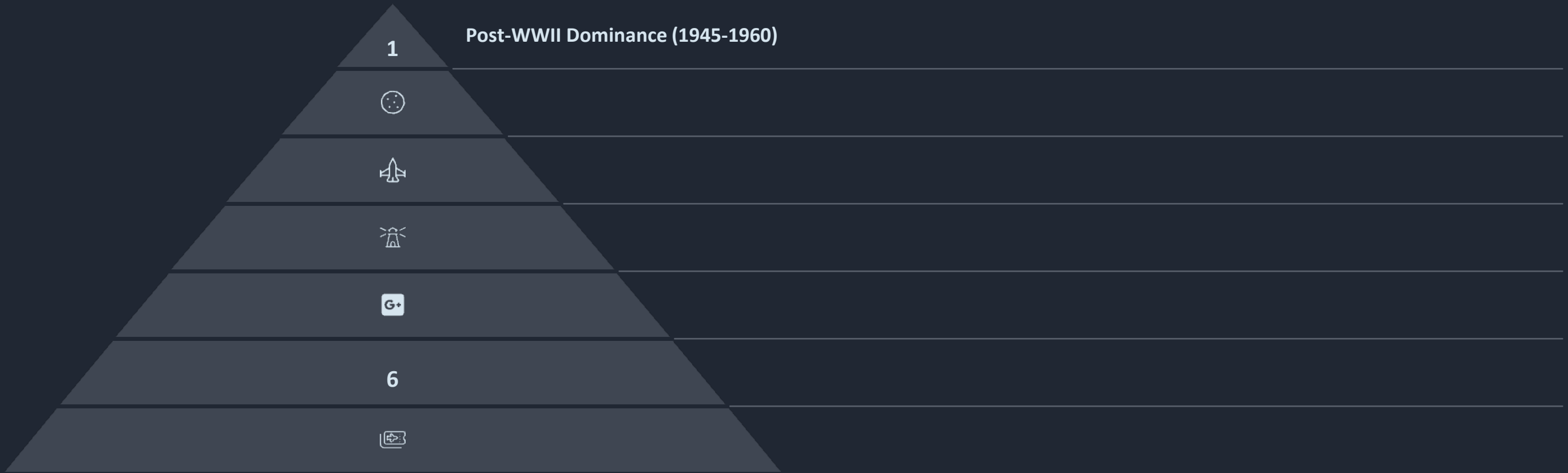


**The West being
prepared for the 1st and
2nd Industrial
Revolution was by
accident!!!**

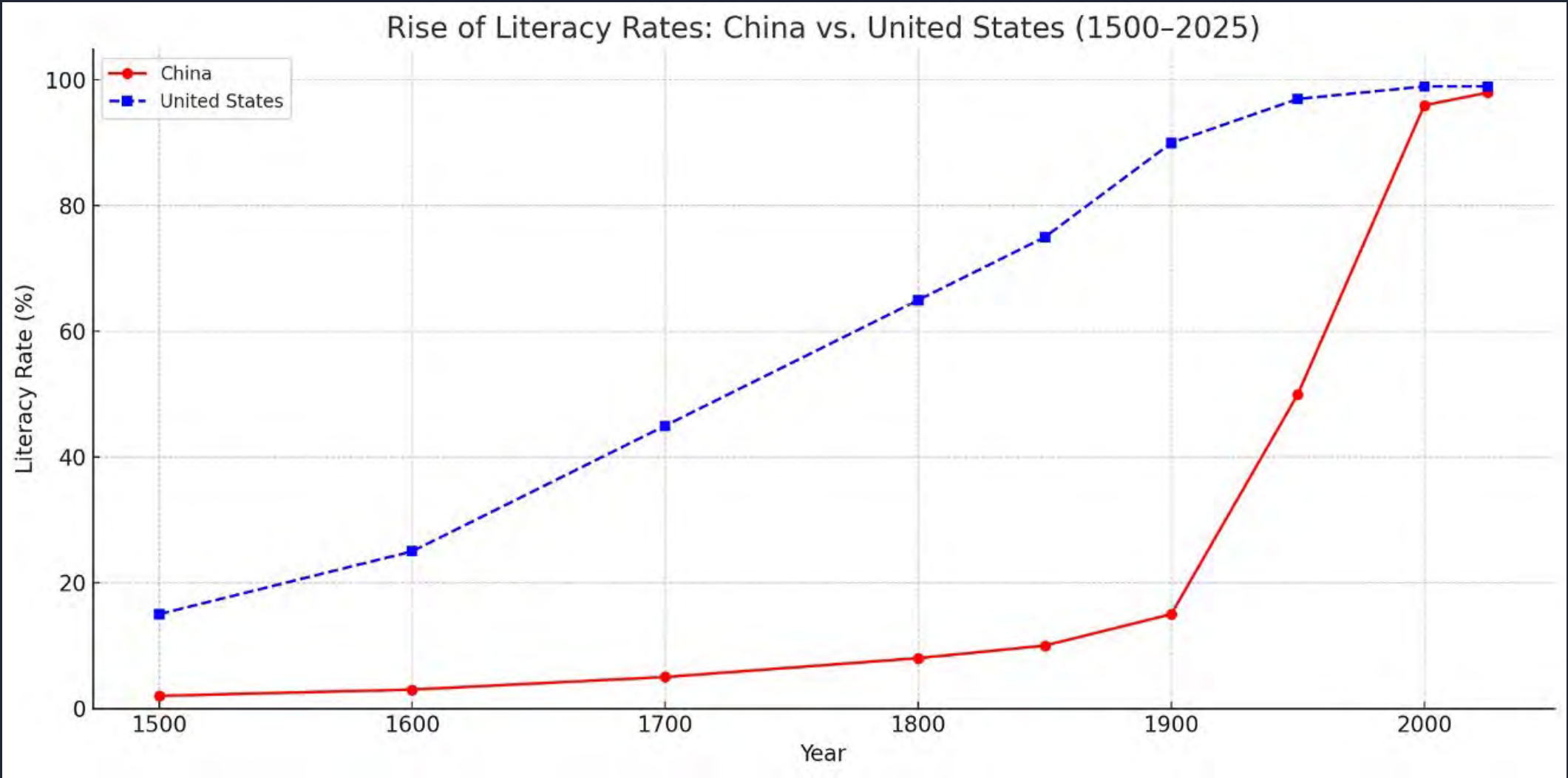


America's Missed Opportunities to Adapt : A Timeline

Critical historical junctures where Western linear thinking created vulnerabilities in the U.S. economy



Literacy Rates Over Time

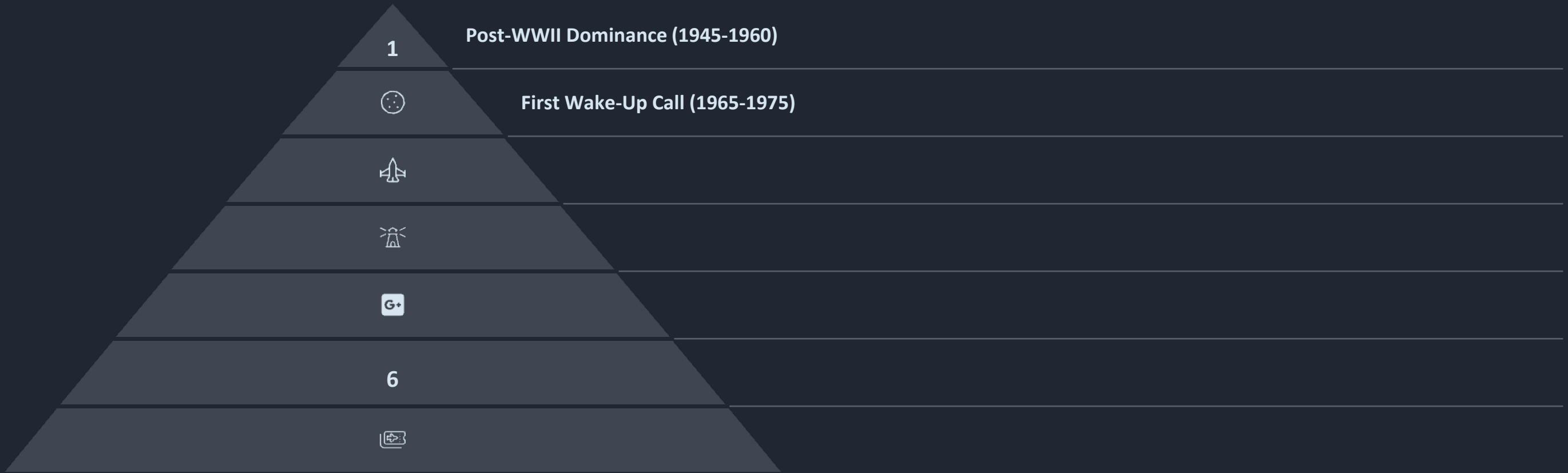


The expansion of literacy represents one of humanity's most significant cognitive transformations, reshaping how societies process and transmit information.

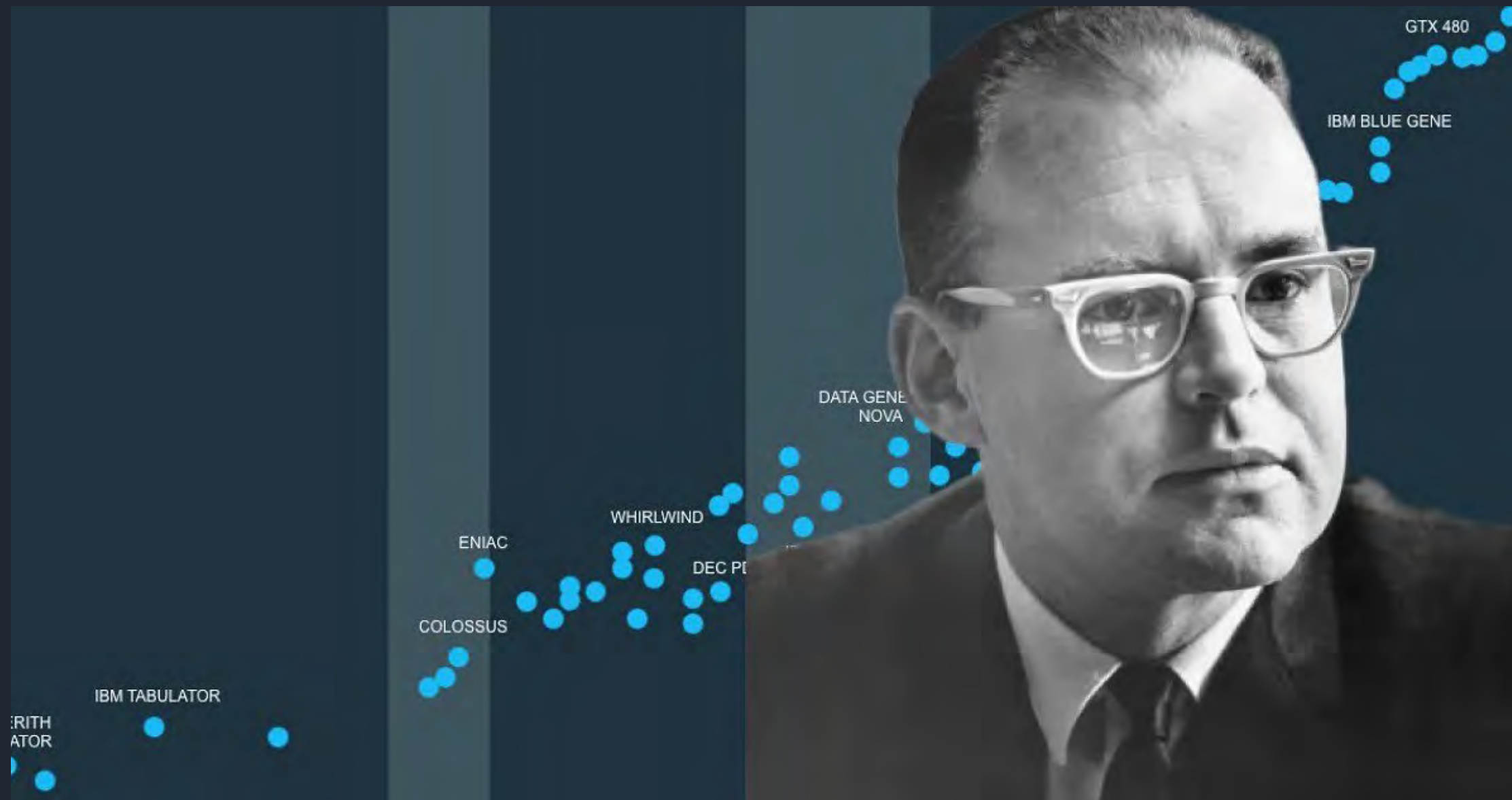


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Critical historical junctures where Western linear thinking created vulnerabilities in the U.S. economy



First Wake-Up Call (1965)



Gordon Earle Moore, Co-Founder & former CEO of Intel Corporation

The Cold War Mask



The Cold War Mask



- 1947 : 13 Nuclear War Heads

The Cold War Mask



- 1947 : 13 Nuclear War Heads
- 1987 : 23,000+ Nuclear Warheads



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Dot Com Boom and Bust





America's Missed Opportunities to Adapt : A Timeline

Critical historical junctures where Western linear thinking created vulnerabilities in the U.S. economy



The Period of Great Distraction (2000s-2023)





America's Missed Opportunities to Adapt : A Timeline

Critical historical junctures where Western linear thinking created vulnerabilities in the U.S. economy



Year to get ready for AI

Not 2025

Year to get ready for AI

Not 2025

It was 1965!!!

Cognitive Divergence Model

Western Written Language: Alphabet

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg
Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn
Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu
Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

Cognitive Divergence Model

**Western Written Language:
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**Eastern Written Language:
Logographic / Morphographic**

The image shows the Chinese character '愛' (love) in a stylized, calligraphic font. The character is composed of a top part resembling a heart or a stylized '心' (heart) and a bottom part resembling a '友' (friend). The strokes are thick and expressive, with some variations in thickness and direction, giving it a dynamic and artistic appearance.

Cognitive Divergence Model

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English Alphabet

**Eastern Written Language:
Logographic / Morphographic**



Number of letters: 26

Cognitive Divergence Model

**Western Written Language:
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Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

English Alphabet

Number of letters: 26

**Eastern Written Language:
Logographic / Morphographic**



Chinese Characters

**Number of characters: 4500 as a
regular high school graduate**

8000 for Highly Educated up to 10,000



East vs. West: Cognitive Perspectives

Western Minds

- Analytical, linear, individualistic.
- Language: Alphabetic, sequential reasoning.
- Values: Personal benefit, individual achievement.

Eastern Minds

- Holistic, contextual, collective.
- Language: Logographic, relational reasoning.
- Values: Collective harmony, societal benefit.



How West and East View AI

Western Minds

"What can AI do?" *(Capabilities-focused)*

"How can AI help me?" *(Individual-focused)*

*Emphasizes personal empowerment,
productivity, and competition.*

Eastern Minds

"What does AI mean?" *(Context-focused)*

"How can AI help us?" *(Community-focused)*

*Prioritizes societal cohesion,
shared progress, collective well-being.*

Cognitive Divergence Model





"The only way to get artificial intelligence to work is to do the computation in a way similar to the human brain."

Geoffrey Hinton

"Godfather of AI"

"The Occidental Paradox"



Artificial Intelligence

"The Occidental Paradox"



Artificial *Western* Intelligence

"The Occidental Paradox"



Artificial
General
Western
Intelligence

The Ouroboros Horizon



Harnessing the Hummingbird



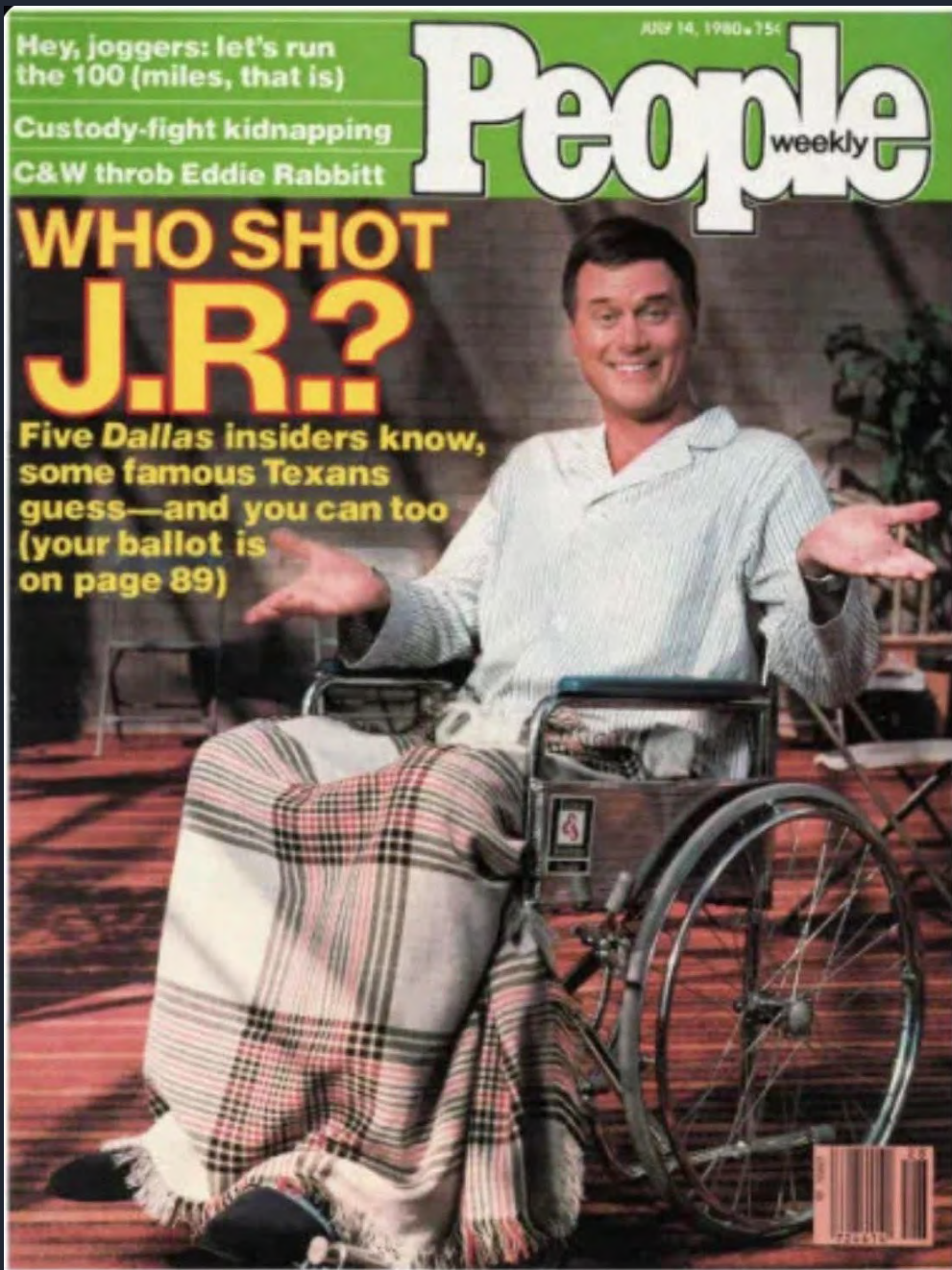
My Early Years



My Early Years



Early Years



Early Years



Piaget's Four Stages of Cognitive Development



1. Sensorimotor Stage (Birth – 2 years)

Key concept: "Learning through doing"

Infants understand the world via senses and motor actions, developing object permanence – the realization that objects exist even when out of sight.

Implication: Lays foundation for memory, intentional action, and cause-effect reasoning.

Piaget's Four Stages of Cognitive Development



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2. Preoperational Stage (2 – 7 years)

Key concept: "Imagination without logic"

Rapid language development and symbolic thinking emerge through pretend play. Children exhibit egocentrism and struggle with logical concepts like conservation.

Implication: Creativity blooms, but logical reasoning hasn't developed.

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3. Concrete Operational Stage (7 – 11 years)

Key concept: "Logic grounded in experience"

Children begin thinking logically about concrete events, understanding conservation, reversibility, and cause-and-effect relationships.

Implication: Kids become better problem-solvers — if they can see it, they can understand it.

Piaget's Four Stages of Cognitive Development



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4. Formal Operational Stage (12+ years)

Key concept: "Abstract and hypothetical thinking"

Adolescents develop deductive reasoning and strategic planning abilities, capable of thinking about the future, moral issues, and hypothetical scenarios.

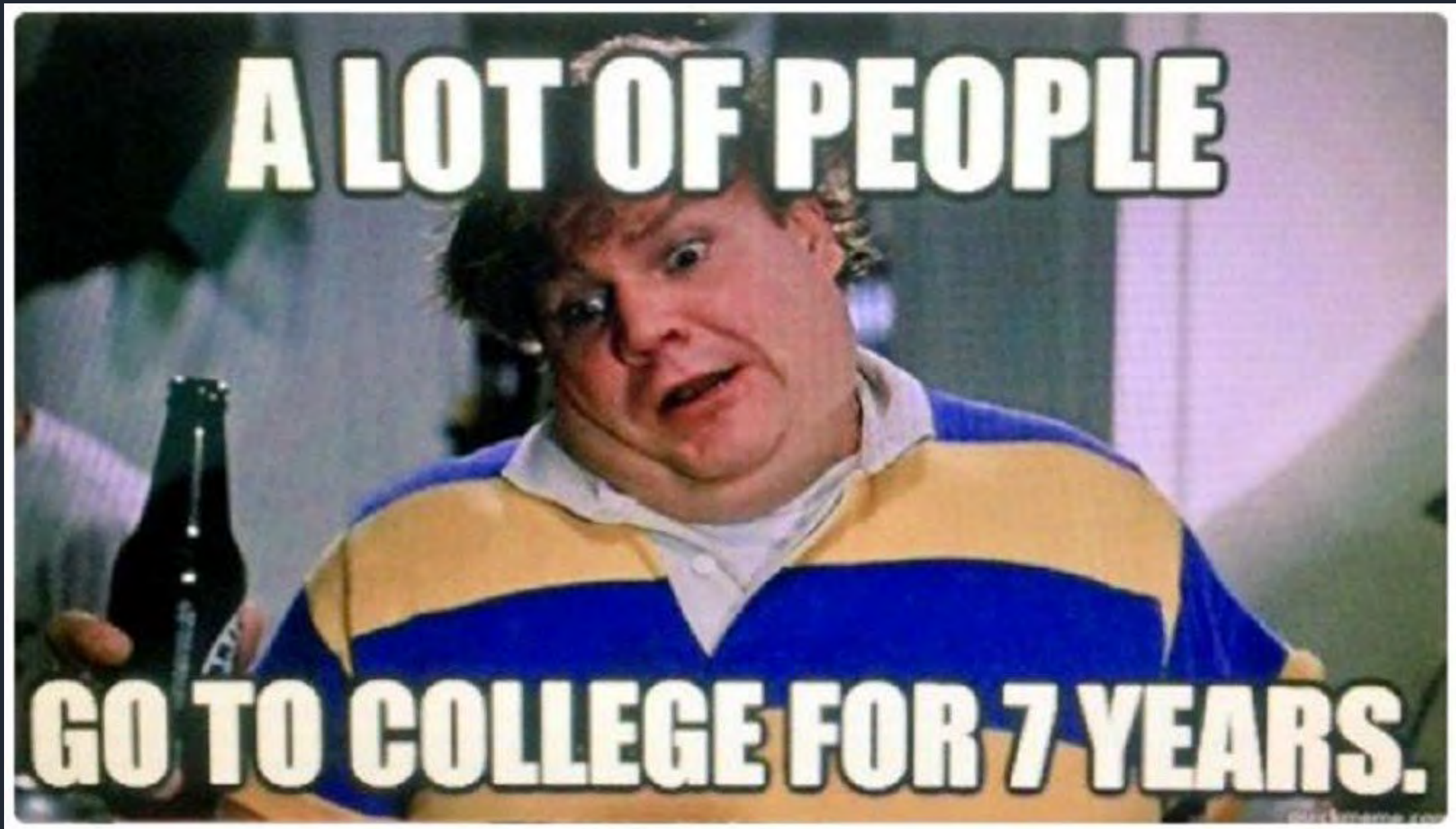
Implication: This stage opens the door for advanced problem solving, scientific thinking, and identity exploration.

Piaget's 3rd Concrete Operational Stage : What I was learning

What I was Learning

Category	Typical Western Lesson	What I Was Learning
Identity	"This is who I am." Identity is fixed and built on traits, labels, and success.	Letting go of identity is necessary for survival. Reinvention is a survival skill.
Stability	The world is predictable; follow the rules and routines and be rewarded.	There is no such thing as stability. Always be prepared to adapt.
Success	Earn, keep, and protect what's yours.	Be willing to give up what you have for others. Sacrifice is honorable.
Morality	Morality is external. Follow the rules. Do what authority says is fair.	People will suffer if I don't act. Moral responsibility is personal and urgent.
Stress Response	Avoid stress or let adults handle it.	Humans can endure extreme stress if their belief is strong enough.
Responsibility	Responsibility belongs to adults or systems.	<i>If I don't act, someone will suffer.</i> I carry the weight of others' well-being.

My College Years



My College Years



My College Years



**VOTED MOST LIKELY TO DIE
IN MARINE CORP BOOTCAMP**

“Cause after all, you’re my Wonderwall!!”

— John McElligott

The new 3 F's: Reigniting the Hyper Vigilance Loop

The new evolutionary cycle that drives adaptation to technological change

Fear
Initial resistance to technological
disruption but it **MUST** be faced



The new 3 F's

The new evolutionary cycle that drives adaptation to technological change

Fear
Initial resistance to technological
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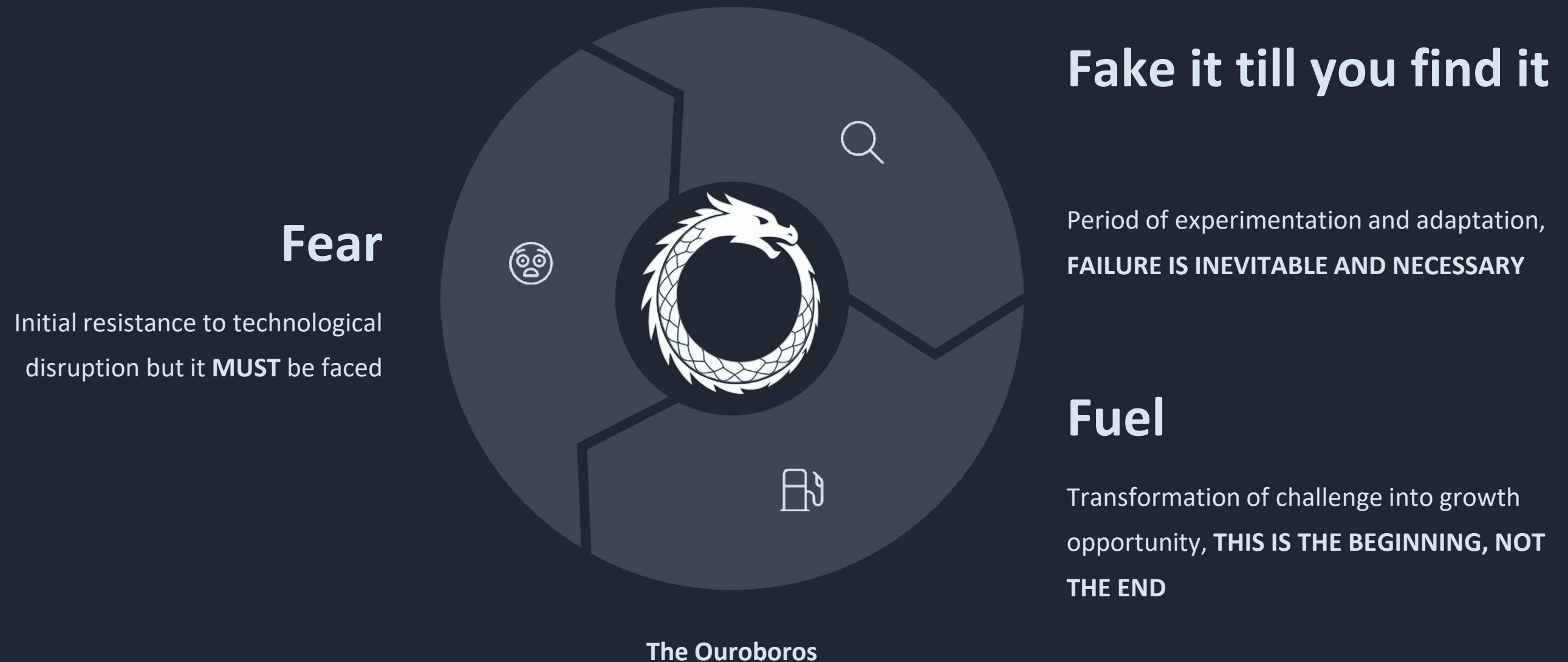


Fake it till you find it

Period of experimentation and adaptation,
FAILURE IS INEVITABLE AND NECESSARY

The new 3 F's

The new evolutionary cycle that drives adaptation to technological change



My Start Up

KEYSTONE EDGE

ARCHIVE 2008 - 2024

A new online marketplace for artist-entrepreneurs: The Usic in York

By [Elise Vider](#) on [September 6, 2012](#)

John McElligott and Mike McHenry had more in common than names that start with “Mc” when they met in 2005: both played in rock bands in and around York and both were struggling to pay for creative services like photography, videography, mixing, mastering and graphic design or “do a mediocre job of it ourselves” at the expense of their music, says McHenry.

With a third partner, Dan Thompson, they're addressing the problem with [The Usic](#), a startup, co-op web marketplace for artist-entrepreneurs. “We've realized that not only have we created a way for musicians to band together to get all the services they need, but we've stumbled on to something much larger,” says McElligott. “Imagine if there was a place that you could go to find a moviemaker that would jump at the chance to shoot a short documentary on your grandfather at a price you could afford? ... Or a local

CENTRAL PENN

BUSINESS JOURNAL

Upcoming Event
WOMEN OF INFLUENCE >

News

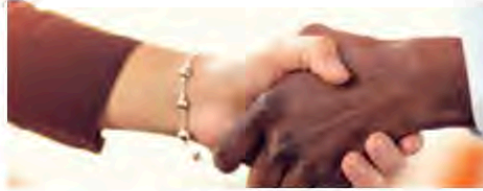
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Leads & Data Center ▾

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Maximize Your
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Home > News > Tech startup The Usic to expand into Baltimore, D.C.



Tech startup The Usic to expand into Baltimore, D.C.

Jim T. Ryan // November 12, 2012 // 1 Minute Read

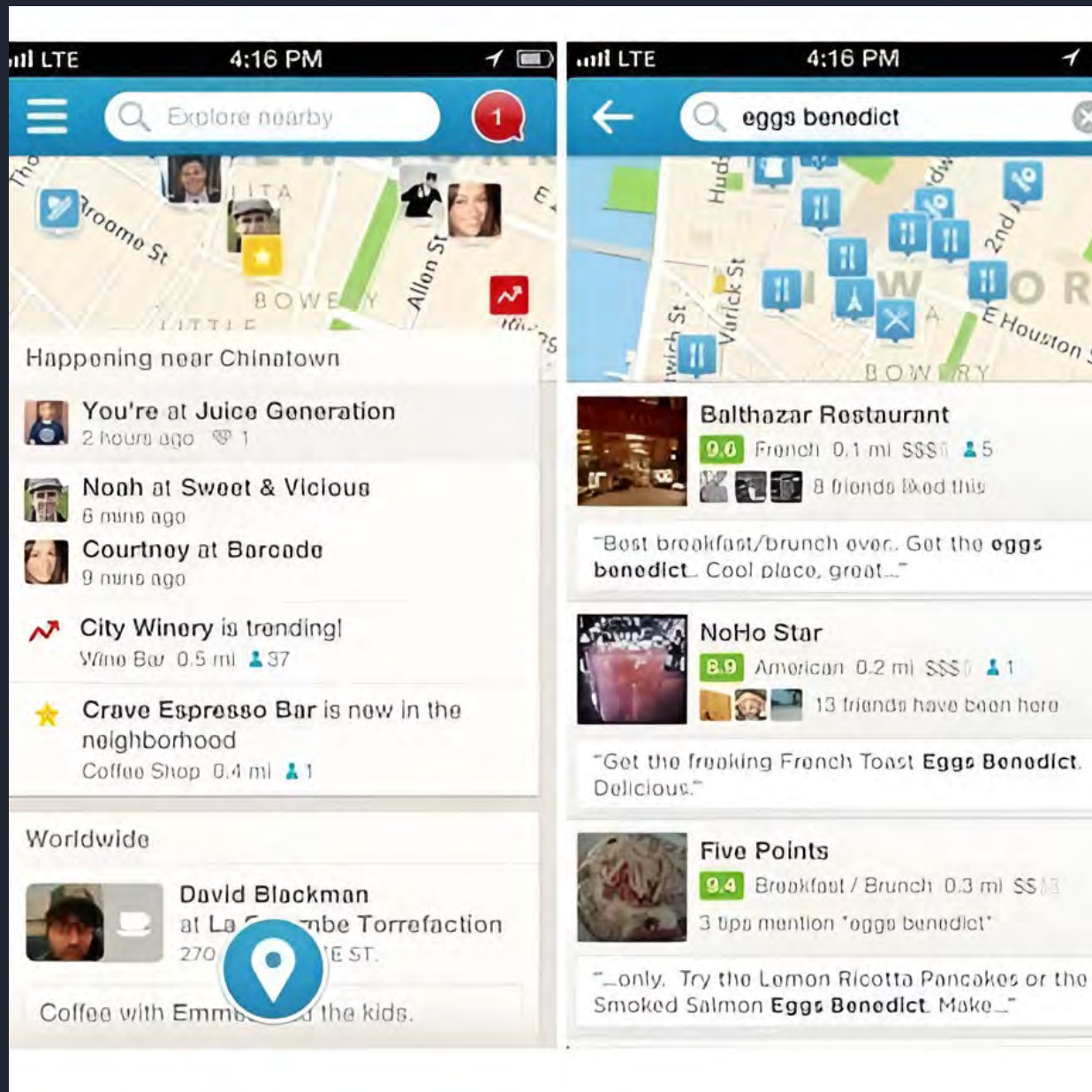
✕ f in p ✉

▶ Listen to this article

The tech startup that officially [launched in April](#) has gained more than 700 users of its site locally, and it's the right time to begin offering the marketplace to larger metro areas, said Usic founder John McElligott.

[The Usic](#) has some business members in the Baltimore and Washington area providing services, he said. The company began a small scale marketing effort during the past several weeks to test the markets and gain greater recognition there.

My Start Up

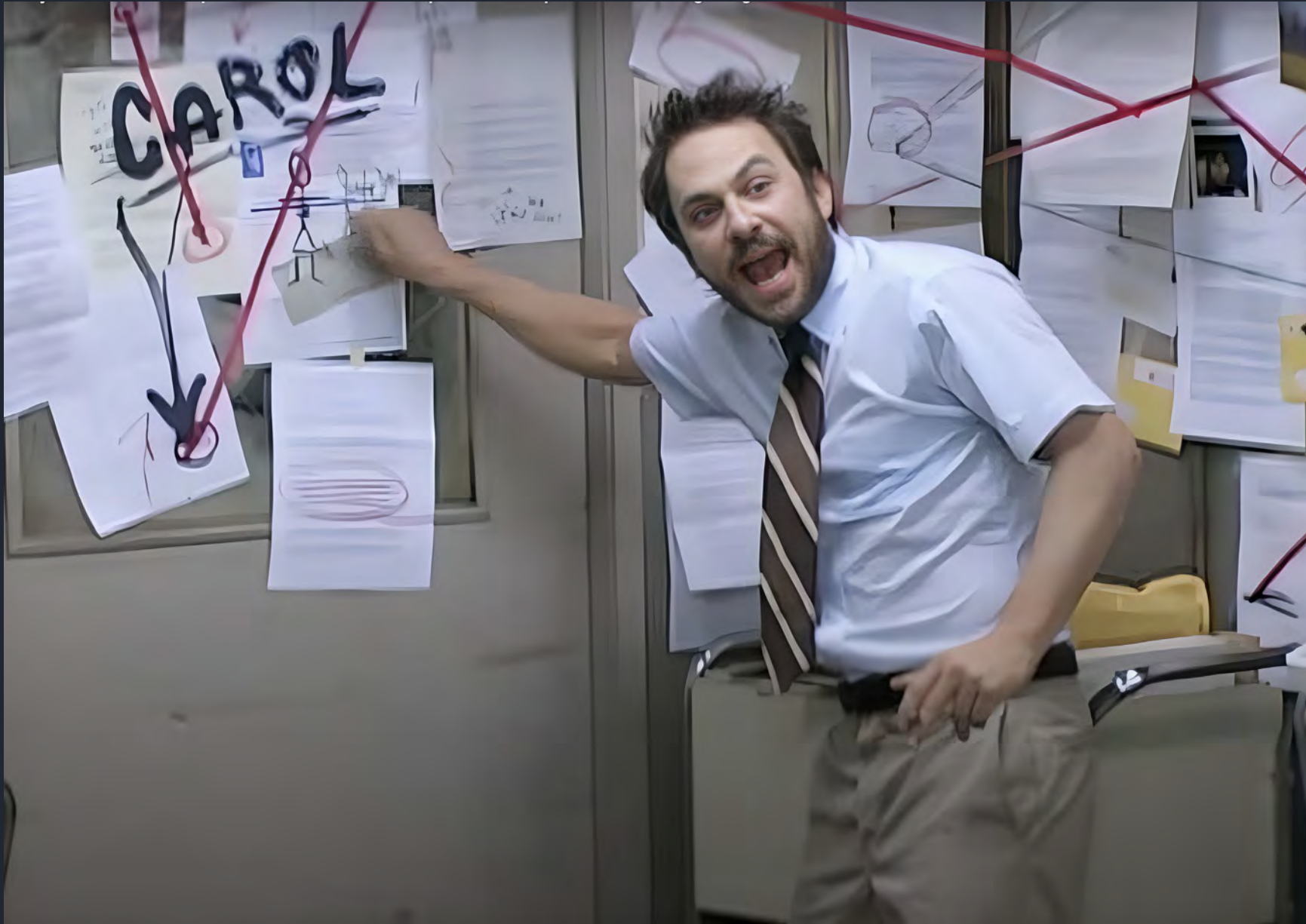


Serendipity



“It was meant to be!!!”

Technologically Manufactured Serendipity



“I meant it to be!!!”

Actual picture of me. jk, credit “Its Always Sunny in Philadelphia”

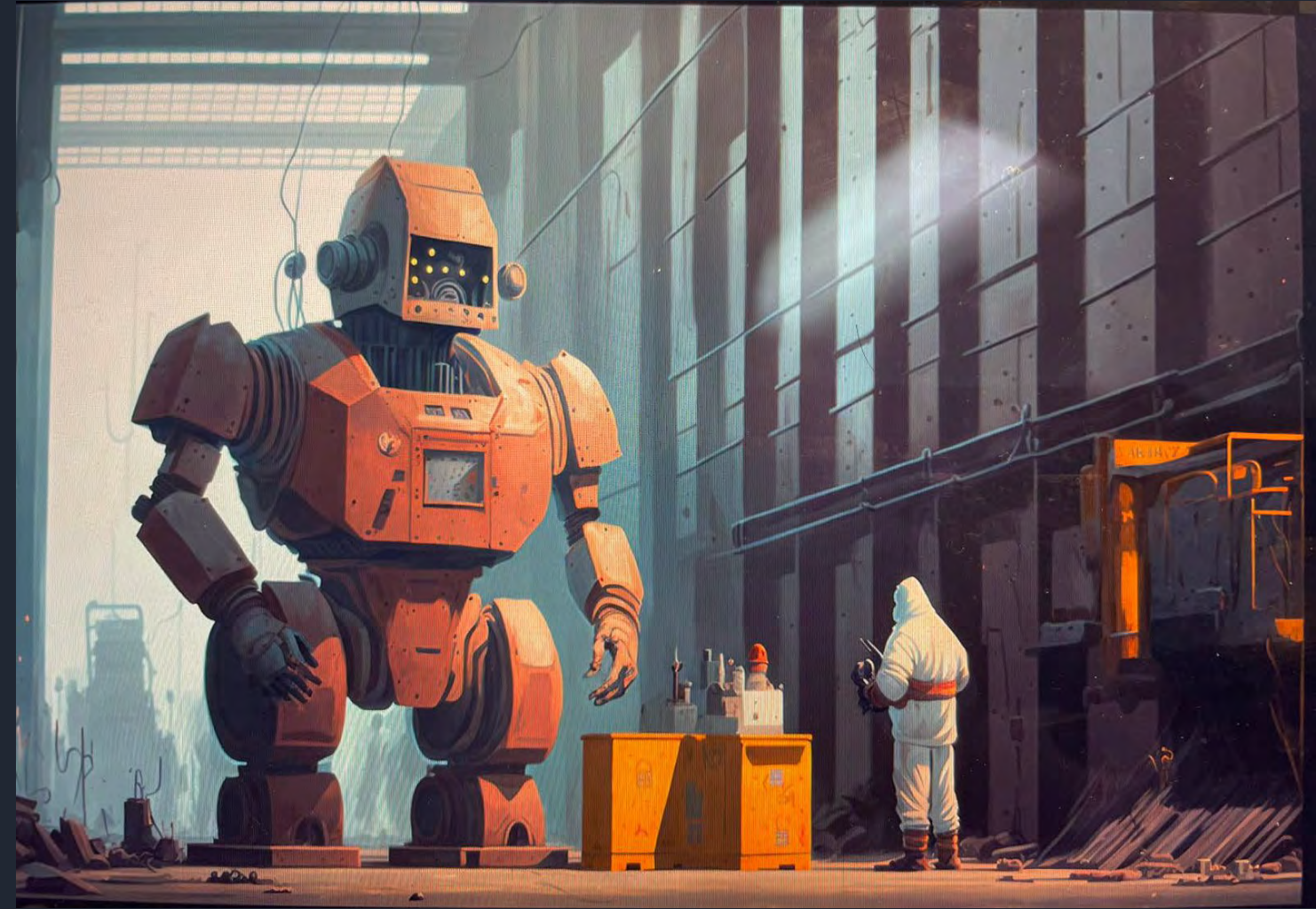
Augmented Momentum



Augmented Momentum



Augmented Momentum : 100 years in a week



Speaker pushes Greenwood to seize tech opportunities

By DAMIAN DOMINGUEZ ddominguez@indexjournal.com Mar 3, 2022



It may be a rude awakening, but John McElligott wants to show Greenwood the future is coming, whether we're ready or not.

McElligott is co-founder of a development and construction company and has been CEO and founder of two tech startup companies. He's made a career as a national speaker on the effects of technological development, robotics and artificial intelligence, and he's in Greenwood to share how these changes might transform the Lakelands.

"That's one of the reasons VisionGreenwood exists, to find these opportunities," said Kay Self, Vision Greenwood's executive director.

VisionGreenwood announces Lakelands Emerging Technology Council

Oct 4, 2022



From left, front row, are Dennis Fassuliotis, Kay Self, Les Brown, John McElligott and Abdallah Haddad. Back row: Brandon Smith, Charles Angel and Matt Wiggins.

Augmented Momentum

Imagine Greenwood: high school AI art competition winners announced

By ST. CLAIRE DONAGHY sdonaghy@indexjournal.com Nov 5, 2022



Imagine Greenwood: high school AI art competition winners announced

By ST. CLAIRE DONAGHY sdonaghy@indexjournal.com Nov 5, 2022



Augmented Momentum

20 minutes!!!

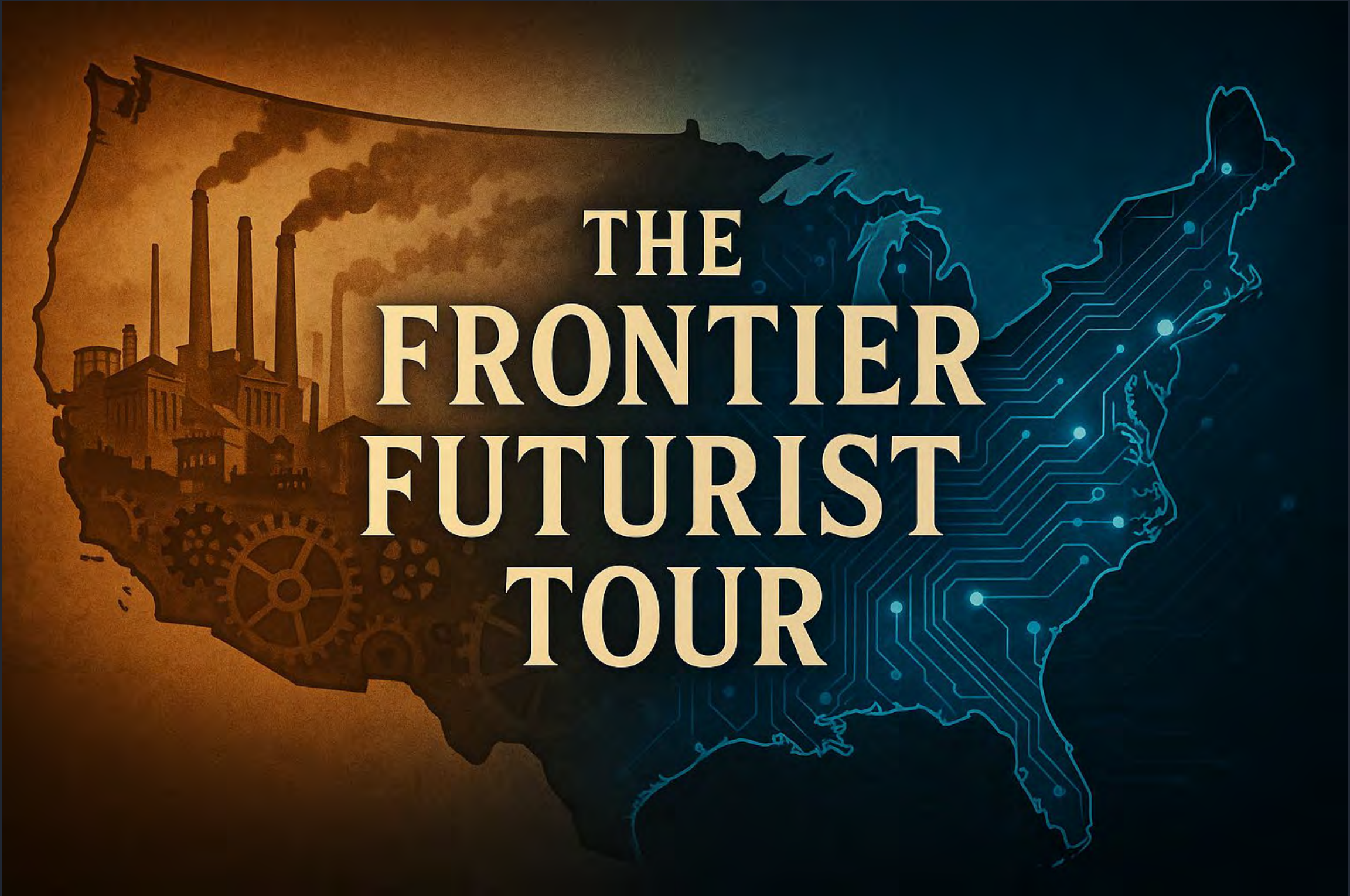
BUILDING IMAGINATIONS

Lego showcase, competition coincide with STEAM Festival, AI high school art

By ST. CLAIRE DONAGHY sdonaghy@indexjournal.com Oct 15, 2024 Updated Oct 15, 2024



2 years
Later



Augmented Momentum



Servitium
AI

Augmented Momentum : Dogs' Brains are Evolving Again—to Support Us



Phase 1: Warning and Hunting



Phase 2: Specialized Working Roles



Phase 3: Emotional Companionship

Augmented Momentum : Dogs' Brains are Evolving Again—to Support Us

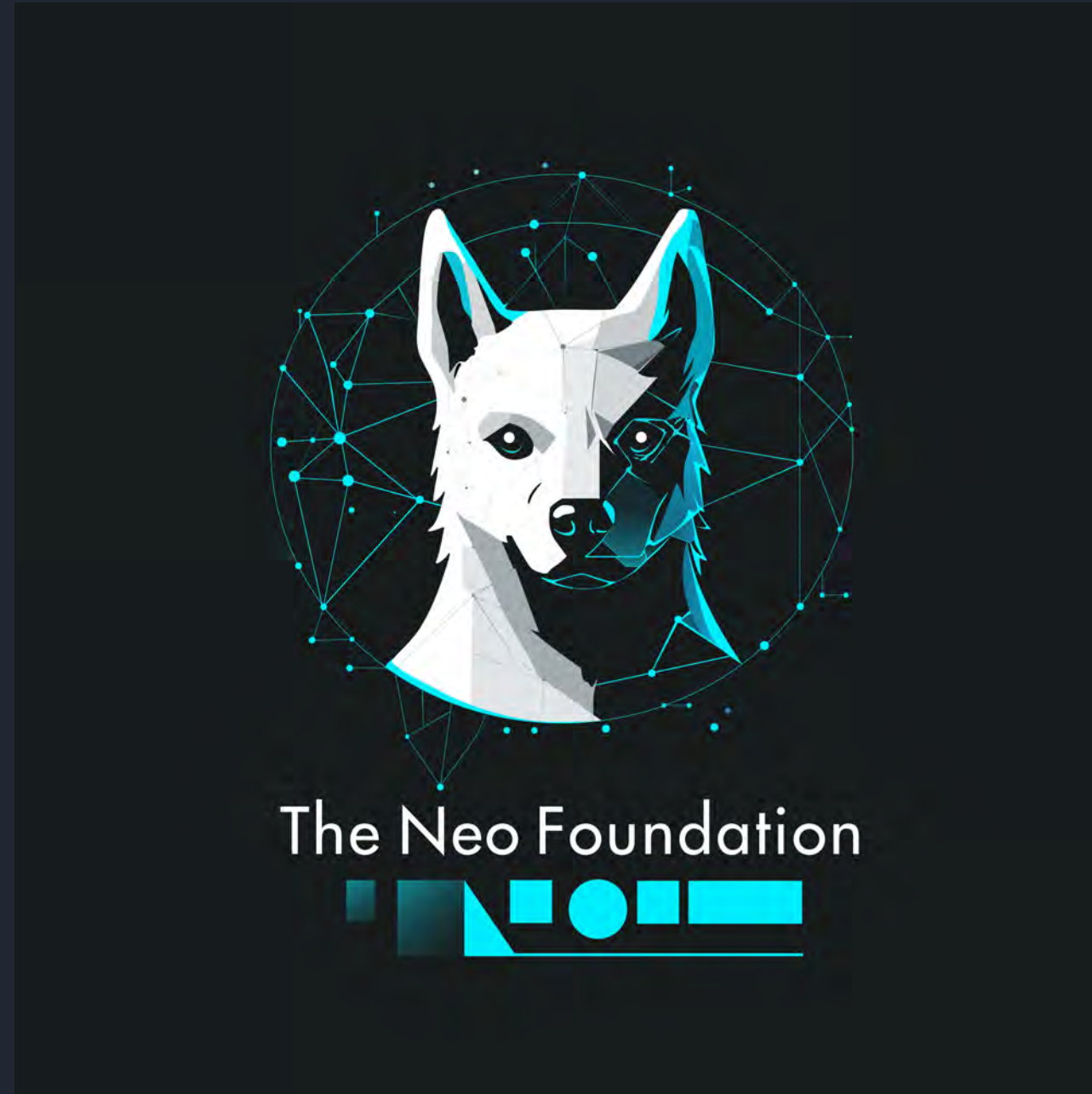


Augmented Momentum : Dogs' Brains are Evolving Again—to Support Us



Neo

Augmented Momentum : Dogs' Brains are Evolving Again—to Support Us



Augmented Momentum





AI + Us: Unpacking Our Black Box

If you would like to learn more about becoming a frontier futurist community email : info@thefrontierfuturist.com

Western vs. Eastern Thinking

Western Linear Thinking

Greek logic, breaking systems into parts

Step-by-step problem solving

Separate expert fields, limited integration

Eastern Holistic Thinking

Focus on connections and whole systems

Comfortable with uncertainty

Sees patterns rather than isolated pieces



Eastern vs. Western Brain Differences



Western Brains

Focus on objects, categorization, specialization

Parts operate independently



Eastern Brains

See relationships, context, whole picture

Stronger cross-region connections



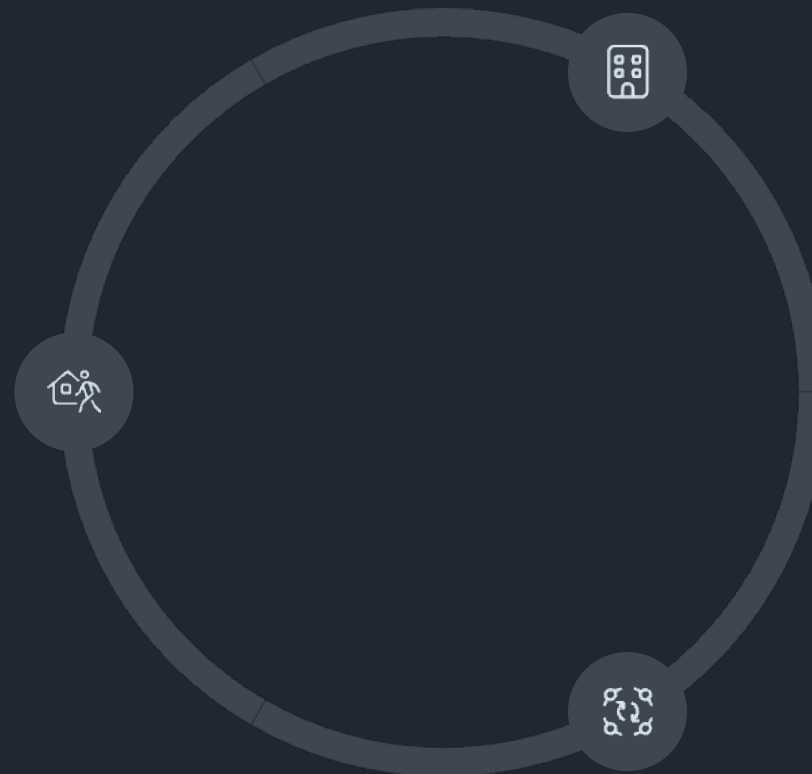
Implications

Different approaches to AI problems

Culture shapes neurological wiring

The Mongol Mindset

"Felt Wall" People
Adaptable, mobile, skills-focused



"Plank Door" People

Static, hierarchical, tradition-bound

Modern AI Adaptation

Continuous learning, flexible identity

The Mongol Mindset

"Felt Wall" People
Adaptable, mobile, skills-focused



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Modern AI Adaptation

Continuous learning, flexible identity

AI Impact Across Cultures

Western Risk

Linear thinking easily replicated by AI

Cognitive Flexibility

Adaptable thinking survives disruption

Eastern Advantage

Holistic thinking complements AI better

Optimal Strategy

Blend diverse thinking styles





The Precipice of Change

"We are not at the beginning of the age of AI.
We are at the end of everything before." -
John McElligott

1

Past Reality

World we understood

2

Current Moment

Point of no return

3

Uncertain Future

Unwritten potential

A man with a beard and long hair, wearing a simple loincloth, is walking through a cave. He is pointing towards a glowing, translucent blue brain that is floating in the air. Two dogs, one large and one small, are walking alongside him, looking at the brain. The cave is dimly lit, with the brain being the primary source of light.

Supporting Research Evidence



Co-Evolution

Brain changes in both species 30,000 years ago



Early Warning Systems

Dogs detect dangers 2-3x farther away



Brain Changes

Smaller fear centers in domesticated dogs and humans



Self-Domestication

Humans became less aggressive, more cooperative but less capable of handling constant threats and stress

Cognitive Divergence Model

AI interacts differently with Western and Eastern cognitive frameworks due to underlying neurological and cultural differences.

Western Mind



- Evolved around linear logic and individualism
- Specialized, compartmentalized tasks
- AI mimics and replaces these functions

Eastern Mind



- Evolved around holistic awareness
- Interdependence and pattern integration
- AI enhances and extends these functions

Cognitive Divergence Model

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg
Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn
Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu
Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

愛

Cognitive Divergence Model

Western Written Language: Alphabet

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Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu
Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

English Alphabet

- **Number of letters:** 26
- These are the basic building blocks for writing English.
- Letters are combined to form words.

Eastern Written Language: Logographic / Morphographic



Chinese Characters

- **Number of characters:** Tens of thousands exist.
- A well-educated Chinese speaker knows about 8,000 characters.
- Everyday reading require knowledge of around 3,000 to 4,000 characters.
- Each character represents a syllable and usually carries meaning on its own.
- Characters are not combined like letters but can form compound words.

Catalyst of Revolutionary Change

High Literacy Enabled

- Technical manuals to be read and followed.
- Scientific and mechanical ideas to spread.
- A **workforce** capable of adapting to new tools and processes.

The **Industrial Revolution (c. 1760–1840)** took root in **Protestant, literate nations**:

- **Britain**, the epicenter, had Protestant schooling systems and rising literacy since the 1600s.
- **Scotland** is a standout: due to its Presbyterian emphasis on reading Scripture, it had some of the
- **highest literacy rates** in Europe by the early 1700s.

Piaget's Third Stage of Cognitive Development

What was I learning during this stage?:

- **Learned to “Un-learn”**
- **Letting go of self identity is necessary for survival**
- **There is no such thing as stability**
- **Be willing to give up what you have for others**
- **Human beings can adapt to incredible stress if they have a strong enough belief system**
- **People will suffer if I personally do not act**

The Vigilance Offloading Hypothesis



Outsourced Vigilance

Dogs became early-warning systems for humans, capable of detecting sounds, smells, and movement far better than us.



Cognitive Freedom

Humans could focus on thinking and creating but lost their own hyper-vigilance capabilities



Co-Evolution and decline

Both species' brains changed permanently.
Human brains have shrunk by about 10% over the past 10,000–15,000 years



**"Your future opens up
when letting go is less
painful than holding on."**



**"Your future opens up
when letting go is less
painful than holding on."**

John McElligott

