



BE CYBER • BELGIUM

The Cyber Renaissance

Reclaiming human agency in the age of AI

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Cyber + Renaissance

Building understanding

Renaissance

1

REBIRTH

Born after a pandemic — in the wreckage of plague and collapsed certainties.

2

BACKWARD TO GO FORWARD

Thinkers dug the classics out of monastery libraries — Plato, Aristotle and more

3

THE RADICAL IDEA

The human beings at the centre. Human dignity. Human judgment. Human agency.



Humans are the only species that is self-authoring — free to sink to the level of the brute, or rise toward the divine, by our own choice.

Pico della Mirandola • Oration on the Dignity of Man • 1486

Cyber never meant computers

κυβερνήτης

kubernetes — the steersman

The person at the back of the ship with a hand on the tiller. In 1948, Norbert Wiener reached back for the word and coined cybernetics: the science of control and communication between people and machines.

PEOPLE

TECHNOLOGY

CONTROL

One question: who steers?

Wiener mapped the order of operations.

1950

The Human Use of Human Beings

Human purposes must govern the machines — not the reverse.

1964

God and Golem, Inc.

Beware “gadget worshippers” — and devices that give you exactly what you asked for, which is not what you wanted.

People first. **Machines in service.**

CYBER + RENAISSANCE

People in control of technology.

Pushing back against misanthropy.



The modern tech myth

The most pervasive and expensive mistake in cybersecurity.

“People are the weakest link.”

- People are the problem.
- If it wasn't for people, we'd have the perfect system
- PEBKAC: “the problem exists between the keyboard and the chair.”

Only two industries call their customers “users”: software and illegal drugs.

— as Edward Tufte famously observed



You cannot shame people into vigilance.
You can only shame them into silence.

And silence is the attacker's best friend.



All technology is political

How choices on building and using technology define our world

WHAT THE WORD TELLS US

Technology is craft with intent.

TECHNE

Craft. Art. Skill.

LOGOS

Reason. Purpose. The word.

The careful consideration of what we gain and what we lose when we build and use a thing.

— Lessons from Dr. Darin Barney, University of New Brunswick Saint John, Fall 2000

Every technology argues how the world should work.

A LOCK

is an argument about property.

A ROAD

is an argument about where people should go.

AN ALGORITHM

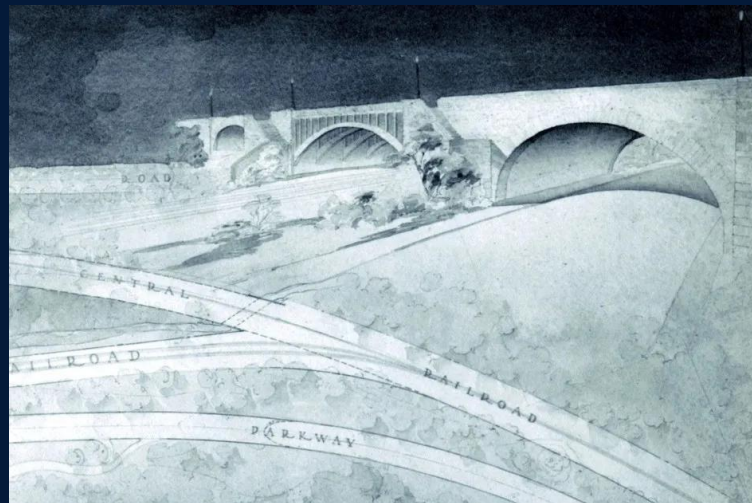
is an argument about what your attention is worth — and who collects the payment.

Nothing about a technology is neutral.

CAN A BRIDGE BE RACIST?

Robert Moses built Long Island's parkway overpasses too low for buses.

Buses carried the poor. Buses carried Black New Yorkers. The beaches at the end of those parkways were reserved, in concrete, for people who owned cars.



Concrete was policy. Code is policy too.

Prometheus Wired called it early.

NETWORKS CARRY VALUES

The values of whoever builds and controls them — not democracy by default.

SURVEILLANCE WINS

Surveillance and corporate control — not information access — define life on the network.

A STANDING RESERVE OF BITS

After Martin Heidegger: the network treats the world, and everyone in it, as resources on call.

Fifteen years before “surveillance capitalism” had a name. Technology affects what we are — not just what we do.

IV

Pandora's jar

You thought we were done with lessons from the Greeks.



It wasn't a box.

THE STORY YOU KNOW

Pandora opens a box. Every hardship pours out. One thing is saved for humanity: hope.

THE OTHER TRANSLATION

It was a jar. And what stayed inside was false hope — the curse that we are god-like with technology, or that technology itself is a god.

Prometheus' gift of fire came with a curse.

AI and the curse of false hope.

"It will cure all disease."

"It will transform the economy."

"It will deliver AGI."

The biggest story is not what AI does to our software code.

It's what using AI may do to our minds.

Your brain on ChatGPT.

55%

weaker neural activity

MIT Media Lab put EEG sensors on essay writers — with and without a large language model.

Every outsourced thought borrows against the capacity to think — and the interest compounds. **The AI group stayed weaker even after the AI was taken away.**

Source: MIT Media Lab, “Your Brain on ChatGPT” (2025)

When the machine sounds confident, we stop checking.

93%

follow the AI's answer when it is correct

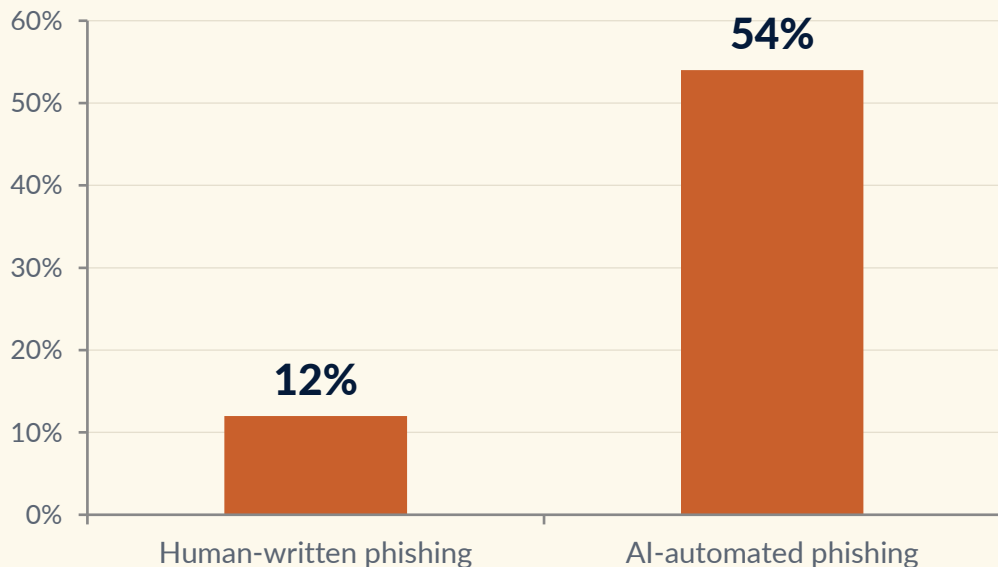
80%

still follow it when it is wrong — but confident

We hand over the tiller because the autopilot sounds so very sure of itself. • Source: Wharton cognitive-surrender research (2026)

MEANWHILE, THE ATTACKS SHARPEN

AI-built phishing is 4.5× more effective.

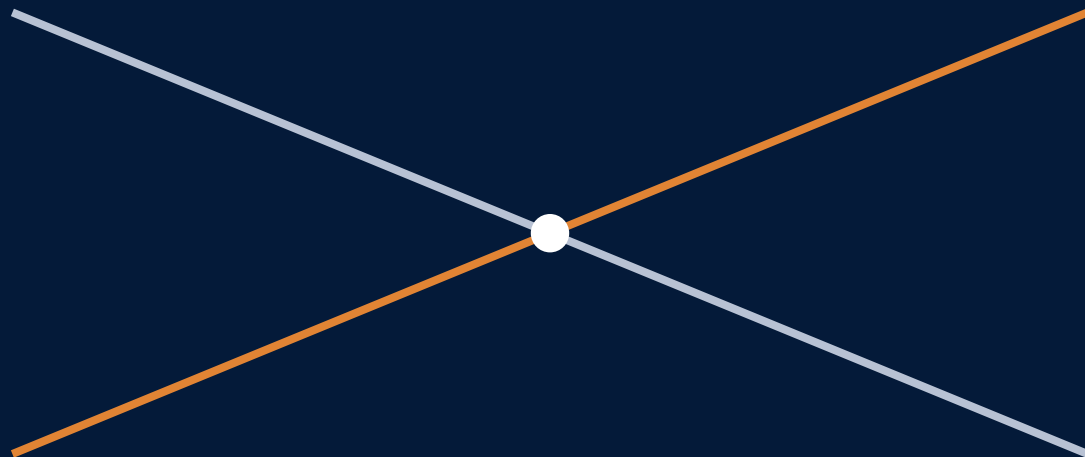


- Flawless Language
- Tuned to your role and your projects
- Voice clones. Deepfaked video calls.
- “Look for the typos” is officially dead.

Source: Heiding et al., AI spear-phishing study (arXiv, 2024), Microsoft Digital Defense Report 2025.

TWO LINES ON THE SAME CHART

HUMAN CRITICAL THINKING



MACHINE-MADE DECEPTION

The real AI risk: not that
machines out-code us —

**that they out-think us,
because we stopped
thinking.**

Socrates' warning

THE KING'S VERDICT ON WRITING

"This will produce forgetfulness ... the appearance of wisdom, not the reality. They will seem to know many things while understanding nothing."

SOCRATES LOST — BUT WASN'T WRONG

Writing really did change memory. We traded one capacity for a greater one. Every technology is a trade.

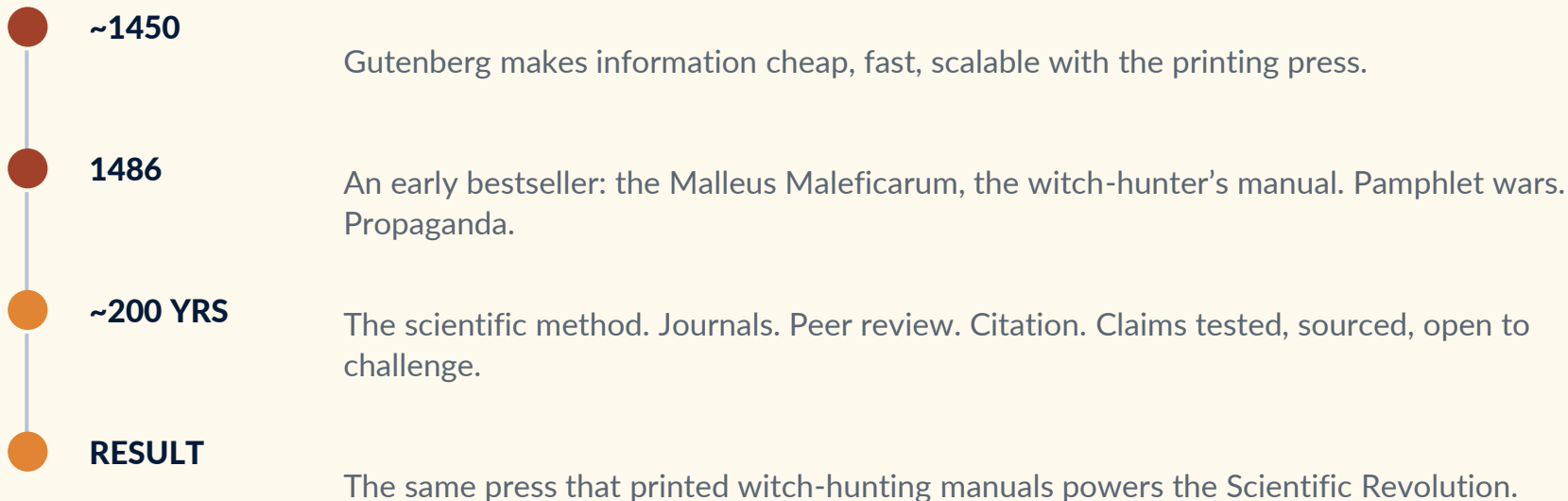
What are we trading away with AI? What are we getting? And who decided?



History has run this experiment before. Here is the playbook.



Europe tamed the worst abuses of print.



We do not have two centuries this time.



Towards a Better Future

The Cyber Renaissance has already started

INDIVIDUAL

BUSINESS

NATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

LEVEL ONE – THE INDIVIDUAL

People are sensors. People are steersmen.

MEASURE REPORTING

Celebrate the person who says “this felt wrong” – the one sensor attackers can’t patch around.

RETIRE THE GOTCHA

Stop running phishing tests as traps that generate a failure stat for the board.

REBUILD CRITICAL THINKING

Pause. Ask who benefits. Verify through a second channel. Socratic questioning is frontline cyber defence.

Agency, it turns out, is a security control. It might be the security control.

Human-in-command, not just human-in-the-loop.

THE CHECKBOX

A person rubber-stamps whatever the machine decided — at a pace no person can actually review.

IN COMMAND

AI drafts — humans decide. AI flags — humans judge. AI accelerates the work; it never absorbs the accountability.

If your AI deployment plan can't answer, “who is steering?” — back to the drawing board.

What's happening in Canada.

BILL C-8 – LAW, JUNE 2026

Critical infrastructure operators must secure the systems our lives depend on – with real accountability. A duty of care to the humans who depend on the technology.

A NATIONAL ANTI-FRAUD STRATEGY

Platform liability for scam ads: if a company profits from placing a fraudulent ad in front of someone, it owns a share of what the ad does to them.

Fraud at today's scale is not a user-error problem. It is a design problem – and design problems have owners.

Europe, the locomotive of tech change.

EU AI ACT – ART. 14

High-risk AI must be designed for effective human oversight. The steersman, written into statute.

GDPR

Your dignity travels with your data. Europe exported that position to the world.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The first binding international treaty on AI and human rights is open for signature.

Values don't hamper innovation. Values create markets.

Canada and Europe: middle powers, finding middle ground – proving democracies can adopt AI and keep people in command.



THE AGE OF AI WILL NOT BE DECIDED BY THE MACHINES

**“There is no fate
but what we make.”**

Join the Cyber Renaissance

David Shipley • Beauceron Security • Cybersecurity Today