

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE DISENCHANTMENT OF THE WORLD

In the early twentieth century, Max Weber wrote his seminal work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, in which he reflected on the relationship between religious values and economic advancement. In this book as well as his other writings, he argued that the rise of modern society—with its rigid bureaucracies and emphasis on rationalism over human creativity—led to the "disenchantment of the world." His work offered a warning that feels all too resonant today: that a relentless pursuit of maximum efficiency, driven by impersonal rules and algorithms such as those provided by AI, threatens to rob individuals of the creative spirit that inspires them, reducing human beings to mere cogs in a machine.



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become as ubiquitous in our daily work lives as Google or the internet itself. Learning from massive stores of information, generative AI (GenAI) applications are capable of everything from analyzing complex data sets to composing epic poetry. Rather than spending a lifetime studying the intricacies of the human form, color theory, and composition, these systems can produce a convincing masterpiece in seconds. They can generate emails, memos, blog posts, articles, song lyrics—even entire books—in the blink of an eye. These tools undoubtedly offer powerful advantages, but are there hidden costs to such inhuman productivity? Could AI represent Weber's "iron cage"—a new form of bureaucratic rationalization that sacrifices human autonomy and the creative spirit?

LOSS OF AGENCY

Imagine a world where decision-making and strategy—whether for selecting the optimal breakfast to meet one's macros or designing a corporate hiring policy—are outsourced to AI, devoid of emotion, driven solely by the pursuit of efficiency. That world is no longer hypothetical; it is the world we inhabit now. As reliance on these tools becomes embedded in daily life, what will become of our own critical thinking and problem-solving abilities? Will we continue to develop them, or will we lose the habit—and the confidence—to question the systems guiding our choices?

LOSS OF PURPOSE AND MEANING IN WORK

As GenAI increasingly takes over creative tasks once reserved for humans—at a fraction of the cost and time—what, exactly, will be left for us to do? And perhaps more importantly, will we want the jobs that remain—those stripped of self-expression, creativity, and meaningful engagement?

CALL TO ACTION

While I do not claim to have the answers to the questions raised here, I know I am not alone in feeling a growing sense of AI fatigue as its presence becomes suddenly and overwhelmingly embedded in our daily lives. Much like the "information overload" many experienced during the rise of the internet, we are once again searching for balance and a renewed sense of agency. GenAI is, at its core, a tool—a remarkably powerful one—that can enhance our productivity both professionally and personally. But like any tool, it must be used with intention. We must resist the temptation to surrender our creative spirit and preserve what makes us distinctly human.

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