

Stolen Minds

The Engineering of Human Obsolescence — by Liam Stanley

What social media did to attention between 2010 and 2020, AI is doing to judgement, memory and creativity between 2025 and 2030 — and this time the people building it are saying so on the record.

We are five years into a second wave. The first — engagement-maximised social media — was something its architects later admitted they hadn't understood. The second is different: the founders of the major AI labs are stating publicly that their systems will substitute for human cognitive labour, and the economic infrastructure to make that substitution rational is being built now. *Stolen Minds* names what is being built, by whom, on the public record — and what the reader can do, tonight, this month and this year, to protect the cognitive capacities the system is calibrated to replace.

The argument

1

COERCIVE · FINISHED

The substrate broke

Engagement-maximised platforms dismantled the cognitive ground — attention, focus, memory — everything else depends on.

Comparable titles

Primary readers

Placement

Formats

Extent

2

REPLACEMENT · NOW

AI substitutes

Tools stand in for the functions the broken substrate can no longer perform — memory, creativity, judgement, the self.

The Anxious Generation (Haidt) · Stolen Focus (Hari) · The Coming Wave (Suleyman)

Thoughtful adults 30–60 uneasy about AI; the Haidt/Hari audience wanting what to do, not only what to fear

Current Affairs · Technology & Society

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c. 80,000 words · 19 chapters · cover illustration by James Thew

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OPTIMISATION · BEGINNING

Surrender turns rational

Competitive pressure penalises the professional who keeps an unaided skill. The substitution becomes institutionally unavoidable.

The largest deliberate displacement of human capability in history — and it is by design. Read it before the door closes.