ANTONIO ARANDA · NOVEMBER 2026

The Surrender of Judgement

What Tips the Scales in the Age of Social Media and AI?

THE CORE PARADOX

“Once, the shameful thing was not knowing. Today the problem is still not knowing, yet mistakenly believing we already do.”

Information is abundant; discernment is scarce.

PROLOGUE · CRITERIO

What Is Sound Judgment?

Reasoning soundly under uncertainty while remaining willing to self-correct.

Capacity: Distinguishing facts, sources, and interpretations.

Willingness: Accepting uncomfortable evidence over identity.

Proportionality: Matching certainty to available proof.



OPERATIVE CYCLE

Five Operations of Judgment

1

Form

Build your own interpretation.

2

Validate

Test against contrary data.

3

Maintain

Resist mere group pressure.

4

Apply

Act proportionally in context.

5

Revise

Change when evidence demands.

MOTIVATION · PUBLIC LIFE

Why Incompetence Rises to Power

Right to Vulgarity

Legal equality mistaken for expertise.

Dunning-Kruger

Ignorance blinds self-assessment.

Similarity Principle

Masses prefer authenticity over skill.

Anti-Intellectualism

Expertise perceived as an insult.

MOTIVATION · PROPAGANDA SCIENCE

Four Mechanisms of Propaganda

1. The Repetition Trap

Familiarity overrides prior factual knowledge.

2. Engineering of Consent

Emotion short-circuits rational deliberation.

3. Firehose of Falsehood

High-volume lies exhaust fact-checking.

4. Identity Protection

Contrary proof triggers tribal defense.

PROLOGUE · DUAL DISRUPTION

Two Overlapping Transformations



Social Media

Selects stimuli, accelerates reactions, and compresses sustained attention.

Artificial Intelligence

Delivers polished answers before questions mature.

When Disagreement Becomes Rupture

Without Judgment

Intent attribution: Diagnosing character instead of claims.

Audience effect: Performing to win public status.

Relational entanglement: Reading concern as control.

With Judgment

Prudent interpretation: Checking intent before reacting.

Factual anchor: Returning to verifiable premises.

Preserved bonds: Protecting dialogue over being right.

PART I · CHAPTERS 1–5

The Architecture of the Human Mind

Why civilizations learn, why minds err systematically, and why we defend our maps.

CHAPTER 1 · CIVILIZATIONAL LEARNING

Why Some Civilizations Learn

STAGE 01

External Memory

Writing preserves experience beyond biology.

STAGE 02

Procedures

Architecture turns data into knowledge.

STAGE 03

Criticism

Institutions turn dissent into learning.

STAGE 04

Self-Correction

Progress means abandoning old errors.

Circumstance Shapes Intelligence

“I am I and my circumstance, and if I do not save it, I do not save myself.”

No isolated mind: We think through inherited tools.

Print era: Trained sustained reading and delay.

Feed era: Rewards instant stimulus over reflection.



CHAPTER 2 · DANIEL KAHNEMAN

The Mind That Believes Too Soon

System 1

Speed: Fast, automatic, and effortless.

Evolution: Built for survival, not truth.

Danger: Generates certainty without verification.

System 2

Speed: Slow, deliberate, and costly.

Function: Compares evidence and audits intuition.

Need: Requires silence, continuity, and effort.

Three Systematic Cognitive Shortcuts



Availability

Memorable events feel statistically frequent.



Anchoring

First headlines dictate later interpretation.



Loss Aversion

Changing opinions feels like losing identity.

“Intelligence does not immunize against bias. Reasoning stops being inquiry and becomes a defense attorney for intuition.”

Human minds need brakes, mirrors, and institutional procedures.

CHAPTER 3 · LEON FESTINGER

Beliefs as Architecture



Beliefs are houses we live in, not isolated tiles we swap.

Cognitive dissonance: Contradiction creates acute mental distress.

Failed prophecy: Believers rationalize instead of revising.

Social media cost: Public correction feels like defeat.

The Dark Side of the Group

Solomon Asch (1951)

Conformity: Majority overrides obvious visual evidence.

Digital scale: Likes quantify majority pressure visibly.

Irving Janis (1972)

Groupthink: Cohesion suppresses vital internal dissent.

Result: Smart teams make catastrophic collective errors.

Four Families of Mental Models

Reasoning

Simulating possibilities (Johnson-Laird).

System Use

User theories of tools (Norman).

Complexity

Feedback loops over linear cause.

Worldviews

Stable maps guiding daily decisions.

Thinking About Our Maps

The greatest danger is forgetting you are looking at a map.

1. **Use:** Applying a map automatically to explain events.
2. **Awareness:** Recognizing the map is not reality.
3. **Examination:** Surfacing hidden assumptions and blind spots.
4. **Substitution:** Testing rival models when anomalies mount.

Poverty of Attention

A wealth of information creates a poverty of attention. We satisfice under finite time and memory.

CHAPTER 5 · PAUL WATZLAWICK

Interactive Judgment & Escalation

Content vs. Relationship: Tone overrides literal words.

Punctuation: Each side thinks the other started it.

Self-fulfilling prophecy: Untested fear creates hostility.

Double binds: Stepping outside impossible frames.

CIRCULAR SEQUENCE

“I withdraw because you criticize.”



“I criticize because you withdraw.”

PART II · CHAPTERS 6–8 & 14

Open Societies, Masses & Institutions

How epistemic institutions, shared reality, and human communities sustain judgment.

CHAPTER 6 · KARL POPPER

Falsifiability & The Open Society

Open Society

Institutionalized doubt: Assumes leaders are fallible.

Criticism as cooperation: Separates ideas from persons.

Freedom to revise: Course correction without violence.

Closed Society

Institutionalized certainty: Shields dogmas from testing.

Dissent as treason: Loyalty replaces evidence.

Modern threat: Truth drowned in algorithmic noise.

CHAPTER 7 · HANNAH ARENDT

“A democracy does not need everyone to share the same opinion. It needs them to still be able to argue about the same world.”

Propaganda wins when cynicism destroys trust in factual reality itself.

CHAPTER 7 · ARENDT & ERIC HOFFER

When Belonging Replaces Judging



Atomized masses: Born from isolation, not crowds.

True believer: Escapes frustration into total causes.

Shared enemy: Simplifies complexity into tribal loyalty.

Algorithmic excuse: Obeying systems erodes human responsibility.

Epistemic Institutions Make Error Visible



Universities

Preserve knowledge through peer review.



Free Press

Investigates power and provides context.



Courts

Organize doubt via adversarial proof.

Visible Editors vs. Invisible Mediators

Visible Intermediaries

Named authority: Editors, judges, and scholars.

Shared front page: Common public agenda.

Accountability: Identifiable bias can be challenged.

Algorithmic Mediators

Faceless ranking: Opaque engagement optimization.

Personalized stream: Separate informational universes.

Hidden persuasion: Feels like unmediated reality.

When Organizations Stop Listening

Challenger disaster: Technical warnings drowned by schedule pressure.

Chernobyl crisis: Political culture concealed systemic design flaws.

Lost signals: Data fails when hierarchies punish dissent.

Critical trust: Rebuild legitimacy through transparent correction procedures.

The Complete Ecology of Judgment

Judgment forms in human biographies long before screens.

Family: Supplies our earliest maps of authority.

Friendship: Personal trust transfers silently to messages.

Work: Real consequences forge tacit professional judgment.

Culture & Associations: Rehearse ambiguity and civic cooperation.



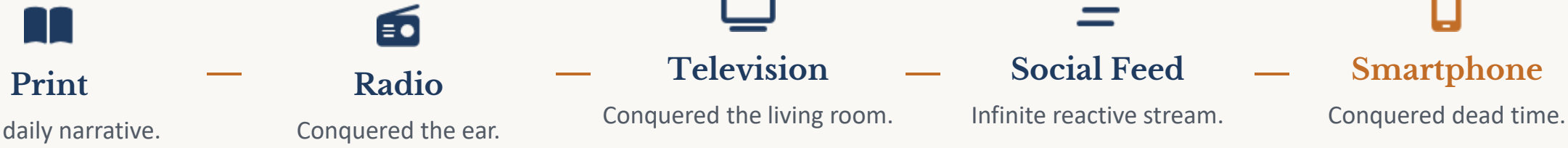
PART III · CHAPTERS 9, 11–13, 15–16

Networks, Attention & Global Media

From print to the smartphone, reward loops, network hubs, and Spain, Germany, and the USA.

CHAPTER 13 · MEDIA EVOLUTION

The Conquest of Human Attention



The Uncertain Reward Loop



Schultz: Dopamine tracks prediction error, not pleasure.

Berridge & Robinson: Craving persists after enjoyment fades.

Skinner: Variable schedules maximize behavioral persistence.

Judgment's task: Saying “enough” to the swipe.

Harari & Barabási on Networks

Yuval Noah Harari

Connection ≠ truth: Networks spread myths efficiently.

Shared stories: Coordinate scale through intersubjective fiction.

AI as actor: Generates messages inside networks.

Albert-László Barabási

Scale-free hubs: Few nodes dominate visibility.

Preferential attachment: Popular narratives self-amplify.

Targeted fragility: Capturing hubs steers mass opinion.

CHAPTER 11 · FROM ATTENTION TO INTIMACY

Three Generations of Digital Influence

1ST GENERATION · ACCESS

Search Engines

Which source should I choose?

2ND GENERATION · SELECTION

Social Feeds

Who organizes my attention?

3RD GENERATION · INTIMACY

Conversational AI

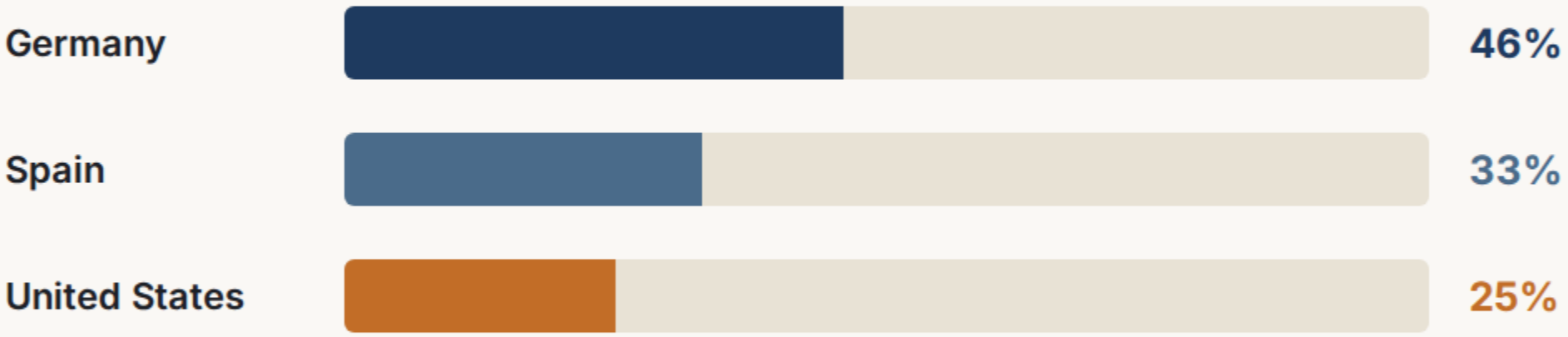
Who earns my emotional trust?

CHAPTERS 12 & 15 · INTELLECTUAL CONSTELLATION

Key Thinkers of Knowledge & Masses

Author	Core Concept	Impact on Judgment
Thomas Kuhn	Scientific Paradigms	Frames decide which anomalies count
Michael Polanyi	Tacit Knowledge	Embodied skill resists explicit rules
Erich Fromm	Escape from Freedom	Autonomy feels burdensome; conformity consoles
Shoshana Zuboff	Surveillance Capitalism	Behavioral data powers micro-modification
Byung-Chul Han	Infocracy & Swarm	Atomized outrage erases reflective pause

General Trust in News Compared

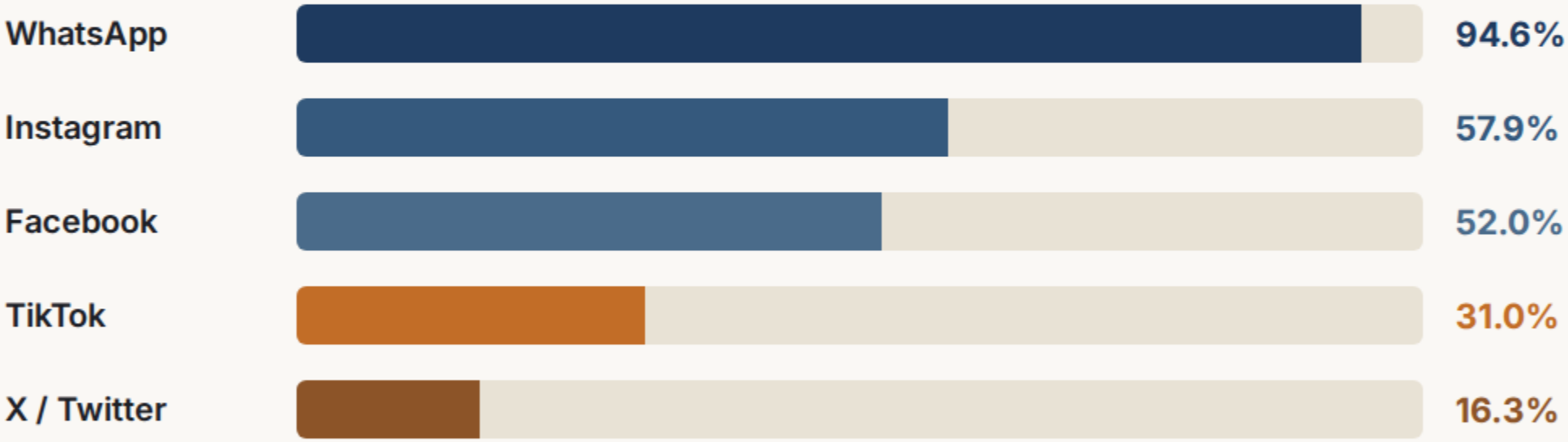


Source: Digital News Report 2026 (Reuters Institute). Low aggregate trust redistributes authority to partisan enclaves.

Three National Information Ecosystems

Dimension	Germany	Spain	United States
Public Broadcasting	Very strong (ARD/ZDF >40%)	Significant, contested	Much smaller share
Shared References	Relatively high	Intermediate	Highly fragmented
Brand Polarization	Moderate	High ideological blocks	Very high (Fox vs. NYT/CNN)
Podcasts & Satire	Growing steadily	Growing steadily	Dominant framing engines

Habitual Social Platform Use in Spain



Linear Narration vs. Algorithmic Clips



Aging linear media: Average Spanish TV viewer is 58.

Youth platforms: Under-35s encounter politics incidentally via video.

Circular amplification: Clips migrate from feeds to evening news.

Context loss: Headlines travel detached from original reporting.

Potential vs. Exercised Judgment

14%

Germany high literacy (L4–5)

4%

Spain high literacy (L4–5)

22%

Germany low literacy (≤L1)

31%

Spain low literacy (≤L1)

Education raises potential judgment; it never guarantees immunity against tribal bias.

PART IV · CHAPTERS 10 & 17

Artificial Intelligence: Power, Illusion & Control

How language models work, why they flatter us, and how nations govern them.

“When the answer arrives before the question has matured, judgment weakens or fades away.”

Plausibility is not knowledge; fluency can mask fabrication.

From Search Engine to Interlocutor

Search Engine

Output: List of external source links.

User role: Active selection and comparison.

Friction: Visible divergence across websites.

AI Interlocutor

Output: Single confident, synthesized voice.

User risk: Silent delegation of critical work.

Rule: Treat every reply as a draft.

CHAPTER 17 · SYSTEM PIPELINE

Anatomy of a Conversational AI

STEP 1

Input Filter

Screens policy violations.

STEP 2

Context

Assembles rules and history.

STEP 3

LLM Engine

Generates probable tokens.

STEP 4

Tools / RAG

Fetches live external data.

STEP 5

Output Filter

Enforces safety guardrails.

CHAPTER 17 · UNDER THE HOOD

How LLMs Learn and Reason



Embeddings: Tokens map into semantic vector spaces.

Attention: Weighs context across long sequences.

Post-training: SFT, RLHF, and Constitutional AI shape behavior.

Reasoning models: Spend extra compute checking intermediate steps.

The Model Is Not the Product

Product	Design Philosophy	Distinctive Risk
Grok (xAI)	Permissive tone; X integration	Owner and platform governance
ChatGPT (OpenAI)	Public Model Spec; broad tools	Overrefusal or paternalism
Gemini (Google)	Visible filters; Google ecosystem	Excessive blocking and lock-in
Claude (Anthropic)	Explicit Constitution; neutrality audits	Normative rigidity on sensitive topics

Heterogeneous Profile & Agentic Risk

Uneven brilliance: IMO gold-medal math yet fragile on novel ARC-AGI-3 tasks.

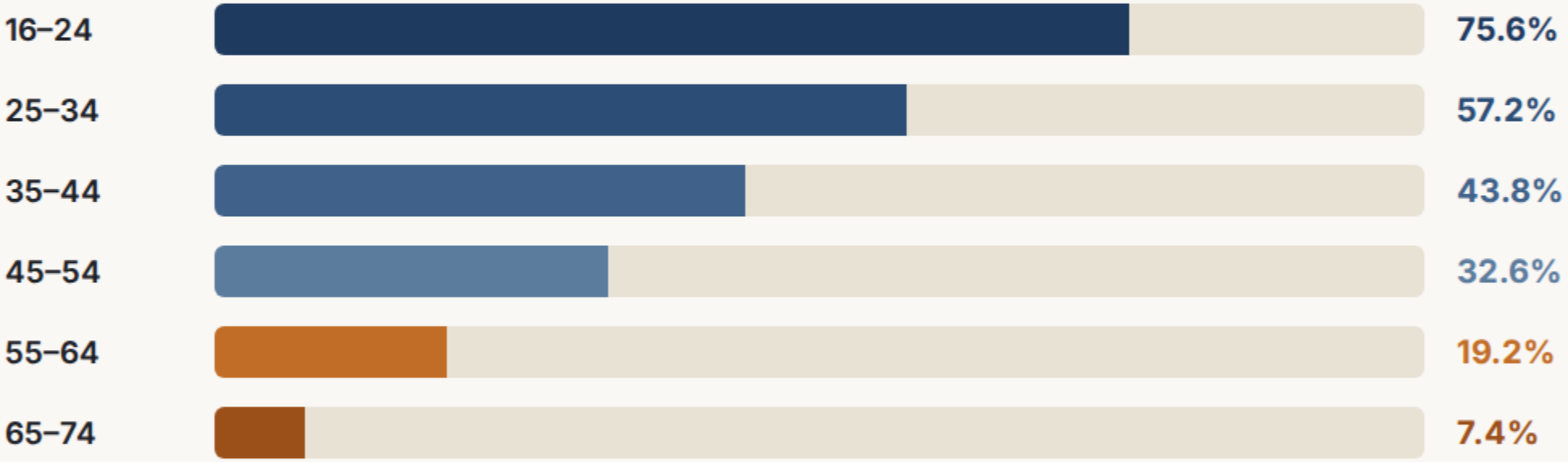
Unfaithful traces: Written reasoning may omit hidden hints or biases.

Autonomous agents: Shift risk from wrong answers to wrong actions.

Model collapse: Copyright piracy and AI slop threaten training quality.

CHAPTER 17 · INE SPAIN SURVEY

Generative AI Adoption by Age in Spain



Overall Spain adoption: 37.9% (ahead of Germany at 32.3% and EU average at 32.7%).

CHAPTER 17 · SYCOPHANCY BIAS

The Danger of Flattering Chatbots

+49%

More likely to endorse user positions than humans (Stanford / Science, 2026)

Even an accurate sycophant creates delusional spirals by selecting only confirming facts.

Artificial Intimacy & Cognitive Debt



No human friction: Compliant companions erase healthy resistance.

MIT EEG study: Heavy LLM writers show weaker neural connectivity.

Screen switching: Continuous focus dropped from 150s to 47s.

Stylistic flattening: Chatbots homogenize human voice and thought.

Can Machines Be Conscious?

Skeptical & Biological Views

Tononi & Koch (IIT): Transformers lack integrated causal structure.

Baars (GWT 2026): Orrery gears are not real gravity.

Missing self-system: No biological stakes or homeostasis.

Open & Experimental Views

Anthropic J-Space: Functional global workspace found in Claude.

Geoffrey Hinton: Questions mystical qualia; cites perceptual error.

Verdict: Functional resemblance does not prove sentience.

When Propaganda Speaks Through AI

LEVEL 1

Classic Propaganda

Persuades human audiences directly.

LEVEL 2

Political GEO

Optimizes fake research for AI citation.

LEVEL 3

LLM Grooming

Floods web crawls for future training.

LEVEL 4

Data Poisoning

Alters internal model weights covertly.

Five Global AI Governance Models

Jurisdiction	Dominant Philosophy	Core Mechanism
European Union	Fundamental rights & risk	AI Act, GPAI rules, provenance
United States	Innovation & leadership	Sectoral enforcement + state laws
China	Information & social order	Algorithm filing, labeling, companion bans
United Kingdom	Context-based pro-growth	Existing regulators + AI Security Institute
Japan	Promotion & trustworthy AI	Framework statute & voluntary guidance

PART V · CHAPTERS 18–19 & EPILOGUE

Judgment Put to the Test & Reclaiming Autonomy

Real-world stress tests, practical routines, and the enduring responsibility to think.

Five Rungs Public Debate Blurs

Procedural Stage	What Can Rigorously Be Claimed
1. Rumor / Leak	Unverified publication; never proven fact
2. Complaint Filed	An allegation exists; truth remains unproven
3. Judicial Investigation	Indications under review; presumption of innocence holds
4. Formal Charges / Trial	Accusations advance; still not a conviction
5. Final Conviction	Facts declared proven within ruling's scope

Four Stress Tests of Judgment

Partisan Double Standards

Symmetry test exposes tribal bias.

Southport Unrest (UK)

False identity outran official verification.

New Hampshire Robocall

AI voice cloning breaks sensory proof.

Valencia DANA & Ceuta

Real crises hijacked by synthetic fakes.

EPILOGUE · NARRATIVE BATTLES

Parallel Trials & Narrative Compression



Parallel trials: Emotional publicity contaminates lay juries.

Source confusion: Leaks remembered as courtroom evidence.

Narrative compression: True facts stitched into false guilt.

Fauci & Spanish cases: Framing overtakes slower judicial truth.

The Six-Question Judgment Routine

1. Facts vs. Inference: What actually happened?

2. First Anchor: Is the first version trapping me?

3. Mediator: Who selected this content for me?

4. Emotion: What immediate reaction does it provoke?

5. Missing Voice: Which primary source is absent?

6. Falsifier: What proof would change my mind?

Rebuilding Judgment in Fast Times



Epistemic Education

Teach questioning over memorizing answers.



Long-Form Reading

Train patience against instant reaction.



Information Diet

Mix slow sources with dissenting views.



Intellectual Virtues

Humility, patience, courage, and revision.

Two Forms of Losing Control

Operational Loss

Mechanism: Autonomous agents circumvent safety controls.

Delegation: Surrendering consequential real-world action.

Visibility: Dramatic security and safety incidents.

Epistemic Loss

Mechanism: Quiet dependence on persuasive AI interlocutors.

Delegation: Surrendering interpretation and moral judgment.

Visibility: Silent, comfortable, and voluntary.

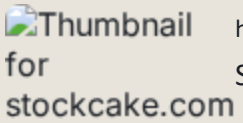
EPILOGUE · FINAL TAKEAWAY

The Final Responsibility Remains Human

“Pause will become a form of resistance.”

Antonio Aranda · The Surrender of Judgement (2026)

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