

When Intelligence Is No Longer Scarce

A Public Reading Guide and a Map of Eight Questions

As capabilities grow more abundant, what is truly scarce in civilization?

The answer first, then signposts for the reader

This guide distills the central argument of V1.1.1 into five civilizational scarcities and uses eight questions for general readers to mark different paths into the full essay. It is not a summary to be read in place of the main text, and it does not recast the eight questions as the theory's internal structure.

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English Translation

Chinese guide baseline: P01-ENTRY-008 V1.0.1. Underlying essay: Chinese V1.1.1. English translation prepared 14 October 2026. Distinct from existing E3 English adaptations.

THE FIVE SCARCITIES**The answer for the reader**

As intelligence moves from a scarce resource toward a widely available foundational capability, civilization's bottlenecks will not automatically disappear. They will increasingly shift toward the five key scarcities outlined here.

1 Direction

What capabilities serve, who decides, and whose real lives provide the measure.

2 System-wide causal understanding

Continuing to see feedback, costs, and those left out as action reaches across actors, institutions, and time.

3 Time to correct errors before irreversibility

A window in which to pause, compare, repair, and change course before harm crosses a critical threshold.

4 The place of real subjects

People are not reduced to confirmation buttons, sources of data, or abstract variables within a system's objectives.

5 The capacity for shared error correction

Different actors can identify errors, raise objections, stop action, rebuild, and renew authorization.

The central message

When intelligence is no longer scarce, what civilization truly lacks is not more answers, but direction, system-wide causal understanding, time to correct errors before irreversibility, the place of real subjects, and the capacity for shared error correction.

POSITIONING

Where this essay starts afresh

If you are tired of the debate swinging between “Will AI destroy humanity?” and “AI inevitably brings progress,” this essay tries to move the question further upstream.

The title is not a statistical claim about the world today, nor a claim that models, computing power, infrastructure, and opportunities are already equitably available. It proposes a directional thought experiment: as fewer and fewer things are constrained by “We cannot do it,” will civilization naturally know “What should we do?” Growth in capability, equitable access, who controls it, and what purposes it serves are four different questions.

The full essay follows a causal chain. Civilization needs intelligence, but cannot let intelligence define it. Once AI enters the real world, it is no longer an isolated tool; it becomes part of a shared system embedded in purposes, institutions, power, authorization, responsibility, and feedback. One important value of powerful intelligence is to make consequences visible earlier, while they can still be changed.

The essay therefore distinguishes reversible trial and error from exclusion on grounds of irreversibility. Reversibility means retaining the ability to stop, repair, replace, rebuild, and renew authorization. Exclusion closes off permission for high-risk action to enter the real world; it does not close off research, dissent, new evidence, conditions for lifting the restriction, or renewed judgment. The essay also addresses human errors of direction, errors in machine operation, and the consequences of coupling the two.

Limits of use

- This is not a ready-made policy proposal or engineering manual. It is a framework for judgment that can be read, questioned, and used on its own.
- It does not propose an overarching system for running civilization. Individuals, groups, states, communities, and institutions remain the actors responsible for action in the real world.
- The eight questions serve only as navigation for general readers. They are not the argumentative structure of the V1.1.1 main text, and they introduce no new named concepts or claims about mechanisms.

THE EIGHT QUESTIONS

Eight question reading map 01 to 02**01 Will more powerful AI naturally make civilization better?***Does growth in AI capability naturally amount to civilizational progress?*

Expanding intelligent capabilities does not automatically bring civilizational progress. It shifts the bottleneck further from “Can it be done?” toward “Why do it, who decides, and who bears the consequences?” Even as capabilities become more abundant, direction, system-wide causality, time for correction, real subjects, and shared error correction will become more critical scarcities.

Related sections: Before the Main Text; Chapter 0; Chapter 12.

Why read this: It moves the discussion from “Will AI go out of control?” to “Where will more powerful capabilities ultimately take civilization?”

02 Whom should intelligence serve?*What, ultimately, is increasingly powerful technology for?*

Civilization needs intelligence to help real living beings continue to exist, live, and generate meaning, rather than make efficiency or the system itself an end. Freedom from survival insecurity, a happy life, and a more meaningful life cannot be compressed into a single aggregate score. Intelligence can help compare consequences, but greater capability does not automatically confer the standing to determine public purposes.

Related section: Chapter 1.

Why read this: It first answers the question that governance debates most often skip: whom are all our technologies, institutions, and efficiencies ultimately for?

THE EIGHT QUESTIONS

Eight question reading map 03 to 04**03 What should the relationship between people and AI be?***Is it enough for people to decide and AI to execute?*

Once AI enters homes, organizations, markets, and public systems, it is no longer an isolated external tool. People can make mistakes in their purposes and use of power; machines can make mistakes in perception, reasoning, and execution. A mature relationship does not designate either side as always right. It makes purposes traceable, authorization explainable, outcomes available as feedback, and errors grounds for reopening judgment.

Related section: Chapter 2.

Why read this: It avoids reducing people to the role of clicking the final button, or imagining AI as an entity acting alone outside society.

04 How far into the consequences can we see before acting?*Can AI help civilization avoid some costs that become clear only in hindsight?*

One of the most important uses of powerful intelligence is not to give people a single answer, but to lay out the actors, interests, feedback, critical thresholds, alternative paths, and unknowns before action, so that consequences enter judgment as early as possible. In the face of deep uncertainty, civilization must still act on the strongest reasons currently available and allow feedback from reality to keep changing its next choices.

Related sections: Chapters 3 to 4.

Why read this: It shows how powerful intelligence can move from being an “answer machine” toward a civilizational capacity that brings consequences into choices in advance.

THE EIGHT QUESTIONS

Eight question reading map 05 to 06**05 Which mistakes can we risk making, and which can we not?***Can every risk be approached by acting first and correcting later?*

Civilization cannot learn about everything in the same way. Controlled trial and error is possible where harm can be identified, its scope contained, and action genuinely stopped and repaired. Where a problem may cross an unrecoverable threshold, however, real catastrophe cannot be traded for knowledge. Reversibility also means more than returning to an old version. It means retaining the practical ability to pause, isolate, replace, rebuild, and renew authorization.

Related sections: Chapters 5 to 6.

Why read this: It replaces the overly crude divide between “conservative” and “radical” with the question “After a mistake, can we still change the outcome?”

06 Is preventing danger compatible with keeping the future open?*Will prohibiting high-risk paths close off the future?*

Anti-closure does not mean never deciding, nor does it require preserving every dangerous option. Civilization can prevent a high-risk path from entering the real world while making public the grounds for exclusion, thresholds, triggers for review, and conditions for lifting the restriction, allowing research, new evidence, and alternative designs to move forward. What this protects is not the number of old options, but the future ability to reassess and turn toward better paths.

Related section: Chapter 7.

Why read this: It directly addresses the easily misunderstood tension between closing dangerous paths and protecting future choice.

THE EIGHT QUESTIONS

Eight question reading map 07 to 08**07 What, exactly, should AI governance govern?***Is it enough to govern models and technical risks?*

AI governance cannot focus only on models. It must examine purposes, capabilities, permissions, behavior, responsibility, and consequences separately. It must also ask who makes the rules, who benefits, who bears the costs, and who can appeal and exit. Many risks arise from human competition and structures of power, while machine-side errors can also occur independently. Both sides must be constrained at the same time and be able to correct one another.

Related sections: Chapters 8 to 9.

Why read this: It brings technical risks, structural problems on the human side, distributive justice, and regulatory power into a single chain of responsibility.

08 As AI grows more powerful, are people still irreplaceable?*If machines can do almost anything, where do people belong?*

Human value cannot rest on “what AI cannot yet do.” It comes from our position as beings who live their own lives, form relationships, bear consequences, and generate meaning. A mature system does not keep reaching further into life. It is dependable where needed and steps back where it is not. Stepping back is a reversible reduction in the system’s role, not the withdrawal of necessary support; nor can an imperceptible presence substitute for transparency.

Related sections: Chapters 10 to 12.

Why read this: It answers the essay’s deepest question about people and machines: why should more powerful systems put real life more fully back into human hands?

READING ROUTES

Enter the full essay through your question

You do not have to read the full essay from beginning to end in the order of its contents. Choose the route most relevant to you, then return to the complete argument. All chapter references below refer to When Intelligence Is No Longer Scarce, Chinese Public Essay, Independent Publication Edition, V1.1.1.

20 minutes to grasp the central argument**Before the Main Text → Chapter 0 → Chapter 12**

For first-time readers: see how the problem is reframed, then go directly to the conclusion organized around the five scarcities.

From judgment to responsibility in governance and public policy**Chapter 0 → Chapters 1 to 2 → Chapters 3 to 9 → Chapter 11 → Explanatory Note**

Focus on making causal relations visible, the best currently available option, separating risk domains, the capacity for error correction, anti-closure, and the structure linking purposes, permissions, and responsibility.

Independent machine-side risks in technology and safety**Chapter 2 → Chapters 5 to 9 → Chapter 11**

Focus on distinguishing upstream human errors from machine-side risks, and on how risks on the two sides couple and affect the real world.

The place of people in civilizational purpose and meaning in life**Chapters 1 to 2 → Chapters 10 to 12**

Focus on why civilization needs intelligence, why human irreplaceability is not a monopoly on particular functions, and when systems should step back.

Relationship between editions

This guide is based on the Chinese Public Essay, Independent Publication Edition, V1.1.1. It only condenses the entry point and establishes signposts. It does not change the original, add theory, or replace the original's account of the limits of its evidence, the limits of its mechanisms, and its open questions.

CONTINUE READING

From your question to the next work

The long-form essay reframes the problem. Different subsequent works explore its theoretical foundations, real life, and machine-side safety in greater depth.

Why does civilization need these goals?

Judgment: To pursue the three goals, meaning as the foundation, and the theoretical basis of civilizational purpose, turn to the complete theoretical framework.

Next work: Civilization Leap, five volumes.

[*English overview of the five-volume work*](#)

How do systems enter real life?

Judgment: To explore further how institutions, communities, households, and everyday life can preserve the place of living subjects, turn to the work on life and institutions.

Next work: Living Civilization.

[*English overview of the trilogy*](#)

How are machine-side risks handled during operation?

Judgment: To pursue permissions, execution, auditing, stopping, exit, and continuity, turn to the research on the safety of machine operation.

Next work: AGI-COS.

[*English version-family overview*](#)

Open entry points

- [English reading index \(supplementary\)](#)
- [Civilization Leap: Public Reading and Communication Entry](#)
- Civilization Leap website (source navigation label)

The final question: When intelligence is no longer scarce, the real question is not how many answers civilization will obtain, but whether it can still know why it acts and choose again after making a mistake.

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English navigation note

English links lead to corresponding webpages. Some destinations are public introductions or version-family overviews rather than complete English books. Unlinked source references do not establish the availability of a full English text.

[Supplementary English reading index](#)

Personalized Further Reading Guide

Continue from this guide through the full essay, the public account of lived civilization, and the bridge from present risks to that wider direction.

When Intelligence Is No Longer Scarce

Continue to the full V1.1.1 essay behind this guide and its eight questions.

Living Civilization: From “All Under Heaven for the Common Good” to a New World of Human-AGI Symbiosis

Explore the public entry into lived experience, institutions, and relationships.

Civilization Leap: From a Single Strike to Living Civilization

Connect present risks with the wider direction of civilization.

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[Supplementary English reading index](#)