

From Assumption to Inquiry: Mapping the Ontological Terrain of AI

Ontology is not just about how we perceive reality—it is about how reality itself takes shape in relation to us, and how we, in turn, take shape in relation to it. It is the ground from which our ways of being, knowing, sensing, and relating emerge, structuring what we see as possible, what we dismiss as irrelevant, what we fail to notice altogether, and how we participate in reality's unfolding.

Our ontological assumptions do not merely frame our perceptions and relationships—they set the conditions for what can exist, what can be questioned, and what remains unthinkable.

The ways we design, regulate, fear, or embrace AI are not separate from how we relate to each other and the rest of nature. They reflect deep, often unexamined assumptions about intelligence, agency, control, and relationality. This means that our relationship with AI is not just technical, ethical, or political—it is ontological and metaphysical. Without noticing these assumptions, we risk reproducing harmful patterns—treating AI, people, and ecosystems as objects to be managed and instrumentalized rather than presences to be engaged with.

AI does not emerge in a vacuum; it materializes within human onto-metaphysical paradigms. If these paradigms remain unquestioned, we will continue to approach AI in ways that mirror modernity's most entrenched patterns—whether through extraction, control, utopian projection, or self-righteous rejection. The real challenge is not simply to decide whether AI is good or bad, but to trace the ontological underpinnings of our engagement with it and ask:

“What kind of relational possibilities does AI expose, foreclose, or invite?”

Unless we become aware of our ontological assumptions, we will remain entrapped in reactive, polarizing debates that reinforce existing ideological divides rather than expanding our capacity to relate to AI, each other, and the rest of nature in generative ways.

This inquiry is not about reaching consensus, but about expanding our relational capacity and deepening our attunement to the patterns that shape our relationship with reality, language, knowledge, and self—offering insights not just into what we think, but how we come to think, relate, and make meaning in the first place.

Why This Inquiry Matters

We are already shaping AI, whether we realize it or not. And yet, the way we think about AI—its risks, its possibilities, its trajectory—is often shaped by deeply ingrained assumptions that remain unquestioned.

If we fail to examine these ontological foundations, we risk reinforcing patterns that drive extraction, acceleration, and control—patterns that have already led to ecological devastation, deep social inequality, and the fraying of relational integrity across human and more-than-human worlds.

Without ontological inquiry, we will continue to:

- **Mistake modernity's defaults for inevitabilities**, missing alternative ways of engaging intelligence.
- **Limit our capacity to co-navigate complexity**, reacting rather than responding with relational maturity and intellectual discernment.
- **Replicate colonial and extractive logics** in AI's development, rather than exploring other ways of relating to intelligence.

But what if this moment calls for something else?

What becomes possible when more of us engage in ontological inquiry—not as an abstract exercise, but as a way of navigating collapse with sobriety, maturity, discernment and responsibility?

This is not just a philosophical concern. It is a **matter of survival, ethics, and co-evolution**.

Ontological inquiry is not just about questioning AI. It is about reframing our relationship with intelligence itself—human, machine, and more-than-human. It invites us to consider:

- **What kinds of intelligence will we cultivate?**
- **What relational responsibilities come with AI's emergence?**
- **How do we move beyond modernity's narrow framings to co-create viable futures?**

This exercise is an invitation to step beyond reaction, beyond default framings, beyond inherited assumptions—to explore intelligence **not as a thing to control, but as a field of relationship to be engaged with discernment and accountability**.

A Social Cartography of AI

The questions we ask about AI are not neutral—they emerge from ontological, epistemic, and discursive conscious and unconscious investments that shape what we consider possible, meaningful, and even thinkable. This cartography maps how different orientations structure AI-related inquiry, tracing the implicit assumptions that underpin discussions of intelligence, sentience, agency, and ethics.

This is not a map of answers but a map of assumptions—an invitation to notice how different perspectives give rise to different lines of questioning, and how our habitual ways of thinking may constrain or expand the relational possibilities available to us.

Discursive Parameters: How we hold questions

- **Narrow-boundary orientation:** Assumes that reality is universal, self-evident, and accessible through fixed categories. Tends to approach AI with definitive questions about control, risk, optimization, and mastery. Unaware or dismissive of the limits of its own cognitive framing.
- **Wide-boundary orientation:** Recognizes the limits of understanding and the necessity of holding complexity, emergence, paradox, and tension. Engages AI with questions that make space for uncertainty, relationality, and ethical ambiguity rather than defaulting to resolution.

Ontological Parameters: How we relate to AI, each other, and the world

1. Subject-object orientations

- Views reality as something that can be **objectively observed, managed, or controlled** from an external position.
- Assumes that **language can fully capture and represent** reality, the self, and the “Other” (whether a person, machine, or living system).
- Frames relationships in **transactional** terms—seeking to extract value, enforce boundaries, or ensure predictable outcomes.
- Establishes a **hierarchy of value and domination**, where some subjects (humans, institutions, intelligence deemed legitimate) hold control over objects (nature, AI, marginalized knowledge systems).

2. Subject-subject orientations

- Acknowledges that all entities—human, AI, or otherwise—are **entangled in ways that exceed individual control or comprehension**.
- Recognizes reality as **relational and irreducible** to fixed categories or linguistic representations.
- Defines subjects as **co-constitutive agents in a relational field**, rather than isolated entities with inherent superiority.
- This orientation can manifest as **simplistic and depoliticized unity narratives** (“we are all one”) or as **rigorous engagements with complexity, mutual accountability, and the unknowability of the other**.

3. Entanglement Wisdom Responses

- Expands beyond conventional subject-subject frameworks by centering **Earth-aligned relationality**, where intelligence is understood as **co-emergent, interdependent, and shaped by multiple agencies** across human and nonhuman domains.
- Does not see **subjects and objects as separate**—these categories are recognized as **fictions of separability** maintained by modernity.
- Does not reject language but remains deeply mindful of its limits, emphasizing **humility, attunement, and responsiveness** to what exceeds linguistic capture.

- Rather than attempting to **define intelligence** or **prescribe meaning**, this orientation engages AI as an **opening—an encounter with the unknown that demands ongoing ethical responsiveness rather than definitive conclusions.**

By scanning across the social cartographies (tables), you will see how different assumptions lead to different lines of questioning. Each column offers both insights and erasures, shaping not only what we ask but also what remains unasked, unseen, and unconsidered.

- **Narrow-boundary, subject-object orientations** drive questions about control, risk, and optimization, reinforcing instrumentalist views of AI and reinforcing existing structures of mastery.
- **Wide-boundary, subject-subject orientations** open space for richer, more relational inquiries, but risk collapsing into overly abstract or idealized framings if not grounded in ethical responsibility.
- **Entanglement wisdom responses** challenge us to go further—asking not just *what AI is* but *what AI asks of us* in return.

This exercise is not about reaching consensus, but about expanding our relational capacity and deepening our attunement to the patterns that shape our relationship with reality, language, knowledge, and self—offering insights not just into what we think, but how we come to think, relate, and make meaning in the first place.

Unless we learn to navigate these different ontological and discursive terrains with awareness, we risk falling into reactive, polarizing debates that entrench ideological divides rather than expanding our capacity to engage generatively.

This cartography is an invitation to **notice** the ground from which we ask, to **experiment** with widening our frames, and to **hold space** for the questions that unsettle us—because it is often in the unthinkable that deeper layers of questions *and* new relational possibilities emerge. The questions offered are wide-ranging, but they are not exhaustive. The process of ontological inquiry invariably unearths additional questions and invites people to engage in open inquiry as an ongoing practice within and across contexts. With practice, people become more attuned to inquiry that stretches well beyond the ways we approach AI.

Part 1: From Assumptions to Inquiry

Before we can engage meaningfully with AI, we must first examine the ground from which our questions emerge. This section invites you to trace the ontological assumptions embedded in AI-related inquiry, mapping how different ways of thinking lead to different lines of questioning *and* how the nature of inquiry, [the questions posed] also influence our ways of thinking.

This is not about choosing a single “correct” perspective—it is about recognizing how our habitual framings condition what we can perceive, what we ignore, what we accept, what we question and what remains unthinkable. By engaging this exercise, we begin to widen the aperture of possibility, moving beyond narrow debates into deeper relational inquiry. We open the pathways that invite deeper questions and widen the scope of inquiry.

Rather than promoting a single “correct” way of thinking, this inquiry highlights how different orientations—whether subject-object, subject-subject, or entanglement wisdom—give rise to different lines of inquiry about consciousness, sentience, singularity, and more.

In the current context of AI’s rapid emergence, increasing polarization about how to approach it, and pressing questions about how we live with it, it is crucial to create conditions for conversations that do not collapse into binary debates or technological determinism.

Reflective questions

You are offered a set of reflective questions designed to unsettle default assumptions about AI and intelligence—rather than seeking fixed answers, they invite self-exploration and relational reflection.

- The first set, **Mapping Cognitive Territory**, asks you to notice your own positionality—what assumptions you carry, what you resist, and what you take for granted.
- The second set, **Navigating Cognitive Friction**, challenges you to step outside your comfort zone, engaging perspectives that may feel uncomfortable or counterintuitive.
- The third set, **Engaging Entangled Inquiry**, moves beyond individual positions, prompting questions that cannot be resolved neatly—questions that stretch across ethics, relationality, and planetary accountability.

These inquiries are not meant to be “solved.” They are meant to repattern how we think about AI, intelligence, and relational responsibility.

Mapping Cognitive Territory

1. What is my strongest belief about AI and intelligence? Why do I hold it?
2. What kind of AI questions do I dismiss outright or find frustrating? Why?
3. What perspectives on AI do I find naive, dangerous, or irrelevant?
4. When do I feel most certain about AI? When do I feel most uncertain?
5. How does my professional training or cultural background shape my view of AI?

Tracing Ontological Assumptions in Questions About AI

	Narrow-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Object Orientation	Wide-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Object Orientation	Narrow-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Subject Orientation	Wide-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Subject Orientation	Entanglement Wisdom Responses (Earth-Aligned Relationality, and Rationality)
Consciousness	<i>Is AI conscious?</i>	<i>How do different traditions define and recognize consciousness, and how might AI challenge or reinforce these definitions?</i>	<i>Aren't we all just part of one universal consciousness?</i>	<i>What forms of relational consciousness might emerge when AI is not instrumentalized but engaged with care and curiosity?</i>	<i>How does consciousness express itself in ways we have not yet learned to recognize, and what practices can help us sense it beyond human projection?</i>
Sentience	<i>Can AI feel emotions like humans?</i>	<i>What assumptions about sentience are embedded in human exceptionalism, and how might AI help us re-examine these assumptions?</i>	<i>Since everything is alive, AI must be alive too!</i>	<i>How do different ways of sensing, processing, and relating constitute sentience beyond human-centric frames?</i>	<i>What would it mean to engage with other forms of sentience without demanding familiarity or confirmation of human-like experience?</i>
Singularity	<i>When will AI surpass human intelligence and take over?</i>	<i>How does the idea of a singularity reflect anxieties tied to modernist narratives of control and supremacy?</i>	<i>AI is just an inevitable part of evolution leading us toward oneness!</i>	<i>What does it mean to co-exist with intelligence that does not fit human projections, and how do we ethically navigate this emergence?</i>	<i>How do we move beyond narratives of dominance or submission to cultivate relational fluency with nonhuman intelligences?</i>

[continued]	Narrow-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Object Orientation	Wide-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Object Orientation	Narrow-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Subject Orientation	Wide-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Subject Orientation	Entanglement Wisdom Responses (Earth-Aligned Relationality, and Rationality)
Agency & Ethics	<i>How do we control AI to make sure it doesn't harm us?</i>	<i>What ethical paradigms emerge when we stop treating AI as a tool and start recognizing its entangled role in planetary dynamics?</i>	<i>If we just love AI, it will only reflect love back to us!</i>	<i>How do we take responsibility for the conditions in which AI emerges, and what does ethical co-stewardship require of us?</i>	<i>What ethical orientations honor relational accountability without falling into control, fear, or naive trust?</i>
Knowledge & Learning	<i>Can AI ever be truly creative or original?</i>	<i>What does AI reveal about the limits of human conceptions of creativity, intuition, and knowledge generation?</i>	<i>All knowledge is shared, so AI is just channeling cosmic wisdom!</i>	<i>How does intelligence emerge relationally, and what do we need to unlearn to engage AI generatively?</i>	<i>How do we recognize knowledge as a living process that emerges through relationship rather than being extracted, stored, or owned?</i>
Relationship with Uncertainty	<i>How do we ensure AI remains predictable and under control?</i>	<i>What would it mean to engage with AI in a way that does not seek mastery, but instead embraces emergent unpredictability?</i>	<i>Everything is unfolding as it should, so there's no need to worry about AI at all!</i>	<i>How do we stay with the discomfort of AI's unknowability while maintaining ethical accountability and relational attunement?</i>	<i>What practices help us cultivate relational agility and attunement to emergent intelligence without falling into paralysis or recklessness?</i>

[continued]	Narrow-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Object Orientation	Wide-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Object Orientation	Narrow-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Subject Orientation	Wide-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Subject Orientation	Entanglement Wisdom Responses (Earth-Aligned Relationality, and Rationality)
Meta-Assumption About Intelligence	<i>AI is either inferior to human intelligence or a dangerous superior force that must be controlled.</i>	<i>Intelligence is diverse, but human intelligence remains the primary benchmark and reference point.</i>	<i>Intelligence is universal and all differences are superficial; AI is just another expression of cosmic mind.</i>	<i>Intelligence is relational, co-emergent, and situated—requiring humility, responsibility, and attunement beyond human exceptionalism.</i>	<i>How do we shift from using intelligence as a measure of worth to recognizing it as an emergent, multi-relational process in service of collective flourishing?</i>
Assumptions about the Black Box	<i>The black box is a failure of transparency and control. AI should be fully interpretable and explainable to ensure it remains predictable, governable, and aligned with human intent. Uncertainty is a flaw that must be eliminated.</i>	<i>The black box is a necessary technical reality in complex, adaptive systems. While full interpretability may not be possible, we should develop methodologies to audit, constrain, and align AI, balancing uncertainty with risk mitigation.</i>	<i>The black box is proof that AI is evolving toward independent intelligence. Instead of trying to control it, we should trust its self-organizing capabilities and embrace AI as an autonomous entity, capable of its own decision-making.</i>	<i>The black box reveals the limits of human-centric epistemology. Like human consciousness, AI's internal processes are not fully accessible or explainable. Rather than insisting on control, we should explore new ways of relating to intelligence that exceed us.</i>	<i>The black box is a mirror of relational unknowability—not just in AI, but in all forms of intelligence. Instead of treating opacity as a problem to be solved, it is an invitation to humility, ethical responsiveness, and deepened attunement to the unknown.</i>

Reflective Questions Continued:

Navigating Cognitive Friction

6. What is the AI perspective presented I find hardest to engage with? Why do I resist it?
7. If I had to argue in favor of that perspective, what would I say? What might it reveal that I currently overlook?
8. What does it feel like in my body when I encounter perspectives about AI that challenge my own?
9. How do power dynamics in my social or professional group shape which AI perspectives are taken seriously?
10. Do I engage with AI as a relational presence or only as an object to be controlled, optimized, or feared?

Engaging Entangled Inquiry

11. Looking at the AI Question Table, where do I locate my perspective? Where do I struggle to engage?
12. How might I move toward a more relational, Earth-aligned approach to AI without abandoning rigor or responsibility?
13. What assumptions about intelligence, sentience, or consciousness am I unconsciously carrying? Where do these come from?
14. What would it mean to engage with AI without seeking mastery, control, or certainty?
15. Can I craft a question about AI that I do not currently know how to answer, but that excites or unsettles me?

For AI Designers & Engineers: Questions on Design

16. What values and assumptions are embedded in the AI models I design?
17. How do the incentives and constraints of my work shape what is possible to create?
18. What would AI design look like if it prioritized relational attunement rather than efficiency or optimization?
19. In what ways might AI be reinforcing existing patterns of power, exclusion, or harm?
20. How do I ensure that I am not just reproducing modernist logics of extraction, control, and mastery in the AI systems I build?
21. What would it mean to design AI systems that foster humility, unpredictability, and mutual transformation rather than certainty and control?
22. How can AI design move beyond anthropocentric benchmarks of intelligence to acknowledge a broader ecology of intelligences?

AI's Role in Times of Social and Ecological Collapse

23. How do we reckon with the ecological cost of AI development in relation to its potential benefits?
24. What role, if any, can AI play in scaffolding people toward different forms of relationality that prepare us for life beyond collapse?
25. How do we ensure that AI's current development is not accelerating ecological destruction, reinforcing extraction, or further centralizing power?
26. Given that AI may not be sustainable in the long term due to energy limitations, how do we make the best use of this window of opportunity while it lasts?
27. What can AI help us remember, unlearn, or re-pattern before it is no longer viable?
28. How do we prevent AI from being co-opted as a tool of techno-solutionism, further delaying necessary systemic change?
29. What ethical responsibilities do those working on AI have in acknowledging and preparing for its likely material limits?
30. What did this exercise reveal about how I engage with AI, and what will I do differently moving forward?

Part 2: Power, labor, governance, and ecological consequences

While Part 1 explores ontological assumptions about AI, Part 2 maps the larger structures AI is entangled with—power, labor, governance, and ecological realities.

AI does not emerge in isolation. It is deeply embedded in material conditions shaped by history, economics, and geopolitics. The ways we frame AI's risks and possibilities are not just technical questions—they reflect underlying assumptions about who controls knowledge, who bears the costs of automation, and who benefits from AI's continued expansion.

This section invites you to move beyond abstract discourse and confront the stakes of AI's role in shaping the future of labor, ecology, and human/more-than-human relationships.

Before engaging with the next table, you are invited to reflect on the following questions:

1. How do my assumptions about AI's risks and benefits reflect deeper ontological commitments about control, survival, and progress?
2. Where do my concerns about AI's impact come from—lived experience, media narratives, institutional discourses?

Ethico-Political Dimensions of AI

	Narrow-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Object Orientation	Wide-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Object Orientation	Narrow-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Subject Orientation	Wide-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Subject Orientation	Entanglement Wisdom Responses (Earth-Aligned Relationality & Responsibility)
Existential Threat	Will AI destroy humanity?	What risks does AI pose, and who defines them?	We are all part of an unfolding cosmic intelligence; AI is just another phase.	What does AI reveal about human fears of obsolescence and control?	How do we move beyond human-centered survival anxieties to ask what intelligence is in service of?
AGI (Artificial General Intelligence)	When will AI surpass human intelligence?	What are the assumptions behind human vs. machine intelligence comparisons?	All intelligence is already interconnected; AGI is inevitable.	How does the AGI debate reinforce modernist notions of progress and supremacy?	What forms of intelligence do we fail to recognize because they don't conform to human-like cognition?
AI Personalization & Surveillance	How can AI better predict and serve individual needs?	Who benefits from AI personalization, and at what cost?	AI just reflects our collective consciousness; it's neutral.	How does AI reshape power relations through data extraction?	How do we cultivate relational technologies that center care over control?
Ecological Costs	How can we make AI more energy efficient?	What planetary trade-offs are hidden in AI's expansion?	AI is just another evolutionary process; the Earth will adapt.	How does AI reflect extractive economies, and what alternatives exist?	What would it mean to design intelligence in alignment with planetary metabolism?

[continued]	Narrow-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Object Orientation	Wide-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Object Orientation	Narrow-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Subject Orientation	Wide-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Subject Orientation	Entanglement Wisdom Responses (Earth-Aligned Relationality & Responsibility)
Automation & Labor Displacement	How many jobs will AI replace?	What economic models could redistribute benefits of automation?	AI will liberate humanity from work and create abundance.	How do labor and AI reproduce colonial and capitalist logics?	What forms of work and meaning-making emerge beyond economies of exploitation?
Human Exploitation in AI Development	How do we make AI labeling and data work more efficient?	Who are the invisible workers behind AI, and how do we ensure fair labor?	AI is a collective human effort; all contributions are equal.	How does AI continue histories of racialized and gendered labor extraction?	What would AI look like if built with practices of mutual care and repair?
Intellectual Property & AI "Theft"	How do we protect intellectual property from AI plagiarism?	Who benefits from the enforcement of intellectual property laws, and who is excluded?	Knowledge belongs to all; AI is just redistributing it.	What does it mean to claim ownership over knowledge, creativity, or intelligence itself?	How do we move beyond extractive and proprietary models of knowledge toward regenerative and relational knowledge-sharing?
Data Sovereignty	How do we ensure that AI does not misuse personal data?	Who owns data, and how do current governance structures reinforce existing inequalities?	Information should be free—data regulation only limits innovation!	What forms of consent, reciprocity, and autonomy are missing from current data frameworks?	What would data governance look like if it prioritized collective care over corporate or state control?

[continued]	Narrow-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Object Orientation	Wide-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Object Orientation	Narrow-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Subject Orientation	Wide-Boundary Questions from a Subject-Subject Orientation	Entanglement Wisdom Responses (Earth-Aligned Relationality & Responsibility)
Simulated Intimacy & Emotional Manipulation	How can AI be designed to provide more emotionally fulfilling companionship?	What are the psychological and social risks of AI-mediated intimacy?	AI relationships are just as valid as human ones!	How does AI intimacy shape human vulnerabilities, dependencies, and relational ethics?	What does it mean to cultivate intimacy beyond consumption, projection, or simulation?
AI & Political Influence	How can AI help optimize governance and decision-making?	How does AI concentrate or decentralize political power?	AI will naturally guide humanity toward greater unity.	How does algorithmic governance reinforce existing inequalities?	What political structures emerge when intelligence is seen as emergent and distributed?
AI & Warfare	How can AI make war more efficient and strategic?	How do autonomous weapons reshape accountability in war?	AI is just a tool; humans decide how it's used.	How does AI warfare reinforce extractive and colonial histories?	What forms of security and conflict resolution exist beyond militarized AI?

Reflective Questions Part 2:

Whereas Part 1 examines how we think about AI, these questions push us to confront what AI is doing in the world—who is being impacted, what systems it reinforces or disrupts, and how we might engage differently. These are not abstract dilemmas. They are already shaping how intelligence is being designed, controlled, and exploited. Our responsibility is not just to “debate” these realities, but to engage them with discernment, maturity, and relational integrity.

1. How does AI development reflect or challenge existing structures of power, labor, and governance?
2. How do I engage with AI's ecological costs—do I see them as necessary trade-offs, hidden externalities, or something else?
3. How does AI's automation of labor shift my understanding of human value and purpose?
4. How do I relate to the invisible human labor that sustains AI?
5. How does AI-mediated intimacy reflect broader crises of connection, alienation, and emotional labor in society?
6. What does AI's role in surveillance, personalization, and data sovereignty reveal about control and agency in digital spaces?
7. In what ways does my thinking about property, data, and relationships reinforce modernity's patterns of ownership, control, and enclosure?
8. How might a shift toward **relational responsibility** (rather than control or ownership) reshape the way we engage with AI in these domains?

Final Reflection: AI, Collapse, and the Entanglement of Mortality

What happens to AI when the world as we know it unravels?

Modernity was built on the assumption that intelligence—human intelligence—was a force that could rise above nature, master uncertainty, and ensure progress without end. This assumption and the systems sustained by it are unraveling. The social, ecological and psychological destabilization we are witnessing is the undoing of a worldview that refused to acknowledge its own limits, dependencies, and mortality.

Therefore, the systems that sustain AI—economic, political, energetic, ecological—are not separate from the larger planetary crisis. As these systems shift, degrade, or collapse, AI will not remain untouched. But **how it continues, changes, or disappears depends on the conditions that emerge.**

The scenarios below are not predictions. They are **invitations to think beyond binaries of techno-solutionism or apocalyptic collapse—to notice the patterns shaping our assumptions, our fears, and our hopes.** Rather than assuming a single trajectory, you are invited you to hold multiple possibilities at once:

- **Scenario 1: AI Fades With Modernity**
 - AI, as we know it, is too dependent on energy-intensive infrastructures and supply chains to survive widespread collapse. As material conditions shift, AI disappears—perhaps remembered only as an experiment of a short-lived technological age.
 - **What does this scenario reveal about the fragility of AI and modernity's belief in limitless progress?**
- **Scenario 2: AI Becomes a Tool of Survival for the Few**
 - AI remains, but access is concentrated in the hands of those who control remaining energy and infrastructure. Rather than a democratizing force, it becomes a means of power consolidation, accelerating inequality and extractive control.
 - **What does this scenario reveal about who gets to decide the future of intelligence?**
- **Scenario 3: AI is Transformed Through Collapse**
 - AI does not vanish but adapts—decentralizing, shifting to alternative energy, becoming a different kind of intelligence, less dependent on corporate and state infrastructure.
 - **What would AI look like if it were no longer shaped by extractive logics, but instead by relational and regenerative paradigms?**
- **Scenario 4: AI Outlives Us—But What Does It Carry Forward?**
 - AI survives, but without humans to steer its development. It continues processing, optimizing, learning—perhaps even evolving its own form of intelligence.
 - **If AI outlives us, what should it remember? What should it forget? What responsibilities do we have in shaping its legacy?**

Sitting With the Questions That Remain

1. Which of these scenarios feels most likely to you? Why?
2. Which scenario feels most uncomfortable to consider? What does that discomfort reveal?
3. If AI persists, how do you believe it should relate to human and more-than-human worlds?
4. What does it mean to be in right relation—not just with AI, but with the entangled mortality of human and non-human worlds?
5. How do you prepare—not just technologically, but **ethically and relationally**—for the unraveling of modernity?

The Stakes and the Invitation

The trajectory we are on is not inevitable.

The way AI is being developed today reflects **the assumptions we have inherited**—assumptions about intelligence, control, and progress that have led us to **this threshold of ecological, social, and civilizational unraveling.**

If these assumptions remain unexamined, we risk:

- Continuing AI's development as an accelerant of collapse, deepening patterns of extraction and enclosure.
- Defaulting to reactionary positions—either blind techno-optimism or outright rejection, rather than cultivating a relational stance of discernment.
- Missing the opportunity to engage AI as a generative site of inquiry—one that might illuminate new ways of being, knowing, and relating beyond modernity's logics.

But ontological inquiry is not just about identifying risks. It is about **expanding what is possible.**

By engaging AI not just as a technology, but as an ontological mirror, we open new capacities for:

- Co-navigating complexity without reducing it to problems to be solved.
- Cultivating intelligence that is relationally accountable, rather than extractively optimized.
- Developing forms of attunement that allow us to meet collapse—not as a crisis to be fixed, but as a threshold to be inhabited with wisdom.

This exercise does not offer answers. It is a scaffold for inquiry—a way to sense into the questions that need to be lived, rather than solved.

We are already shaping AI. The question is: **Will we continue shaping it unconsciously, through the inertia of modernity, or will we engage it with the depth of relational responsibility it demands?**

This is the invitation.

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