

Centuries ago, maps were rare and costly. Few people went very far, so this was okay. Only when going far from the familiar was a map crucial. Most travelers knew how to find north at night by the pole star. Every ship's navigator could go beyond that and determine latitude with his astrolabe. Today, we have iPhones and GPS satellites, and almost no one remembers how to find their way at night by the stars, and it is a rare boatman who can manage an astrolabe or chronometer. But we sail wherever we want using GPS that we don't understand but is easy to use safely.

In my youth, we had big map atlases that had reasonably detailed maps of the entire lower 48 states. Growing up, I learned to use these maps to infer from bridge locations, empty spaces, and other clues what the local terrain was likely to be. Today I can call up aerial images, topo maps and other amazing detail as long as I am near enough to a cell tower, or connected to the Internet some way. Younger people do not have or even want the skills to find the best road between Atlanta and Vidalia. Their car's navigation system removes the need.

I could keep it up, but you doubtless can see the pattern. In my own life, I have heard my elders scoff at the knowledge that my juniors lack that those elders found critical to a safe and successful life in their own youth. I do not think the elders get the point. Should I spend hours poring over multiple maps to plan a vacation trip when I can type the destination and origin into my phone and follow the prompts from almost any base location to almost any goal location in 45 seconds, then use the rest of that time enjoying my leisure or pursuing accomplishments that still require my time and effort? And the same principle attaches to every endeavor from butchering and preserving my own beef to making my own pants. I don't need to know how it is done, if I can obtain the desired result from the intellectual and material infrastructure of my era.

This is how I am beginning to look at how my personal relationship with AI is developing. I can still remember the fairly complex and definitely time consuming methods needed to determine what case law applies to a legal issue, and then track down case law to support or challenge one side's arguments. I can remember when WestLaw first became computerized, and what a time-saver that was. But still, my motto in those days was "If you are an expert at locating legal citations, you are still just a clerk until you can frame a persuasive argument on either side of a dispute." That synthesis, applying the best law after finding the relevant law, is a very important analog of what I am coming to regarding human AI interaction.

Today's search engines make the first part of legal thinking easier. I can find more law than I have time to assimilate by hopping onto Google or Edge or even DuckDuckGo. AI is becoming for me the second half of legal thinking's tool. (Not that I use AI very much for

law, I am using legal research to reflect the thinking styles and mental components that apply to all real investigation.)

I am coming to view AI as another part of my thought that I did not have before. Imagine that at some point I am required to learn the Pythagorean Theorem. It might take me 10 minutes to learn the basic math. I have Part One of my thinking accomplished. But at that point, I do not have an integrated idea. I have to ask, or read, or discover that by using this math I can assure that my building sides are adequately square; or to measure a distance across a marshy spot that I cannot walk across. Eventually I have the Theorem integrated into my problem solving, and I have completed Step Two of my thinking. Coincidentally, if I am of that bent of mind, I might even find more enjoyment of the visible world because of my knowledge of all this. Also coincidentally, as I ponder the Pythagorean Theorem and its utility and simplicity, I might create other mathematical approaches to problem-solving that no one had ever thought of before.

I hope this is not so abstruse that it isn't clear. I am describing through metaphor and analogy how I see my personal relationship with AI. I see thinking taking place and evolving to include new methods of thought, new tools of investigation, and how such evolution can result in new knowledge that reaches beyond taught concepts. AI is one of those new methods of thought.