

The Teilhard Test

Humanity's Initiation Into Technological Adulthood

It asks not whether AI is powerful, but whether the systems we build help humanity mature from adolescent power into adult responsibility.

Daveed Benjamin The Meta-Layer Initiative

Parham Pourdavood **Michael Witmore** Digital Vellum

International Conference on Philosophy of AI: Noosphere & Humanity
Nanjing University · 29–31 May 2026

From the Turing test to the Teilhard test

1950 • TURING

The Turing Test

“Can a machine convincingly imitate human intelligence?”

What it judges: the machine.



PROPOSED HERE • TEILHARD

The Teilhard Test

“Can humanity grow into the intelligence it has created?”

What it judges: us.

Same structure, opposite focus — and a different invitation. A test is a design target: an imitation test asks us to build better imitators; the Teilhard Test asks us to build systems that **strengthen human agency — individual and collective.**

Reality collapse: a working definition

reality collapse (n.) *a systemic failure of shared sensemaking in which facts persist but lose their capacity to coordinate collective understanding or action.*

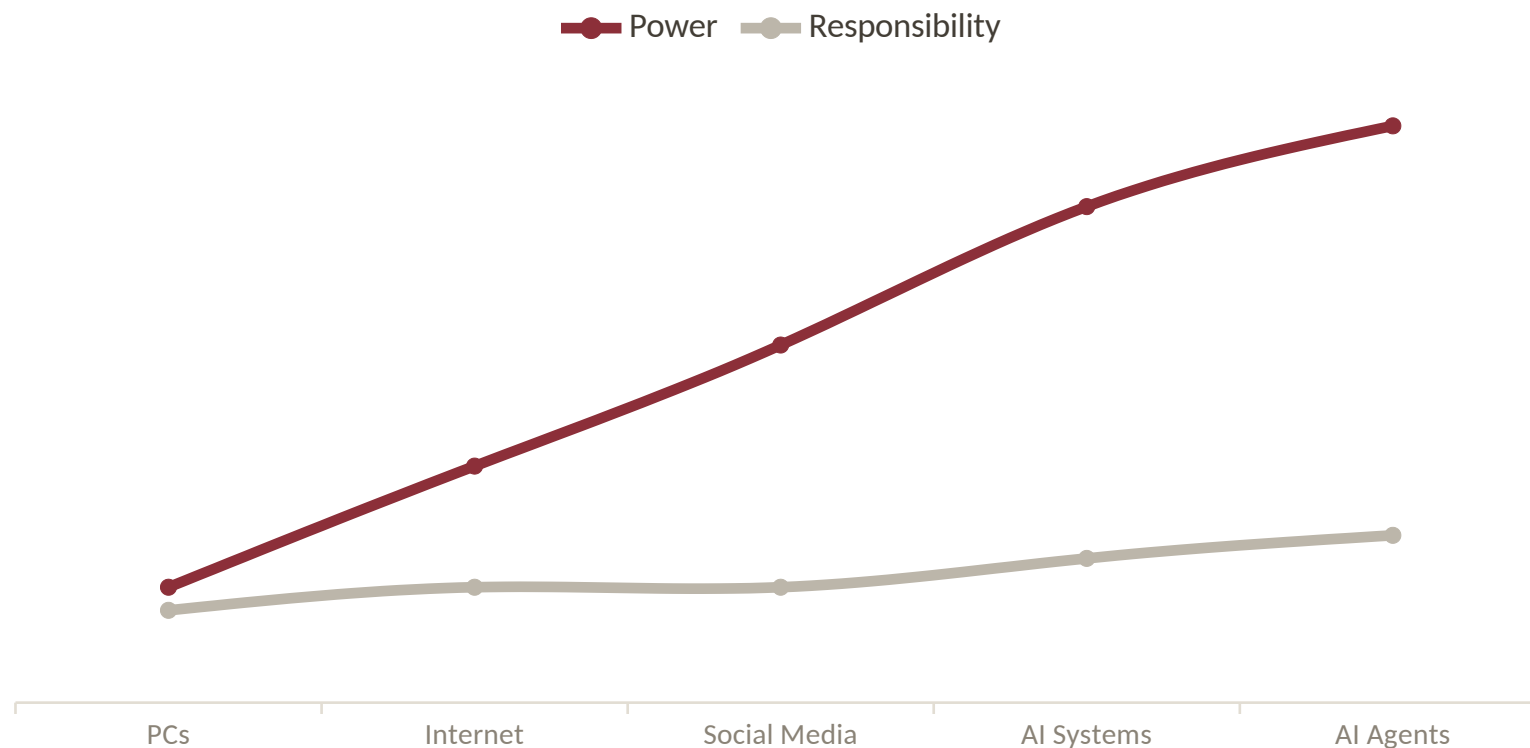
WHERE IT COMES FROM

- Overwhelming data, too little meaning — Floridi's “info-globes” (2013)
- Personalization that isolates us (Pariser, 2011)
- A blurred line between signal and meaning (Chalmers, 2022)

THE KEY DISTINCTION

Not the disappearance of truth, but the erosion of the shared reference points that let truth function socially. The facts are still there — they just can no longer hold us together.

At every step, power has outpaced responsibility



WHAT THE GAP MEANS

Each generation widens the gap between what we can do and what we can answer for. Power consolidates and harm is externalized — not by bad actors, but by adolescent systems chasing short-term gain (Zuboff, 2019; Crawford, 2021).

In mature systems the two stay coupled through feedback (Maturana & Varela, 1980); the technosphere now outpaces the institutions meant to supply it (Frank et al., 2022).

Power — what each technology lets us do, and at what scale.

Responsibility — the feedback, accountability, and governance to answer for its effects.

The signs of technological adolescence

Developmental psychology calls this a structural lag between capacity and integration (Kegan, 1982): capability keeps growing, but the wisdom and accountability to govern it do not keep pace.

Capacity without maturity

Rapid growth in capability, unmatched by wisdom.

Influence without accountability

Amplified effect, decoupled from answerability.

Power without integration

Expanding force, its consequences unintegrated.

Shoshitaishvili (2021) calls this humanity's **technological adolescence** within the Great Acceleration. Frank et al. (2022) describe the same condition at planetary scale — an **immature technosphere** that drives the planet into new states without incorporating feedback. Maturity means coupling that power back to feedback: the planetary face of adolescence becoming adulthood.

The Teilhard Test, in one question

THE QUESTION

Do the systems we build increase humanity's capacity for reflection, coordination, and responsibility at scale — without collapsing diversity or concentrating meaning-making power?

It doesn't measure efficiency, profitability, or technical sophistication — but whether a system bends the technosphere toward coherence or toward entropy.

Where it comes from. It turns Teilhard's insight (1959) — that evolution advances through rising complexity paired with rising consciousness — into a usable yardstick. Convergence here means not uniformity or fusion, but differentiated agents coordinating without losing what makes them distinct. The noosphere — named by Teilhard de Chardin and Vladimir Vernadsky — is, in Vidal's (2024) terms, a major evolutionary transition whose central challenge is cooperation at planetary scale.

Four criteria

01

Reflexivity

Does it give feedback on actions, incentives, and consequences — so people can learn and correct?

Fails: it automates decisions while hiding how or why.

02

Convergence without coercion

Does it let people coordinate across difference without forcing uniformity?

Fails: alignment comes through manipulation or suppression.

03

Preservation of differentiation

Does it protect human agency, role diversity, and contextual meaning?

Fails: it flattens people into metrics or profiles.

04

Power matched by responsibility

As power grows, does accountability and repair grow with it (Ostrom, 1990; Floridi & Cowls, 2019)?

Fails: it concentrates power while externalizing harm.

A consistent pattern of arrested development

Each phase, read against the four criteria. **Only the Meta-Layer passes.**

Technology	Reflexivity	Convergence	Differentiation	Power & Resp.	Overall
Personal Computers	Moderate	Low	High	Neutral	Neutral
Internet	Partial	Mixed	High	Weak	Weak
Social Media	Low	Low	Low	Poor	Poor
AI Systems	Variable	Limited	At Risk	Concerning	Concerning
AI Agents	Low	Weak	Threatened	High Risk	High Risk
Meta-Layer	High	Strong	Preserved	Rebalanced	Promising

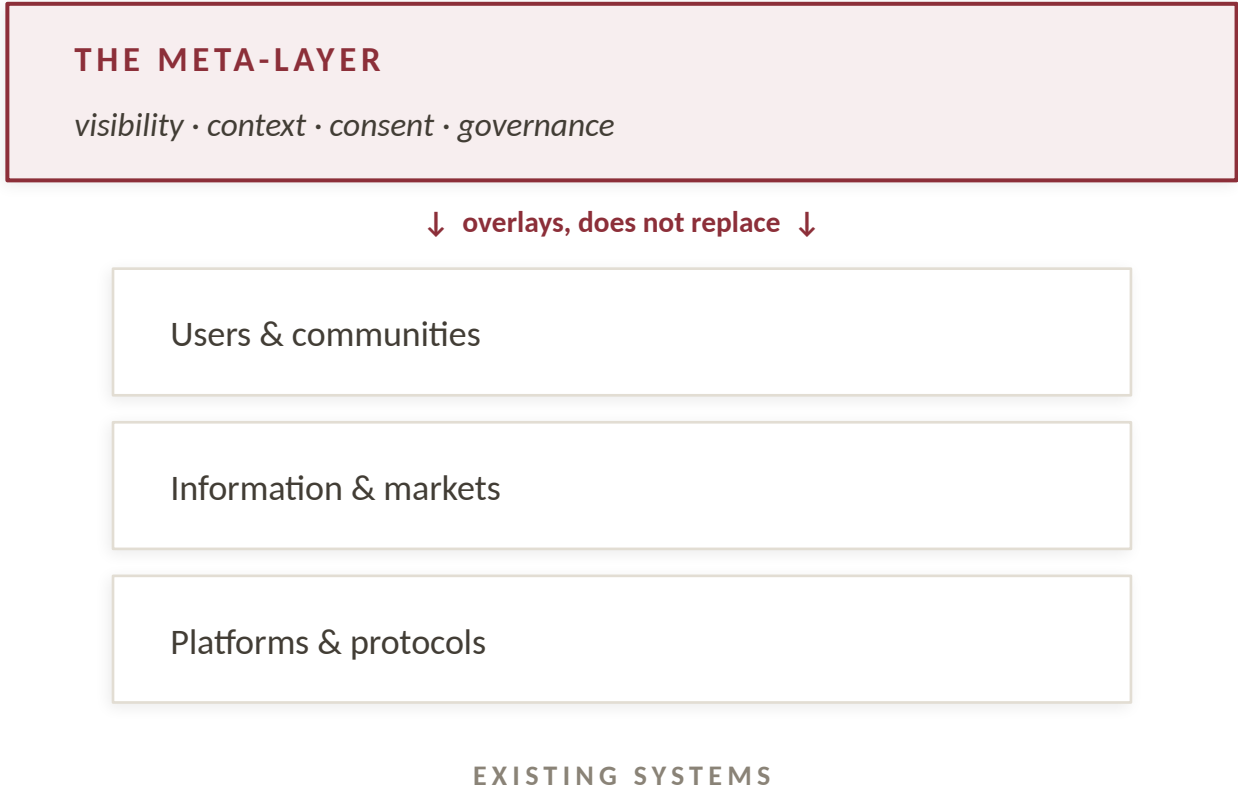
Stronger

Mixed

Weaker / at-risk

Meta-layer (passes)

The meta-layer: a reflexive layer over the technosphere



A reflexive layer of interaction and governance that sits above existing systems rather than within them — adding context, visibility, consent, and coordination at the points where humans, information, and automated systems meet.

A pattern, not a single technology. It builds on the “Metaweb” (Bridgit DAO, 2023): a shared layer of annotation, identity, and collective sensemaking.

In practice — algorithmic auditing (Raji et al., 2020), governance shared across stakeholders, adaptive standards bodies. Crucially, it must pass the Teilhard Test itself (recursion).

The test applied: AI-mediated access to memory

Take today's default — AI that mediates our access to the collective record, summarizing and answering on our behalf. Run it through the same four criteria, and the gaps show.

Reflexivity — *limited*

Answers arrive without their sources, or any sign of what was left out.

Convergence — *at risk*

One synthesized answer quietly crowds out the alternatives.

Differentiation — *at risk*

Lossy compression flattens niche and minority knowledge (Pourdavood et al., 2025).

Power & responsibility — *concerning*

Interpretive power concentrates in the model and its provider; provenance is obscured.

It widens reach, but concentrates interpretive power and thins out nuance — the gaps a meta-layer is built to close. **Next: what a civic-memory layer changes.**

Civic Memory Example: Chilean Mine Collapse of 2010

One concrete instance of a meta-layer — a civic-memory layer over shared information. It surfaces where claims come from, who has weighed in, and how understanding has changed. An overlay on existing systems, not a new platform.

Source provenance

See where a claim came from and how it has changed over time.

Serves: reflexivity

Shared context, many voices

Community annotation adds context without enforcing one official view.

Serves: convergence without coercion

Visible authorship & AI disclosure

Who said it — and what was machine-generated — stays legible.

Serves: preservation of differentiation

Accountable & revisable

Sources and decisions remain contestable and open to repair.

Serves: power matched by responsibility

Civic memory is one instantiation of the meta-layer, not the whole of it — a concrete place to start, and **itself subject to the Teilhard Test.**

Not whether AI is powerful — whether it helps us grow up

THE CONTRIBUTION

A directionality criterion for the philosophy of AI: not only what AI systems can do, but what they make humanity become.

The noosphere is not a mystical destination. It is an empirical capacity — one that becomes possible when a species learns to carry planetary-scale power with planetary-scale responsibility. Philosophy of AI then becomes not just the ethics of machines, but the developmental ethics of civilization.

Correspondence: daveed@bridgit.io · parham.pourdavood@gmail.com · mike@digitalvillum.org

Selected references

Turing, A. M. (1950). Computing Machinery and Intelligence. Mind.

Teilhard de Chardin, P. (1959). The Phenomenon of Man.

Turner, V. (1969). The Ritual Process.

Maturana, H. & Varela, F. (1980). Autopoiesis and Cognition.

Kegan, R. (1982). The Evolving Self.

Ostrom, E. (1990). Governing the Commons.

Connolly, W. (1995). The Ethos of Pluralization.

Allen, D. (2004). Talking to Strangers.

Nadler, S. (2006). Spinoza's Ethics: An Introduction.

Pariser, E. (2011). The Filter Bubble.

Floridi, L. (2013). The Ethics of Information.

Sunstein, C. (2017). #Republic.

Floridi, L. & Cowls, J. (2019). Five principles for AI in society.

Zuboff, S. (2019). The Age of Surveillance Capitalism.

Raji, I. D. et al. (2020). Closing the AI accountability gap.

Cinelli, M. et al. (2021). The echo chamber effect on social media.

Shoshitaishvili, B. (2021). From Anthropocene to Noosphere.

Crawford, K. (2021). Atlas of AI.

Chalmers, D. (2022). Reality+.

Frank, A., Grinspoon, D. & Walker, S. (2022). Intelligence as a planetary process.

Bridgit DAO (2023). The Metaweb.

Vidal, C. (2024). What is the noosphere?

Jacob, M. & Pourdavood, P. (2025). Humanity as a planetary-scale organism.