Artificial humanity and human artificiality

ICSET 2023

Jon Dron, October 2023

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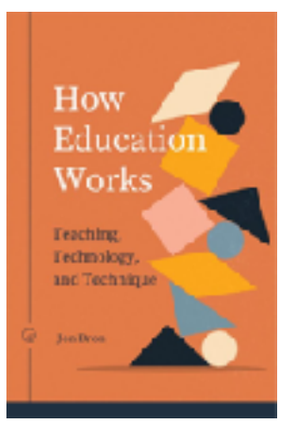
IFNTF
International Federation of National Teaching Fellows



Athabasca University
FACULTY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
School of Computing & Information Systems

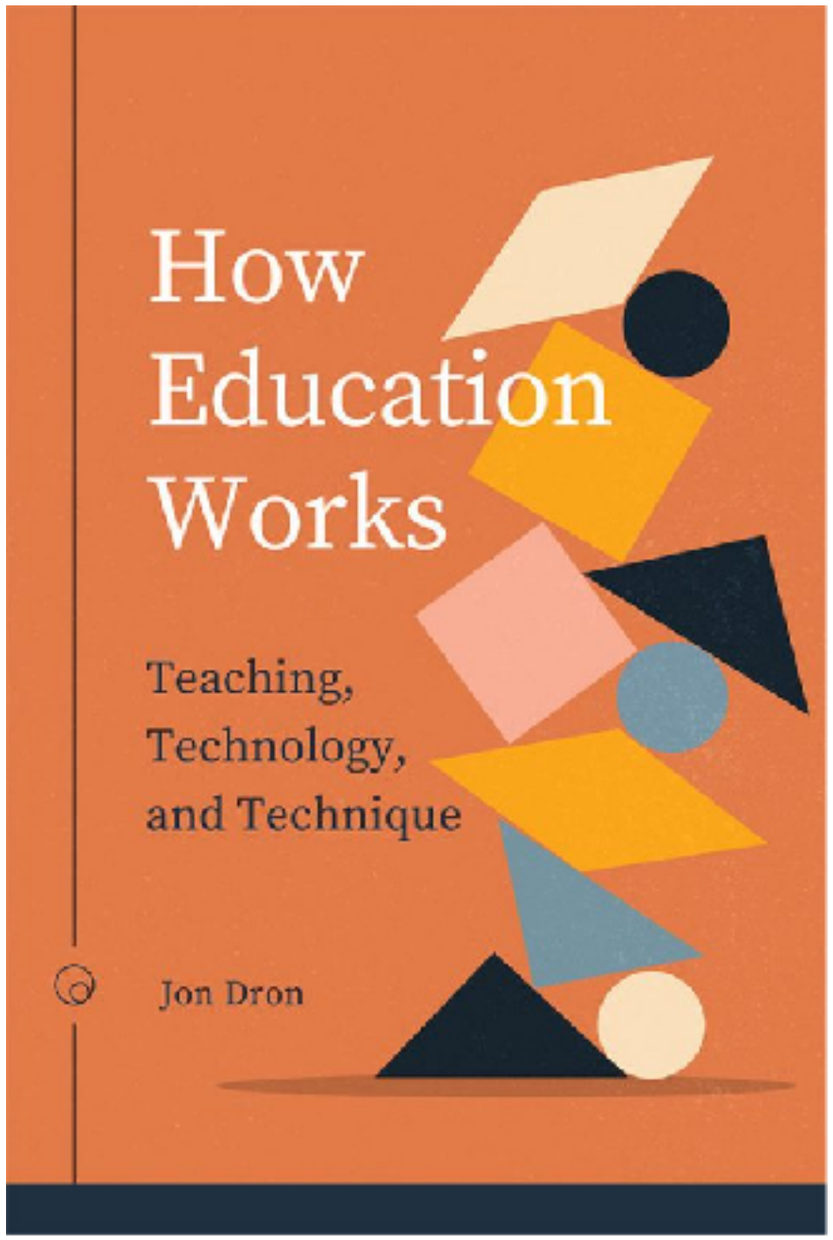
So I asked ChatGPT+ to introduce me in 75 words…

Dr. Jon Dron, a distinguished figure in learning technologies and distance education, has carved an impressive academic trajectory from Sussex University to his current position at Athabasca University. Recognized as a National Teaching Fellow in the UK, he's acclaimed for merging passionate teaching with groundbreaking research. His expertise spans from social learning and motivation to innovative pedagogies for online education. A prolific writer and speaker, Dron's contributions are globally acknowledged and revered.

Whose (or what's) intelligence is this?

First, some theory

Free to read and download



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Defining “technology”

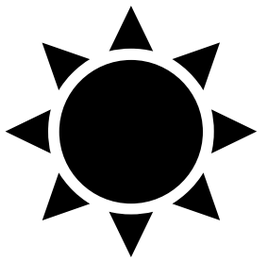
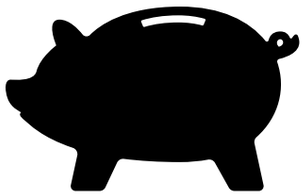
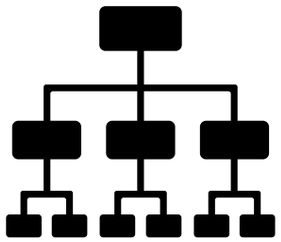
W. Brian Arthur:

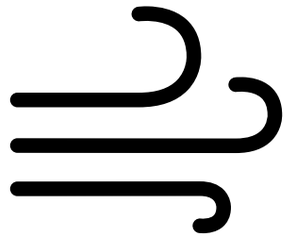
The orchestration of phenomena to our use

me:

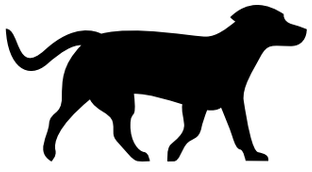
organizing stuff to do stuff

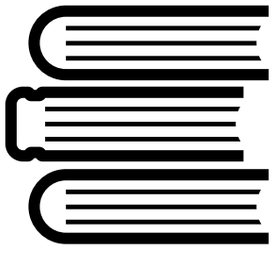
Including what we do, what has been done,
and what we do with what has been done

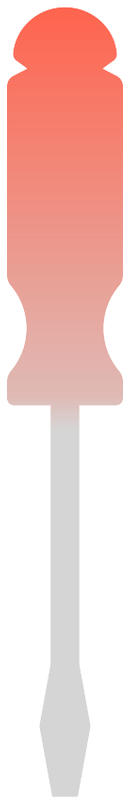


any
stuff

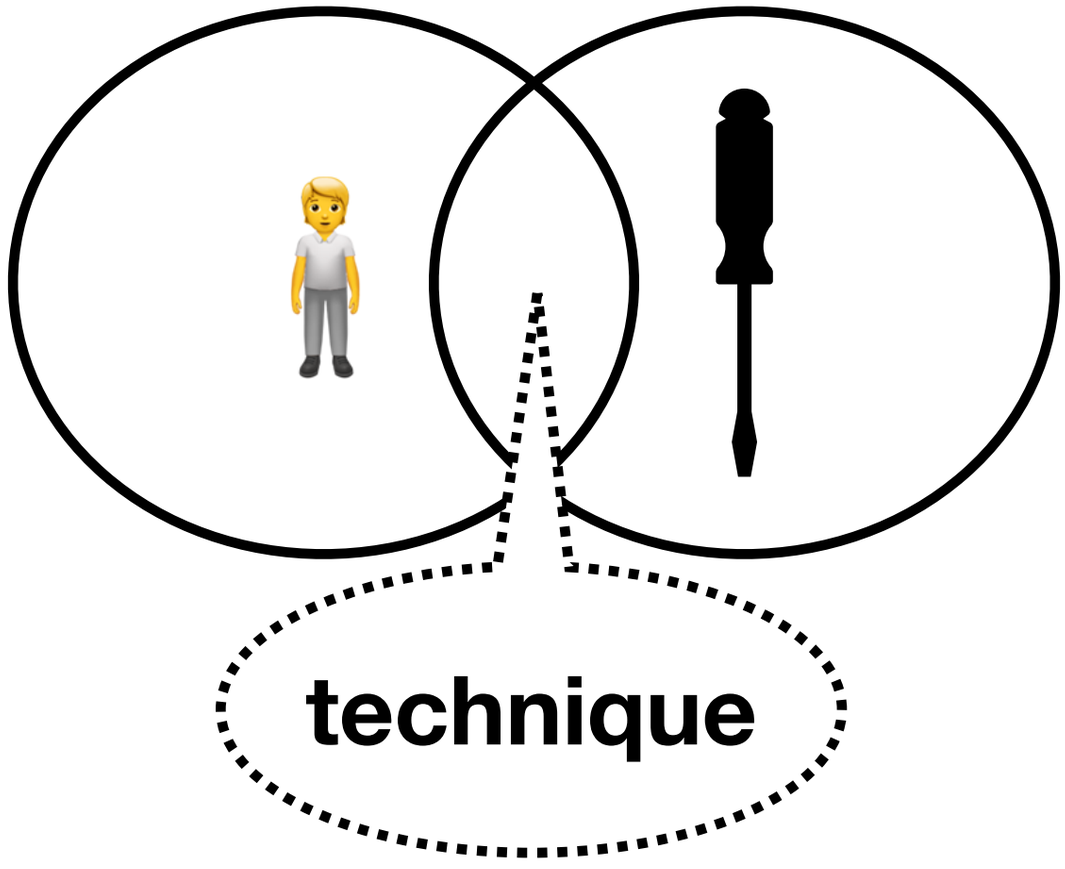




What can be done with this?



We are part-technology.
Technology is part-us.



Participants, not (just) users

Technique

What we do with what has been done

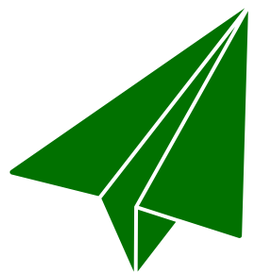
A technology enacted by a human

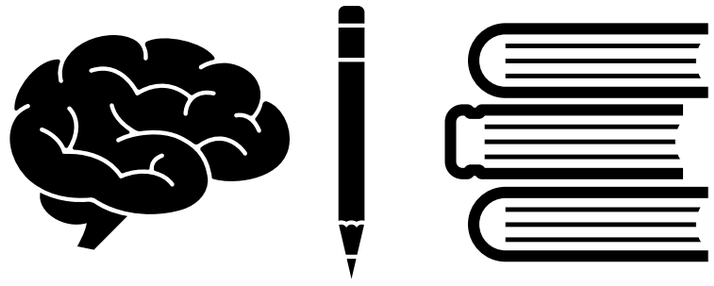
Hard technique

We are parts of the orchestration (methods, processes, procedures)

Soft technique

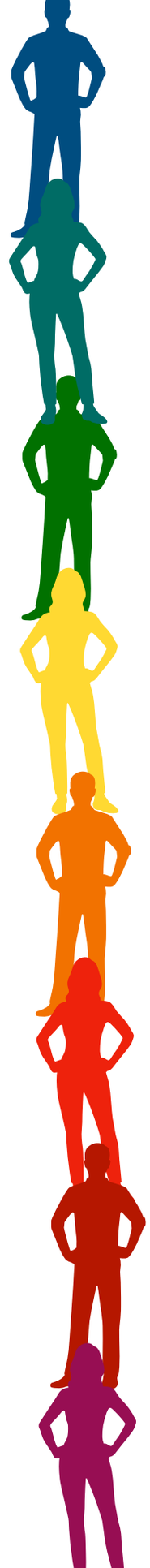
We are the orchestrators (the ways we do stuff)





Most technologies demand a mix of both hard and soft technique.

Some, like pencils or language, are innately soft. Others, like production lines or regulations, tend to be hard



Through our technologies we participate in the collective intelligence of our species

No one learns alone

No one teaches alone

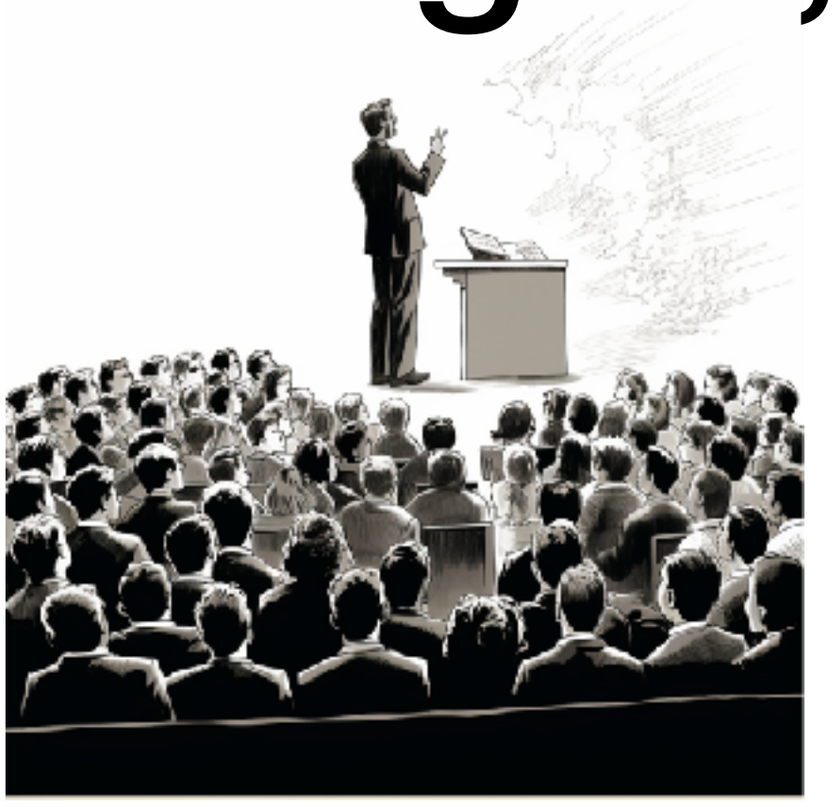
Almost all of our intelligence is artificial

Education

Developing the techniques needed to participate in our societies

A technology built from countless technologies

Pedagogies are technologies, too

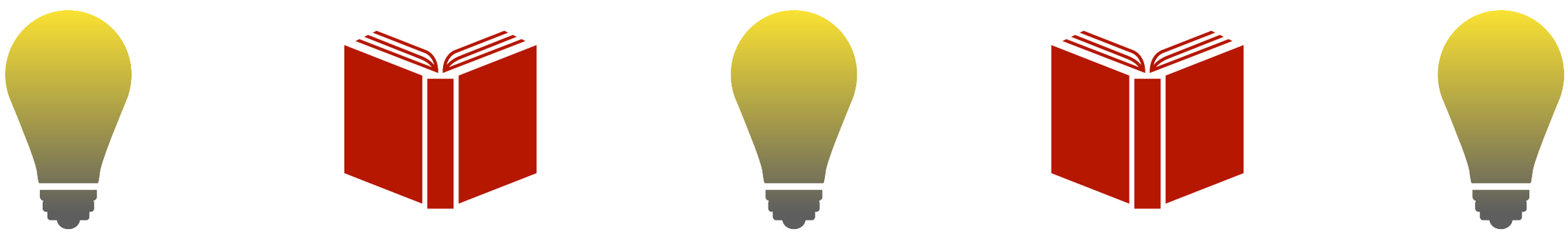


We are all learning technologists

Co-participants

Everyone is a teacher

And so are our creations



If education is a technology, what is it for?

Harder

Softer

Achieving learning outcomes

Gaining credentials

Learning useful skills

Remembering important facts

Learning how to behave

Learning to think

Learning values

Learning to live, work, and play with others

Learning to live well

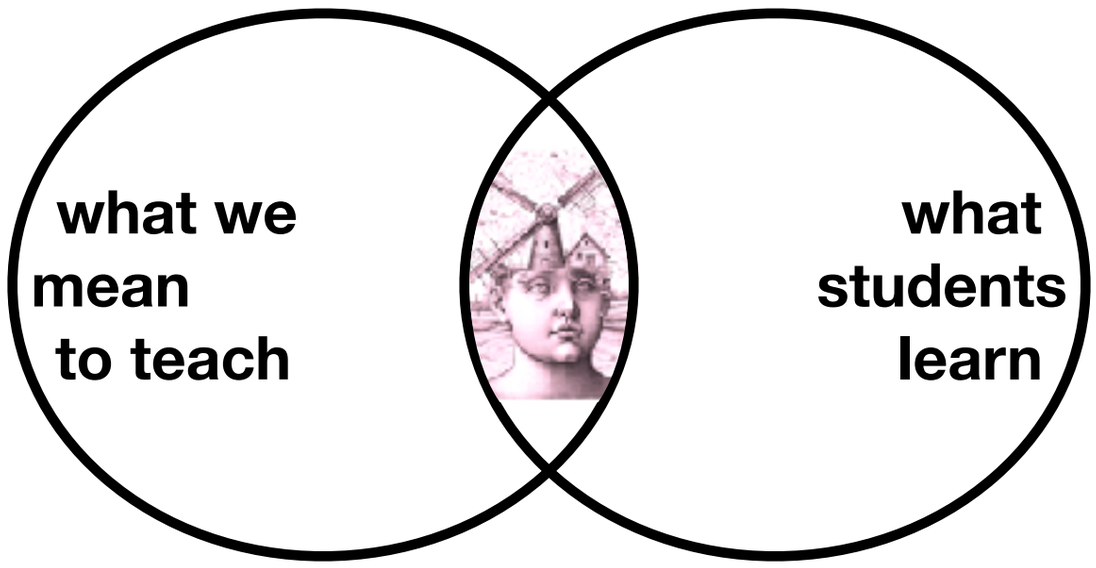
Learning to adapt

Sustaining happy, safe societies

The grist.

The mill.

learning outcomes



ways of learning
attitudes
values
relationships
motivation
ways of thinking
ways of being
cultural norms
behavioural expectations
etc

How to do stuff

How to be human in a human society

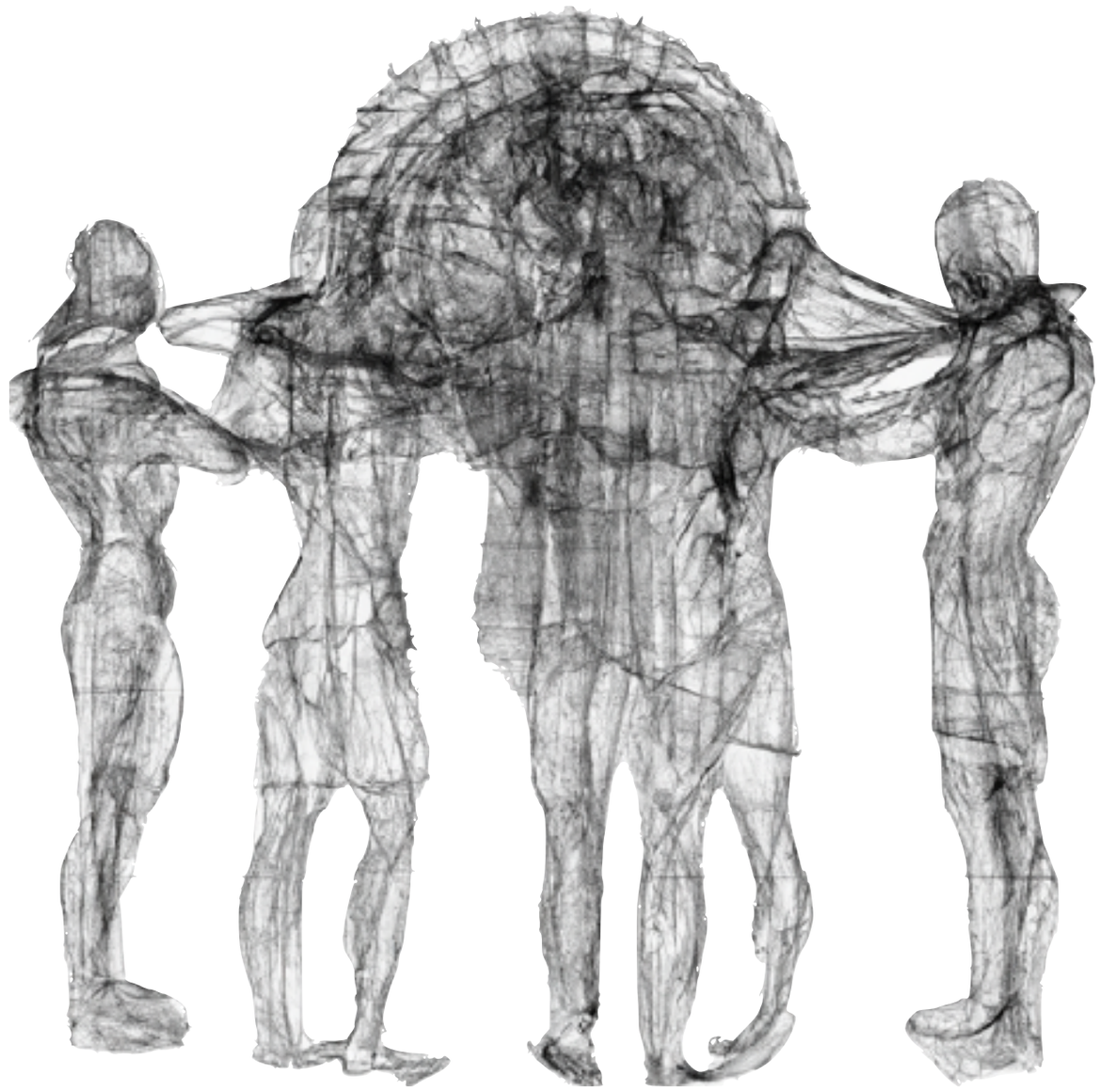
What happens when we learn to be human from things that are not (quite) human?

Until now, automation has replaced only **hard** technique

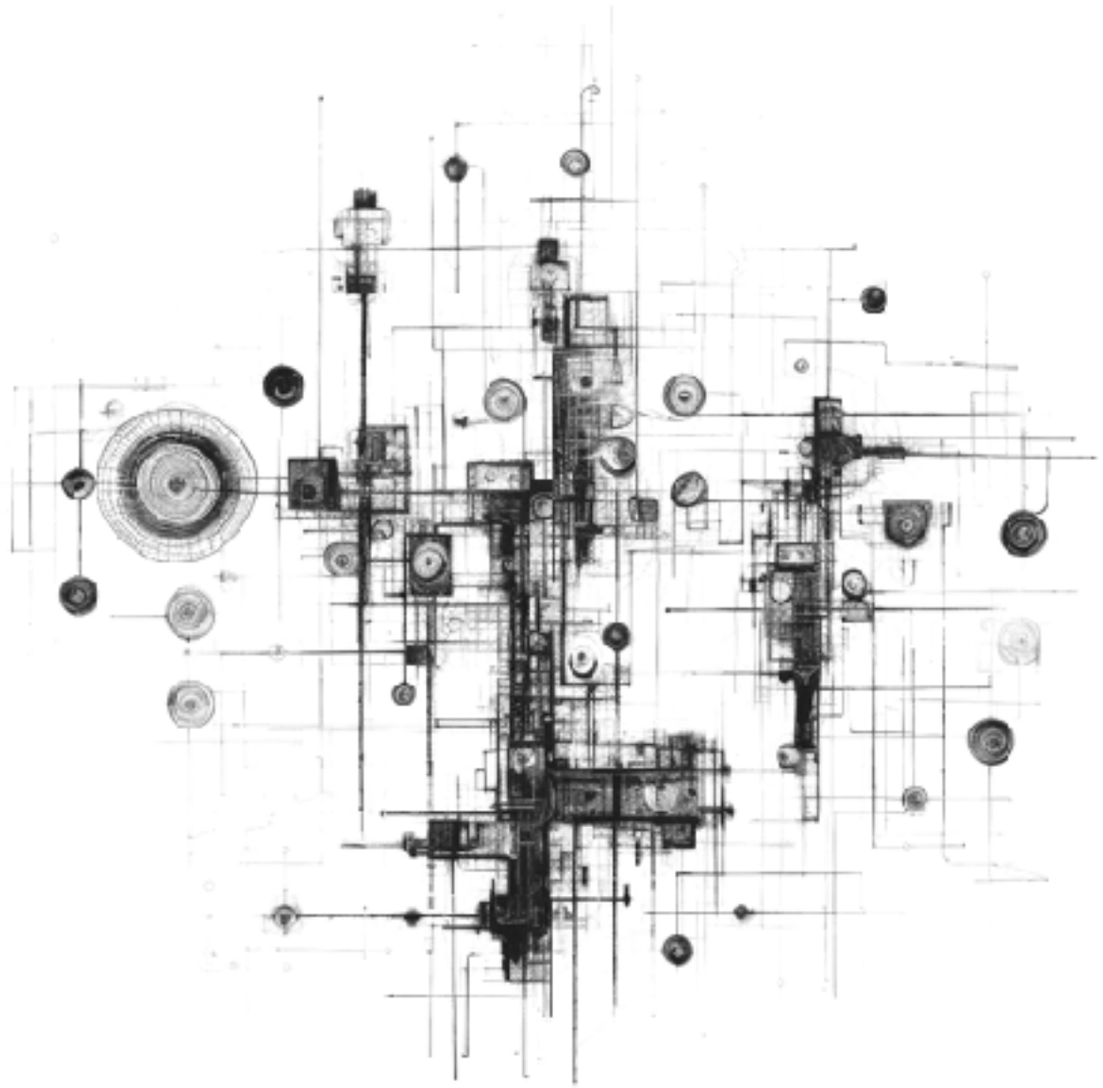
Generative AIs automate and replace **soft** technique

Generative AIs

Remixed collective *human* intelligence and creativity



Signals, but no signification



A dystopian future?

Soft skills that atrophy

Soft skills that are never learned

Ways of being that are not quite human

Machines trained on the output of machines

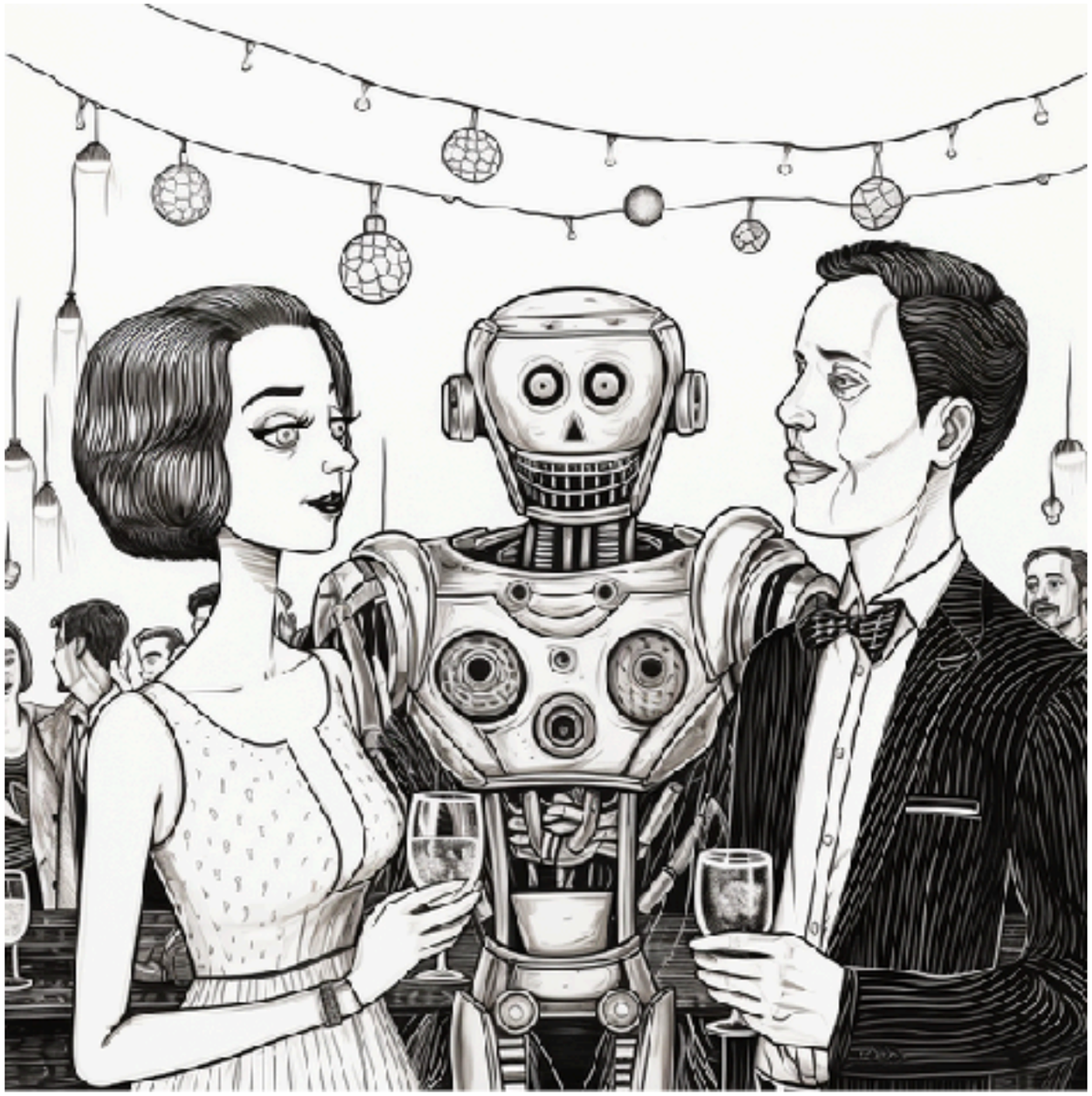
Machines trained on the output of people who are taught by machines

Evading the AI apocalypse

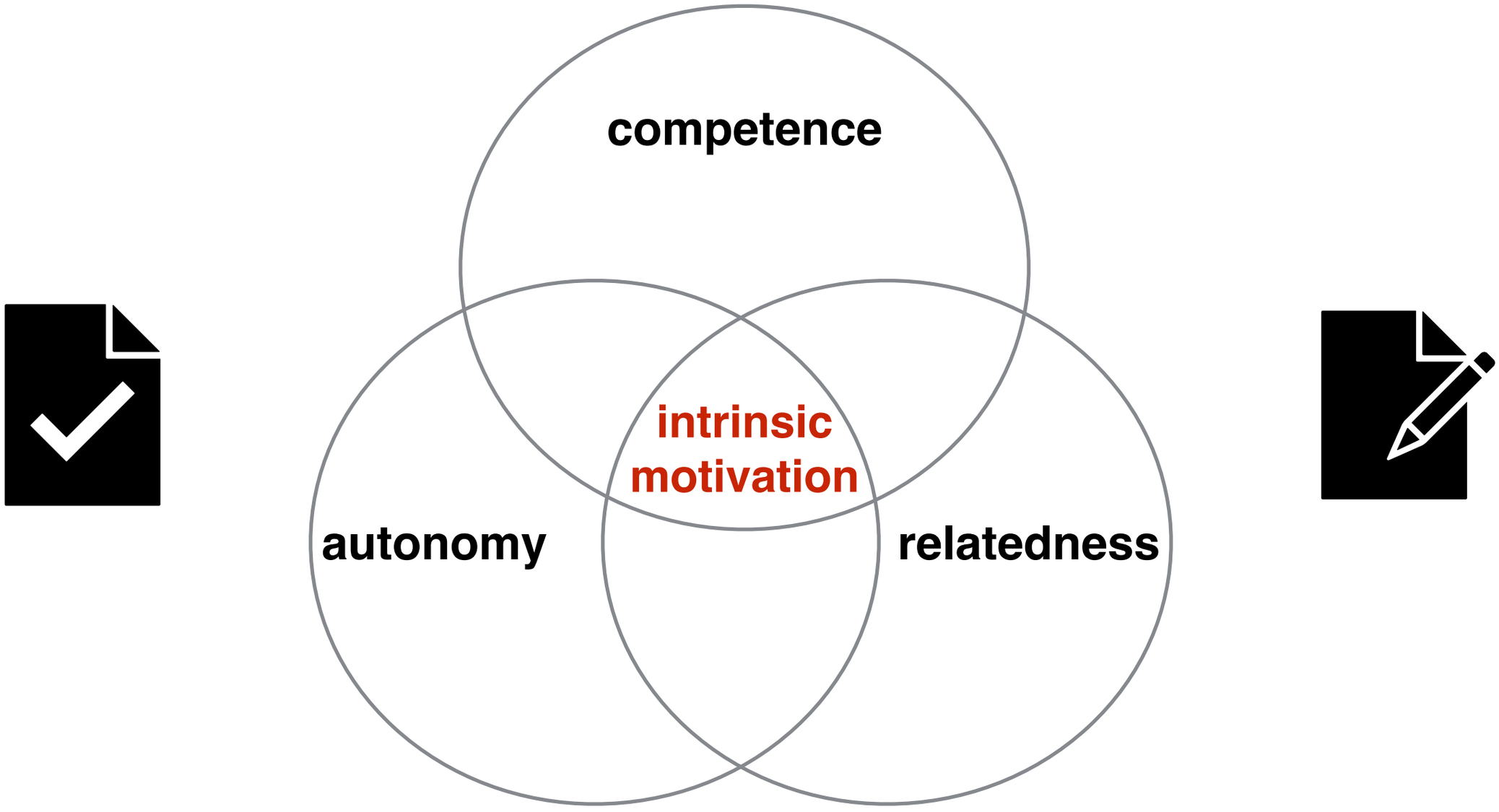
Contractors and team members, not tools

Separate roles, not overlapping

Supports for human connection



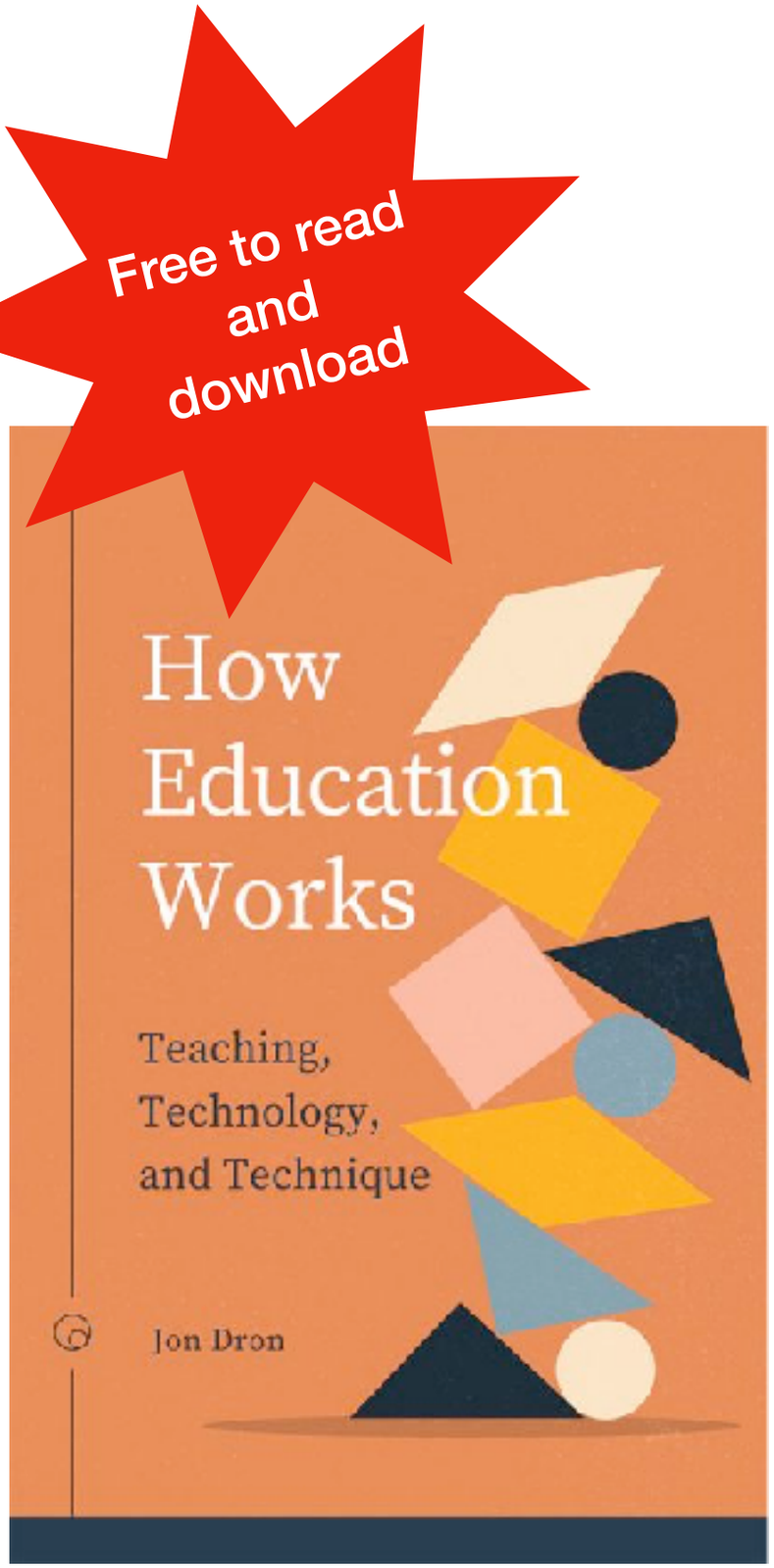
Decoupling credentials



Reclaiming the social

Courses as communities vs courses as products

Refocusing education



Thank you

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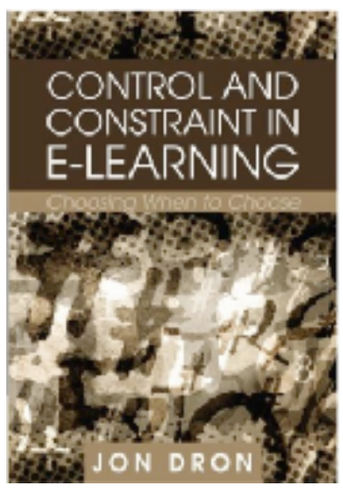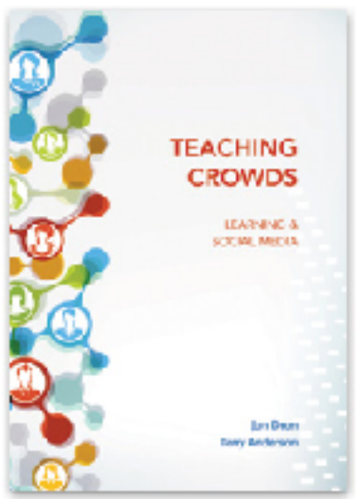
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