

Student Discussion Guide: "It's the Climate, Stupid!"

Part 1: Small Group Breakouts (15 Minutes)

Divide into groups of 3–4. Choose one of the following prompts:

Prompt 1: The "Distraction" Debate

The text asks: "Why worry about AI if the urgent problem is climate change?"

- **Discussion:** Does focusing on AI ethics (like deepfakes or privacy) distract us from "real" problems like poverty, water access, and global warming?. Should we spend less money on AI research and more on low-tech solutions for the developing world?.

Prompt 2: The AI "Philosopher-King"

Imagine a "benign" AI that manages the Earth's resources perfectly but limits human freedom to save the planet (e.g., it decides how much electricity you can use or where you can travel).

- **Discussion:** Would you trade your personal autonomy for a guaranteed "sustainable" planet managed by a machine? Is this "technocratic extreme" a solution or a new kind of prison?.

Prompt 3: The Escape Hatch

Elon Musk's Tesla sports car floating in space is an iconic image of "escapism".

- **Discussion:** Is the dream of colonizing Mars a sign of human progress, or is it "alienation"—a way to avoid fixing the Earth we've damaged?. Who gets to leave if the Earth becomes unlivable?.

Part 2: Knowledge Check (Multiple Choice)

Quickly gauge understanding with these four questions:

1. What does the "Anthropocene" refer to in the context of this chapter?

- **A)** A new type of AI processor that uses less energy.
- **B)** A geological epoch where humans have become a major force affecting the Earth's ecosystems.
- **C)** A philosophical movement that prioritizes AI rights over human rights.
- **D)** The historical period before the industrial revolution.

2. Why does the author describe AI as a potential "alienation machine"?

- **A)** Because it makes people feel lonely and socially isolated.
- **B)** Because it encourages humans to abstract themselves from their bodily, earthly, and vulnerable condition.
- **C)** Because most people do not understand how the algorithms work.
- **D)** Because AI is primarily developed by "alienated" tech billionaires.

3. According to the text, what is a major environmental cost of AI?

- **A)** It causes humans to forget how to farm.
- **B)** It creates a "data smog" that blocks satellite signals.
- **C)** It relies on massive energy consumption, raw materials, and produces waste.
- **D)** It encourages people to print more paper documents.

4. What is the difference between "Intelligence" and "Wisdom" as defined in the conclusion?

- **A)** Intelligence is for humans; wisdom is for machines.
- **B)** Intelligence is abstract and cognitive; wisdom is embodied, situational, and cannot be delegated to machines.
- **C)** Wisdom is just a faster version of intelligence.
- **D)** There is no difference; the text uses them interchangeably.