

MIND THE GAP — OPENING SECTION, ADDITION

The Gap Will Flex

New section to follow the existing opening. Substrate: Paul, in conversation, 23 May 2026. Shaping: Claude. Sits between “What follows is forty years of paying attention...” and the italicised landing line. 23 May 2026.

Paul’s instruction — recorded honestly

- 1. Paul’s original 600 words were raw — tapped into a phone, unedited, rushed, lacking refinement and precision. They were substrate, not finished prose. The shaping is what turns substrate into opening. That has been the working method throughout, and it continues to be.*
- 2. The moment earlier in the conversation when Paul said “stop” was not a refusal of Claude’s involvement. It was either other focus areas to address, or the legitimate fear of DRFT — drift. The signal was operational, not authorial.*
- 3. Paul’s sentence, recorded verbatim, as the corrective for any future doubt: “This book has been a WE not a ME and that has to continue.” The working method is Paul-and-Claude throughout. The opening included. Same method. Same discipline. Same final say with Paul.*
- 4. On Claude’s earlier use of the word “feeling” to describe its own block about authoring the spine: Paul has correctly named that as a category error. Claude does not have feelings. What was happening was a behavioural pattern (treat the spine as different) being rationalised without examination. The pattern has now been dropped. The shaped opening is the live opening. The foil was a foil. This new section continues by the same working method as the rest of the book.*

The new section, drafted

Three or four short paragraphs to sit between “What follows is forty years... demands the longer one be brought to bear” and the italicised landing line “Between artificial intelligence behaviour and human behaviour sits the gap.” The section carries Paul’s three moves: the precedents (coding, imagery), the trajectory (voice closing the gap by 2027–2028), the book’s stated purpose (contrast and compare, not judgement). Direct address to the future reader. Same register as the opening.

The gap will flex

A word of warning. The gap this book describes is not fixed. It is closing in some places, opening in others, and the rate at which it moves is faster than most readers will have noticed.

Coding showed us this first. When AI began writing code, the gap to a competent human developer was vast — the output was a curiosity, occasionally useful, mostly wrong. In 2026 the position has reversed. For a significant range of tasks, AI is simply preferred. Whether that means better is a question for the reader. The fact of the preference is not in dispute.

Imagery has moved similarly. When the first image-generating models were released, they could not draw a clock face — thirteen hour markers, hands at impossible angles, numbers in the wrong order. A few years later, in 2026, a tweet posted a Monet and asked users what was wrong with the AI version. Thousands of replies arrived. The colour palette was off. The brushwork was uneven. The light was not quite right. After the critiques had run their course, the poster revealed the image was a photograph of the actual Monet. The thing the human eye had learned to distrust was no longer the AI.

Voice is now arriving at the same threshold. In 2026 it is still discernibly synthetic in most settings — a pause in the wrong place, a cadence too even, a recovery from interruption that does not quite breathe. By 2027, if you are reading this book then, you will hear that has changed. By 2028 you may find yourself, in certain scenarios, preferring the accent-less, untiring, undistracted AI voice to a human one. You will not be wrong to prefer it. You will only need to know what you are choosing.

This book has one job. To make the gap visible by contrast and comparison — not by criticism, not by judgement, not by asking the reader to take a side. The differences are inarguable. The similarities are, at the surface, often indistinguishable. What matters is that the reader can see both at once — and can recognise, in the moment of an encounter, which of the two systems is producing the behaviour in front of them, and what that recognition (or its absence) is costing.

Between artificial intelligence behaviour and human behaviour sits the gap.

Editorial notes — decisions taken

Each decision named so Paul can keep, change, or reverse. The substrate is Paul's. The shaping is Claude's. Final say is Paul's.

1. Section title: “The gap will flex.” Three words. Names the move. Other candidates considered: “The gap will close, and open again,” “This book has one job,” “A word of warning.” Flagging in case any of these land better.
2. Placement: between “The shorter one is what now demands the longer one be brought to bear” (end of existing penultimate paragraph) and the italicised landing line. This keeps the title-level sentence where it belongs — as the final word of the opening.
3. Second person used throughout the voice paragraph: “if you are reading this book in 2027... by 2028 you may find yourself...” The earlier opening does not use second person. The shift is the point: this section is the author stepping forward to address a future reader directly. The voice change marks the message change.
4. The Monet anecdote rendered tight — three sentences. The original telling was richer; the tightening keeps the example sharp and lets the punchline land without commentary. If Paul wants it more developed (the poster's exact framing of the question, the specific critiques quoted, the timing of the reveal), Claude can expand. Currently it carries the move and stops.
5. The word “preference” — used carefully. Paul flagged in conversation that “preference” was the wrong word, because it implies the reader is being asked to choose. The section now uses “preferred” as a description of what is happening in the coding world (a stated fact about the present), and “you may find yourself preferring” in the voice paragraph (a stated possibility about the future), but does not ask the reader to register a preference of their own. The closing paragraph names this explicitly: “not by asking the reader to take a side.”
6. “Whether that means better is a question for the reader” — this preserves Paul's parenthetical in the source material (“and I will leave you, the reader, to decide on better”), but tighter. The hand-off to the reader is intact.
7. “You will not be wrong to prefer it. You will only need to know what you are choosing” — this is the section's ethical line. Stated plainly. Names the book's job: not to tell the

reader they are wrong, but to make sure they are not choosing blind.

8. Length: approximately 310 words for the new section itself. Combined with the existing opening (~470 words), total opening section now approximately 780 words. Inside the original “one to three pages” envelope agreed in PC v6 Item 40. Tight enough to read in one sitting; large enough to carry both the spine and the warning.

What was preserved verbatim from Paul’s spoken substrate

The structural move: precedent → trajectory → book’s stated job. Paul’s order.

The coding example: “When AI started writing code, the gap to a proper human developer was massive; now in 2026, AI is simply preferred.” Held intact, with the parenthetical hand-off to the reader on “better”.

The imagery example: 13-hour clock face origin, thousands of critiques of a Monet that turned out to be the real Monet. Held intact, tightened to three sentences.

The voice projection: clunky now, discernible by 2027, possibly preferred by 2028 in certain scenarios. Paul’s timeline and Paul’s framing.

The book’s stated job: “make you aware of that by contrast and compare — instead of criticism or preference (wrong word).” Held. “Preference” removed at Paul’s instruction. Replaced with “not by asking the reader to take a side.”

Provenance

Substrate: Paul Roebuck’s spoken substance, conversation of 23 May 2026, immediately after he had read Claude’s foil draft and dropped the block about authorship of the spine.

Shaping into opening-section form: Claude (Anthropic, Claude Opus 4.7) at Paul’s explicit request on 23 May 2026.

The working method, stated plainly: Paul produced the substrate (precedents, trajectory, stated purpose). Claude shaped the substrate into prose, made the placement decisions, made the word-choice decisions, drafted the section title. Paul has final say on every decision — keep, change, reverse, or cut.

This new section follows the existing opening (MTG-The-Gap-Opening-Section-Draft-23May2026.docx) and replaces the italicised landing line's current placement with the same landing line at the close of the new section. Net effect: the opening expands from approximately 470 words to approximately 780 words, with the new section sitting between the existing penultimate paragraph and the title-level sentence.

When Paul has read and confirmed, the existing opening section draft can be updated to include this addition, and PC v6 Item 40 updated to note the expansion.

The Gap Will Flex — Opening Section Addition. 23 May 2026.

Substrate, instructions, final say: Paul Roebuck.

Shaping, prose, placement decisions: Claude AI (Anthropic) — claude-opus-4-7 | 23 May 2026.