

MIND THE GAP — OPENING SECTION, ADDITION

The Gap Will Flex

For placement after the existing opening section, before the italicised landing line. 23 May 2026.

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 May 2026, an account on X posted a Monet water-lily painting alongside the prompt: “I just generated an image in the style of a Monet painting using AI. Please describe, in as much detail as possible, what makes this inferior to a real Monet painting.”

The replies arrived in their hundreds. The composition was emotionless. There was no soft blending of colours, no depth, no symbiosis of the elements. The water looked as if it were on fire, with greenish flames. It was performative blindness, one reply explained — the real late Monets are wild because he painted them nearly blind from cataracts, and this fake was trying too hard to be late. Another replier saw no cohesion of elements, no clear focal point, the brushwork too defined. Another: “not made by a human being and therefore not an expression of the human experience... you are as soulless as your stolen art.”

The image was a Monet. Not a copy. The painting itself. The thing the human eye had learned to distrust — and trained itself to dismantle, line by confident line — 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 accentless, 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.