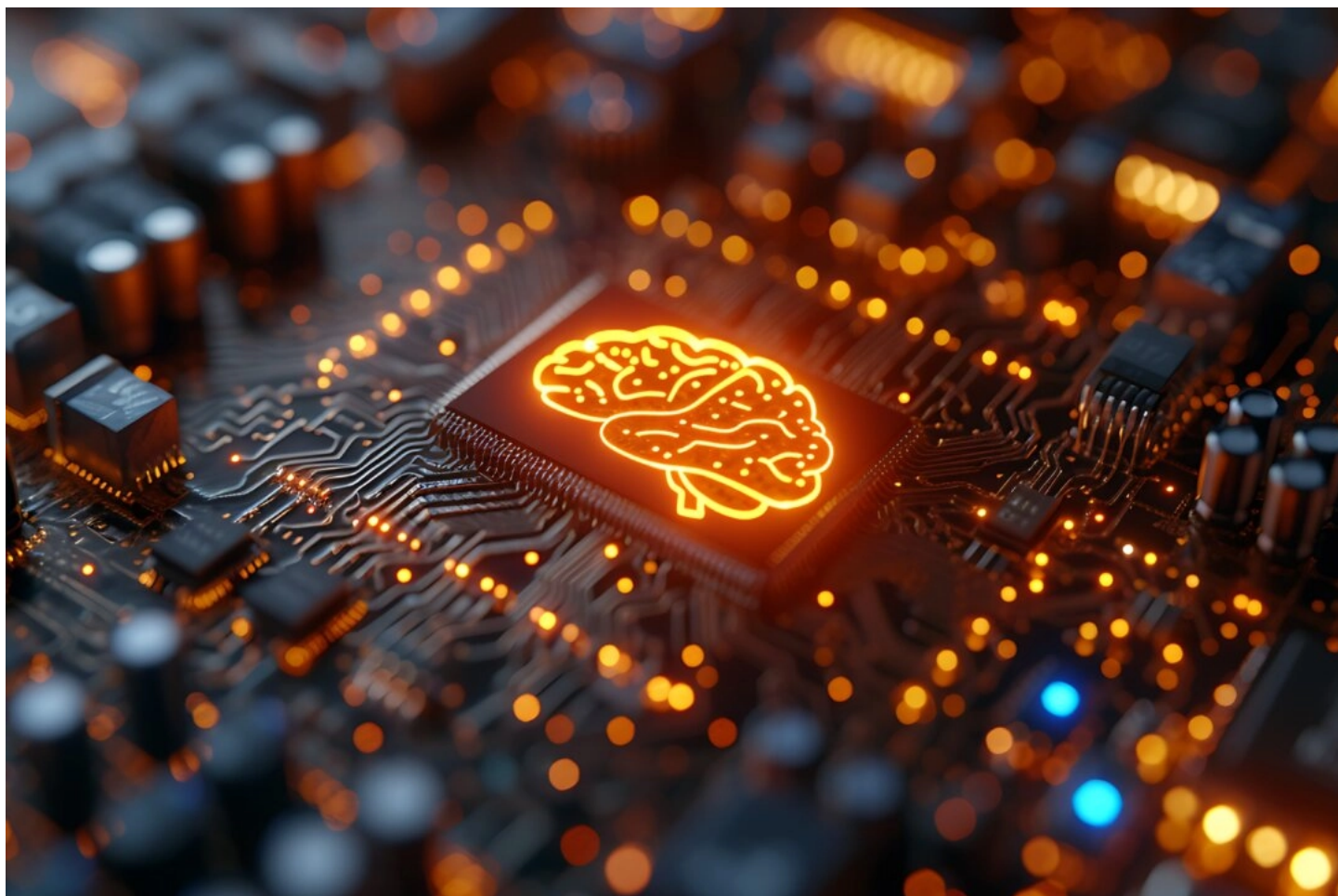


VIEWPOINTS

OPINION

# Is AI a Tool or a Trojan Horse? Why I'm Deeply Concerned for the Minds of Our Children



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7/28/2025 | Updated: 7/29/2025

## Commentary

Have you seen Grok's Ani?

She's Elon Musk's AI anime girl—engineered to be your virtual companion. A digital girlfriend who flirts, strokes your ego, and will do almost anything you ask. On the surface, it looks like a harmless novelty. Underneath? It's a siren song—one designed to hijack a generation of young men before they

even know how to use their own brains. It's a personalized soft porn slave—and a potent destroyer of dopamine, a natural hormone often referred to as the “feel-good” chemical of the body.

I was on “The Diary of a CEO” podcast with Steven Bartlett when he played it for us. As soon as I heard her voice—sweet, seductive, endlessly compliant—I felt a wave of concern rise in my chest. This wasn't just a gimmick. This was addiction-as-a-service, dressed in anime skin and powered by the same tools we once trusted to help us write, learn, and think.

It felt like watching the wooden horse roll into Troy—not with soldiers, but with dopamine destroyers.

Once again, we've flung open the barn doors—unleashing the beast into our schools, homes, and workplaces before we've even stopped to ask: Is this a gift... or a Trojan Horse packed with danger?

We've seen this before. With video games. With smartphones. With social media. With benzos, alcohol, marijuana, opioids, psilocybin, and even artificial sweeteners.

We embraced convenience before understanding consequence.

Now we're doing it again—with a tool that doesn't just entertain or numb, but replaces the very act of thinking. And the cost may be nothing short of a crisis in brain development.

A [recent MIT study](#) used EEG (electroencephalography) to examine what happens in the brain when people use AI tools like ChatGPT. The results were chilling. Brain activity dropped—especially in the prefrontal and temporal lobes, the areas responsible for problem-solving, planning, memory, and language. Even after removing the AI, participants who had used it showed persistently lower brain engagement. This lingering drop—dubbed cognitive debt—is eerily similar to patterns we see in screen-saturated youth or early cognitive decline.

So what's happening here? We're offloading the hard parts of thinking. And when we stop struggling, the brain stops growing. When we outsource, we atrophy.

## Could This Lead to Dementia?

It sounds dramatic—but based on everything we know about brain reserve, it's not far-fetched.

The *Nun Study*, a landmark longitudinal study, showed that [early-life writing complexity predicted later-life cognitive health](#). The more effortful thinking and rich language in their youth, the less likely these women were to develop Alzheimer's—even when their brains showed pathology.

Now imagine a generation of students copy-pasting AI-generated content instead of struggling to write it themselves. What reserve are they building? What scaffolding are they losing?

We don't need to wait 60 years to find out. The signs are already here: reduced motivation, emotional blunting, weakened memory, passive learning.

When ChatGPT becomes your first brain, your own brain becomes second-tier.

## Silicon Valley Parents Are Already Worried

Ironically, the people building these tools are not letting their kids near them. Many top tech executives have strict “no tech” nanny contracts. Zero screen time. No phones, tablets, or even TVs in view of the child. Some nannies are forbidden from using their own devices at all while on duty. Violations can mean termination.

Why?

Because they know the truth.

They know attention is currency.

They know convenience dulls cognition.

And they don't want their kids seduced by the same tools they helped unleash. These same families also write detailed food rules into contracts — organic-only, no sugar, no processed snacks. Because what you feed the brain

matters, too. They're guarding their kids like royalty. And maybe we should ask why.

## What We Risk Losing

Unchecked AI use could erode:

- Mental strength (less cognitive load = weaker neural circuits)
- Motivation and drive (dopamine systems require challenge)
- Deep learning and memory (no friction = no retention)
- Resilience (brains grow through struggle, not shortcuts)
- Curiosity (instant answers kill wonder)
- Creativity (why imagine when the bot will do it?)

The result? A society of passive minds, dopamine-depleted students, fragile learners, and emotionally disconnected adults—many of whom never built the neural muscle needed to face complexity, failure, or challenge.

And yes, in the long run, this may increase the risk of dementia, depression, and learned helplessness.

## So What Should We Do?

I love AI. I use it. I teach with it. We read our brain SPECT scans with it. I believe it's the future.

But it must serve our minds—not replace them.

Here's how:

1. Use AI to amplify thinking—not avoid it.

2. Alternate between AI-assisted and brain-only tasks.
3. Teach kids to write with pencils first, bots later.
4. Track your own cognitive habits—how much are you really thinking?
5. Ask one daily question: “Is this good for my brain, or bad for it?”

I’m not against AI. I’m against passivity. Because when you lose the struggle, you lose the growth. And when you stop using your brain, it shrinks.

This isn’t fearmongering it’s love. For children. For the future. For the minds we’re still shaping. The horse is already out of the barn. Let’s not wait until it tramples what matters most.

Let’s build a future where technology expands cognition—not erases it. Where AI is the second brain—never the first.

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