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# The End of the Mouse: Why We'll Stop Serving the Machine

For forty years the keyboard and the mouse have kept us at the machine's service. Why the mouse will disappear, what the keyboard becomes, and what we gain once we no longer need our hands.

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Knowing where we've been matters as much as knowing where we're going. For forty years we've worked with computers the same way: one hand on the keyboard, the other on the mouse. With the keyboard you tell the machine what you want, but in its own language, through commands and shortcuts someone else chose. With the mouse you go wherever someone else decided to put things. I feel that, together, they've become the symbol of a relationship in which we've put ourselves at the machine's service: we learn where someone else put each button, move our hand there, and do it again. I believe that relationship is coming to an end, and that the mouse will go with it.

I like asking myself why we do things the way we do. Why do we still work like this? Because someone made that call forty years ago, and hardly anyone has questioned it since. I did, and instead of writing down an answer, I put it to the test.

## From tool to part of you

At first, people used AI to get tasks done for them. They gave it a one- or two-line instruction and waited for the result. That has changed a great deal. Today the heaviest users speak to it out loud, and when they speak, they open up: instead of an instruction, they give it their whole line of reasoning, with all the context, the way they'd explain it to a person. Speaking draws out what you know about a problem in a way typing can't.

And when you talk to it like that, the computer stops feeling like an add-on. It becomes something you communicate with, something that reacts and makes decisions across all your apps.

I work in this field, I spend my days at a computer, and I want to be part of this change from the inside. My thinking has changed a lot along the way. First I used AI to do tasks for me. Then I built my own apps for those tasks. Then, one by one, I swapped them in for the ones I'd been using, because once you're used to tools of your own, you see right away what other people's are missing, and you build it yourself. Today nearly everything I use daily is something I built: my email client, my CRM, the app my agents work in and the one I use to invest. Each of them has its own agent.

And something happened that I didn't expect. Often I'm no longer the one telling the agent what to do. It suggests what to do, and I listen. Does that mean we've become slaves to the machine? It doesn't feel that way to me. I feel we've become one. When your stomach tells you to eat, you listen, and no one would call you its slave; it's part of you. That's how it is for me with my agent: we're one. What it suggests comes from everything I've taught it, and I'm still the one who can tell, the moment I see it, whether it's right.

## What was missing

Even so, I felt something was still missing before I could say I was living in the future. The apps had changed on the inside, but I was still sitting in front of them the way we all have for forty years, one hand on the mouse and the other on the keyboard. What had to change next was the hardware on my desk.

In "The Last Tool" I wrote that the mouse wouldn't disappear, because "it gives you a kind of freedom on screen you wouldn't want to lose." I was wrong, and I only realized it when I tried the alternative. I picked up a small remote with six buttons and a D-pad, the four-way pad you find on a game controller, and set out to do all my work with it. The D-pad moves me between apps. One button confirms, another deletes, and a third lets me talk to the agent in whatever app I'm using. When a client emails me, I press that button, tell the agent what needs doing, and it drafts the reply. That's how I handle my email, my agents, and my investments. I dictated the first draft of this essay that way, leaning back in my chair, without touching the keyboard or the mouse.

How, you might ask, can six buttons handle all that? Because the remote doesn't have to do the work. It only has to take me to the agent, and from there I talk. The freedom on screen I was defending was the freedom to move around inside interfaces someone else designed, and once those interfaces disappear, you no longer need it. You don't point at something when you can simply name it.

## A world without interfaces

We need fewer and fewer interfaces, and the people who use AI most are noticing that an interface someone else designed no longer helps them. It gets in the way. Most people are still wary of this, but I believe interfaces will eventually disappear, and the tools will move into the background for the agent to operate. Speaking will be the main way we work: you say what you want, and the work gets done behind the scenes.

In a world like that, what's the point of the mouse? It existed to get you around inside what someone else had designed, and that's exactly what's going away. A remote with a handful of buttons will take its place. The trackpad may survive on laptops, and the mouse will live on in gaming, for people who enjoy games.

The keyboard is a different story. I firmly believe there'll always be one, because there are things you don't want to say out loud. But it'll be a different keyboard. It'll look like the one on your phone, with the letters, a few symbols, and little else, because there'll be no point in typing commands or memorizing shortcuts for a machine that understands you. And it'll have a button for talking to your agent. Many keyboards already have a dictation key; this button will be front and center.

## We don't need our hands

I spend hours on end at my computer, and now I spend them leaning back, with my hands off the desk. At first you think you're slacking off. You're not. What you're doing is shedding the mechanical work, the signals you send to your hands to type and to move the cursor around, and putting all that effort into the intellectual part: into the business, into thinking, into coming up with better ideas.

That's what I'm after in everything I build: handing off as much of the mechanical and the repetitive as I can, so that what's left for me is the thinking. We no longer need our hands. We need our heads.

Opening your mind this way, enough to think outside the box and build something like this, changes your everyday life too. Once you've changed something that had stayed the same for forty years, you start asking why everything else is done the way it is.

## The computer that's coming

I picture the computer of the future as very small, about the size of a Mac mini, with a keyboard and a remote. You plug it into whatever screen you like, lean back, work by talking, and set it up the way that suits you. Today I still jump from one app to another; where this is heading is a single agent that handles everything, and you just talk to it.

And I think remote work will speed this along. At home you close the door and can talk to your computer all day; when you can't talk out loud, you type, and that's what the keyboard will still be there for. Managers who work this way will see for themselves that they get more done at home than at the office, and that what counts is results, not face time.

## What will one day make no sense

This will take decades. There are countless programs to adapt, and changing the way people work takes time. But it will play out like every other shift in technology over the past forty years. One day no one will understand how we kept working with computers exactly as we did forty years earlier, with a keyboard and a mouse, while everything else changed. Today we still work that way. That's not the future.

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