Non-Hype Manifesto of 90s CS Graduates

One-Page Handout • March 2026

Preamble

We are not anti-AI. We are anti-nonsense. Something profound is happening, but history has not ended and judgment is not obsolete. Constraints never disappear; they return in more fashionable clothing.

What Has Changed

Implementation is being commoditized. Code generation is real; routine implementation is increasingly machine-cheap. Engineering shifts from writing code to specifying intent, constraining ambiguity, validating behavior, observing runtime reality, and carrying responsibility.

Ambiguity is now a first-class engineering problem. If the spec drives the machine, then unclear language is not a documentation problem. It is a systems problem.

Memory constraints have returned. Today's scarcity is context windows, token budgets, session amnesia, retrieval gaps, and institutional forgetting. The answer is memory discipline: context packs, decision logs, precedents, and explicit handoffs.

What the Hype Gets Wrong

Inevitability is not an argument. Capability trajectories are real; destiny narratives are marketing.

Confidence is not comprehension. Demos are not deployments; a system that is 95% magical may still be operationally unacceptable.

"Human-in-the-loop" is often ceremonial. If the human does not genuinely constrain the system, call it what it is.

The economics are political, not just technical. Token cost, compute concentration, and platform dependency shape who gets to think at scale.

What Still Matters

Accountability does not automate. The machine may generate the artifact; the human still absorbs the consequence.

Labor mutates; it does not vanish. Less coding often means more specification, review, incident analysis, and governance.

The apprenticeship gap is real. A civilization that automates the beginner path risks making expertise scarce.

Thinking still happens off-screen. An engineer who cannot think away from the machine is already partially automated.

What We Demand

Verifiable governance, not vibes.

Treat specifications as production artifacts.

Do not ship autonomous workflows without rollback.

Maintain human-readable decision logs.

Prefer reversible systems over elegant ones when uncertainty is high.

Distinguish ceremony from real control.

Final Position. The future is not "AI replaces engineering." Engineering becomes the discipline of governing machine-generated possibility under uncertainty.

"This revolution is real. The sales pitch around it is still mostly insufferable."