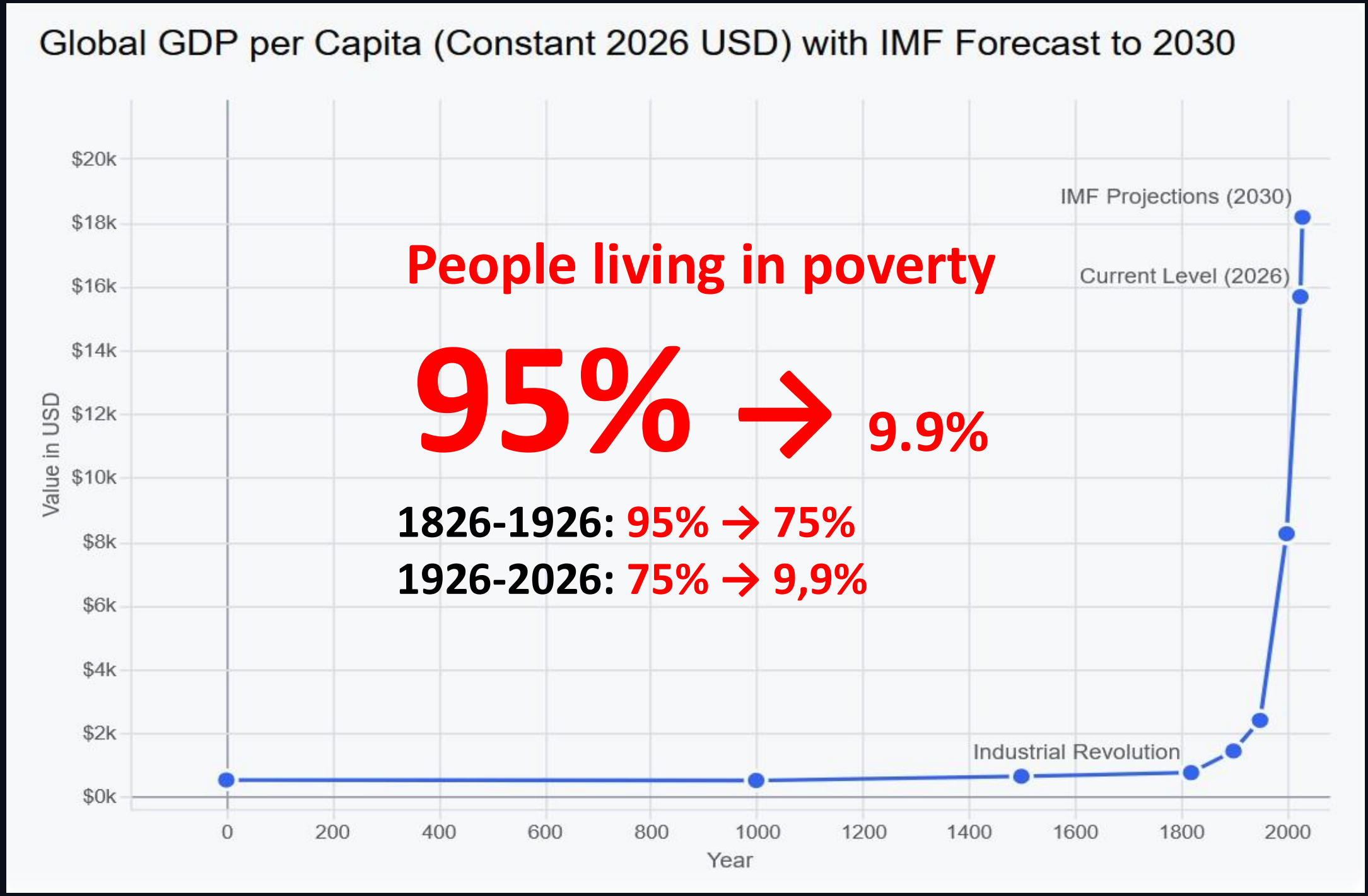
THE
WORLD STAGE

What Would Kraków Look Like Without Us?

MAN vs MACHINE
ASPIRE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

A turning point and a great opportunity for PEOPLE and BUSINESS

- **ZBIGNIEW BARTUŚ**


Global GDP per Capita (Constant 2026 USD) with IMF Forecast to 2030
People living in poverty
95% → 9.9%
1826-1926: 95% → 75%
1926-2026: 75% → 9,9%
IMF Projections (2030)
Current Level (2026)
Industrial Revolution
Value in USD
$0k
$2k
$4k
$6k
$8k
$10k
$12k
$14k
$16k
$18k
$20k
0
200
400
600
800
1000
1200
1400
1600
1800
2000
Year

We owe the progress of civilization to the development of TECHNOLOGY. But...

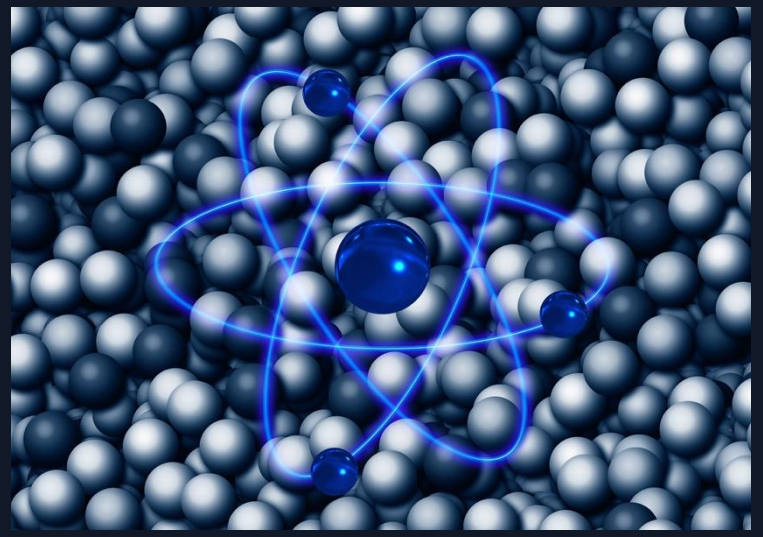
It is never obvious whether a given technology will be used to:

improve quality of life

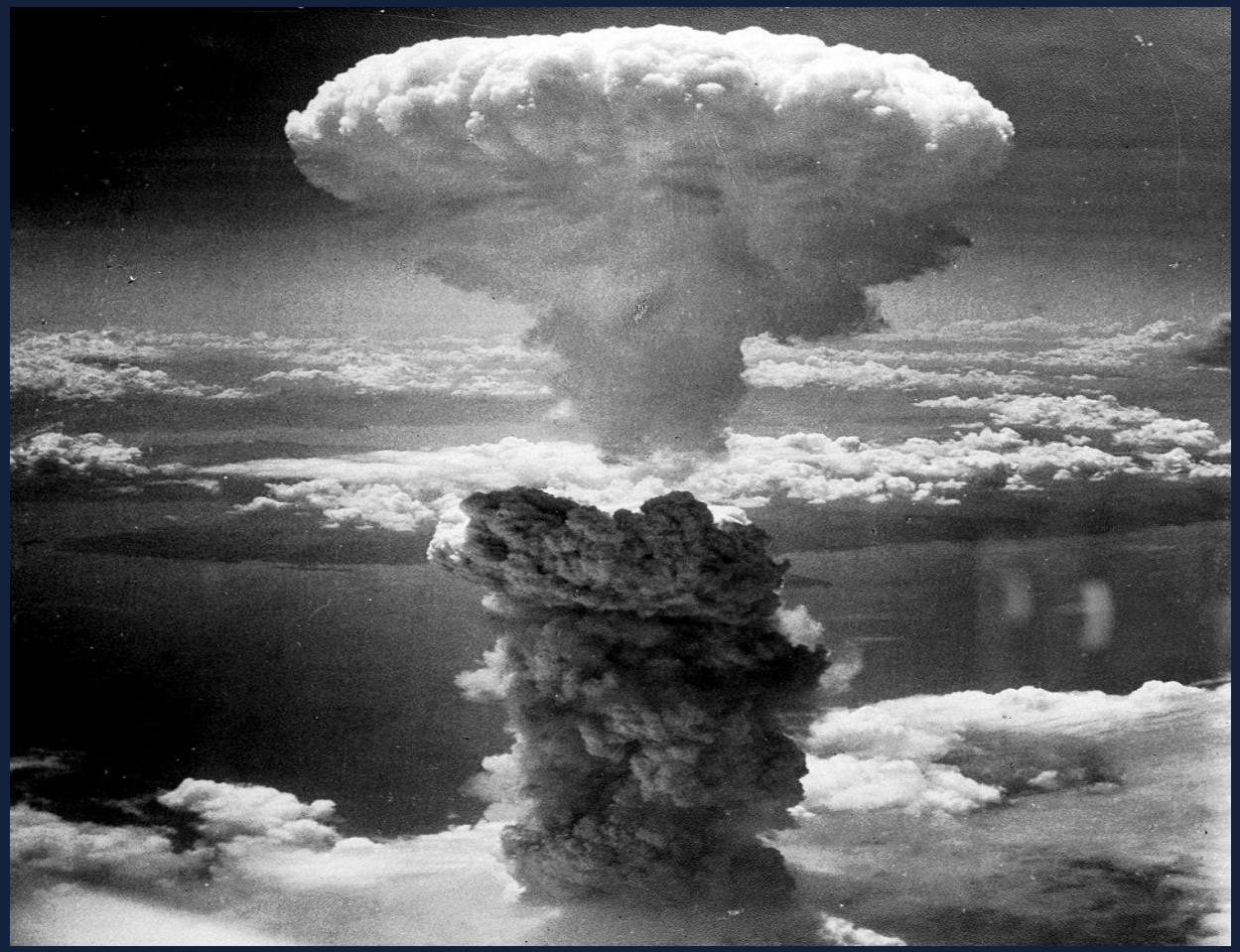
destroy humanity

NUCLEAR REACTION

- 440 reactors
- 9% energy
- 1 billion people



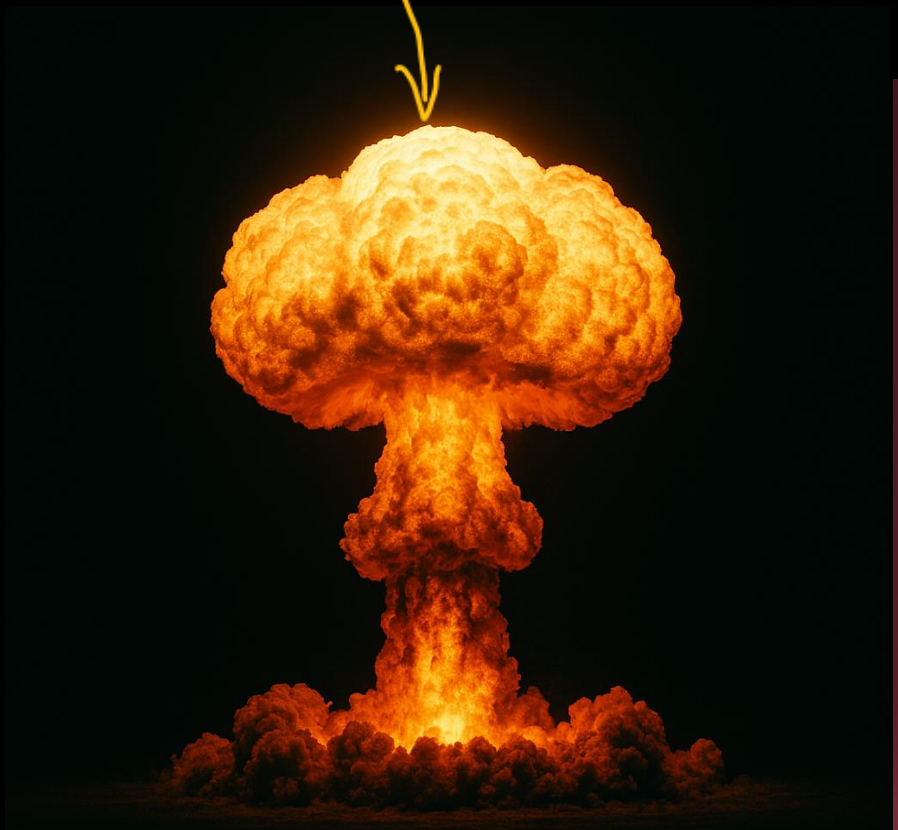
WHAT CAME FIRST?



1945: BOMBS

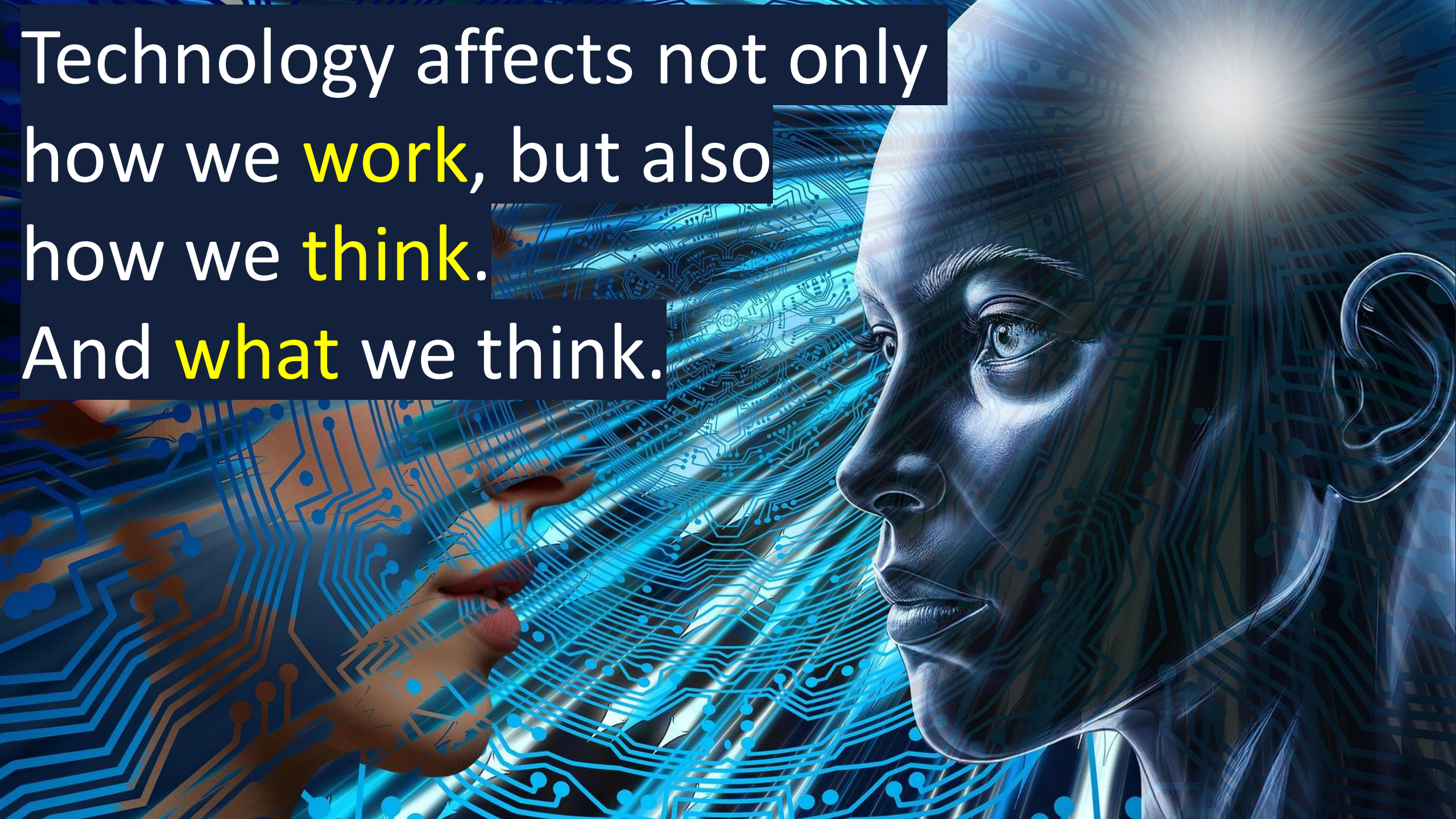
1954: POWER PLANT

If we live in the best of worlds in history then why do young people being asked to depict a vision of the future draw...

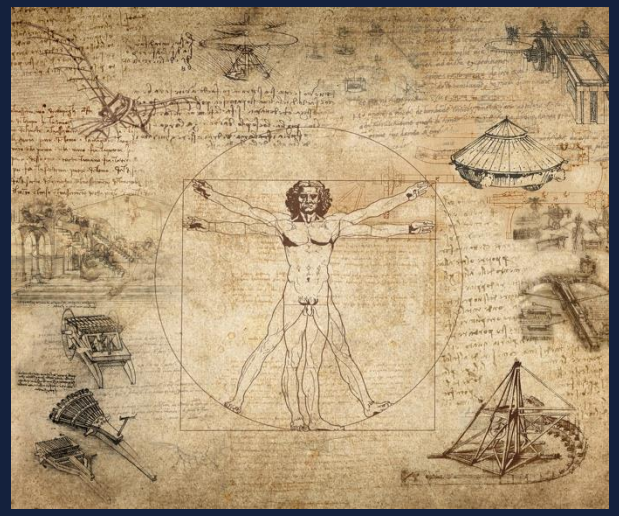


How to turn bombs into fruits?

And they should draw something like this or like that.


Technology affects not only
how we work, but also
how we think.
And what we think.

Advantages of human



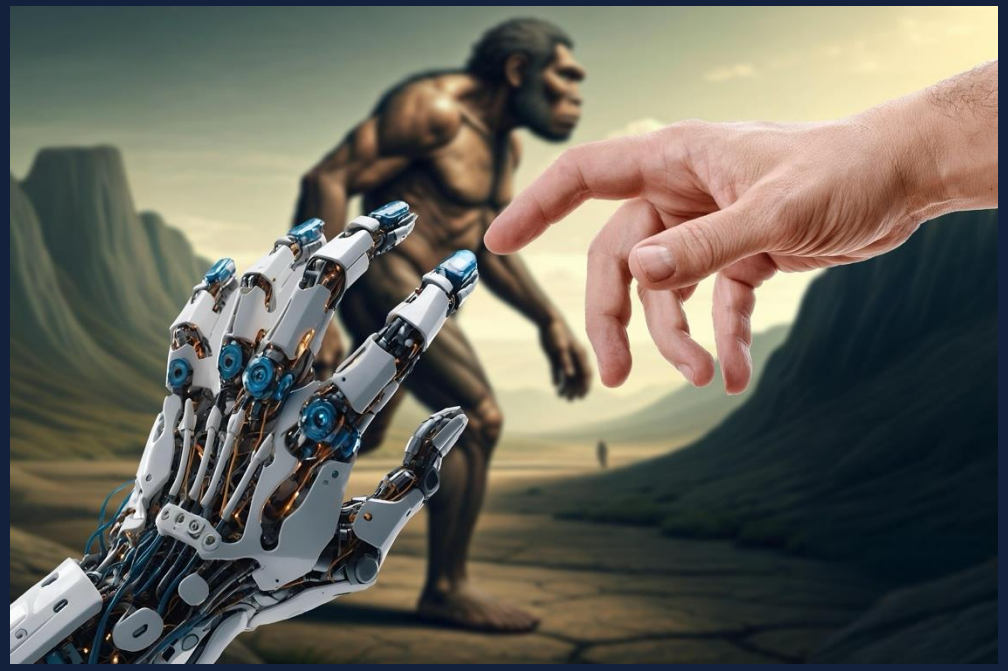
🧠 Abstract thinking

📖 Creating fiction

Result: 🤝 Cooperation based on ideas (religion, state, law, property, money)

QUESTION:

WILL WE PASS ON THESE COMPETENCIES TO MACHINES?



2030: WHERE IS HUMAN?

In the Bahamas. | **There is no human.**

Permanent vacation vs. World of machines

CREATIVE TENSION

WHAT ARE WE AFRAID OF?

That AI is NOT a tool like a hammer.

THE AI WILL DECIDE FOR ITSELF WHETHER TO DRIVE THE NAIL INTO THE BOARD OR INTO YOUR HEAD

A turning point and a great opportunity for PEOPLE and BUSINESS

🧠 Abstract thinking 📖 Creating fiction

🤝 Cooperation with the highest computing power in history based on legal regulations, responsibility and ethics

Result: revolutionary productivity growth

Condition: human at the center of the process

MAN AND MACHINE.

Machine for human

WHO DRAWS THE LINE WITHIN CREATIVE TENSION

Is Kraków a good place to talk about it?

THE BEST

We are in the city of

Stanisław Lem

who a long time ago predicted

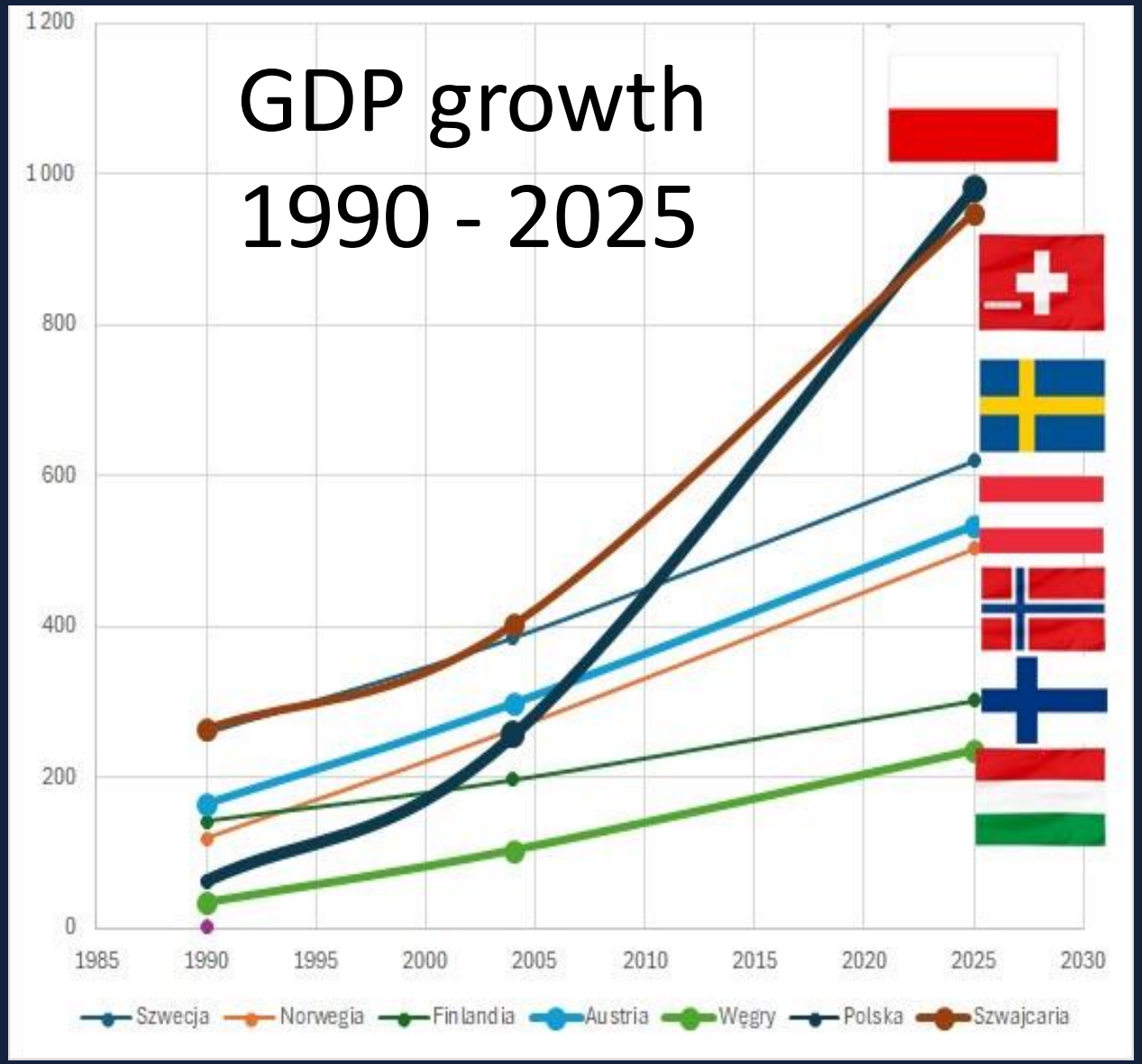
- the Internet
- the Google search engine
- smartphones, tablets
- e-books
- 3D printing,
- VR, IoT, digital twins
- Video calls
- drones
- the development of AI

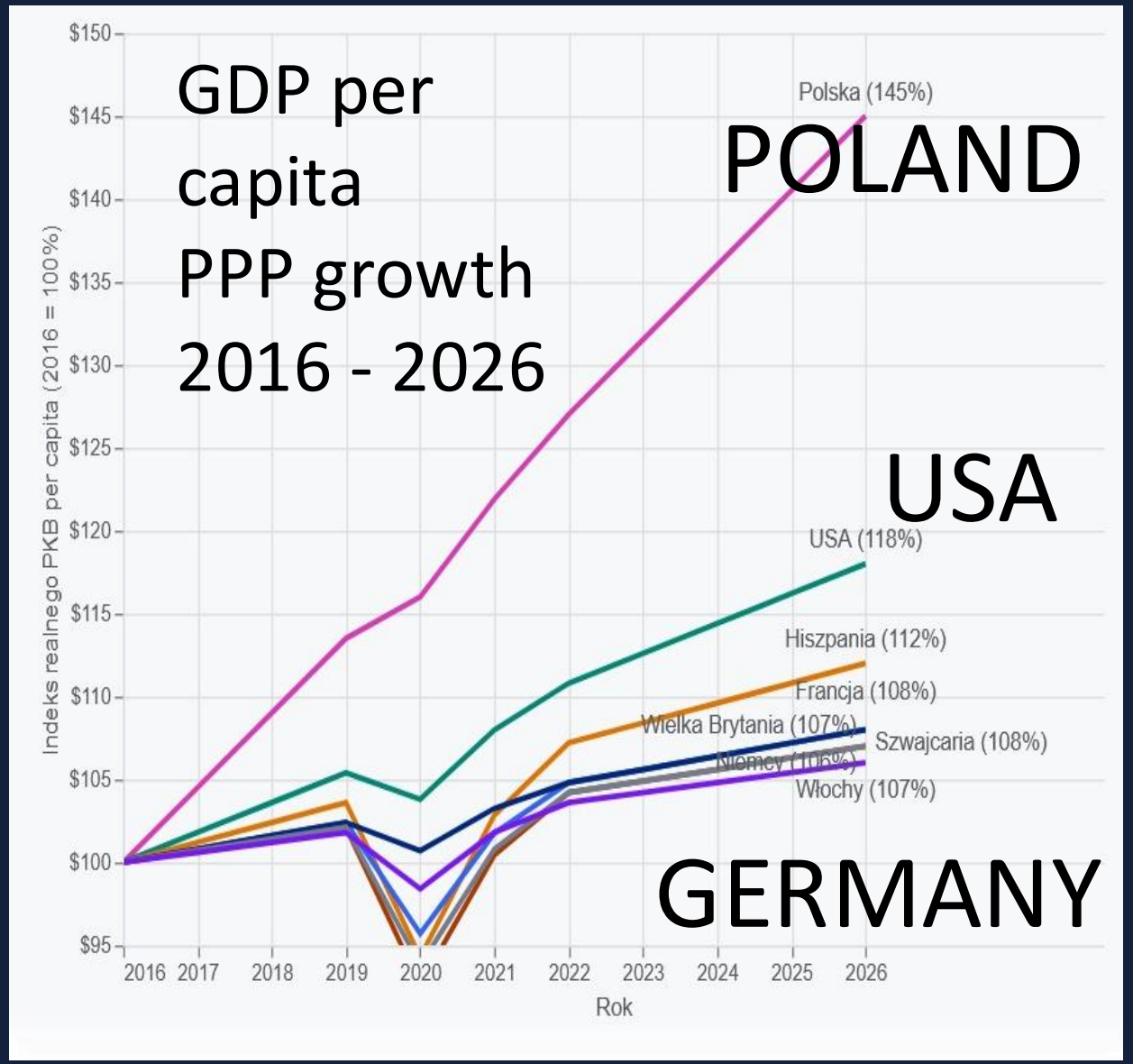
But he also warned against:

- fake news
- post-truth
- the use of technology to build totalitarianisms
- and the plunge of humanity into the matrix.

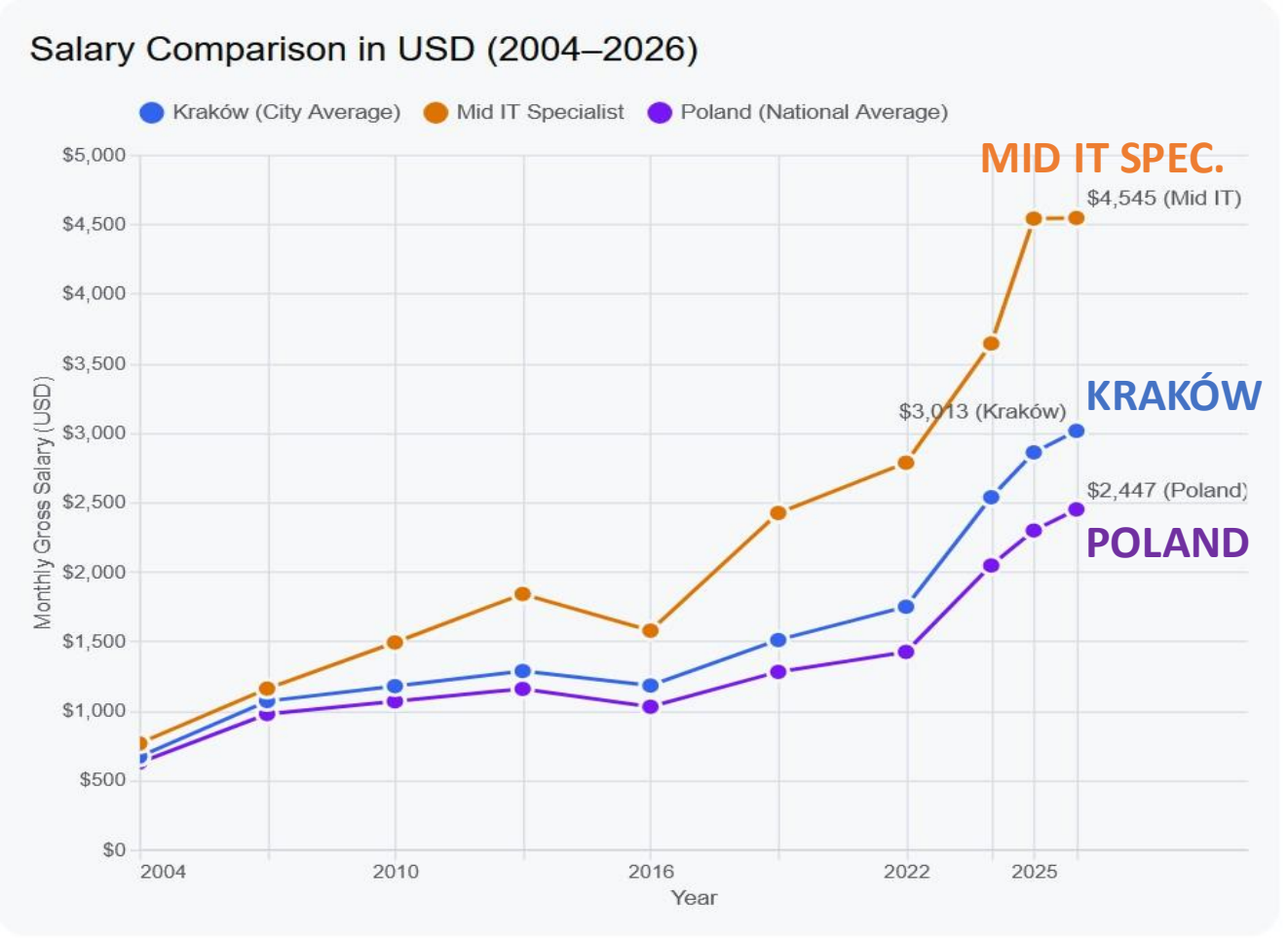
It is high time to **face his predictions**.

Is Poland a good place to talk about it?





Is Kraków a good place to talk about it?



THE BEST

Krakow's IT talent pool grew by 5% over the past year and has now reached 65 000 specialists. That is 40% more than in 2021. IT specialists now account for almost 12% of everyone employed in the city.

What Would Kraków Look Like Without GBS?

What Krakow would look like without us?
Do we understand what happened?

PRZEMYSLAW ROTH

Krakow 2000

Population 785k

Average Net Monthly Income 170€

Tax Income per Resident 180€

Investment Value per Resident 190€

FDI Attractiveness Index: Emerging

Krakow 2026

Population 1,4m

Average Net Monthly Income 1950€

Tax Income per Resident 1980€

Investment Value per Resident 4200€

FDI Attractiveness Index: #1 European Large City

SHADOW SKYLINES: EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE TRAJECTORIES

Cities that had similar kick off in 1995

Cultural twins: historical heritage.
Student cities.
Rebound and internationalisation in focus.

…..but we exclude

Some capitals as they have in-country specific investments re-distribution and substantial government sector.
Locations impacted by the war on the trajectory, e.g. Lviv.

KEY TRAJECTORIES

	Student-to-Resident Ratio 1995 – 2010 - 2026			Average Net Monthly Income € 1995 – 2010 - 2026			City Investment Value per Resident € 1995 – 2010 - 2026		
Krakow	11% ↗	28% ↘	17%	150	680	1950	180	1600	4200
Brno	11% ↗	23% ↘	17%	190	720	1650	220	1750	3900
Lisboa	13% ↗	21% ↘	10%	420	850	1350	300	400	820
Zagreb	7% ↗	10% ↘	9%	250	750	1400	350	1400	2600
Riga	6% ↗	15% ↘	10%	110	520	1300	140	1100	2800
Seville	11% ↗	13% ↘	11%	850	1350	1600	900	2200	3100

CITY VITALITY AND PROSPERITY

Decision making – quality of the elites (municipal, academic, business)

How to leverage the historical heritage and the educational potential.

How to go international.

How to direct the investments using EU convergence to neutralize the impact of the Capital and to overcome the traditional Southern European regional hubs.

Shift from Manufacturing FDI to Knowledge-Capital based investments

Krakow would never grow without Malopolska, Podkarpackie and Silesia regions.

Manufacturing investments established the core capability and operational framework that paved the way for advanced GBS and IT skillsets.

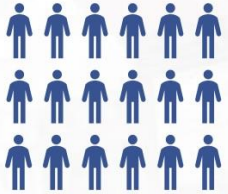
How the sector grew

= 5000

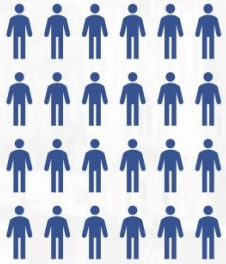
2011
19k employees

2017
59k employees

2020
90k employees



2025
120k employees



2026

+4,5% YoY market growth (5% in IT)

Stable attrition (2%-5% in BSS, 6% in IT)

New hires cost av. -1%-2% YoY

Productivity Challenge ▸ **Teach and Learn Technology** ▸ **Re-inventing Krakow: Resource allocation and focus** ▸ **Global Shake-up; Transformation** ▸ **Key areas of growth: Technology adoption (AI), Dual Use, Space, Startups**

Our assets
expertise, high digital resonance, cost-to-quality balance, ecosystem density, academia

What we need
take the lead in global transformations – who dares wins!, leverage capabilities in neighbouring regions - cooptation

Source: Kearney Global Services Location Index

CONSIDERATIONS FOR OUR FUTURE

Capability challenge isn’t over – it’s just getting started

Talent paradox: world-class engineering, zero market slack.

Stop hiring by city, start strategy in region: companies must re-evaluate where to build capability and where to buy it.

Build the base: identify top talents, investing in the early-career pipeline isn't optional, it's essential.

Leadership and ecosystem make or break the outcome

Fierce competition demands a stronger power multiplier.

The synergy strategy: uniting bottom-up business drive with regional public-private power.