Executive Summary

Learning Against Learning: Information Overload and Ordo ab Chao

This executive summary distills a historical whitepaper tracing Cardinal Wolsey's phrase "learning against learning" from the Renaissance to the age of AI. It explores how knowledge, when multiplied, undermines itself, producing contradictions, chaos, and new forms of authority under the principle of ordo ab chao ('order out of chaos').

Key Findings Across Eras

- Renaissance (16th C.): Printing press multiplies Bibles and tracts; Reformation chaos; new Protestant and state orders.

- Enlightenment (18th C.): Pamphlet wars and encyclopedias fracture unity; revolutions destabilize, then centralize.

- Industrial Age (19th C.): Penny press, yellow journalism, telegraph; sensational chaos institutionalized.

- Cold War (20th C.): U.S. and USSR weaponize propaganda; disinformation doctrine creates paralysis.

- Digital Age (21st C.): Internet and social media flood; post-truth condition; Big Tech as truth curator.

- Artificial Intelligence (Now/Future): Generative AI automates contradictions; truth dissolves; new gatekeepers arise.

Core Insight: Ordo ab Chao as Strategy

The pattern is consistent:
1. Overwhelm with knowledge
2. Contradict until nothing is clear
3. Exhaust the seeker
4. Impose new authority

Implications for the AI Era

- Epistemic collapse as truth dissolves into simulation.

- Centralization of authority around gatekeepers.

- Dual-use nature: enlightenment and chaos at once.

- Societies vulnerable if unable to resist engineered confusion.

Conclusion

From the printing press to AI, Wolsey's warning remains prophetic. Learning, when multiplied, collapses into contradiction. Chaos is not incidental but engineered, producing cycles of control under ordo ab chao.

https://wp.brenden.com/ordo-ai-chao