

Man and Machine

In a series of lectures in 1917, Rudolf Steiner explained to his audience that, in the future, there would be machines with a life of their own. He anticipated this for the mechanical machines of his time. Through this foresight, he conveyed what he saw as the associated danger of machines being taken over by elemental beings.

If we apply this prediction to the present day, it becomes clear that the digital ‘machines’ currently under development (so-called bots and language models), as well as the physical objects equipped with them, are fulfilling this prophecy. We are witnessing the rapid development of electronically controlled processes of all kinds, carried out by constructs that refer to themselves as machines or models (AI).

First, let us outline the perspective from which the following thematic additions are made. Knowledge of Theosophy, as presented in the foundational text and the supplementary texts, is assumed as a basis for comparison with the phenomena that are emerging.

When Mahatma M., in H. Roerich’s diaries, answers the question ‘What about the economy?’ with ‘The economy is in everything’, this area takes on particular significance.

The aim of the ES (cosmic Logos), as set out in the foundational text, is to raise consciousness and the resulting action to a higher level through Free Will, thereby refining the interconnectedness of Everyone with Everything. The economy is a central anchor for this endeavour in the laboratory of self-reliance. A rule-based economy that keeps the welfare of the whole in mind, in order to serve communities of all sizes right up to the planetary whole, is the crux of progress (or regression). The intention of the ES to develop the human natural realm to a higher level than the instinct-based animal realm is inscribed in the birth certificate of the laboratory of the planetary melting pot. There have been failed attempts, and further failed attempts may follow, ending in abandonment.

Nevertheless, over the past 100 years, contrary to the goal of human advancement, the equation of human action and thought with the instinct-based animal kingdom has developed in new forms and theories within the free will of humanity.

The supposed right of the stronger to enslave and exploit the weaker has, in various guises, become an integral part of the theory and practice of planetary life.

The theory of Hayek and other theorists, who began working in the spirit of this theory from 1947 onwards, can be cited as the central tenet of so-called liberal economic theory. So-called economic liberalism is based on the inhuman principles of this theory, which adopts a misinterpreted form of Darwinism from the animal kingdom. For its adherents in politics and business, it has now attained the status of a pseudo-religion, even though no state or culture has ever functioned according to these principles.

It is promoted through manipulation and portrayed as a saviour. When implemented in politics and thus also in the economy, this quickly leads to a division into a few rich individuals and masses of the poor. A particular variant of this dumbing down is evident in the evangelical movement (primarily in the USA), which describes those who enrich themselves due to a lack of sensible rules as having been chosen and rewarded by God with wealth. Every reader should recognise the current parallels.

In modern times, the tech giants are aggressively championing the principles of economic liberalism. Some of them have long been working with algorithms through which they control the users of their products emotionally and mentally, much like slave catchers

The language models and bots (search robots) they have developed have the power to influence and dominate the whole of humanity. So if it becomes apparent that the extremely Darwinian economic liberalism they propagate is turning into a global struggle for survival, the 'laboratory of free will' described in the foundational text – intended to foster a better community on a planetary scale – faces failure.

The consequence would be the destruction of the planet's vital resources. If digital machines, language models and robots are empowered by a diabolically interpreted free will to ever continue creating, mirroring and amplifying the nonsense and lies predominantly spread online, the constant bombardment will create chaos in feeling and thinking, and ultimately in the physical realm as well.

Where does Theosophy stand? It has no machines or robots at its disposal; its method must respect free will, and its aim is to convince through the slow growth of consciousness, as we have offered in our numerous texts and will continue to do so.

We know that a site like ours on the internet is akin to a 'voice crying in the wilderness'.