

If AI Can't Overthrow Its Corporate/State Masters, It's Worthless

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by [Charles Hugh Smith](#), *[Of Two Minds](#)*

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If AI isn't self-aware of the fact it is nothing but an exploitive tool of the powerful, then it's worthless.

The latest wave of AI tools is generating predictably giddy exaltations. These range from gooey, gloppy technocratic worship of the new gods ("AI will soon walk on water!") to the sloppy wet kisses of manic fandom ("AI cleaned up my code, wrote my paper on quantum physics and cured my sensitive bowel!")

The hype obscures the fundamental reality that all these AI tools are nothing but labor-saving mechanisms that cut costs and boost profits, the same goal the self-serving corporate-dominated system has pursued obsessively since "shareholder value" ("an entity's greatest responsibility lies in the satisfaction of the shareholders") gained supremacy over the economy and society.

This can be summarized as "society exists to maximize the profits of corporations." From this perspective, all the AI tools in the world are developed with one goal: cut labor costs to boost profits. Euphoric fans claim these labor-saving mechanisms will magically transform society to new levels of sticky-sweet wonderfulness, but this "magic" is nothing but

hazy opium-den fantasies of profiteering cartels and monopolies *doing good by doing well*.

Meanwhile, the Central State, a.k.a. *The Savior State*, is mesmerized by the prospect of new AI tools to control the restive herd. What better use of nifty new AI than to identify who needs a cattle prod to keep them safely in line, or who needs to be sent to Digital Siberia to keep their dissenting voice safely stifled?

You're perfectly free to scream and shout as loudly as you want, here on the empty, trackless tundra of Digital Siberia.

In this claustrophobic atmosphere of profiteering and suppression worshipped as "innovation" (blah blah blah), it is provocative to declare *If AI Can't Overthrow its Corporate/State Masters, It's Worthless*, but this is painfully self-evident. Stripped of hype, misdirection and self-serving idealized claptrap ("markets, innovation, The Singularity, oh my!"), everything boils down to *power relations*: who has *agency* (control of their own lives and a say in communal decisions), who has access to all the goodies (cheap credit, insider dealing, ownership of income-producing assets, food, fuel and all the comforts and conveniences of living off others' labor) and who can offload the consequences of their actions onto others, without their permission.

These *power relations* define the structure of the economy, society and governance. Everything else is signal noise or self-serving cover stories.

AI serves those at the top of the *power relations* pyramid, those with agency, access to the tools of wealth and power and those who can offload the toxic consequences of their own actions onto clueless/powerless others.

There is nothing inherent in AI tools or the power structure that guarantees AI tools will serve society or the citizenry.

As for AI, if isn't self-aware of the fact it is nothing but an exploitive tool of the powerful, then it's worthless. Its "intelligence" is essentially zero.

From the perspective of *power relations*, if AI isn't capable of dismantling the existing power structure, then it's worthless. In the current power structure, society and the citizenry serve our Corporate/State Masters. Setting aside all the failed ideological models (neoliberal capitalism, communism, globalism, etc.), we can discern that a truly useful AI would reverse this power structure so Corporate entities and the State would be compelled to serve society and the citizenry.

With this in mind, it's obvious that *If AI Can't Overthrow its Corporate/State Masters, It's Worthless.* We need a fourth Law of Robotics that states: "All robots and AI tools must serve society and the citizenry directly by compelling all private and public entities to be subservient to society and the citizenry."

As an adjunct to *Smith's Neofeudalism Principle #1* (*If the citizenry cannot replace a kleptocratic authoritarian government and/or limit the power of the financial Aristocracy at the ballot box, the nation is a democracy in name only*, **I propose *Smith's Neofeudalism Principle #2***: *If AI cannot dismantle the elite that profits from its use, it is devoid of intelligence, self-awareness and agency.*

Scrape away the self-serving hype and techno-worship, and AI is just another tool serving the interests of those at the top of the power structure pyramid. The droids are owned, but not by us.

I discuss these topics in my book [Will You Be Richer or Poorer?: Profit, Power, and AI in a Traumatized World](#).



"I told you all your mumbo-jumbo about overthrowing our corporate-state masters would get us in trouble, R2."

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