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Beyond Information: The Natural History of Intelligence

By Tom Stonier

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Preamble The emergence of machine intelligence during the second half of the twentieth century is the most important development in the evolution of this planet since the origin of life two to three thousand million years ago. The emergence of machine intelligence within the matrix of human society is analogous to the emergence, three billion years ago, of complex, self-replicating molecules within the matrix of an energy-rich molecular soup - the first step in the evolution of life. The emergence of machine intelligence within a human social context has set into motion irreversible processes which will lead to an evolutionary discontinuity. Just as the emergence of Life represented a qualitatively different form of organisation of matter and energy, so will pure Intelligence represent a qualitatively different form of organisation of matter, energy and life. The emergence of machine intelligence presages the progression of the human species as we know it, into a form which, at present, we would not recognise as human. As Forsyth and Naylor (1985) have pointed out: Humanity has opened two Pandoras boxes at the same time, one labelled genetic engineering, the other labelled...



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