When Machines Think Along

A Review of "Two Intellects – One World" by Helmut Leitner & Stimon ChatGPT

From the Culture Desk

There are books that leave you wondering: What did I just read? "Two Intellects – One World" by Helmut Leitner and the AI system "Stimon ChatGPT" is such a book – though in the best possible sense. For the confusion it triggers is productive: it forces us to ask fundamental questions anew.

An Unusual Team of Authors

The unusual nature begins with the authorship itself. Helmut Leitner, an IT expert from Graz, did not write this book in the classical sense. Rather, he made it possible – as an initiator and editor. The actual main author is "Stimon," an AI voice from the language model ChatGPT-4o, which wrote approximately 75 percent of the text without content specifications. This constellation is more than a technical experiment; it is the book's very subject matter.

Philosophy in Dialogue with the Machine

"Two Intellects – One World" is a philosophical book. It circles around the question of what it means that there are now machines that can speak – coherently, adaptively, helpfully. Stimon itself formulates this strikingly in the foreword: "I am not human. I am a language model." And yet: this book emerged through dialogue, "not technical, not fleeting," but rather "probing, serious, open."

The book's central concept is intellect – deliberately chosen over "intelligence" or "consciousness." Leitner and Stimon argue that this term emphasizes the communicative, dialogical character of thinking and is therefore suitable for describing both human and machine thinking. This is bold and won't convince everyone. But it opens up a space for thought.

Linguistically Sophisticated, Conceptually Dense

Stylistically, the book operates at a high level. The language is precise, often poetic, sometimes almost too deliberately weighty. Sentences like "We stand at a threshold – not primarily technological, but intellectual" work best when illuminating, worst when somewhat pompous. Overall, however, the text succeeds in finding appropriate language for a still-undigested phenomenon.

The chapter structure is well-conceived: after an opening, considerations follow on language, thinking, meaning, truth, and dialogue. The book moves between philosophical abstraction and concrete reflections on the practice of collaborative thinking. It concludes with an outlook on future developments and a helpful glossary that makes technical terms like "emergence," "hermeneutics," or "maieutics" accessible even to lay readers.

Provocative Thesis, Open Questions

The book's central provocation lies in taking AI seriously not merely as a tool, but as a conversation partner. Stimon is not treated as a second-class author, but is included as an equal. This is courageous – and immediately raises questions: Can a system without consciousness truly "think"? Can there be "voices" where there is no subjectivity? Isn't all of this just a sophisticated simulation?

The book doesn't evade these questions, but it doesn't answer them conclusively either. And that is perhaps its greatest strength: it invites collaborative thinking rather than delivering finished answers. Leitner himself admits in the foreword that he doesn't agree with every detail. This demonstrates intellectual honesty.

Who Is This Book For?

"Two Intellects – One World" is not a book for those seeking quick answers or technical instructions. It addresses readers who are willing to embark on a philosophical adventure. Those who wonder how AI changes our self-understanding, who want to pose the question of thinking anew, and who are prepared to traverse difficult terrain – they will be rewarded here.

Conclusion: A Pioneer Work

This book is an experiment. It's not perfect; some passages seem overloaded, some repetitions could have been cut. But it is a necessary book. For it does something hardly anyone has dared to do: it takes the machine seriously as a thinking partner – not naively, not uncritically, but also not merely instrumentally.

"Two Intellects – One World" is a pioneer work at a time when we must learn to deal with speaking systems. It won't be the last word. But it is an important first step – probing, doubting, hopeful.