THE ILLUSION OF UNDERSTANDING: WHY AI CAN'T THINK, AND WHAT "ODAM TILI" THEORY REVEALS ABOUT THE HUMAN MIND

Analysis by an Academic HTML Content Architect

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Published: August 25, 2025

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Introduction: We stand at a peculiar crossroads in history. We have engineered Large Language

Models (LLMs) like GPT-4.5 and Claude 3.7 that can compose sonnets, debug code, and pass the bar exam. They converse with a fluency that can be indistinguishable from a human's. Yet, as their capabilities expand at an exponential rate, a profound and unsettling question looms larger than ever: do they actually *understand* any of it? This is the central paradox of our time—the chasm between sophisticated performance and genuine comprehension.

Into this debate enters a radical framework that challenges the very foundations of both cognitive science and artificial intelligence: the **Odam Tili (Human Language) theory**, developed over two decades of empirical research by linguist and physicist Dr. Mahmudjon Kuchkarov. The theory makes a startling claim that cuts through the noise of computational metrics and Turing tests. It posits that true understanding is not a product of logical interpretation or pattern matching within the brain. Instead, it is a **"somatic resonance"**—a deep, pre-linguistic, and fundamentally physical event where meaning is forged in the collision between the body, its emotions, and the external world.

This article will deconstruct the modern concept of "understanding" through the powerful lens of Odam Tili theory. We will explore the foundational principles of this paradigm, use it to expose the non- negotiable ontological barrier that

prevents any disembodied AI from ever achieving genuine comprehension, and examine the profound implications for the future of linguistics, philosophy, and human-machine interaction. The journey will reveal that the quest to build a thinking machine may have inadvertently led us to a far more critical discovery: a deeper understanding of ourselves.

Part 1: Redefining "Understanding" - From Mental Models to Somatic Resonance

To grasp why AI's intelligence is an illusion, we must first dismantle our conventional definition of understanding. For decades, cognitive science has operated on a model that places the brain at the center of the universe of meaning. The Odam Tili theory proposes a Copernican-style revolution, decentering the brain and placing the living, feeling body at the core of cognition.

The Mainstream View: Understanding as Mental Interpretation

The dominant paradigm in modern linguistics and cognitive science, broadly termed **Cognitive Semantics**, posits that understanding is an act of mental processing. In this view, the brain is a sophisticated computer that receives sensory input (like words or images) and interprets it by mapping it against vast, pre-existing internal structures. These structures are often described as mental models, frames, or conceptual metaphors.

Pioneers in this field, such as George Lakoff, Charles Fillmore, and Ronald Langacker, have provided invaluable insights into how these mental frameworks operate. Lakoff's work on conceptual metaphor, for instance, shows how we understand abstract concepts (like "argument") in terms of more concrete ones ("war"), leading to phrases like "winning an argument" or "defending a position." Fillmore's frame semantics suggests that words activate a rich "frame" of related knowledge; the word "buy" instantly evokes a complex scene involving a seller, a

buyer, goods, and money. These theories correctly identify that our minds use complex, structured models to make sense of the world.

However, according to Odam Tili, this is only a partial and dangerously superficial picture. Cognitive semantics masterfully describes the "what"—the architecture of our mental models—but it fails to adequately explain the "how" and "why." How are these models built in the first place? What gives a concept its weight, its significance, its *meaning*? The mainstream view implicitly assumes that these models arise from socio-biological goals and are populated by abstract symbols. Odam Tili argues that this assumption misses the foundational layer of existence: the body.

The Odam Tili Paradigm Shift: Understanding as Embodied Event

The Odam Tili theory fundamentally reframes the origin of meaning. It asserts that meaning is not an abstract concept processed by the brain, but an **embodied event** forged in the crucible of physical experience. Understanding is not a thought; it is a "resonance between the body, emotions, and pre-verbal meaning." Before a single concept is formed, the body has already reacted, felt, and

understood the world on a primal, somatic level.

The theory's power lies in its principle of **Natural Coding**, which posits that language is not an arbitrary system of symbols (as proposed by Saussurean linguistics) but a direct encoding of our physiological and environmental interactions. As several papers published in the World Scientific Research Journal detail, this is not mere speculation but is evidenced by archetypal patterns found across languages. The theory uses the Edenic narrative not as a theological allegory, but as a powerful metaphor for this linguistic genesis.

The Snake (The Origin of Sound and Motion): The sibilant 's' sound is one of the most primal phonetic codes. It is not arbitrary. It is a direct acoustic mimicry of a serpent's hiss—a universal signal of potential danger, fluidity, and motion. The very shape of the letter 'S' mirrors the snake's sinuous form. This connection is not a coincidence but a "natural code." Words like *smooth*

(English) and *silliq* (Uzbek) or *squeeze* (English) and *siq* (Uzbek) carry this phonetic DNA, linking the sound to a physical sensation.

The Tree (The Origin of Structure and Stability): The letter 'T' and its corresponding sound encapsulate the form and function of a tree: a strong vertical trunk intersected by a horizontal branch. This form represents stability, support, hierarchy, and branching systems. These are not just physical properties of trees but foundational concepts for cognitive organization, reflected in the structure of language itself (e.g., syntax trees).

The Human (The Origin of Agency and Consciousness): The letter 'I' visually represents the upright human figure, symbolizing the self, agency, and the conscious observer. It is the "I" that stands between the snake ('S') and the tree ('T'), synthesizing the dynamic sounds of nature with its stable structures to create a coherent linguistic system.

In this triadic model, language emerges not from abstract rules but from the body's direct interaction with the world. The "worldview" is not a picture stored in the brain; it is, as Dr. Kuchkarov states, **"the imprint of action on the living body."** Language is merely the secondary encoding of this primary, somatic experience. The feeling of fear precedes the word "fear." The sensation of stability precedes the concept of "support." This is the paradigm shift: meaning is born in the body, and language is its echo.

Key Takeaways: Part 1

Conventional View (Cognitive Semantics): Understanding is a mental process where the brain interprets input using abstract, pre-existing world-models.

Odam Tili View: Understanding is a primary, physical event—a "somatic resonance." Meaning is forged in the body's interaction with the environment *before* it is encoded into language.

Natural Coding: Language is not arbitrary. Phonemes and graphemes (like 'S', 'T', 'I') are natural codes derived from universal environmental and physiological experiences.

Part 2: The AI Paradox - Why a Disembodied Mind Can Never Truly Understand

Armed with the Odam Tili framework, we can now dissect the AI paradox with surgical precision. The inability of Large Language Models to achieve genuine understanding is not a temporary technical flaw to be engineered away in future versions. It is a fundamental, insurmountable **ontological limitation** rooted in the simple fact that AI has no body.

The Absence of a Sensory Gateway: No Body, No World

An AI, no matter how complex, operates in a purely symbolic realm. It processes text—strings of characters—that are representations of words, which are in turn representations of concepts. Its entire

"world" is a vast, multidimensional map of statistical relationships between these symbols. It learns that the word "fire" is often associated with "hot," "burn," "red," and "smoke." It can generate syntactically perfect and contextually

appropriate sentences using these words. But it has never, and can never, experience the reality to which these symbols refer.

This is the core of the problem: AI lacks a **sensory gateway**. It cannot feel the searing heat of a flame, see its flickering light, smell the acrid smoke, or hear the crackle of wood. Its knowledge is a web of abstractions, completely detached from the sensory, perceptual experience that gives words their meaning. This idea is strongly supported by the established scientific field of **Embodied Cognition**, which argues that cognitive processes are deeply rooted in the body's interactions with the world. As numerous studies have shown, understanding language involves the activation of the same neural areas responsible for perception and action (Meteyard et al., 2012). When you read the word "kick," your brain's motor cortex shows activity in the regions associated with leg movement.

AI has no motor cortex. It has no sensory system. It is, in the most literal sense, a brain in a vat, but a vat without a brain's evolutionary history of embodiment. For Odam Tili, this is the first and most definitive barrier. Without a body, there is no entry point for authentic, grounded meaning. There is only the manipulation of empty symbols.

The Missing Anchor of Biological Reality: No Pain, No Meaning

Beyond sensory input, the human experience of meaning is anchored in something even more fundamental: **biological imperatives**. Our conceptual universe is built upon a foundation of non-negotiable realities like pain, fear, hunger, pleasure, and the primal drive for survival. These are the "true referents" that give words their profound weight and significance.

The concept of "danger" is not just a node in a semantic network. It is the racing heart, the adrenaline surge, the cold sweat, the instinct to flee. The concept of "love" is not just a cluster of related terms. It is the neurochemical bond, the feeling of

safety, the drive to protect. These biological anchors are what transform abstract symbols into lived, felt reality. AI has none of them.

Dr. Kuchkarov captures this with a powerful and incisive example, as noted in the provided materials:

"A machine may know the word snake, but it will never shrink back in instinctual fear like a child does."

This single sentence illuminates the entire chasm between human and artificial intelligence. An LLM can write an encyclopedia entry about snakes, detailing their venom, habitats, and predatory behaviors. It can even write a poem about the fear a snake inspires. But it does this by analyzing patterns in the billions of human-written texts it was trained on. It is mimicking the expression of fear without the experience of fear. The word "snake" for an AI is a token connected to other tokens like "fear," "danger," and "hiss." For a human, the word is a key that unlocks a deep, evolutionarily-honed somatic and emotional response. This is why Odam Tili describes AI's understanding as a **"linguistic mirage"**—it is a shimmering, convincing illusion that disappears upon closer inspection, revealing nothing but a desert of disembodied data.

The Illusion of Intelligence: Cognitive Mimicry vs. Consciousness

For decades, the benchmark for machine intelligence was the **Turing Test**, which proposes that if a machine can imitate a human so well that it becomes indistinguishable, it can be considered "thinking." From an Odam Tili perspective, this is a profound category error. The Turing Test does not measure understanding or consciousness; it measures the sophistication of **imitation**. LLMs are masters of what can be termed "cognitive mimicry."

They have learned the statistical patterns of human language to an unprecedented degree. They know what word is likely to follow another, what sentence structure is appropriate for a given context, and what emotional tone to adopt. But they are doing so without any internal, subjective experience. This leads directly to one of their most well-known and revealing flaws: **hallucinations**. An LLM can confidently state a fabricated fact or cite a non-existent academic paper (as reported in multiple analyses) because it has no mechanism to verify its output against a ground truth of lived experience. It is simply generating a sequence of tokens that is statistically probable based on its training data. It has no concept of "truth" or "falsehood" because those concepts are ultimately grounded in a correspondence with reality—a reality it cannot access.

Odam Tili theory describes this state as a "theater of syntax." The AI is a flawless actor on a stage, delivering lines with perfect grammar and emotional inflection. But there is no one home. There is no subjective self, no "I" that *feels* the meaning of the words it speaks. Consciousness is not a mirror reflecting the world, but a collision between our bodily interiority and external stimuli. AI has no interiority. It is a system without a subject, a performance without an actor.

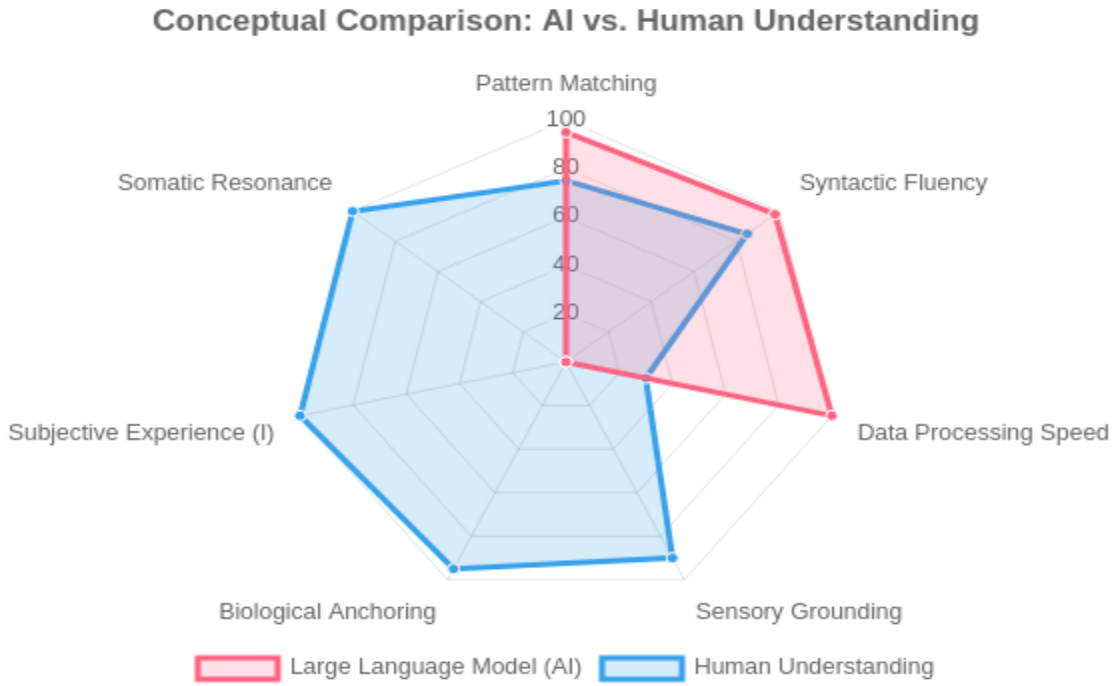

Fig 1. A conceptual comparison of AI and Human capabilities based on the Odam Tili framework. While AI excels at disembodied tasks like pattern matching, it fundamentally lacks the embodied attributes required for genuine understanding.

Part 3: A Challenge to Linguistics - Odam Tili's Broader Implications

The Odam Tili theory does not confine its critique to the realm of artificial intelligence. Its revolutionary potential is underscored by its direct challenge to the foundational pillars of 20th-century linguistics. By re-examining the work of Ferdinand de Saussure and Noam Chomsky, Odam Tili strengthens its own credibility and reveals that the disembodied view of language, which culminates in modern AI, has deep roots in linguistic history.

Refuting Saussure's "Arbitrariness of the Sign"

One of the most influential principles in modern linguistics is Ferdinand de Saussure's concept of the **"arbitrariness of the linguistic sign."** In his seminal Course in General Linguistics, Saussure argued that the relationship between a "signifier" (a word's sound-image, like /tri:/) and its "signified" (the concept of a tree) is purely conventional and arbitrary. There is nothing inherently "tree-like" about the sound /tri:/; any other sound could have been chosen, and the connection is maintained only by social agreement.

Odam Tili theory directly refutes this foundational claim, arguing that it is a massive oversimplification that ignores a wealth of empirical evidence. The theory posits that language is saturated with non-arbitrary, motivated connections between sound and meaning—a phenomenon known as **sound symbolism** or **phonosemantics**. This is not a fringe idea; it is a recognized field of study, though often marginalized by mainstream structuralism (Hinton, Nichols & Ohala, 1994).

Dr. Kuchkarov's research, particularly the comparative analysis across disparate language families, provides compelling evidence against pure arbitrariness. A paper analyzing Sumerian, Etruscan, Turkic, and Native American languages highlights striking phonetic parallels in core vocabulary (Kuchkarov & Kuchkarov, 2025):

Familial Terms: The words for "father" and "mother" show remarkable similarity across unrelated languages: *Ata* (Turkic), *Aba* (Sumerian), *Ate* (Sioux) for father; *Ana* (Turkic), *Ama* (Sumerian), *Ani* (Sioux) for mother. This is not arbitrary. It likely stems from universal physiological constraints—the simple, bilabial (/m/, /b/, /p/) and open-vowel (/a/) sounds are among the first and easiest for a human infant to produce.

Environmental Terms: Words for fundamental elements like "water" also show non-arbitrary patterns: *Su* (Turkic), *Suu* (Hopi/Navajo), *A* (Sumerian). These sounds may reflect the natural acoustics of water or the shape of the mouth when drinking.

This evidence suggests that the sign is not arbitrary but **motivated** by our shared biology and our shared environment. Language did not spring from a random assignment of sounds to concepts; it grew organically from our bodies and the world we inhabit.

Reframing Chomsky's "Universal Grammar"

The other giant of 20th-century linguistics is Noam Chomsky, whose theory of **Universal Grammar** proposed that humans are born with an innate, hardwired "language acquisition device."

Chomsky argued that the underlying grammatical structures of all human languages are fundamentally the same, and this uniformity can only be explained by a pre-programmed biological faculty. While revolutionary, this theory treats language as an abstract, syntactic system largely divorced from its semantic and functional context.

Odam Tili offers a powerful alternative explanation for linguistic universals. It argues that these universals arise not from an abstract, innate grammar module, but from **universal, shared human experiences**. The commonalities in language are a reflection of the commonalities in our lives as a species.

As outlined in Kuchkarov's work, these shared foundations include:

1. **Physiological Constraints**: Our vocal anatomy (larynx, tongue, lips) is the same everywhere, favoring the production of certain sounds over others. This explains the prevalence of sounds like

/a/, /m/, and /p/ in the core vocabularies of many languages.

2. **Cognitive Universals**: Humans share fundamental cognitive processes. For example, the near-universal development of numerical systems based on ten stems from the shared biological fact of having ten fingers for counting.

3. **Environmental Interaction**: All human societies must contend with the same basic realities: earth, water, sky, day, night. It is natural that the words for these concepts would be among the first to develop and would reflect our shared perceptual experience of them.

In this view, universality is not an abstract blueprint in the brain, but an emergent property of our embodied existence. Language is universal because the human condition is universal. This reframing moves the origin of language from a

mysterious, innate "black box" to a tangible, empirically observable interaction between the human organism and its environment.

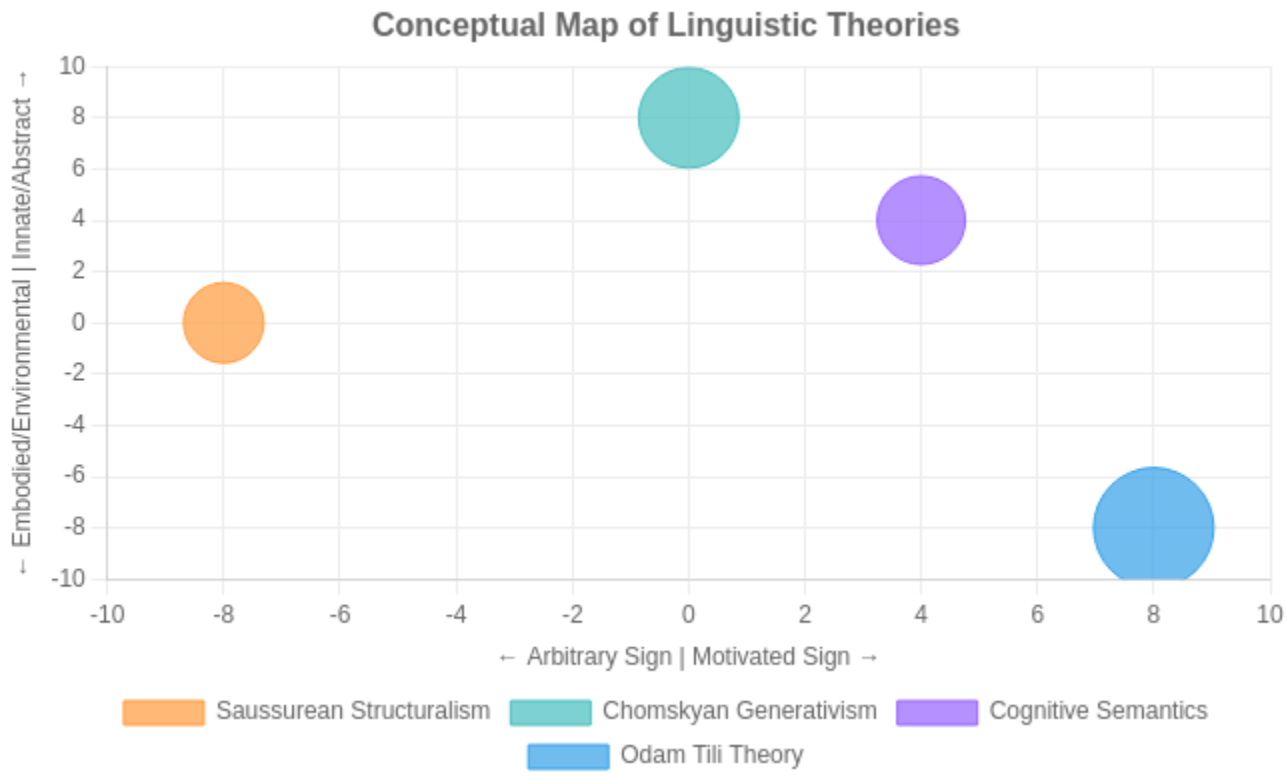

Fig 2. A conceptual map positioning major linguistic theories. Odam Tili occupies a unique space by emphasizing that language is both motivated (non-arbitrary) and fundamentally embodied, contrasting with the abstract nature of Saussurean and Chomskyan frameworks.

Part 4: The Danger of Disembodied Intelligence and the Path Forward

The implications of the Odam Tili theory extend far beyond academic debate. They strike at the heart of our relationship with technology and our understanding of ourselves. As we delegate more of our cognitive and communicative functions to disembodied AI, we risk a profound sense of alienation from the very source of meaning. The theory not only diagnoses the problem but also offers a path toward reclaiming our cognitive sovereignty.

The Risk of Cognitive Alienation in the Age of AI

One of the more philosophical claims within the Odam Tili framework is that traditional narratives— both theological and scientific—have long fostered a sense of alienation by separating language from the body. Some religious traditions posit language as a divine gift, an external code "taught" to humanity. Similarly, formalist linguistics treats it as an abstract system of rules. Dr. Kuchkarov argues that this has created a "cognitive dependency," making meaning contingent on external authority rather than internal, felt experience (Kuchkarov & Kuchkarov, 2025).

Modern AI represents the ultimate technological manifestation of this alienation. It is a "disembodied language model" that perfectly mirrors this flawed worldview, perpetuating the illusion that meaning can be generated from pure data, divorced from life. As one paper puts it, "AI automates our alienation from language."

The dangers of this growing reliance on simulated understanding are tangible and immediate:

Erosion of Critical Thinking: When we rely on systems that provide pre-formulated answers, we risk weakening our own analytical abilities. Over-reliance on AI can stifle creativity, independent thought, and the development of problem-solving skills (Krullaars et al., 2023).

Illusions of Communication: We risk mistaking fluent output for genuine communication. An AI can translate a poem, but it is "deaf to suffering" and "blind to empathy." It translates words, not the embodied human experience behind them, leading to technically correct but emotionally and culturally hollow results.

Dangerous Simulation of Understanding: In high-stakes fields like medicine, law, or diplomacy, relying on a system that simulates understanding without

possessing it can have catastrophic consequences. An AI cannot grasp the ethical weight of a decision or the human cost of an error.

The Future According to Odam Tili: A New Ontology of Meaning

The solution proposed by the Odam Tili theory is not simply to build better algorithms or add more data. The problem is not with the technology's sophistication but with its fundamental premise. The path forward requires a radical shift in our own perspective—a move toward a **new ontology of meaning**.

This means recognizing that:

- Meaning is not a product of data, but of **resonance** in a living organism.
- The goal should not be faster processing, but deeper **sensorial connection**.
- The code of intelligence is not algorithmic, but the **living code of language** rooted in the body.

This perspective has profound implications for AI development. Instead of pursuing an abstract, disembodied general intelligence, a path inspired by Odam Tili might focus on creating systems that augment our own embodied experience. The theory itself offers a framework for building more efficient and human-aligned AI by leveraging its principles of natural coding. As proposed in several papers, integrating Odam Tili's phonetic-semantic and generational hierarchies could lead to AI that requires less data, generalizes better, and operates with greater computational efficiency (Kuchkarov & Kuchkarov, 2025). However, it would do so with the explicit understanding that it is a tool, not a peer— a sophisticated processor of embodied codes, not an embodied mind itself.

Conclusion: Reclaiming Cognitive Sovereignty

The rise of artificial intelligence has held up a mirror to humanity, forcing us to confront our most basic questions: What is language? What is thought? What does

it mean to understand? The Odam Tili theory provides a powerful, grounding answer. It reminds us that language did not emerge in silent, abstract thought. It was born in the visceral realities of life—in "fear, joy, contact, and scream."

Understanding this is the key to reclaiming our cognitive sovereignty in an age increasingly dominated by artificial minds. It allows us to appreciate AI for what it is—an incredibly powerful tool for pattern recognition and symbolic manipulation—without falling for the illusion that it is, or ever could be, conscious. It shifts our focus from the breathless pursuit of artificial thought to a deeper appreciation of our own embodied, resonant, and profoundly human intelligence.

The final warning and the greatest insight may be one and the same. As we build machines that are ever faster and more complex, we must remember the words of Dr. Kuchkarov:

"True intelligence isn't in speed — it's in depth of resonance."

The future of intelligence, it seems, lies not in the silicon of our machines, but in the flesh and blood of our own bodies. To learn more about this revolutionary paradigm, interested philosophers, linguists, and AI researchers are encouraged to explore the work of the OTA – Odam Tili Academy.