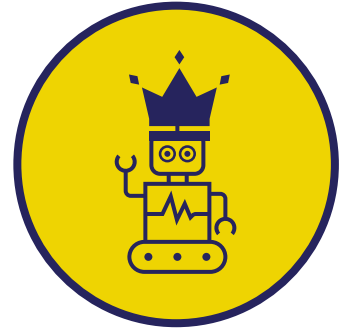


KING MURDAS #1

THE DIVINATION MACHINE



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This is the first of three sessions inspired by the fairy tales of Stanisław Lem, a world renowned Polish author, from his collection of short stories: *Fables for Robots* (1964). These sessions follow a robot-king called Murdas.

Keywords: Freedom, free will, determinism.

Stimuli: Read the original story about King Murdas or the following summary:

Murdas, a robot-king, was an ambitious but cowardly ruler who wanted to possess great power. He imagined all kinds of conspiracies against him and was filled with fear when he imagined what might happen to him. You might be surprised to know that in Murdas's kingdom there were many divination machines that were built to forecast the future. Murdas was afraid of what such a machine might tell him, so he ordered all of them to be destroyed. One day, he was surprised to find just such a machine in one of his chambers. He was very upset, and suspected his uncle had put it there. "I hate my uncle," he thought. "How dare he go against my will!" The king wanted to get rid of the machine straight away, but then he paused to think ...

Warm-up questions:

What would you do if you were in King Murdas's place?
Would you use the machine?
Would you like to know your future?

Task Question:

Is our future written in the stars or are we creating it ourselves?

Questions to take you further:

Are we free?
Do we have free will?
What drives our choices?
Do our choices depend entirely on us?
When we change our mind, does it prove we are free?
What is freedom?