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As we move further along into 2026, it feels all too easy to fall into mid-winter doldrums ~ at least for me!

The Days are growing noticeably longer, but the weather is still dangerous, chaotic, and cold - which is one way of looking at things.

Our discussion on AI slop brings to mind a slurry of sorts - a "winter mix" of "content" aggregated and carelessly passed of in various digital and digitally -

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rendered products and services.

When I was considering how to look at this topic - the slop-ification of the internet -

I started thinking of the kinds of content that

large language models might find challenging to generate -

except as LLMs, they are incapable of finding anything a certain way, lacking

consciousness or perception.

With predictive capabilities,

LLMs can "create"

poetry or works of philosophy

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or other types of "text-based content." But the reason these works exist in the first place is for their creators to share their experience, and to help expand our understanding of what it is to be human.

As Epictetus famously said:

"Everything has two handles, and it may be carried by one of these handles, but not by the other" (Handbook, 93).

As another translation has it,

"Every circumstance comes with

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two handles, with one of which you can hold it, while with the other conditions are unsupportable."

There are other translations to be found online and elsewhere - an AI application would be able to locate the original text and various translations - but it would be incapable of making a higher order judgement - for instance to state which translation might be better, or for whom, or for

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what purposes.

With AI apps and "sloppified" content abundant across all areas of our digital, and increasingly non-digital or off-line lives, it is preferable to take the "supportable handle" with these apps and associated content generally. For example, it could be seen as an opportunity to become more proficient in information literacy - to be able to better recognize "stop" from

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legitimate works of human creativity. Furthermore, these apps and other AI-based tools can be used creatively. The associated outputs could be seen as enhanced, rather than degraded or empty, because a human consciousness and sensibility are using the tools and processes with intention rather than from motives of expediency for its own sake. Existing AI-stap could be seen as helpful -

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even if the purpose by the user is to recognize it so as to avoid it - and to become better at recognizing and avoiding it generally. Furthermore, you can aggregate and endlessly share information about Epictetus and the Handbook - but there is no substituting Epictetus as the original author. So it is with this period in the winter - I am choosing to take the handle by which the

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current season is for setting the conditions of a purposeful, vibrant spring ahead ~ making preparations for when the days are longer, warmer and with the potential for boundless growth. The spring will be as different for each of us as there are people on the planet. Yet each of us has the capability to appreciate it equally - which still falls well outside the abilities of any AI app or

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large language model -
no matter how comprehensive,
flexible, robust or even
lifelike it may be.