

Let the Playing Field Level the Playing Field

Dennis Joiner

ReadersMagnet

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Let the Playing Field Level the Playing Field is a speculative technology text that is filled with optimistic predictions about the future.

A grand, idealistic technological manifesto, Dennis Joiner's *Let the Playing Field Level the Playing Field* theorizes a future in which continued progress will obliterate social, economic, and political strife.

Arguing that racism, the most virulent form of class-creating hatred, serves a corrupt elite that amasses wealth and power through the propagation of social enmity, the book forwards two dueling visions of the future. In one, the world is subject to totalitarian rule; in the other, a utopian society is in place, in which "unending love, commonality, unity [and] harmony" reign. Pointing to a combination of heightened human consciousness and strides in biotechnology, it asserts that the latter future is all but inevitable. Pop-culture anecdotes, scientific graphs and illustrations, and multidisciplinary references to psychology, politics, and history are used to propel its ambitious arguments regarding imminent progress.

To maximize its persuasiveness, the book emphasizes its notions of the complex relationships between ever-developing technologies and stagnating human biases. Its interpretations of age-old concerns about justice, equality, and freedom in human affairs seem novel as a result. Likewise, the delicate balance struck between scientific materialism and humanistic ethics in the hypothesized future leads to questions regarding the extent to which human values are compatible with computer systems. Still, in the course of imagining its hopeful future, the book leaves a bevy of questions unanswered. The subject of humanity's expanding consciousness is crucial to its work but is underexplained. Further, the book's binary options—either a utopian or dystopian future—are too convenient and narrow.

Despite its evidence of erudition and logical reasoning, the book's profusions of jargon and extraneous distinctions mar its work. An adage about ten fools crossing a river—meant to underline the psychological damage of a racist mentality—provides an excuse for enumerating and expanding on the ten specific fool types: "vulnerable, perverse, prurient, arrogant, pious, ignoramus, moron, idiot, stooge, and buffoon." Unrelated to the argument as well as ungrounded in any scientific or psychological literature, this prolix digression casts doubt on the validity of the entire passage. And such lengthy tangents are a common feature of the text, which has a tendency to overwrite and reformulate ideas with increasing complexity. These rhetorical flights fail to arrive at, or highlight, concise conclusions. A twenty-page theatrical allegory about *The Wizard of Oz* is a case in point.

A scholarly intervention into the question of human consciousness and technological development, *Let the Playing Field Level the Playing Field* is an optimistic prediction of the future.

WILLEM MARX (December 29, 2023)

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