

Will Computers Revolt? Preparing for the Future of Artificial Intelligence

Charles J. Simon

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An interesting, timely, and thoughtful book, Will Computers Revolt? probes the future of AI and sees exciting possibilities.

Charles Simon's *Will Computers Revolt?* is a fascinating and informed look at the conjoined futures of humanity and artificial intelligence.

The rapid evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) spawned a bumper crop of dystopian jitters. Taking the fear factor firmly in hand, the first section of the book delves into the inevitability of thinking machines while citing numerous factors—including consumer demand, obsolescence, and mutually beneficial coexistence—that would deter conflict. The second section of the book is a thoughtful exploration of intelligence, showing how both human brains and computers operate. The book's final section looks ahead to how humans and AI, mutually sentient species with differing drives and priorities, will—or won't—coexist going forward.

Reader friendly and easy to grasp, the book's language is to the point and free of jargon. Though the subject is complex, the book's approach is from the real-world side of things, not from a techie's cubicle. It is written in the context of contemporary culture, with awareness of current concerns and plenty of fun references to science fiction. The exception is the long middle section, which examines human brain function down to the cellular level and is of the most interest for its neuroscience; the discussion of computer "thinking" that follows goes overboard in comparing the two and wanders into abundant illustrations and diagrams.

Begun in the 1980s but never quite finished, then updated in the early 2000s and again never finished, the book in its final form is up to date with its analogies and references, including mentions of Alexa, though a few topics are dated, including the final, brief section that shares the imagined memoirs of a computer early in the next century.

The intensity of thought and imagination behind the project is evident, including in how it avoids war-of-the-worlds-type scenarios and imagines instead the questions most likely to arise: Would disconnecting a thinking, self-aware machine be immoral? Should autonomous, sentient machines have basic rights? The book argues yes, if we want to coexist and continue to enjoy the capabilities of AIs.

Subheads identify main points within chapters, and good use is made of bold-face type and bulleted lists. The table of contents doubles as a quick reference, and a glossary and index are included at the back.

An interesting, timely, and thoughtful book, Will Computers Revolt? probes the future of AI and sees exciting possibilities as well as disquieting challenges.

SUSAN WAGGONER (October 23, 2018)

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