

Books to read: Superintelligence

This book was a reference from Elon Musk – and after reading it, I can see why. The book was written by Nick Bostrom and is [available from Amazon here](#) if you are interested in buying it online or reading other reviews. The review on Amazon covers the highlights:

Superintelligence asks the questions: What happens when machines surpass humans in general intelligence? Will artificial agents save or destroy us? Nick Bostrom lays the foundation for understanding the future of humanity and intelligent life.

✖ The human brain has some capabilities that the brains of other animals lack. It is to these distinctive capabilities that our species owes its dominant position. If machine brains surpassed human brains in general intelligence, then this new superintelligence could become extremely powerful – possibly beyond our control. As the fate of the gorillas now depends more on humans than on the species itself, so would the fate of humankind depend on the actions of the machine superintelligence.

But we have one advantage: we get to make the first move. Will it be possible to construct a seed Artificial Intelligence, to engineer initial conditions so as to make an intelligence explosion survivable? How could one achieve a controlled detonation?

This profoundly ambitious and original book breaks down a vast track of difficult intellectual terrain. After an utterly engrossing journey that takes us to the frontiers of thinking about the human condition and the future of intelligent life, we find in Nick Bostrom's work nothing less than a reconceptualization of the essential task of our time.

I took my time on this one, reading it mainly while traveling, on planes or when I would not be disturbed. The topic requires a significant level of focus for those of us who are not deep in this field, but the ideas are thought provoking. I have considered and debated the “rise of machines” to steal a phrase from Terminator, but this book makes the idea real! As Nick walks the reader through the development of the Superintelligence, and the various paths it can take, it starts to make the concepts much more clear and crystallized the need to be thoughtful in the application of these emerging technologies and ideas.

Why I recommend the book:

It is a thought provoking exploration of artificial intelligence and the need to be thoughtful and intentional in the exploration of this exploding field. Who will create the seed intelligence, and when doing so, will it be done in a way that drives human preservation and growth with intentionality?