



# The Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human Intelligence

By Ray Kurzweil

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**Ray Kurzweil** is the inventor of the most innovative and compelling technology of our era, an international authority on artificial intelligence, and one of our greatest living visionaries. Now he offers a framework for envisioning the twenty-first century--an age in which the marriage of human sensitivity and artificial intelligence fundamentally alters and improves the way we live. Kurzweil's prophetic blueprint for the future takes us through the advances that inexorably result in computers exceeding the memory capacity and computational ability of the human brain by the year 2020 (with human-level capabilities not far behind); in relationships with automated personalities who will be our teachers, companions, and lovers; and in information fed straight into our brains along direct neural pathways. Optimistic and challenging, thought-provoking and engaging, **The Age of Spiritual Machines** is the ultimate guide on our road into the next century.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

How much do we humans enjoy our current status as the most intelligent beings on earth? Enough to try to stop our own inventions from surpassing us in smarts? If so, we'd better pull the plug right now, because if Ray Kurzweil is right we've only got until about 2020 before computers outpace the human brain in computational power. Kurzweil, artificial intelligence expert and author of *The Age of Intelligent Machines*, shows that technological evolution moves at an exponential pace. Further, he asserts, in a sort of swirling postulate, time speeds up as order increases, and vice versa. He calls this the "Law of Time and Chaos," and it means that although entropy is slowing the stream of time down for the universe overall, and thus vastly increasing the amount of time between major events, in the eddy of technological evolution the exact opposite is happening, and events will soon be coming faster and more furiously. This means that we'd better figure out how to deal with conscious machines as soon as possible--they'll soon not only be able to beat us at chess, but also likely demand civil rights, and might at last realize the very human dream of immortality.

*The Age of Spiritual Machines* is compelling and accessible, and not necessarily best read from front to back--it's less heavily historical if you jump around (Kurzweil encourages this). Much of the content of the book lays the groundwork to justify Kurzweil's timeline, providing an engaging primer on the philosophical and technological ideas behind the study of consciousness. Instead of being a gee-whiz futurist manifesto, *Spiritual Machines* reads like a history of the future, without too much science fiction dystopianism. Instead, Kurzweil shows us the logical outgrowths of current trends, with all their attendant possibilities. This is the book we'll turn to when our computers first say "hello." --*Therese Littleton*

#### From Publishers Weekly

According to the law of accelerating returns, explains futurist Kurzweil (*The Age of Intelligent Machines*), technological gains are made at an exponential rate. In his utopian vision of the 21st century, our lives will change not merely incrementally but fundamentally. The author is the inventor of reading and speech-recognition machines, among other technologies, but he isn't much of a writer. Using clunky prose and an awkward dialogue with a woman from the future, he sets up the history of evolution and technology and then offers a whirlwind tour through the next 100 years. Along the way, he makes some bizarre predictions. If Kurzweil has it right, in the next few decades humans will download books directly into their brains, run off with virtual secretaries and exist "as software," as we become more like computers and computers become more like us. Other projections?e.g., that most diseases will be reversible or preventable?are less strange but seem similarly Panglossian. Still others are more realizable: human-embedded computers will track the location of practically anyone, at any time. More problematic is Kurzweil's self-congratulatory tone. Still, by addressing (if not quite satisfactorily) the overpowering distinction between intelligence and consciousness, and by addressing the difference between a giant database and an intuitive machine, this book serves as a very provocative, if not very persuasive, view of the future from a man who has studied and shaped it. B&w illustrations. Agent, Loretta Barrett; foreign rights sold in the U.K., Germany, Italy and Spain; simultaneous Penguin audio; author tour.

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#### From Library Journal

With the coming of the millennium, there is no shortage of predictions about what the next century will hold. Inventor, computer scientist, and futurist Kurzweil (*The Age of Intelligent Machines*, LJ 6/1/91) has produced a vision of the 21st century in which he predicts that a \$1000 personal computer will match the

computing speed and capacity of the human brain by around the year 2020. But Kurzweil does more than simply prognosticate about the future?he provides a blueprint for the next stage of human evolution, in which we will begin to develop computers more intelligent than ourselves. Then we must ask ourselves whether these new thinking machines are indeed conscious entities. This superb work is a thoughtful melding of technology, philosophy, ethics, and humanism. Highly recommended.

-?Joe J. Accardi, *Northeastern Illinois Univ. Lib., Chicago*

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## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Catherine Stoltenberg:**

This *The Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human Intelligence* is great reserve for you because the content that is full of information for you who all always deal with world and still have to make decision every minute. This particular book reveal it info accurately using great manage word or we can declare no rambling sentences in it. So if you are read it hurriedly you can have whole facts in it. Doesn't mean it only provides you with straight forward sentences but challenging core information with wonderful delivering sentences. Having *The Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human Intelligence* in your hand like finding the world in your arm, facts in it is not ridiculous a single. We can say that no book that offer you world inside ten or fifteen small right but this reserve already do that. So , this is good reading book. Heya Mr. and Mrs. busy do you still doubt in which?

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#### **Byron Hiebert:**

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**Marcie Johnson:**

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