How to Think About AI: A Guide for the Perplexed

- Richard Susskind
  - Presentation Summary

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Why This Book Matters

- AI is transforming society
  - Public confusion and polarization
  - Need for balanced understanding

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About the Author

- Technology adviser and legal scholar
  - Writes about the future of professions
  - Focus on societal impact of AI

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Harry Bennett Note:

As we proceed through this discussion keep in mind 3 terms:

- AI = Artificial Intelligence
- GAI = Generative AI
- AGI = Artificial General Intelligence

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The Central Question

- What can AI do?
  - What does AI mean for society?
  - How should we think about it?

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Book Structure

- Understanding AI
  - Thinking Differently
  - Making AI Work
  - Confronting the Risks
  - Contemplating the Future

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AI: A Long Journey

- Origins in the 1950s
  - Cycles of hype and disappointment
  - Steady technical progress

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The Current AI Summer

- Big data
  - Advanced computing power
  - Machine learning breakthroughs

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Generative AI

- Text generation
  - Image creation
  - Creative content production

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Narrow vs General AI

- Most AI is task-specific
  - AGI does not yet exist
  - Debate about future possibilities

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AI as Evolution, Not Magic

- Built on math and statistics
  - Engineering discipline
  - Incremental progress

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Two Ways to Think About AI

- Process thinking
- Outcome thinking
  - Focus on usefulness

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Focus on Results

- Is it useful?
  - Is it reliable?
  - Is it better than alternatives?

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Language Problem

- Human-like terms mislead
  - Confusion about capabilities
  - Careful vocabulary needed

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Anthropomorphism

- AI has no feelings
  - No intentions
  - No consciousness (today)

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The Perplexed Public

- Optimists vs pessimists
  - Fear vs enthusiasm
  - Need for balance

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Automation vs Transformation

- Task automation
  - System redesign
  - Structural change

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Beyond Human Imitation

- AI need not copy humans
  - Different methods
  - Potentially superior outcomes

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Future of Professions

- Law
  - Medicine
  - Education

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Access and Affordability

- Lower costs
  - Wider access to expertise
  - Global implications

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Organizational Change

- Workflow redesign
  - Leadership decisions
  - Strategic integration

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Technical Risks

- Hallucinations
  - Bias
  - Lack of transparency

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Economic Disruption

- Job displacement
  - Job creation
  - Transition challenges

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Concentration of Power

- Large tech firms dominate
  - Data control
  - Influence concerns

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Ethical Questions

- Accountability
  - Fairness
  - Regulation

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Existential Risk Debate

- Superintelligence concerns
  - Skeptical perspectives
  - Balanced discussion

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Could Machines Be Conscious?

- Philosophical question
  - No consensus
  - Speculative debate

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Human–AI Collaboration

- Augmented intelligence
  - Partnership models
  - Complementary strengths

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Virtual Worlds

- Immersive digital spaces
  - Work and education online
  - AI-driven environments

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The Great Schism

- Adopters vs resisters
  - Social divide
  - Policy challenges

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Final Message

- AI is a tool
  - Human responsibility
  - Thoughtful governance matters

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