CHAPTER

1

Introduction: Our Definition of "There" Is Wrong

I'm what you would call a classic nerd. I got my first degree in computer science, have worked in tech almost my entire life, and am the CEO of an AI company. I unwind by reading big-idea books on computation, cognition, and the nature of reality. And yet, like many people who genuinely love big ideas, I also get bored reading books about highly important topics. Over time, I have learned to treat any book as a kind of choose-your-own-adventure; otherwise, I risk getting stuck halfway through and never finishing it at all.

David Deutsch's *The Fabric of Reality* (Allen Lane/The Penguin Press, 1997),[1] one of many books that shaped the thinking behind the pages you are about to read, is a perfect example. I read Chapters 1 through 9 as normal, then straight to the last chapter. After I read the second-to-last chapter, working in reverse order for a few chapters, I then went back to where I left off at the end of Chapter 9 and continued through the chapters I had not yet read. By the end, I was entirely convinced that the way I read the book was exactly how it should be experienced. I tell you this not as a recommendation but as a confession. I assume you might approach this book the same way.

If you're anything like me, you're standing in the middle of a bookstore or on a seller's page reading the introduction, wondering what you're going to get out of this book. You might even flip through to

[1] Deutsch, D. (1997). *The Fabric of Reality: The Science of Parallel Universes — and Its Implications*. Allen Lane/Penguin Press.

the final chapter, which will be entirely confusing to you if you don't go back through and read those middle chapters at some point, and may gasp at the audacity of my claims. Please do; then come back to the beginning.

Why This Book, Why Now

We are living through a quiet but consequential transition. Artificial intelligence (AI) is shifting from something we use to something we think with. It is no longer just producing outputs. It is shaping the inputs to our minds: what we read, what we see, what we believe, what we feel, and what we do next. The most important question in front of us is no longer whether a standalone machine will wake up one day and surpass us. The question is whether we will sleepwalk into outsourced judgment and engineered instinct, or whether we will deliberately build a partnership in which intelligence and experience expand together.

This book exists now because that fork exists now. The systems we are building are already influencing human behavior, decision-making, and identity. The choices we make in this window will shape not just what AI becomes but what humans become alongside it.

Three Ideas That Frame the Journey

For my readers who are looking for something new in the AI conversation, this book introduces three unique ideas:

The first is Artificial General Experience (AGE), which, without giving too much away, embarks on the understanding that intelligence without experience is hollow and that in AI, until we measure the path to intelligence and the path to experience side by side, "Artificial general intelligence (AGI)[2] when?" is the wrong question.

The second is the creation of hybrid cognition and fused minds, not the continued conversation of "us versus them" but the blend of human biology and machine intelligence, shifting from isolated minds and standalone models to shared hybrid systems that shape how humans think and live.

[2] We will dive into this term and its definition(s) in future chapters, but for now consider it to be a theoretical, advanced form of AI that is as "intelligent" as, or more so, than humans.

The third is a fundamentally different understanding of artificial superintelligence (ASI) entirely. Not just how it manifests, but who or what is actually superintelligent, and whether superintelligence manifests as an external entity at all.

Together, these ideas offer a way out of the stale dichotomies that dominate the current discourse. As our final chapter shows, the question "How do we get there?" in terms of AI might be the wrong question entirely. Perhaps our definition of "there" is wrong. We see endless debates about whether large language models (LLMs) can reach AGI, whether we need world models, entirely new learning techniques, or a complete overhaul of existing paradigms. Layered on top of this is the deeper debate about the nature of the mind itself. Is the brain an antenna or a generator? Where does cognition emerge from? What counts as the substrate of the mind, and how does that shape what is possible to build?

Some argue that you cannot replicate human consciousness or general intelligence without duplicating the biological substrate itself. Others believe that much of what we call mind can be computationally modeled, that emotion, expression, and even sentience may arise from the right architecture. Some scientists argue that none of this is as mysterious as it looks, that we can build feeling models, experience models, and perhaps one day, consciousness models. But there remains the counterview that what makes us special is not only the software of mind but the organic substrate through which it flows. The brain may not produce consciousness, but there may be something essential about it that enables consciousness to manifest. The fusion idea resolves this tension. If the substrate is special and the models are computable, then putting them together gives you something new. You can leverage the unique qualities of the organic substrate while also breaking past its limitations through computational systems. This is where superintelligence becomes plausible, not as a disembodied alien mind but as a fused mind, a hybrid agent that draws simultaneously from biology and computation.

The Missing Axis

When you look at most AI development, especially the cultural conversation around AGI, the axis we obsess over is capability. Bigger models. Better benchmarks. More reasoning tokens. Better planning.

Better tools. Better world models. The implicit assumption is that if we push competence high enough, something like general intelligence will "arrive."

But in practice, the failures that worry me most are not the dumb failures. They are the confident failures inside systems that people trust. A model can be persuasive without being right. It can rationalize without understanding. It can optimize a proxy while missing the point. It can repeat the same class of mistake in new clothing because nothing in it remembers consequence the way a living system does. You'll soon read in the text that the definition of intelligence has as many possibilities as the definition of AGI.

That is when it became clear to me that we were missing a second dimension. Not just the path to intelligence, but the path to experience. The epiphany for AGE didn't arrive as philosophy; it arrived as self-observation.

I noticed a subtle shift. I was no longer using AI as a separate tool, like a calculator or timer. Instead, I was using it the way I use my own mind: to draft thoughts, test arguments, frame decisions. Using AI this way felt like productivity, but I saw in it a deeper implication in that once a system sits inside the loop of attention and judgment, its most important property isn't how clever it makes you sound in that instance. It's what using the system does to you over time. Does it create continuity, better beliefs, or better instincts? Or does it create a convincing stream of outputs that feels like thinking without actually building judgment?

That's when the missing axis snapped into view. Humans don't just solve problems. We accumulate experience. We update from consequences. We learn patterns across time and internalize cost. If AI is going to be embedded in human decision-making, then "intelligence" isn't enough. The system needs a relationship to time, context, and consequence. This realization was the seed of AGE.

What would it mean to build systems where the primitive isn't the answer, but the experience? Systems organized around a continuous stream that binds perception, memory, intent, and consequence into something coherent, the way living minds do. Not memory as storage, but memory as transformation: the system becomes different after it is wrong, after it causes harm, after it sees a pattern play out in the real world. Not intelligence as isolated competence, but judgment as an accumulated relationship with consequences. That is the missing dimension in the AGI conversation. We keep measuring intelligence as if it is the whole story. But what matters in human contexts is whether the system can participate in continuity of experience.

For readers who simply want to understand AI, this book is also for you. This text provides a digestible understanding of AI in its entirety, from how it was created by modeling human cognition, to what cognitive AI is and how it works, to how it's currently being used in the world across different sectors, to what AGI is and how the heck we plan to get there.

In the following chapters, you will journey through not only AI's inner workings but the human mind itself, asking a deceptively simple question: before we predict where AI is going, do we even understand what it means to think? Readers discover why humans rely on two dueling modes of thought, fast intuition and slow reasoning, and how AI was created by replicating one of those systems of thought. The text brings AI down from the abstract and into the real world, showing how deeply it has already threaded itself into everyday life. It begins with the historical arc that carried us from the AI winters to the deep learning revolution and then to modern transformer-based models that can reason, plan, and act. What once required supercomputers and specialized labs now sits inside the phones of farmers, students, clinicians, and call center workers. We trace how deep learning, reinforcement learning, and autonomous agents set the foundation for a world where AI is both a collaborator and an independent problem solver.

In this book, I discuss emerging collaboration models, from centaur teams to cyborg integrations and hive-like collectives, each offering different strengths depending on context. I examine the promises and risks of these structures, especially how accountability can blur when humans rely on powerful automated partners. This book looks deeply at trust, transparency, cognitive privacy, embodied interfaces, and the ethical dilemmas that arise when machines participate in our choices, senses, and even bodies. In a world where cognition is shared, what becomes of agency and the human experience? I explore the intimate terrain of a hybrid humanity and what happens to society and life as we know it. As the boundary between brain and device becomes porous, ethical questions shift from theoretical debates to lived experience. Drawing on insights from neuroscience, philosophy, posthumanism, and transhumanism, I examine how hybrid bodies and hybrid minds challenge long-held ideas about autonomy, embodiment, and even the soul.

Yes, AI is polarizing, but it is also misunderstood. Not in an emotional, teenage "you just don't get me"[3] sort of way, but in the

[3] Or perhaps yes in this exact way.

same way that most of us humans don't understand how our own brains work, or how our own hormones work, or how our own emotions work. All of which would make life a large degree easier if we did understand these things that have such a heavy impact on our day-to-day existence. The same is true for AI. We fear what we do not know. We give false trust to things that appear reliable. Imagine if everyone who used it in any capacity, or refused to use it in any capacity, understood how it worked, how we're getting it to evolve to meet new needs, what its current limitations truly are, and what the actual possibilities are for its long-term existence and its role in the lives of humans.

In the end, this is the hope of what we can achieve. Not a future defined by fear or inevitability, but a future shaped by intentional design, deeper understanding, and the courage to imagine that human evolution may not be ending at all. It may simply be entering a new phase, one in which intelligence, experience, and consciousness expand through partnership rather than replacement. What will we become if we succeed? That all depends on what we do now.