
Preface

Preface of:
AI for Smarties - Understanding Artificial Intelligence
by Bertrand Meyer
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You are awed, I am awed, everyone is awed, even the technology's own developers. What kind of magic can possibly allow a machine, in seconds, to identify a face in a crowd of thousands, translate a text between languages it was not even taught, write an impeccable quarterly report, design a new molecule, and solve problems from mathematical Olympiads?

It is good to be awed. It is even better to understand. By reading this book you will find out what Artificial Intelligence is today, how it got there, what it can do, and what it cannot do. Most importantly, you will be prepared to use AI for your own benefit, beyond the mere user's view, knowing what lies "under the hood" and making career choices that will help you stay on top, even in the presence of the major disruptions AI is rapidly bringing to so many professions.

This book is meant for the general public. You do not need to be a computer scientist or a mathematician. I am guessing that you have used AI a bit, for example a Large Language Model such as ChatGPT (who has not?); such experience will make you enjoy the text more, but it is not required.

Throughout my earlier writing I have been fascinated by new technologies and endeavored to avoid both sterile, jaded skepticism ("*this technology is only a fad!*") and unbridled sycophancy ("*it will cure all the world's ills!*"). For one of my previous books, a survey, tutorial and critique on a fascinating approach to software engineering, agile methods, I chose the title "*Agile! The Good, the Hype and the Ugly*"; I could just as well have titled this one "*AI! The Good, the Hype and the Ugly*". AI may be the most hyped technical topic ever, making it particularly urgent to cut through the hype and understand the good (the benefits) and the bad (the limitations). Such is the goal of this book.

I have striven for technical accuracy at every step, but the field is evolving at a fast pace. This book gives you the basis you need to stay on top of future advances which — no doubt — will continue to keep us all flabbergasted.

[\[Meyer 2014\]](#).

Such underlined references are hyperlinks to the bibliography, which starts on page [259](#).

Bertrand Meyer

$$NL(W * X + B)$$