
Michael Starks

ABSTRACT

Dullest book by a major scientist I have ever read. I suppose if you know almost nothing about cognition or AI research you might find this book useful. For anyone else it is a horrific bore. There are hundreds of books in cog sci, robotics, AI, evolutionary psychology and philosophy offering far more info and insight on cognition than this one. Minsky is a top rate senior scientist but it barely shows here. He has alot of good references but they are seldom discussed in any depth and there is lots more left out than included on the subject of AI, cognition and the mind.

Those interested in all my writings in their most recent versions may consult my e-book Philosophy, Human Nature and the Collapse of Civilization - Articles and Reviews 2006-2016 662p (2016).

I suppose if you know almost nothing about cognition or AI research you might find this book useful. For anyone else it is a horrific bore. There are hundreds of books in cog sci, robotics, AI, evolutionary psych(EP) and philosophy offering far more info and insight on cognition than this one. Minsky is a top rate senior scientist but it barely shows here. He has alot of good references but they are seldom discussed in any depth and there is lots more left out than included on the subject of AI, cognition and the mind. Like nearly everyone in cognition, AI and EP research, he has no clue that Wittgenstein laid out the high level structure of our psychology and made penetrating comments on minds and machines some 3/4 of a century ago. His works are a virtually untapped source for cognitive scientists. Minsky has clearly not kept up, with many of the refs and much of the discussion of primary interest about 20 years ago (see Gazzinaga's 'The Cognitive Neurosciences 3'for an update). And, he has no grasp at all of intentional psychology from the philosophical side (see any of Wittgenstein's works or Searle's brilliant 'Rationality in Action') nor of evolutionary psychology from the experimental and observational side (see Buss-The Handbook of EP), yet these contain many of the high level descriptions and search routines he is seeking. The very basic outlines here of the ideas used to approach AI research seem like they could all be discovered in a short semester by reasonably bright high school students. And of course, there is the materialist/reductionist bias looming above it all, as expressed in the title. In spite of all the work by Minsky and others, machines do not have anything recognizable as intentional psychology and we have very little idea how to give it to them. That is why the best robot in the world has less practical intelligence than an ant (or even an amoeba). It is not even clear how we will recognize any aspect of intentionality in a machine if it were to appear. What could show that your pc was thinking or feeling? This is the most important, though "unintentional" point made by this work.