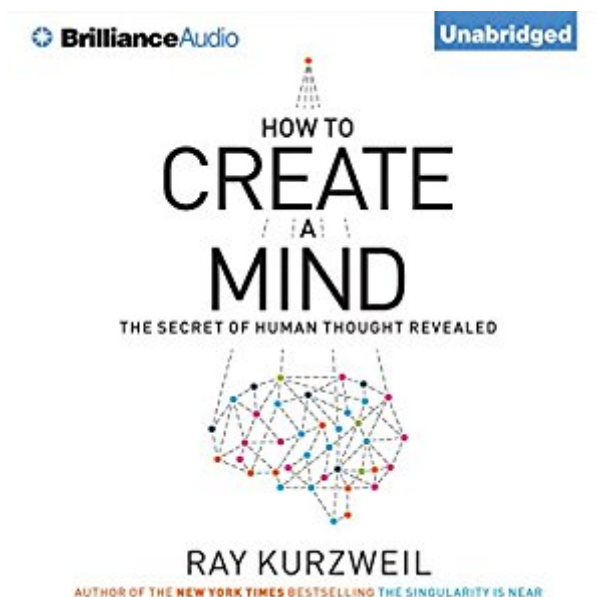


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# How To Create A Mind: The Secret Of Human Thought Revealed



## Synopsis

Ray Kurzweil, the bold futurist and author of the New York Times best seller *The Singularity Is Near*, is arguably today's most influential technological visionary. A pioneering inventor and theorist, he has explored for decades how artificial intelligence can enrich and expand human capabilities. Now, in his much-anticipated *How to Create a Mind*, he takes this exploration to the next step: reverse-engineering the brain to understand precisely how it works, then applying that knowledge to create vastly intelligent machines. Drawing on the most recent neuroscience research, his own research and inventions in artificial intelligence, and compelling thought experiments, he describes his new theory of how the neocortex (the thinking part of the brain) works: as a self-organizing hierarchical system of pattern recognizers. Kurzweil shows how these insights will enable us to greatly extend the powers of our own mind and provides a road map for the creation of super-intelligence - humankind's most exciting next venture. We are now at the dawn of an era of radical possibilities in which merging with our technology will enable us to effectively address the world's grand challenges. *How to Create a Mind* is certain to be one of the most widely discussed and debated science books in many years - a touchstone for any consideration of the path of human progress.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

How to Create a Mind: The Secret of Human Thought Revealed by Ray Kurzweil "How to Create a Mind" is a very interesting book that presents the pattern recognition theory of mind (PRTM), which

describes the basic algorithm of the neocortex (the region of the brain responsible for perception, memory, and critical thinking). It is the author's contention that the brain can be reverse engineered due to the power of its simplicity and such knowledge would allow us to create true artificial intelligence. The one and only, futurist, prize-winning scientist and author Ray Kurzweil takes the reader on a journey of the brain and the future of artificial intelligence. This enlightening 352-page book is composed of the following eleven chapters: 1. Thought Experiments on the World, 2. Thought Experiments on Thinking, 3. A Model of the Neocortex: The Pattern Recognition Theory of Mind, 4. The Biological Neocortex, 5. The Old Brain, 6. Transcendent Abilities, 7. The Biologically Inspired Digital Neocortex, 8. The Mind as Computer, 9. Thought Experiments on the Mind, 10. The Law of Accelerating Returns Applied to the Brain, and 11. Objections.

**Positives:**

1. Well researched and well-written book. The author's uncanny ability to make very difficult subjects accessible to the masses.
2. A great topic in the "mind" of a great thinker.
3. Great use of charts and diagrams.
4. A wonderful job of describing how thinking works.
5. Thought-provoking questions and answers based on a combination of sound science and educated speculation.
6. The art of recreating brain processes in machines. "There is more parallel between brains and computers than may be apparent." Great stuff!
7. Great information on how memories truly work.
8. Hierarchies of units of functionality in natural systems.
9. How the neocortex must work. The Pattern Recognition Theory of Mind (PRTM). The main thesis of this book. The importance of redundancy. Plenty of details.
10. Evolution...it does a brain good. Legos will never be the same for me again.
11. The neocortex as a great metaphor machine. Projects underway to simulate the human brain such as Markram's Blue Brain Project.
12. Speech recognition and Markov models. Author provides a lot of excellent examples.
13. The four key concepts of the universality and feasibility of computation and its applicability to our thinking.
14. A fascinating look at split-brain patients. The "society of mind." The concept of free will, "We are apparently very eager to explain and rationalize our actions, even when we didn't actually make the decisions that led to them." Profound with many implications indeed.
15. The issue of identity.
16. The brain's ability to predict the future. The author's own predictive track record referenced.
17. The laws of accelerating returns (LOAR), where it applies and why we should train ourselves to think exponentially.
18. The author provides and analyzes objections to his thesis. In defense of his ideas. Going after Allen's "scientist's pessimism."
19. The evolution of our knowledge.
20. Great notes and links beautifully.

**Negatives:**

1. The book is uneven. That is, some chapters cover certain topics with depth while others suffer from lack of depth. Some of it is understandable as it relates to the limitations of what we currently know but I feel that the book could have been reformatted into smaller chapters or subchapters. The book bogs down a little in

the middle sections of the book.2. Technically I disagree with the notion that evolution always leads to more complexity. Yes on survival but not necessarily on complexity.3. The author has a tendency to cross-market his products a tad much. It may come across as look at me...4. A bit repetitive.5. Sometimes leaves you with more questions than answers but that may not be a bad thing...6. No formal separate bibliography. In summary, overall I enjoyed this book. Regardless of your overall stance on the feasibility of artificial intelligence no one brings it like Ray Kurzweil. His enthusiasm and dedication is admirable. The author provides his basic thesis of how the brain works and a path to achieve true artificial intelligence and all that it implies. Fascinating in parts, bogs down in other sections but ultimately satisfying. I highly recommend it! Further suggestions: "Subliminal: How Your Unconscious Mind Rules Your Behavior" by Leonard Mlodinow, "The Believing Brain: From Ghosts and Gods to Politics and Conspiracies---How We Construct Beliefs and Reinforce Them as Truths" by Michael Shermer, "The Scientific American Brave New Brain: How Neuroscience, Brain-Machine Interfaces, Neuroimaging, Psychopharmacology, Epigenetics, the Internet, and ... and Enhancing the Future of Mental Power" by Judith Horstman, "The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature" by Steven Pinker, "Who's in Charge?: Free Will and the Science of the Brain" and "Human: The Science Behind What Makes Us Unique", by Michael S. Gazzaniga, "Hardwired Behavior: What Neuroscience Reveals about Morality 1st Edition by Tancredi, Laurence published by Cambridge University Press Paperback" by Laurence Tancredi, "Braintrust: What Neuroscience Tells Us about Morality" by Patricia S. Churchland, "The Myth of Free Will" by Cris Evatt, "SuperSense" by Bruce M. Hood and "The Brain and the Meaning of Life" by Paul Thagard.

A fascinating idea mired in a circuitous narrative. Kinda like having to sort through a hundred boxes of cereal for a single prize that you have to put together yourself. Perfectly fine for people with time on their hands and a fireplace to sit next to on a wintry evening. But I found myself highly impatient as I leafed through page after page looking for his point. I will always buy Ray's books. Make no mistake. He just needs an editor who knows how to sift the chaff. And Ray, if you are reading this, do let the editor do his/her job. Don't get precious about concepts. We're all pretty smart around here. Just make a point and move on.

Very disappointed. The book is about how the mind works, and not AT ALL about "how to create a mind". So if you're into the study of the brain, by all means read this book. But I was expecting something very different given the author's work in AI and given the title of the book, which is misleading.

The first part of the book explains a modern theory on how the brain works, based on repetition of a basic structure in the brain that works as a pattern recognizer, and how this pattern recognition is a recursive function that creates intelligence and ultimately what we are. It seems to be similar to the one put forward in the book "On intelligence" by Jeff Hawkins, which Kurzweil references. I honestly don't know how well accepted this theory is within neuroscience circles but I found this part really interesting and the explanation very well written. Of course the main thing is that if this theory is true, the brain does look like a structure very amenable to eventual simulation in a different substrate, which is what Ray Kurzweil's work is ultimately about. It is after all a recursive structure composed of relatively simple units... exactly like computer programs! Or, more accurately, like some AI constructs like hidden markov models, which Kurzweil pretty much dedicates the rest of the book to. This is the part I have a problem with. The book is called "how to create a mind", but after explaining (superficially) how the mind (supposedly) works, it just describes some vaguely similar structures that could might some day perhaps help in creating one. All while reminding us that the author has worked extensively with these structures and how successful he's been in the business world and how much it owes to him. This last part is very unconnected with the beginning of the book and really offers no insight, no roadmap, no credible evidence that anything it talks about can or will be used to progress in brain emulation. There are currently several projects working in this, like the Blue Brain project, which Kurzweil mentions but unfortunately doesn't go in any depth into them. It feels more like filler content recycled from Kurzweil's past work and feels tired and lazy, compared with the lucid brain description of the first part, which is novel in Ray's body of work. In summary, a mediocre book and one that leaves you hopeful that new advances are made in this fascinating subject and can be described in further work.

I like Kurzweil, he's an excellent inventor and engineer, but consciousness is a much more complicated idea than what he proposes in, "How to Create a Mind." There are some interesting things to be learned from the book, but most of them just reinforce the complexities neuroscience and how little we know. I would encourage you to read it as a general overview of the history of computation and for its popular views on technology as a means to escape the human condition. These ideas are exciting, but most of them are prototypes of prototypes. I wouldn't hold your breath. I generally avoid these kinds of books as I think they are typically meant to attract people who like the benefits of science without trying to understand it, except on a superficial level. Overall, however, it was a fun read even if it claims more than it actually proves.

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