


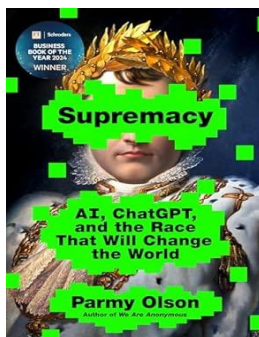


## Decoding Artificial Intelligence – Why You Should Know How AI Works, Book Review of *Supremacy: AI, ChatGPT and the Race That Will Change the World*

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Author Parmy Olson, St. Martin's Publishing Group, New York, 2024, Pages 280,  
ISBN-10 : 1250337747, ISBN-13 : 978-1250337740

Published: June-26-2026

### Abstract

**Citation:** Zahra, Arjmand. "Decoding Artificial Intelligence – Why You Should Know How AI Works, Book Review of *Supremacy: AI, ChatGPT and the Race That Will Change the World* by Parmy Olson." *IttesaaI- Journal of Connecting Discourses* 3, no. 1 (2026): 96-98.  
<https://doi.org/10.64984/ijcd.3.1.2026.29>

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The journey of the conception, development and eventual takeover of AI by the world's tech giants has been deeply researched and encapsulated in this riveting account of the most profound technological breakthrough in living memory. From the vision and ambition of Altman and Hassabis, the CEOs of OpenAI and DeepMind respectively, to the complexities of corporate power and success, "Supremacy: AI, ChatGPT and the Race That Will Change the World," brings into focus how AI functions, and more importantly, how it has been incorporated into every aspect of our lives without a transparent analysis of the threats posed by its unethical use or built-in flaws such as those emanating from bias. This book is not meant for tech enthusiasts alone; it caters to any reader who is interested in understanding and being prepared for the changes shaping the world around us.

**Keywords:** AI, Artificial Intelligence, Technology, ChatGPT, AGI, Sam Altman, Demis Hassabis, Algorithm, language models, data, ethical responsibility

Most of us know that the rise of AI powered tools like ChatGPT has fundamentally altered the way we live, work and lead our lives. AI is the latest and inescapable buzzword on the tech horizon. ChatGPT is our new virtual savior, at least for those of us who use it. Yet, few among us understand how Artificial Intelligence that powers ChatGPT works. And so, we are left at the mercy of fierce advocates of AI who want us to incorporate it into our daily lives, and those who are pressing for ethical guidelines, regulation and more openness in terms of how AI works.

Parmy Olson's acclaimed book, *Supremacy: AI, ChatGPT and the Race That Will Change the World* helps put the rise of AI in perspective. The book won the Financial Times and Schroders Business Book of the Year Award for 2024 and is a must-read for scholars, researchers and anyone who is curious about the future of the world.

The author is a Bloomberg columnist and has covered the technology beat since 2010. She also has an impressive record as a reporter for The Wall Street Journal and Forbes. She has 20 years of journalistic experience. In 2019, Business Insider named her as one the "Top 100 People in UK Tech."<sup>1</sup>

Why is it important for us to understand how AI has been developed? Maybe the technology is over-hyped but we cannot just dismiss AI or wait for the bubble to burst. It is a technology that is projected take over tasks that humans have been doing for generations, such as drivers or translators, though AI also seems poised to take over some areas of software development. In academia for instance, the impact of AI is profound; from homework help to complex research, ChatGPT breaks down the processes at unthinkable speed. At more mundane levels, the role of AI counseling has opened up a Pandora's box of ethical questions. Try asking ChatGPT if God exists and you'll be pleasantly surprised by the answer. After coming up with a concise overview within seconds, the bot asks if you're interested in philosophical, scientific or spiritual angle for further exploration. From here onwards, the conversation becomes a two-way learning experience; ChatGPT learns from your responses as much as vice versa.

That is where Parmy's book fills a void. Divided into four acts, the book traces the aspirations and the passion for winning of the two men responsible for the rise of AI: Sam Altman, the entrepreneur and Demis Hassabis, the game developer. Together, though working in competition, they have unleashed a potent force that has changed the world. As Parmy writes in the prologue:

Their story is one of idealism but also one of naivety and ego, and of how it can be virtually impossible to keep an ethical code in the bubbles of Big Tech and Silicon Valley. Altman and Hassabis tied themselves into knots over the stewardship of AI, knowing that the world needed to manage the technology responsibly if we were to stop it from causing irreversible harm. But they couldn't forge AI with godlike power without the resources of the world's largest tech firms.<sup>2</sup>

That in a nutshell, summarizes the rise, rise, and the pitfalls of AI. Parmy has the rare gift of weaving a riveting story from a complex subject. Tracing the aspirations of Altman and Hassabis for building AI for the benefit of humanity, Parmy explains how this altruistic vision became increasingly blurred in the complex, high stakes race of corporate supremacy and profit margins, with Microsoft and Google emerging as the big winners. The story of this battle is worth reading.

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<sup>1</sup>From Parmy Olson's LinkedIn Profile: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/parmyolson/?originalSubdomain=uk>

<sup>2</sup>Parmy Olson, *Supremacy: AI, ChatGPT and the Race That Will Change the World* (St. Martin's Press, an Imprint of St. Martin's Publishing Company, 2024), Prologue: XIII.

What's even more interesting is that while the book guides us through the labyrinth of language models and data that have been employed to build AI, it also highlights ethical and safety issues. "This is because the Google Photos algorithm that had labeled Black people as "gorillas" wasn't an isolated example. Bias is an immense problem in AI. Algorithms used in the American criminal justice system have disproportionately, and incorrectly, flagged Black individuals as more likely to reoffend."<sup>3</sup>

The point is that while AI can replicate the human mind and come up with answers much faster, it does not mean that they will always be correct answers. Critical thinking humans will always be in high demand. That should provide some solace to us.

The book also touches upon one of the most important aspects of AI, i.e. how it affects humans who interact with it. AI is addictive and so it is powerful. "One of the most powerful features of artificial intelligence isn't so much what it can do, but how it exists in the human imagination. As human imaginations go, it is unique. No other technology has been designed to replicate the mind itself, and so its pursuit has become wrapped up in ideas that border on the fantastical."<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps that explains how a "qualified software engineer started to believe there was a ghost in the machine."<sup>5</sup> Have we then created an entity with an element of personality? The ramifications of this line of thinking are far-reaching. If AI has a personality, then does this new entity bear ethical responsibility for its actions or advice? The view of respected Islamic scholar Javed Ghamidi<sup>6</sup> on this question is particularly illuminating when he pointed out that AI is a copy of human consciousness that does not surpass its human parent. At best, it is still a copy but the parent is responsible for all its ethical ramifications and consequences.<sup>7</sup>

A lot of pioneering work is being done across the Muslim world on integrating the use of AI into educational and economic systems. For instance, a CNN report has detailed how Saudi Arabia is making huge investments on AI.<sup>8</sup> This is a subject that no researcher and scholar can afford to ignore. Parmy Olson's book presents one of the most lucid discourse and critique on this powerful technology. It should be read because without a profound understanding of AI and the efforts towards developing Artificial General Intelligence [AGI], it will be very difficult to understand and prepare for the future.

<sup>3</sup>Parmy Olson, *Supremacy: AI, ChatGPT and the Race That Will Change the World*, Act 2: The Leviathans. Chapter 7: Playing Games, 118.

<sup>4</sup>*Supremacy: AI, ChatGPT and the Race That Will Change the World*, Act 3: The Bills. Chapter 12: Myth Busters, 193.

<sup>5</sup>*Supremacy: AI, ChatGPT and the Race That Will Change the World*, Act 3: The Bills. Chapter 12: Myth Busters, 194.

<sup>6</sup>"Javed Ahmad Ghamidi," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Javed\\_Ahmad\\_Ghamidi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Javed_Ahmad_Ghamidi)

<sup>7</sup>"Effects of ChatGPT," <https://youtu.be/v51Q-sDp2fc?si=W2VKy08VJfiiimFb6>

<sup>8</sup>Tala Alrajjal, "Saudi Arabia is Making a Massive Bet on Becoming a Global AI Powerhouse," CNN, November 02, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/11/02/tech/saudi-arabia-ai-powerhouse>