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Parmy Olson,

Supremacy: AI, ChatGPT and the race that will change the world,

Pan Macmillan (Macmillan Business, UK) 2024, ss. 336

In *Supremacy* Parmy Olson pulls the reader into the very center of one of the most significant rivalries of the 21st century: the technological race to build artificial general intelligence (AGI) capable of matching or exceeding human cognitive abilities.

The author, known for her investigative rigor and analytical depth, reveals the inner workings of the world's most influential AI labs – OpenAI, DeepMind, and Anthropic – which compete for dominance while constantly balancing on a thin line between innovation and ethics. Olson presents this race not as a dry history of technological models, but as a story about people – their ambitions, risks, and power dynamics. For example, she describes the moment OpenAI researchers had to decide whether to release ChatGPT to the public: a choice between revolutionizing communication and the fear of misuse. Another example is the internal debate at DeepMind, when the AlphaGo team questioned whether their learning systems could be safely applied beyond games – in medicine or finance – raising concerns about responsibility and oversight. Olson meticulously reconstructs the evolution of generative systems – from early language prototypes that produced clumsy, incoherent sentences to modern models capable of writing essays, translating complex texts, or generating code. She highlights milestones such as the GPT-3 upgrade, which dramatically improved contextual understanding and propelled generative AI into mainstream use. At Anthropic, in turn, research teams faced the challenge of preventing systems from generating harmful

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or manipulative content, prompting extensive internal testing and new safety mechanisms.

One of the greatest strengths of *Supremacy* is its focus on the human dimension. Olson demonstrates that behind every line of code stands a human being – with passion, fear, ambition, and limitations. She shares stories of engineers working late nights to release new AI versions despite warnings about possible negative outcomes. When describing visionaries and company leaders, she reveals their varied motivations: some driven by a mission to build AI “for the good of humanity,” others focused on commercial dominance. Meanwhile, managers face investor pressure and the risk that delaying a release could mean losing a strategic advantage.

The central theme of the book is the tension between innovation and danger. Olson presents situations where teams faced difficult choices: Should they deploy a new model that delivers better performance but increases the risk of generating misleading or false information? Should a company wait for external testing and safety reviews, even if competitors are racing ahead? She cites conversations where researchers debated restricting API access to advanced models until their impacts were better understood. These dilemmas illustrate that, in the AI world, the priority is not only “being first,” but also preventing potential disasters.

Olson also addresses controversial societal issues. She discusses the real consequences of AI-driven disinformation, citing fabricated articles and manipulated videos that could sway political outcomes. In examining the labor market, she refers to companies experimenting with automated call-center systems, leading to job reductions and uncertainty about the future of employment. She highlights the growing concentration of technological power: when a single company decides how to regulate access to its AI API, it can effectively shape – or limit – the innovation ecosystem for smaller firms and start-ups.

For business leaders and policymakers, *Supremacy* offers valuable insights. Olson explains how companies make decisions in high-pressure technological environments where competitive advantage depends on speed, and the cost of misjudgment can be immense. She describes how firms combine innovation with long-term strategy, manage uncertainty, and build structures of responsibility. For instance, some Anthropic teams established “internal ethics councils” that assessed the societal risks of new models before release. The book’s recognition as the Financial Times Business Book of the Year underscores its importance not only for the technology sector but also for business and governance. It encourages readers to reflect on the future we are collectively shaping – often without realizing how deeply AI is already embedded in our daily lives. *Supremacy* is brilliant, gripping, and strikingly timely – it inspires, provokes questions, and opens our eyes to processes shaping the world around us. It is a book that no leader, manager, or informed technology user should overlook.