



Photo Stanford Engineering School Campus

First Light of Day

Book Summary



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Mr. Steep has been at the forefront of technology innovation. As a senior executive running global operations for companies including Apple, Microsoft, and the world-renowned Xerox PARC, he has built, managed, and helped transform Fortune companies by leveraging the power of emerging technologies to deliver disruptive innovation.

- Founded Stanford Engineering's Disruptive Technology and Digital Cities Program
- Created Microsoft's Innovation Outreach Program under Bill Gates Office for Technical Strategy
- Worked with over 250 companies crossing 30 industries on innovation problems at PARC and Microsoft over ten years
- Worked with Air Bus and BMW on the launch of the first electric airplane and iSeries car
- Participated in the development and launch of the first Cloud Computing platform at Microsoft
- Launched the world's first digital camera at Apple
- Launched the first software for the IBM Personal Computer
- 20 Keynotes delivered in 2018 to over 3,000 C-Level Executives

Executive Summary

FIRST LIGHT OF DAY is a disquieting, and fascinating, look at life in the near future -- and at an impending turning point in human history. It is a world on the brink of creating the first truly sentient being. Already the technological revolution has profoundly affected the nature of society. The world's most developed societies are now increasingly segregated between high-end knowledge workers who enjoy all the benefits of life in the new digital cities and the majority of the population that has been rendered economically superfluous other than for service work – and who are effectively barred from city life. Life for the new technological aristocracy is, to all appearances, rich, elegant and rewarding. Their daily lives are wrapped in all of the benefits of the new Internet of Things. Intelligent assistants talk in their ears, guiding them, customizing their lifestyles, adjusting the world around them (shopping, entertainment, commuting, etc.) as they pass. At the apex of this world are the technologists who devise the next generation of this artificial intelligence.

Underlying the plot of FIRST LIGHT OF DAY is the race to create the next generation of computers – quantum computers – that will be able to think for themselves – making decisions at speeds incomprehensible to human beings. These first sentient machines will be so powerful that they hold the potential to assume control of civilization; not merely consulting humanity but controlling it – presumably for mankind's benefit. This race, conducted by a number of different nations – notably China, Russia, the U.S., and the UK – is exposing the depth of the flaws in this new world: the end of privacy and liberty, the totalitarian motives of the elite, national interests and espionage. What appears benign and pure in this new world is slowly exposed as profoundly dangerous.

At the center of the story is Mikhail Ivanovich Vasiliev, a former Russian gymnast and talented AI engineer now working in London at a powerful global insurance company as its chief scientist for machine intelligence. Outwardly emotionless and disciplined, internally he nurses deep emotional wounds revolving around the childhood death of his friend. Mikhail is offered the dream of a life-time - creating the first sentient computer – and as such has become the target of powerful forces – corporate, governmental, and a rising resistance movement -- around the world. Even his boss, a beautiful Indian executive, is in fact, a Russian agent. In the midst of all of this, Mikhail is facing his own personal crisis. He has come to realize that the first of these new computers will also be the last one. That it will almost instantly assume control over everything. There will be no going back. It will be the end of human freedom as they know it. He also realizes that this fate is inevitable; and if he doesn't win the race, someone else -- with far less pure motives -- will. In the end, he faces a critical choice. More important, he reaches back into his own tortured childhood to find a way to bring human frailty and empathy to mankind's new ruler.