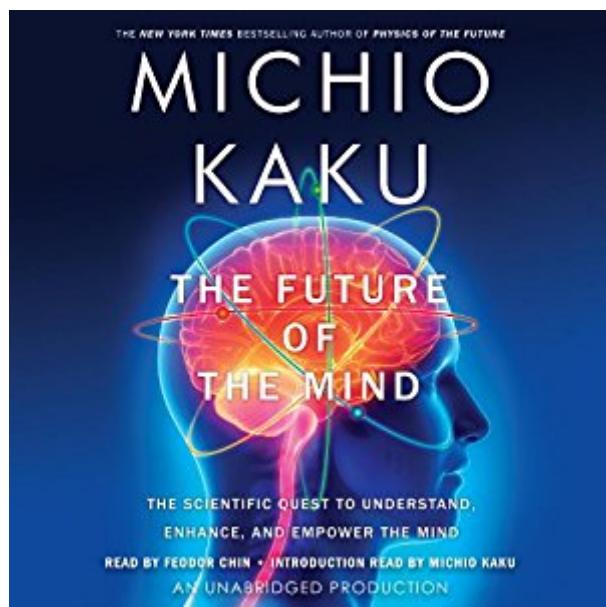


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The Future Of The Mind: The Scientific Quest To Understand, Enhance, And Empower The Mind



Synopsis

The New York Times best-selling author of Physics of the Impossible, Physics of the Future and Hyperspace tackles the most fascinating and complex object in the known universe: the human brain. For the first time in history, the secrets of the living brain are being revealed by a battery of high-tech brain scans devised by physicists. Now what was once solely the province of science fiction has become a startling reality. Recording memories, telepathy, videotaping our dreams, mind control, avatars, and telekinesis are not only possible; they already exist. The Future of the Mind gives us an authoritative and compelling look at the astonishing research being done in top laboratories around the world - all based on the latest advancements in neuroscience and physics. One day we might have a "smart pill" that can enhance our cognition; be able to upload our brain to a computer, neuron for neuron; send thoughts and emotions around the world on a "brain-net"; control computers and robots with our mind; push the very limits of immortality; and perhaps even send our consciousness across the universe. Dr. Kaku takes us on a grand tour of what the future might hold, giving us not only a solid sense of how the brain functions but also how these technologies will change our daily lives. He even presents a radically new way to think about "consciousness" and applies it to provide fresh insight into mental illness, artificial intelligence and alien consciousness. With Dr. Kaku's deep understanding of modern science and keen eye for future developments, The Future of the Mind is a scientific tour de force - an extraordinary, mind-boggling exploration of the frontiers of neuroscience.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“The Future of the Mind” continues a line of inquiry that Michio Kaku has been following with his earlier books “Physics of the Impossible” and “Physics of the Future.” The central question remains: what sci-fi imaginings might come to fruition, which of them are impossible given the laws of physics in the known universe, and what breakthroughs or discoveries would be necessary to achieve the achievable. Technology is the inevitable gateway to these advanced breakthroughs. Humanity has eliminated gross evolutionary pressures through technology—this might not remain true, but we can certainly not expect X-men-style mutations as a result of the foreseeable progression of humanity (which is more likely to be described by the horrible though probably presagious 2006 movie “Idiocracy” than it is by the X-men movies.) The theme of the book, as the title suggests, is the mind. As the most complex system that we know of, the human nervous system offers fertile ground for investigation. Among the sci-fi mainstays considered by Dr. Kaku are telepathy, telekinesis, false memories (think “Total Recall”), intelligence enhancement, mind control, artificial intelligence, and the nature of alien minds. Along the way he considers the challenges of reverse engineering the brain and whether consciousness could take a non-material form (e.g. embedded in a beam of light.) As always, Kaku’s book is easy to follow, even for the scientific neophyte. Few others write on the topic with such clarity. While part of Kaku’s book deals with the same concepts covered by Roger Penrose in his book “Shadows of the Mind”, the Kaku book scores much higher in readability. Of course, the flipside is that Kaku’s book offers less explanatory power. So if one isn’t looking for pop science simplification, “The Future of the Mind” is probably not for you. However, if you want the jist of the science and have neither the background nor the energy to digest the mathematical and biological nuance, you’ll find this book readable. Incidentally, Kaku is more optimistic about the ability to computationally replicate consciousness than Penrose, which the latter argues is impossible. Professor Kaku’s optimism runs through all of his books. He takes the stance that if one can imagine it--and figure out a technological or theoretical loophole around the known barriers --one can achieve it. Therefore, some of his discussion of what could come to pass depends upon theories about, for example, black-holes being true. It should be noted that Kaku is quite clear about the differences of opinion that exist about these theories and the role that differences between theory and reality could play in making science fiction into scientific reality. I enjoyed this book. I’ve been reading a lot about neuroscience lately—entirely on the pop science level—and found this book to be beneficial to my understanding of the subject. It begins by discussing

what is known about the brain and consciousness" it turns out that a lot remains unknown, but the technology of recent years has vastly improved our understanding of the brain, and it continues to do so by the day. The book also delves into the depths of what could come to be. There is definitely pragmatic understanding to be gained as well as outlandish, but fun, science fiction ruminations. For sci-fi fans and writers, it's definitely worth reading. I had many new conceptions of the future as I read the book. (I might suggest reading "Physics of the Impossible" first, which gives an overview many "impossible" technologies and explains how few are just flat impossible regardless of technological development and scientific discovery.) Many of the ideas covered may seem a bit eccentric, such as what first contact with an alien race would look like. (Kaku is of the notion that the transmission of an immaterial consciousness(es), possibly in conjunction with self-replicating machines would be the likely shape of such an alien presence.) I recommend this book for almost anyone. We are really only beginning to venture out of the dark ages understanding the mind, and this book provides an interesting map what might be possible.

I heard some Michio Kaku's conferences and i wanted to read this book because his way of thinking about science is so human and real so this book is like having Michio telling you his scientific-based ideas of the future, with that philosophical and humorous tone that he have. It will open your mind and will make you more conscious of where are we as humanity in terms of social and scientific development. Besides, as a fiction writer it gave me a lot of ideas for some text that i'm developing by the moment. Totally recomended for anybody with a bit of curiosity about the science and human mind.

With knowledge learned from brain mapping, scientists are hoping to cure Alzheimer's, Parkinson's disease, and mental illness. That's good. Some scientists hope we will be able to communicate telepathically (with the aid of a computer), make things move with our minds (with computer chip implants), make super intelligent robots that might be smarter than us (bad idea), and even put someone's brain into a exoskeleton/robot so that they can go on living after death. Yikes. They also want to mess around with the brains of chimpanzees so that they will have intelligence close to that of us. Another bad idea. I do like it that someday scientists and doctors might be able to help people with spinal cord injuries or brain injuries be healed and resuscitated with stem cell implants. This is a very interesting book, I'm not so sure I'm on board with all the things that scientists would like to be able to do, but I learned a lot.

I'd describe this book as eye-opening, to say the least. Like most people, I've had my fair share of futuristic thinking. Of course this is easier when you're equipped with better scientific understanding. After reading you would notice that author Michio Kaku did this well in the beginning of the book - before he entered unchartered territory. Being a professor and public educator, Kaku's didactic skills are unquestionably on par. He starts by explaining the brain and its different parts (e.g. Amygdala, Thalamus, etc) and the functions and purpose of each. He also introduces (or reiterates) to us brain-scanning technologies and their functions and limitations (EEG, MRI, etc). He also comes up with his space-time theory of consciousness and how he believes there's different levels based on brain structure and parameters. For example, level 0 consciousness is designated to plants because of their "lack of" ability to understand space, time, and social relations. I put quotations because he doesn't necessarily describe it as a lack of a ability, or give it any kind of negative connotation. Humans, on the opposite side of the scale have level 3 consciousness because we can understand space and time (our ability to stimulate the future and analyze the past) and posses a prefrontal cortex. Overall he describes consciousness as being the product of multiple feedback loops that ultimately accomplish a goal. This is reminiscent of Daniel Dennett's 'Multiple Drafts Model' interpretation of consciousness which of course is more sophisticated and less elementary than what you'd learn about consciousness in this book. Kaku eventually enters and explores the radical domain of possibility, the possible results of a better understanding of the mind. I'll list many: telepathy, telekinesis, mind-controlling, disease-curing, enhancing intelligence, entering dreams, artificial intelligence, and alien contact. The tone can be described as being conversational, at many times the author references his conversations with scientists who specialize on the particular topic. Although I dislike the importation of personal anecdotes in scientific texts, the author doesn't use them to prove a point or supplement an idea but rather to give a human touch and provide a consensus - pertinent point of view. There is indeed a lot to fathom, and although I can personally grasp a lot of novel futuristic ideas, I did have a hard time with some of the concepts in this book. I think some things are overly speculative and perhaps should have been developed further before being introduced in the book. This leads the title "The Future Of The Mind" to be a bit misleading. The word "speculative" or "uncertain" would be a more germane addition to the title, and do it better justice. Also, the content is not at least to the degree of high majority about the mind. What I mean is that many other things are discussed, like AI (artificial intelligence), societal implications, and research institutions. This isn't to knock the intellectual integrity of such discussions, but rather the elusive title. This is my only criticism, or rather importunity, to a otherwise well-written and interesting book.4.3

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