



Einstein's Wastebasket: The Future of Philosophy

Andrea Diem-Lane

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This book is a collection of distinct essays that explore the future of philosophy by critically examining ten key texts on consciousness and artificial intelligence. These reviews, several of which were published as stand-alone pieces on Integral World in Europe, explore the ins and outs of what self-reflective awareness is and what it means to be human in an increasingly digitized world. What is perhaps most telling in these various books is not where they will be right, but where they will be wrong and what they didn't foresee. It is always illustrative and deeply informative to look back at what previous prognosticators had envisioned twenty to thirty years hence. Nicholas Negroponte's prophetic tome, *Being Digital*, published back in the early days of the World Wide Web (1995) was right on the mark on many of his predictions, but what he didn't foreshadow (at least not as clearly and cleanly) was how certain companies would monopolize the Internet. Today, Facebook, Google, Amazon, Apple, Microsoft dominate the navigation habits of large chunks of the population. Moreover, few predictors realized how powerful Google search would become or how addicting smart phones would become to the general populace. So, books dealing with the future of philosophy and where we are heading technologically should come with a warning for readers: look to what is not being said and take what is being prophesized with some necessary grains of intellectual skepticism. Having been on the Internet since 1984 when I was getting my undergraduate degree at the University of California, San Diego, I am keenly aware of the amazing strides that have been made in the past three decades. I never would have imagined then how powerful our personal computers would become or how almost everyone would connect to each other hourly, if not minute-by-minute. One can only wonder in stupefied awe what the future portends for all us, particularly as artificially intelligent devices become commonplace. Einstein's wastebasket is a telling metaphor since we must be keenly aware that many of our present ideas may be half-baked and should be discarded, whereas other more promising purviews may open up new vistas that have yet to be hypothesized.

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