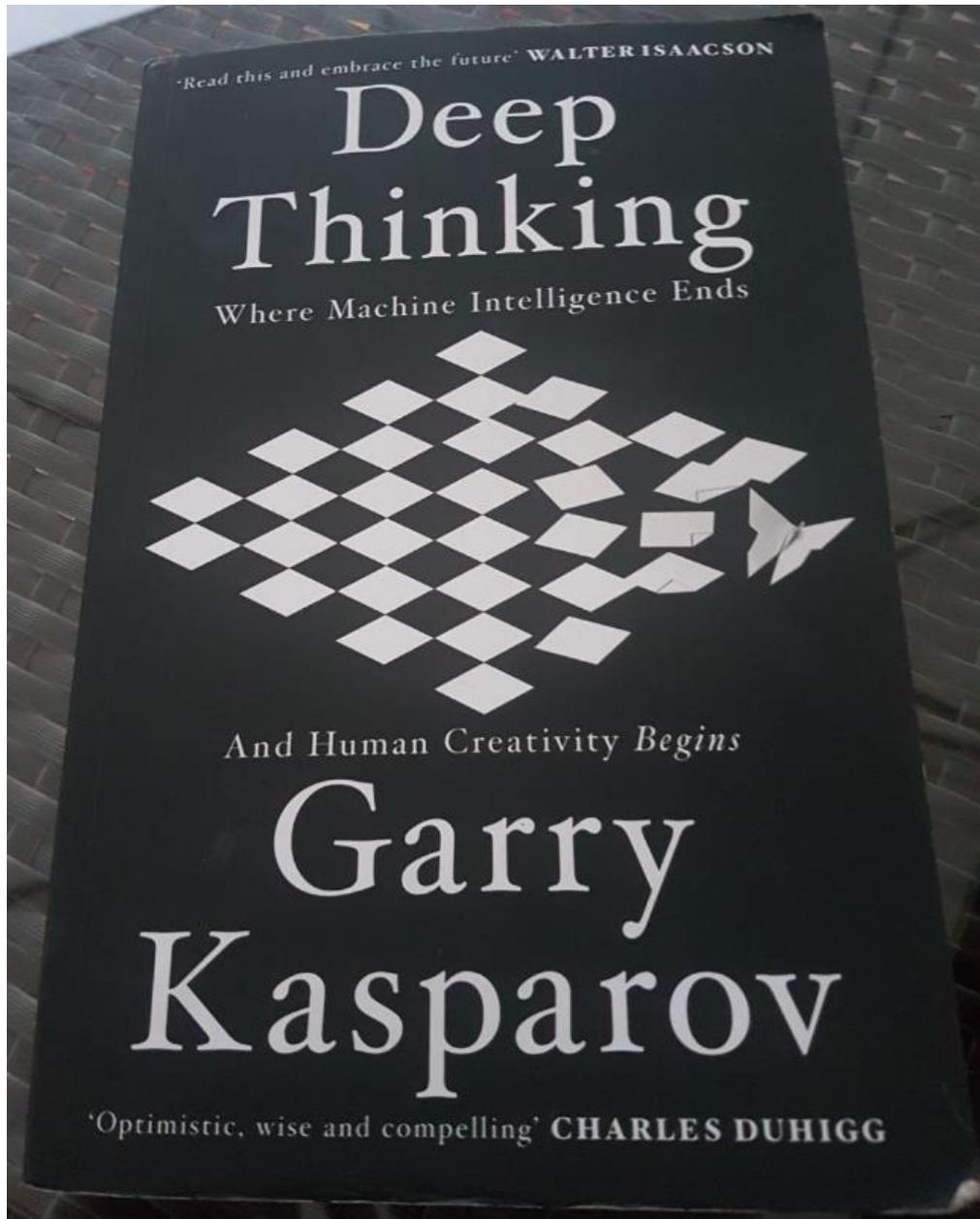


Reflections by Dr Advocate Lyndon Bouah – Deep Thinking by Garry Kasparov

As many of you know I love reading and try to stay up to date with the latest novels and literature relating to chess. At the beginning of July 2017 I bought a book entitled Deep Thinking by Garry Kasparov. I had heard about the book and when I saw it available at a local bookstore I grabbed a copy.



The book is about Kasparov's battles with Deep Blue and generally his take on artificial intelligence. It was fascinating to learn about artificial intelligence and what it potentially means for humankind.

Of course the chess gems within the book was worth the price (R315) of the book. Let's highlight a few. In a discussion on IQ, Kasparov notes that a character in Goethe called chess "a touchstone of the intellect" while most Soviet encyclopaedias defined chess as "an art, a science and a sport" (page 14).

Kasparov recalls the times he grew up in a Baku and what chess meant to the Soviet society. He regaled us with stories of his matches and his approach to life generally. He admits that he doesn't take losing easily but then what champion does?

He speaks about Alan Turing the English chess player who deciphered various codes of the Nazis during World War Two. And he refers to the test Turing invented. I will not spoil the reader by telling you what the test is. The 259 page book is well worth the read because it brings together the inside information about the matches Kasparov played against Deep Blue and other machines.

When I started playing seriously in 1987 the first computer I played against was something called Kasparov Saitek. I remember playing against it in high school during class as I could play against it without the board. It was of course beatable but gave me hours of fun.

Nowadays no serious player will be without a laptop and of course preparation is key. So artificial intelligence is very much part of the makeup of a Chessplayer.

The insights that the book provides have caused me to think about the psychology of chess. Today, as I am writing this, Grandmaster Bassem was knocked out of the World Cup in Georgia after obtaining a winning position in the previous game. The psychological effect of that must've been tough because if he won he would've become the first African player to cross 2700. I wish him well knowing that he will achieve this in due course.

It may be time we write about the SA Open of 2009. In that event three competitors played via Chesscube (founder Mark Levitt) and were based in Australia. GM Gawain Jones was one of them. They each played 11 matches against SA Open opponents having to get up in the early morning hours. I organised the event and we obtained the right of way from FIDE to experiment. South Africa and Africa has thus played a role in computer chess and internet chess in particular because this was the first national event in which competitors were based on two continents during the same event.

One of my happiest moments during that event was congratulating Grandmaster Amon Simutowe who was just awarded his title on 1 July 2009 this becoming the first Sub Saharan grandmaster in Africa. I am happy that he has since been joined by GM Kenny Solomon from South Africa. GM Simutowe also won the SA Open.

Kasparov's book is a must read for those that are interested in preparation for matches and of course just getting his take generally on artificial intelligence and chess. Chess at the top is not easy and we not to grab the knowledge and insights he offers in this book.

Regards.

Dr advocate Lyndon Bouah