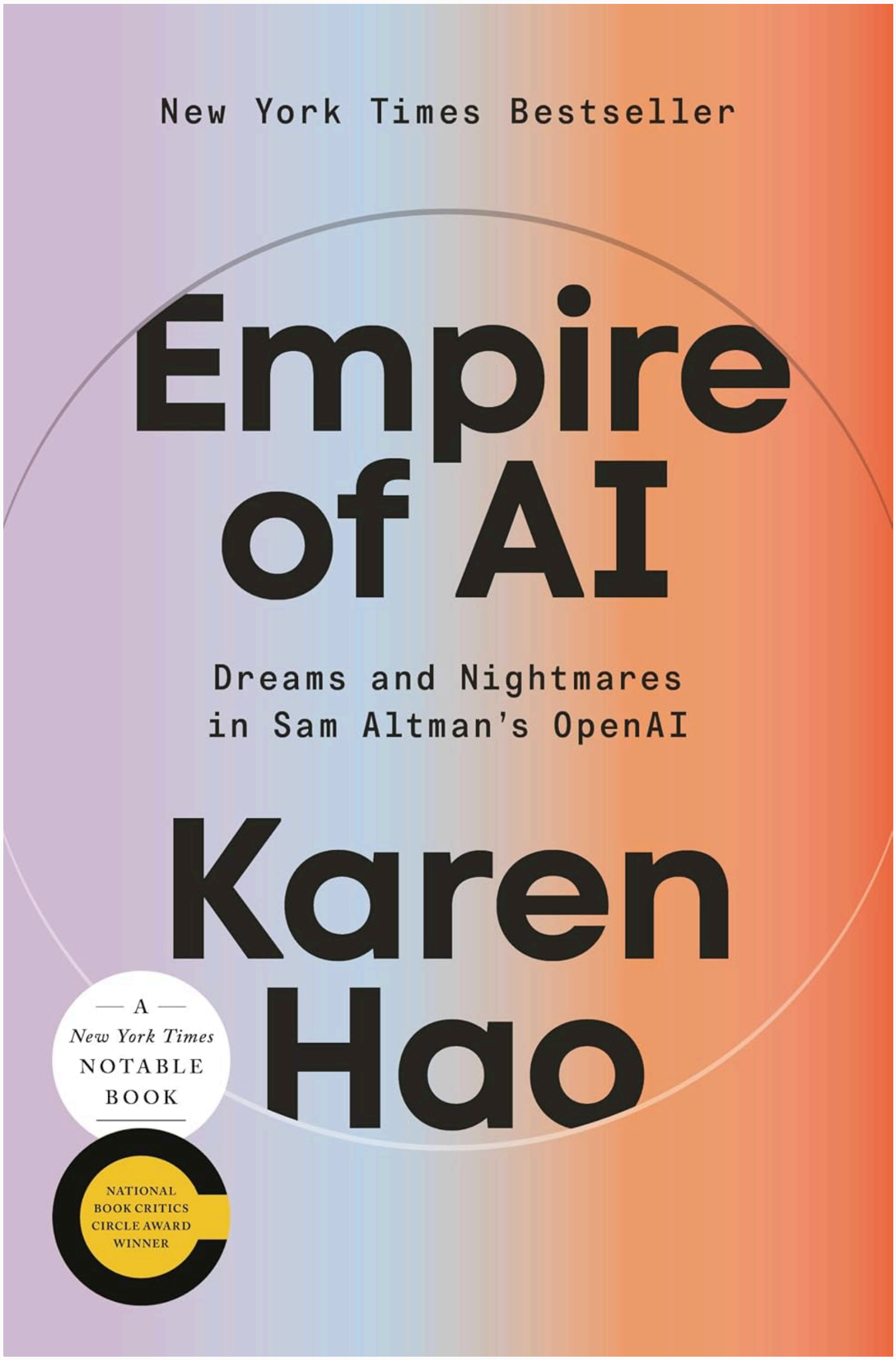


Book Key Takeaways

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Main Idea

The race toward AGI (artificial general intelligence) driven by large models has created a new kind of empire, concentrating knowledge and value, extracting resources, and consolidating power in only a few companies.

Who gets to shape AI?

AI Is a Choice

AI's current state and direction reflect decisions, ideology, hype, and the aspirations of a few people with power. Different choices could have produced a different AI picture today. (Still can!)

AGI Became a Belief System

AGI has no agreed-upon definition or a clear vision of what it will be. Yet belief that it can be realized creates extraordinary investment, urgency, secrecy, and risk. A hypothetical future is shaping the very real decisions and status today.

Scale Changed Everything

The dominant formula in AI world became: more data + more compute + larger models. Scaling improved capability, but demanded enormous capital and infrastructure. That pressure pushed OpenAI from an open nonprofit to a for-profit organization.

Control of Knowledge

AI empires concentrate technical talent, reduce open science, and keep increasingly important models behind closed doors. Control over AI development becomes control over what others can know about it.

Control of Resources

Generative AI consumes enormous amounts of data, labor, compute, energy, water, land, and capital. Much of the cost sits far from the people benefiting from the models. The cloud still has to exist somewhere. (Hence the analogy 'Empire')

Control of Influence

AI companies also shape how society understands AI through demonstrations, AGI predictions, promises, and warnings. Influence attracts resources. Resources secure knowledge. Knowledge creates more influence. A self-reinforcing loop.

Another AI Is Possible

Many real problems may be better served by smaller, purpose-built models and approaches that keep data and control closer to the communities they serve.

Start with the need, and choose the AI accordingly.

So What?

We should ask:

Who controls the knowledge?
Who shapes the narrative?
Who gets to decide next?

The current AI system was built through human choices.

Future AI will be too.