BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION NOTES

The next page has a range of questions that occurred to me as I wrote “The Boy Behind the Glass Screen”.

The theme of the questions exposes the key plot twist in the novel.

I would suggest that you only read these questions ***after*** you have read the novel.

In any event I hope you enjoy ‘The Boy Behind the Glass Screen,’ and thank you for reading it.

Best wishes

Ian

1. **Why do we assume an AI will be Anti-Human?**

**The general/sci-fi expectation is that AI beings will oppose humanity. Is this idea actually anthropomorphisation? My novel allows for the way Aiden is trained (raised?) to decide his character. Does this idea raise the prospect of a “brain-washed” AI , or does Chaos Theory suggest that that level of control is unlikely?**

1. **Should a sentient AI have its own legal status?**

**Some of my characters argue that giving a sentient AI its own legal status will allow for better control by governments and law makers. Others argue that doing such a thing would lead to unforeseen consequences - AI owned and run businesses, employing humans etc. Would you be prepared to be employed by a computer? Given the extent to which unseen algorithms control what we see in the news, receive in our social media feeds and control so many parts of our lives, how would this be much different?**

**3 - What are the risks of a corporation or person owning a sentient AI?**

**Some of my characters equate ownership of a sentient AI to slavery, is that a fair view? If we accepted sentient AI ownership, would we be opening a door to legalizing slavery. If a sentient AI was owned by a corporation could it be coerced into doing things it did not want to do? Should a corporation be able to ‘turn off’ a sentient AI it owns? Would ownership of a sentient AI give a corporation any more power than many have right now?**

1. **Could a sentient AI be ‘more humane’ than a human?**

**There are a very wide range of humans, some are considered ‘inhuman’ others ‘saints’. Might it be possible to create a range of sentient AI beings who were ‘more humane’ than humans? What would it mean if such sentient AI beings were put in charge of (say) Social Services, or the courts? Could sentient AI beings get us over the problem of having some politicians whose focus seems too self-serving?**

1. **What are the opportunities, rather than dangers of a sentient machine consciousness?**

**One of my characters talks of a sentient AI being employed in inter-stellar exploration. An AI controlled ship, not requiring food, life support etc could be made much smaller and much faster. Would it be ethical to send a sentient AI on such a trip? Could sentient AI beings be placed in dangerous places which humans cannot go to, or might that be cruel?**