

GREAT IMMIGRANTS ★ GREAT AMERICANS

featuring Yann Lecun

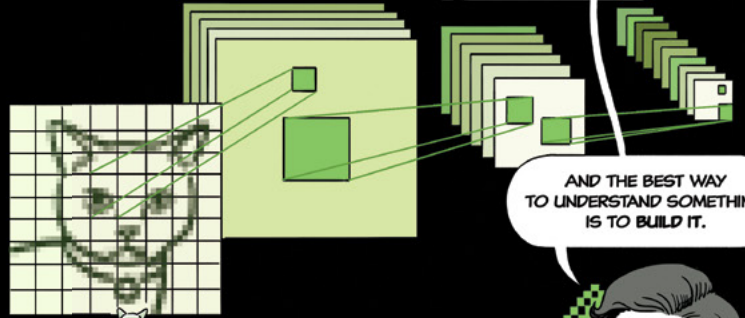


"WHAT I CANNOT CREATE, I DON'T UNDERSTAND."

THAT'S A QUOTE FROM RICHARD FEYNMAN, THE AMERICAN PHYSICIST.

PEOPLE HAVE BEEN WORKING ON BUILDING MACHINES THAT LEARN SINCE THE 1950S AND 1960S.

I TOOK ON THAT WORK MYSELF IN THE 1980S BECAUSE I WANTED TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF INTELLIGENCE: WHAT IT IS, AND WHERE IT COMES FROM.



AND THE BEST WAY TO UNDERSTAND SOMETHING IS TO BUILD IT.



CONCEPT AND SCRIPT BY JONGSMA + O'NEILL
ILLUSTRATED BY CHUAN MING ONG



SOISY-SOUS-MONTMORENCY, FRANCE, 1973

THE TECHNICAL IMPULSE IS A SORT OF FAMILY DISEASE, A VIRUS THAT'S COMMUNICATED FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION.

MY FATHER WAS A MECHANICAL ENGINEER AND INVENTOR. HE TAUGHT HIMSELF EVERYTHING ABOUT ELECTRONICS.

IN HIGH SCHOOL, I GOT INTERESTED IN ELECTRONICS TOO, AND BUILT CIRCUITS FOR SYNTHESIZERS AND SEQUENCERS TO MAKE MUSIC.

I SCRAPED ENOUGH MONEY TOGETHER TO BUY THIS VERY PRIMITIVE COMPUTER WITH A SINGLE CIRCUIT BOARD, AND I TAUGHT MYSELF TO PROGRAM.



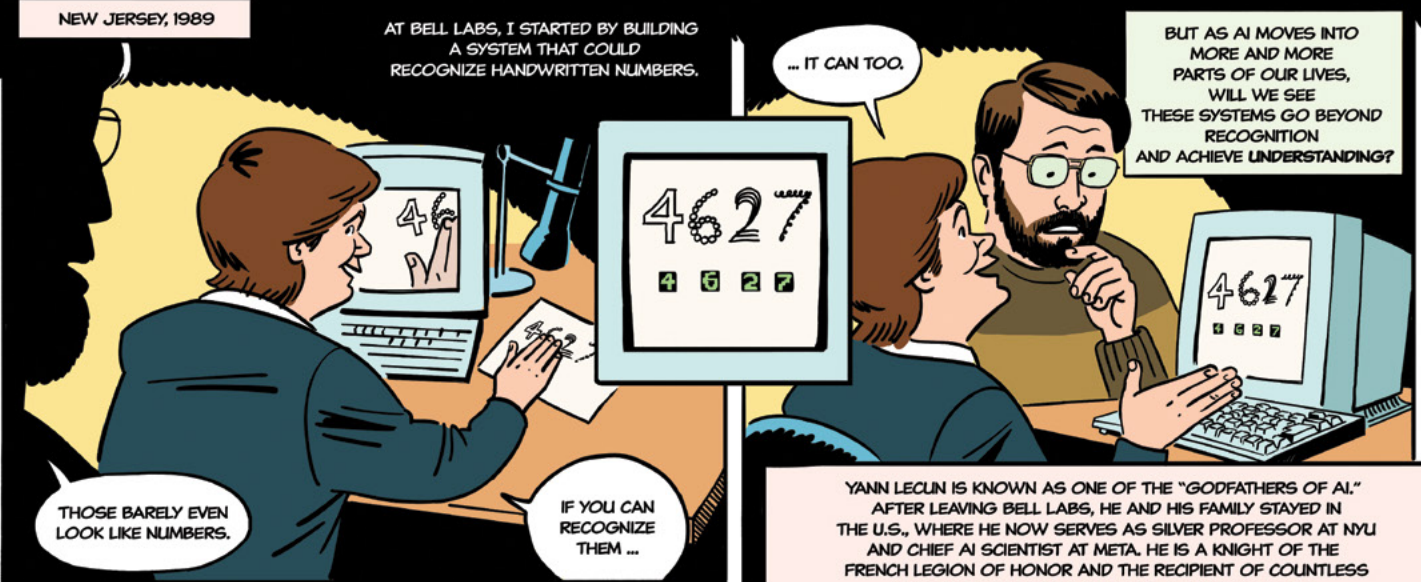
IN MY RESEARCH, I FOUND ACADEMIC PAPERS GOING BACK DECADES DESCRIBING THE IDEAS BEHIND WHAT WE WOULD NOW CALL AI



VERY FEW PEOPLE, AND CERTAINLY NO ONE IN FRANCE, WAS WORKING ON THIS!



BUT I DISCOVERED A SMALL COMMUNITY OF LIKE-MINDED SCIENTISTS, MOSTLY IN NORTH AMERICA, AND WENT TO CANADA.



YANN LECLIN IS KNOWN AS ONE OF THE "GODFATHERS OF AI." AFTER LEAVING BELL LABS, HE AND HIS FAMILY STAYED IN THE U.S., WHERE HE NOW SERVES AS SILVER PROFESSOR AT NYU AND CHIEF AI SCIENTIST AT META. HE IS A KNIGHT OF THE FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR AND THE RECIPIENT OF COUNTLESS SCIENTIFIC AWARDS, INCLUDING THE TURING PRIZE. READ MORE GREAT IMMIGRANT STORIES AT CARNEGIE.ORG/IMMIGRANTSTORIES

*23.6% OF U.S. STEM WORKERS ARE IMMIGRANTS. SOURCE: NEW AMERICANS IN THE UNITED STATES, AMERICAN IMMIGRATION COUNCIL, 2025