

Lifebox, the Seashell, and the Soul: What Gnarly Computation Taught Me About Ultimate Reality, the Meaning of Life, and How to Be Happy

Rudy Rucker

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"A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step," goes the ancient saying. This concept is at the root of the computational worldview, which basically says that very complex systems—the world we live in—have their beginnings in simple mathematical equations.

We've lately come to understand that such an algorithm is only the start of a never-ending story — the real action occurs in the unfolding consequences of the rules. The chip-in-a-box computers so popular in our time have acted as a kind of microscope, letting us see into the secret machinery of the world. In *Lifebox, the Seashell, and the Soul,* Rucker — known as the father of cyberpunk — uses whimsical drawings, fables, and humor to demonstrate that everything is a computation — that thoughts, computations, and physical processes are all the same. Rucker discusses the linguistic and computational advances that make this kind of "digital philosophy" possible, and explains how, like every great new principle, the computational worldview contains the seeds of a next step.



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