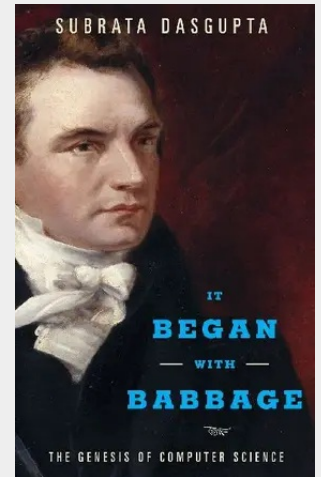


It Began with Babbage

The Genesis of Computer Science

As a field, computer science occupies a unique scientific space, in that its subject matter can exist in both physical and abstract realms. An artifact such as software is both tangible and not, and must be classified as something in between, or "liminal." The study and production of liminal artifacts allows for creative possibilities that are, and have been, possible only in computer science. In *It Began With Babbage*, Subrata Dasgupta examines the unique history of computer science in terms of its creative innovations, spanning back to Charles Babbage in 1819. Since all artifacts of computer science are conceived with a use in mind, the computer scientist is not concerned with the natural laws that govern disciplines like physics or chemistry; the computer scientist is more concerned with the concept of purpose. This requirement lends itself to a type of creative thinking that, as Dasgupta shows us, has exhibited itself throughout the history of computer science. From Babbage's Difference Engine, through the Second World War, to the establishment of the term "Computer Science" in 1956, *It Began With Babbage* traces a lively and complete history of computer science.

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