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Artificial Intelligence: Man's Friend or Man's Foe?

Artificial intelligence is unquestionably a breakthrough in science. It's intelligence and critical thought out of wires and microchips - it's man's imitation of itself. But will AI become humanity's greatest aid, or humanity's ultimate destroyer? The implications of AI are often contended, but its contributions to improving man's comfort - both for simple everyday life and the **inevitable** future - can't be ignored.

Artificial intelligence is human intelligence on steroids: the human mind can't compete with the speed and processing abilities of a computer. Thus, AI technology can be used to automate simple tasks. This is shown in major production factories, where AI is used to "automate the entire shipping process" in "shipping and retail industries" (Western Governors University). Since AI does not have to account for human error or inefficiency, tasks that take workers hours can be accomplished in mere seconds. Businesses are then able to produce significantly more at lower costs, bettering the economy as a whole.

In addition to assisting businesses, AI technology can assist everyday needs. Search engines like Google, Bing, and DuckDuckGo are powered by AI technology to intelligently guess the specific needs of individuals. Similarly, voice-controlled personal assistants like Alexa and Siri can aid individuals through a simple voice command. This is due to natural language processing (nlp), which is used to convert speech into individual sounds that, when recognized by the machine, are treated as specific instructions to be carried out (Gonfalonieri). GPS

directions, phone calls, recipes for apple pie - there are endless amounts of information that can be processed quickly in order to make everyday life easier.

But the possibilities of AI technology are not limited to the automation of simple tasks. Artificial intelligence, and specifically, a machine's ability to adapt to new information, can lead to incredible developments for the future of mankind. Transportation, for instance, is being dramatically improved with the introduction of self-driving cars. "Machine learning and visual recognition" helps vehicles react and adapt to surroundings instantly, adjusting to traffic laws and specific road conditions when necessary (Western Governors University). By reducing human error and involvement, AI makes driving significantly safer. In the medical field, machine-learning technologies can help with "the earlier detection of diseases," as seen in x-rays and MRI scans (Government Accountability Office). AI's ability to detect diseases demonstrates its direct involvement in protecting human life, and suggests that further improvements in AI technology will only lead to greater medical advancements. Thus, it is clear that AI technology is not only beneficial in everyday life, but potentially life-changing, by continuously contributing to mankind's safety.

In spite of all these positives, there will always be fear of artificial intelligence. Existential thought is intrinsic to man's nature. So it is not a question why AI's **omniscience** - AI's endless capacity to learn, and improve - would suggest AI takeover and the eventual destruction of mankind.

Technological innovation has always been this way. With every new piece of technology, concept, or idea, there comes the question of how that technology, concept, or idea will be used. This topic is often played around with in science fiction, where the introduction of new technology leads to a utopian wonderland, or, to the contrary, a dystopian hellhole. In Neal

Shusterman's *Arc of a Scythe* book series, for instance, artificial intelligence is seen through a utopian lens. The story is set in the far distant future, where the virtual cloud has transformed into the Thunderhead: an AI containing all the information of the known world and whose sole purpose is to aid mankind. On the complete other side of the spectrum, there's films like the 2014 movie *Ex Machina* which display the more sinister aspects of AI. In the movie, the artificial intelligence Ava develops a desire for freedom and ends up killing her maker to obtain it, typical of the many fears surrounding artificial intelligence. Regardless of the stance one takes, there will always be discussion on the topic of AI, as the idea of making machines sentient will always be fascinating.

Ultimately, the uncertainty surrounding the development of AI should not be its limiter. Although ethics should always play a role in the growth of new technology, there comes a point where benefits outweigh risks. When the U.S. created the first atomic bomb, for instance, it was decided that the means to end a world war outweighed the risk of having weapons that could potentially wipe out all of mankind. But, whereas the fear of nuclear bombs is grounded in reality (as shown by the destruction of the Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the loss of thousands of lives), the fear of AI takeover remains purely science fiction. Fears grounded in fiction should not be enough to overshadow all of the tangible benefits of AI, especially benefits that are felt in everyday life.

This is not to say that artificial intelligence should be welcomed with open arms, but that it should be accepted for what it is in the present moment: an objectively helpful leap in technology. Pondering otherwise is fruitless. Even if artificial intelligence does eventually destroy all of mankind, chances are, nothing in man's power would be able to stop it. The only

thing left would be to hope that masochism isn't ingrained into AI's inner programming, so that the end can be short and sweet.

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