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Are you afraid of AI?

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The term "AI" is "Artificial Intelligence" and it means a computer (or machine) that can learn and to be creative in applying that knowledge. This article is not really a lesson to be taught but a caution about our near future.

Many computers already have AI and the huge growth of AI cannot be stopped. The question is, can it be controlled? A very simple example of AI is a chess playing app or program. It can "learn" what moves work, and which do not and will always remember. Over time, it learns how to win every game.

From my view, here are the things that concern me about the future of AI:

1. Unlimited and growing knowledge. Eventually everything ever learned, all knowledge, will be available to all computers instantly. Unlike humans, nothing will be forgotten. Not only knowledge, but also any "actions" learned will also never be forgotten.
2. Instant communication. Computers communicate instantly with any other computer.
3. Self-protection. Computers guard and backup themselves.
4. Quick decision making, good and bad, much more quickly than humans.

The above concepts are already in place for most computers to some degree. Is this tremendous AI growth factor and characteristics things to be feared? Many smart people are very concerned of what may happen in the future but here is my perspective.

"Hacking" into a computer network may be difficult but not impossible. Eventually someone or some people will use their computers to hack into others and be successful to a degree that they will "take over" other computers. Thus, a computer terrorist can do a lot more damage than even a nuclear explosion. They will control what they take over, not destroy it.

Robots or computer machines will find humans inferior. What will they do with us humans then? We cannot think or react as quickly as a computer. We would not have all their knowledge. Would we not be a threat to them if we tried to turn them off?

No compassion or emotions. Machines do not care.

No regulations or restrictions. Someone may create an “emotional” program that has compassion and “feelings” towards humans, but like any program it may be changed, corrupted, or hacked.

I have not even touched upon the relatively lesser human impacts such as most jobs being taken over by machines, computers repairing themselves and building more computers, the control of our environment, resources, health, and much more.

Regulation and careful controls will be needed to prevent computers from taking over our world. Do you remember the three “laws” of robotics written by Isaac Asimov written back in 1942?

Here they are:

1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.”

Can you think of possible problems even if these laws ARE obeyed by machines?

On the lighter side, I wonder what the computer in my refrigerator would want to communicate to my car? Or what my computerized toilet will be saying about me on Facebook? In a way, I am glad I am living now and will not have to see if this all comes true. Or — maybe it already has come true and we do not yet know it.

I have included a short list of good movies concerning this topic if you are interested:

Colossus: The Forbin Project -- A computer take-over movie made back in 1970.

Ex Machina (2014) – Eerie and scary, not for kids.

A.I. Artificial Intelligence (2001) – An artificial boy believes he is really a live boy. Sort of a warped “Pinocchio” story.

I, Robot (2004) – Can a robot learn to have real emotions and feelings?

2001 (1968) and the even better sequel, *2010* (1984) – Can we really trust a computer, especially one that has been fixed?

Robot and Frank (2012) – A helpful robot companion and human acceptance of it.

A great long list of AI movies can be found, of course, on Google.