Essay five: Intelligence for good or evil?

The assigned media along with the chapter reading made me think to myself: will the things we believe to be intelligent always be for good? In the chapter reading, it is asked if we as humans should give A.I freewill. What would this mean for us if this happens? If robots are meant to follow the three laws of robotics by Asimov, that could lead to danger for us. Freewill is what allows us as humans to either choose right or wrong; depending on what we base our morals on. We know that it is not good to take the life of another human, but this does not stop humans from killing each other. So then, if robots with A.I know their designated laws, what is to stop them from breaking law one?

With freewill, the only things that would distinguish them from us is how they are built internally and how they appear externally. This reminds me of *Terminator.* They have freewill and eradicated the humans in the future. And yet, it was a cyborg that traveled back in time on his own freewill to prevent this. I cannot say whether or not it is a good idea to give A.I freewill, but I can say that we should expect uncertainty. The possibility of A.I intentionally defying the laws it was given; regardless of the fact it recognizes law four: The A.I is just a robot.

The BBC plant documentary changed my perspective on plants entirely. I do not simply view them as still and existing. I now view them as life that is bound to its territory with no choice but to adapt for its survival. One reason I feel this way now is when the documentary showed how plants would expel a chemical to kill animals that tried to eat it. Even though plants do not have a brain organ, it is as if they themselves entirely are a functioning brain. They look peaceful; we associate plants with lovely scenery and good vibes, but I believe now this is simply based on their appearance. If they appeared to be more beastly, then they would probably have the same reputation we give to grizzly bears: fierce and dangerous. This is an example of the phrase “looks can be deceiving.”

Another property of plants that changed my perspective on them was the fact that they showed examples of memory retention in the documentary. The experiment that placed the plant in different positions showed that they know when there is a change. Also, when certain leaves were touched, they would react physically; the biochemist then explained this is probably to ward off bugs and animals. My original belief was that intelligence can only stem from an organism with a brain, but this documentary has changed my perspective on this.

My new belief is intelligence stems from anything with life. That also goes for computerized life. I see life now as anything that is able to function on its own will regardless of its internal makeup. I feel that since we like to relate the human brain to machines and our interconnectedness to networks, a relation is all that is needed. Aside from plant life, my perspective on the possible intentions of extraterrestrial life has changed as well.

The reading of *His Master’s Voice* allowed me to have a more open perspective on what intelligence outside of earth could really be. In popular fiction, aliens are (for the most part) depicted to be invaders that wish to take either humans away from earth, or earth’s resources. Rarely do we see aliens that come to earth with good intentions. It is usually a snatch-and-grab situation; or they are here to stay (*district 9*). In the novel, this substance that the scientists believe can enhance human life causes Hogarth to believe the lifeform that sent the emissions to earth is kind; of course, there were others that believed otherwise. This novel’s take on alien life goes against the common narrative that any alien will be an evil alien. If there does exist intelligent life in outer space, maybe they could be the missing link to prolonging human life expectancy. We know a lot of the basics: eat healthy, do not smoke (or try not to at least), and limit drinking to give your expectancy more years. But what about an enhancement that would guarantee more life regardless of these factors? That is something that scientists have not figured out. So far, there is nothing we know of that can do this for us on earth. This novel gives some food-for-thought for readers. Maybe extraterrestrial life is the missing link to prolonging our lives. The only way to find out however would be to come into contact with a life form. So far, we have not been able to. But maybe if we give A.I freewill, the robots can gain the intelligence to help us humans to form new ideas on how to try to achieve this goal. That is assuming the A.I will not try and turn against us as discussed above. Both of these abstract ideas have not been brought upon by humans yet. It seems our decision to do so is the barrier that stops this possibility from happening. If we do decide to take this risk, I feel we should have back up plans in case our undesired beliefs come true. Nothing is ever 100 percent certain, and it is quite possible that A.I could mimic the behaviors of humans in our world. We know right from wrong, some do good, and some do bad to other.

It seems intelligence comes in many various forms; whether they be plants, humans, or machines, but one thing is for certain: we all are aware of what we are doing. Every decision the different types of intelligences make are to prolong their existence. With machines, I equate this to automatic software updates. As for plants, their defense mechanisms that kick in when they are presented with unpredicted stimuli; all to preserve what their essence is. There is no good or evil in this case. These programmed behaviors are defined regardless of what they believe in. These intelligences are simply acting the way they have been designed to. As for intelligence from outer space, we as humans can only hope that if we do come into contact one day, there will be no cause for concern. However, we should not expect benevolence. Anything is possible; the same way anything is possible within our reality on earth. Uncertainty comes around from every corner and to expect a predicted outcome will only shorten our vision.