What's wrong with AI? Try asking a human being

Amazon has *apparently* abandoned an AI system aimed at automating its recruitment process. The system gave job candidates scores ranging from one to five stars, a bit like shoppers rating products on the Amazon website.

apparently 似乎；显然地

The trouble was, the program tended to give five stars to men and one star to women. According to *Reuter*, it "penalized resumes that included the word 'women' s', as in 'women's chess club captain' " and marked down applicants who had attended women-only colleges.

Reuter 路透社

It wasn't that the programme was *malevolently misogynistic*. Rather, like all AI programs, it had to be "trained" by being fed data about what constituted good results. Amazon, naturally, fed it with details of its own recruitment programme over the previous 10 years. Most applicants had been men, as had most recruits. What the program learned was that men, not women, were good candidates.

ma'levolently 恶意地   misogynistic 歧视女性的

benevolently 仁慈地

It's not the first time AI programs have been shown to exhibit bias. Software used in the US justice system to assess a criminal defendant's likelihood of reoffending is more likely to judge black defendants as potential *recidivists*. Facial recognition software is poor at recognizing non-white faces. A Google photo app even labelled African Americans "*gorillas*".

recidivist 惯犯   gorilla 大猩猩

reoffend 再犯罪

All this should teach us three things. First, the issue here is not to do with AI itself, but with social practices. The biases are in real life.

Second, the problem with AI arises when we think of machines as being objective. A machine is only as good as the humans programming it.

And third, while there are many circumstances in which machines are better, especially where speed is *paramount*, we have a sense of right and wrong and social means of challenging bias and injustice. We should never *deprecate* that.

paramount　至高无上的　　　　　　　　deprecate　反对；轻视