As I gaze around, the world before me is foreign. I'm surrounded by humans that look exactly like me, and yet something lies beneath the pupils of their eyes, something extraordinary. The aspects that once connected human to human still lie beneath the surface. They engage in deep conversation and devote themselves to the potential of their kind. They display skills that, though previously incomprehensible to human knowledge, may be the only reason I am still here to recall this to you today. These biological advancements appear to have paved a new way for humanity completely. No, this type of life was only achievable through action. This life, this reality, was achieved only through opportunity, and would still be a reality unknown to humankind now if we had not taken that opportunity that once presented itself to us, so long ago.

We live in a world where inventions nearly outpace their creators. In a society where the whole world lies beneath the reflective screens of our cellular phones, creativity knows no bounds. But this period of experimentation also brings with it an expansive room for error, and can even lead to existential threats, risks that threaten the destruction of humanity's long term potential. Toby Ord, author of *The Precipice*, is a philosopher at Oxford University who began his career in the ethics of global poverty before broadening his path into the effective altruism movement. His book highlights the existential catastrophes we face as humanity enters a new era of technology, and lists the steps that humanity must take in order to preserve our future potential. Ord states that the biggest risk humanity may face next is artificial intelligence. In the earliest forms of artificial intelligence, humans found it easier to program computers to perform tasks known as the "pinnacle of human intellect," such as calculus or chess, rather than tasks we view as "effortless," such as recognizing a cat or picking up an egg. Even so, as the stages of technological innovation grew exponentially, humans were eventually able to construct artificial neural networks resembling those of the human brain. This stage of "deep learning," as Ord puts

it, “gives the networks the ability to learn subtle concepts and distinctions. Not only can they now recognize a cat, they have outperformed humans in distinguishing different breeds of cats. They recognize human faces better than we can ourselves, and distinguish identical twins” (Ord, 139). These inventions have gone beyond their initial goal, only calculating challenging calculus equations, for example. Now, they are perfecting abilities only known to humans. While this technology may help us, a new reality is emerging, one in which humans becoming cyborgs is no longer science fiction. Technology would not only then hold the upper hand in terms of intelligence, but also potentially overcome humanity altogether, leaving our future generations in the hands of an increasingly foreign power.

I, however, would like to propose that it is not the technology we must be wary of, but the human beings at the forefront of these creations. We must approach this new expansion of technology responsibly in order to curb any future existential threats. Though it is unlikely that the humans creating a technologically advanced future would do this without humanity’s best interest in mind, the possibility of major complications thus remains. Therefore, rather than completely transforming our human traits, might we instead enhance the attributes with which we’ve been uniquely granted? A piece of technology such as this will allow us to address these larger existential threats, such as climate change. Put simply, we would use a chip. After implanting this chip, it would navigate through our brain, locate where we display the greatest amount of potential, and heighten or magnify our skills within a given area that we inherently excel in. This chip would adapt to each person individually by enhancing their innate skills; it would not create new qualities. This chip would not sever the ties that connect a human with their own biological tendencies, but instead would act as a bridge between a human and their own potential.

Inevitably, new inventions call for new consequences, both good and bad. There will surely be instances where people may be less accepting of the idea that their abilities could exceed that of their own comprehension. They may believe that this direct approach is too aggressive. The worst outcome may be that we end up pursuing the very threat we are trying to evade: fully transforming the human race. Attempting to enhance any natural human abilities may imply far too much constraint on individual identity, and possibly fit us under the blinding ideals of a utopian society in which we ignore our own chance and freedom to pursue whatever interests us. The question then becomes, how do we prevent an outcome where we all become cyborgs? Scientists and ethicists need to explore this complicated matter much more, because we are the hands that make our future. Without a doubt, it is difficult to fathom the gravity of these existential risks, as we, the human population, have never encountered such a catastrophe. As Ord adds, "We can't rely on our current intuitions and institutions that have evolved to deal with small- or medium-scale risks… Evolution and cultural adaptation have led to fairly well-tuned judgments for these questions in our day-to-day lives, but are barely able to cope with risks that threaten hundreds of people, let alone those that threaten billions and the very future of humanity" (Ord, 195). It is in considering these big questions, as well as recognizing the detrimental impacts that these threats warrant, that we reach this desired preservation of humanity.

In order to truly grasp the implications of such a proposition, we must be malleable. To be willing to contribute individually will allow us, together, to contribute to a significance beyond comparison, as we are all a part of something bigger than just ourselves. Though my goal is to use artificial intelligence to be able to address existential threats, that which can help us might also be our downfall. It is imperative that we tackle this challenge with perseverance

unknown to humankind. We carve our own path, and though there are many doors that new technology can bring us, they can only be opened if these setbacks are confronted directly. We must ensure that the hands that shape our future potential are able to perform to the best of their best ability through exceeding their own projected potential. Now, opportunity awaits us, and all that is left for us to do is take it.