Review of

Why AI will save the world

By Marc Andreessen,
Notes by Alan Jacobs

[Marc Andreessen](#) is an American businessman, venture capitalist and former software engineer. [Alan Jacobs](#) is a professor of humanities at Baylor University.

Having quite a strong and critical opinion on AI and its current usage can get exhausting from time to time, so I decided to widen my horizon with other people's opinions and read Marc Andreessen's essay: Why AI Will Save the World.

I wasn't aware that I am reading the commented version by Alan Jacobs, but in hindsight, I am very happy I did.

I was awaiting a scientific paper, since I found the file on Google Scholar, but instead I found an essay filled with (contradicting) opinions of an angry man. Also, a very wealthy man, as I found out.

Andreessen wrote the work, to assure AI sceptics, that "AI will not destroy the world, and in fact may save it".

My key takeaways are:

- At the end of the day, AI is a computer program like any other and controlled by people, like any other. This is reassuring in a way, but we'll return to the people part.
- AI isn't killer software, liked described in movies like Electric State.
- Saying: AI could be a way to make everything we care about better. Is the most boring and lukewarm statement ever.
- Human intelligence makes life outcomes usually better and smarter people have better outcomes. Therefore, training machines to act like the smarter people, will have better outcomes.
- The author kind of pretends as if human intelligence has never had bad consequences. He is talking about subjects like science, technology, maths, physics, as if there weren't inventions which resulted in major destructions.
- The most raise in our standard of living has occurred in the past hundred years.
- AI is around already in many computer control systems, but it will rapidly escalate if we let it. As an example, he used ChatGPT.
- Andreessen describes the new AI era with
    - AI tutors for children, who will be infinitely patient, compassionate, helpful, etc.
    - AI assistant/coaches for everyone
    - AI partners for every scientist

- AI partners for every CEO, government official, coach, etc.
- For all of these areas he points out the significant growth in learning, achievements, knowledge and effectivity. How is the first thought on that abstract not: Who will be able to afford that? AI implementations are so expensive, what company will willingly supply not only children but the whole society with said partners?
- He says that the effects of better decisions by the leaders of the people are enormous, so this augmentation may be the most important. But how does one define "better decision". A "better" business-wise decision for the CEO will rarely be a better social decision for his employees. A "better" training-wise decision of a coach will rarely be a better health decision for an athlete.
- Andreessen then goes on to productivity growth, how that if AI takes jobs, that just opens up new job positions for the now replaced people and the creation of new industries and new jobs will result in a wage growth. This just sounds like the shallowest take ever. It literally takes one further thought down this narrative to get to the fact, that maybe I don't want a new job. Maybe I don't want to have to break into a new industry, only to be able to survive.
- In his mind, science and technology will dramatically expand and artists will be able to realize their visions faster and on a greater scale. I do really like Jacobs' note on this paragraph: "Do we even suffer from a shortage of stories, songs [and] pictures?"
- Where he probably lost me is when he started justifying AI usage in warfare, "when it has to happen". It appears, that he is of the understanding, that military commanders and political leaders declare war out of necessity and that AI advisors would greatly help reducing the destruction, by making better strategic and tactical decisions, minimizing risk and error. The next abstract literally cites: "Anything that people do […] can be done much better with AI. Maybe he doesn't understand the concept of war, as Jacobs suspects.
- His take that AI makes art more accessible for people who otherwise lack the technical skills to create is a whole topic on itself but I do still strongly disagree.
- He makes a lot of contradicting claims, stating that AI doesn't want and doesn't have goals because its not alive, but then also promising "infinitely patient, infinitely compassionate, infinitely knowledgeable, infinitely helpful" AI partners. That doesn't really add up.
- In the end of the essay, the whole narrative also seems to shift: he said before, that there will be no harm from AI because it's controlled by people (which prompts the question "do humans never want to cause harm?" immediately) but suddenly starts a hate speech on China and explains how their Ai usage is completely wrong and morally reprehensible?
- He talks extremely foul about all AI sceptics and addresses them directly at some point: "Most people in the world neither agree with your ideology now want to see you win:".
- Andreessen calls AI sceptical people a cult.
- Elon Musk is used as an example on how "the rich" will not end up only getting richer from AI, but will end up giving back to society? Elon Musk??
- He does state: AI will make it easier for bad people to do bad things. But he then calls for governmental surveillance, which he completely rejected before.
- 5 chapters have a question as title but he talks so much around the actual topic.

- The whole essay is written from the most money hungry perspective of an already wealthy man, which makes sense, because he is exactly that I guess? But it is highly disappointing.
- In his narrative, AI researchers are paid off to cause hysteria in the society.
- Him saying "AI is quite possibly the most important – and best – thing our civilization has ever created.", starting the essay with "I am here to bring the good news." and with "I propose a simple plan." makes him seem like a self-centred douchebag, who sees the biggest possible cash grab in the current AI hype, kindly.

I am quite happy I read the commented version of this essay, because I'm not sure how to react to that work on itself. I probably went into reading with the false expectation, but nonetheless, this is just kind of a bad essay.

If I were to write an essay about the impacts of AI on our society, and I were forbidden to use actual sources, my essay would probably live up to the same standard. I think it's rather an opinion than an essay that needs to be published, but each to their own.

In my mind this essay is directed to his fans only, probably entrepreneurial white men.

If you are the main profiteer from the AI hype, it may make more sense to enjoy the hype as it is, instead of trying to carry it forward with a sadly written essay.