Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to the simulation of human intelligence in machines that are programmed to think like humans and mimic their actions. The term may also be applied to any machine that exhibits traits associated with a human mind such as learning and problem-solving.

The ideal characteristic of artificial intelligence is its ability to rationalize and take actions that have the best chance of achieving a specific goal. A subset of artificial intelligence is machine learning (ML), which refers to the concept that computer programs can automatically learn from and adapt to new data without being assisted by humans. Deep learning techniques enable this automatic learning through the absorption of huge amounts of unstructured data such as text, images, or video.

Key Takeaways

- Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to the simulation or approximation of human intelligence in machines.
- The goals of artificial intelligence include computer-enhanced learning, reasoning, and perception.
- AI is being used today across different industries from finance to healthcare.
- Weak AI tends to be simple and single-task oriented, while strong AI carries on tasks that are more complex and human-like.
- Some critics fear that the extensive use of advanced AI can have a negative effect on society.

Understanding Artificial Intelligence (AI)

When most people hear the term artificial intelligence, the first thing they usually think of is robots. That's because big-budget films and novels weave stories about human-like machines that wreak havoc on Earth. But

nothing could be further from the truth.

Artificial intelligence is based on the principle that human intelligence can be defined in a way that a machine can easily mimic it and execute tasks, from the most simple to those that are even more complex. The goals of artificial intelligence include mimicking human cognitive activity. Researchers and developers in the field are making surprisingly rapid strides in mimicking activities such as learning, reasoning, and perception, to the extent that these can be concretely defined. Some believe that innovators may soon be able to develop systems that exceed the capacity of humans to learn or reason out any subject. But others remain skeptical because all cognitive activity is laced with value judgments that are subject to human experience.

As technology advances, previous benchmarks that defined artificial intelligence become outdated. For example, machines that calculate basic functions or recognize text through optical character recognition are no longer considered to embody artificial intelligence, since this function is now taken for granted as an inherent computer function.

AI is continuously evolving to benefit many different industries. Machines are wired using a cross-disciplinary approach based on mathematics, computer science, linguistics, psychology, and more.

Algorithms often play a very important part in the structure of artificial intelligence, where simple algorithms are used in simple applications, while more complex ones help frame strong artificial intelligence.

Applications of Artificial Intelligence

The applications for artificial intelligence are endless. The technology can be applied to many different sectors and industries. AI is being tested and used in the healthcare industry for dosing drugs and doling out different treatments tailored to specific patients, and for aiding in surgical

procedures in the operating room.

Other examples of machines with artificial intelligence include computers that play chess and self-driving cars. Each of these machines must weigh the consequences of any action they take, as each action will impact the end result. In chess, the end result is winning the game. For self-driving cars, the computer system must account for all external data and compute it to act in a way that prevents a collision.

Artificial intelligence also has applications in the financial industry, where it is used to detect and flag activity in banking and finance such as unusual debit card usage and large account deposits—all of which help a bank's fraud department. Applications for AI are also being used to help streamline and make trading easier. This is done by making supply, demand, and pricing of securities easier to estimate.

Types of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence can be divided into two different categories: weak and strong. Weak artificial intelligence embodies a system designed to carry out one particular job. Weak AI systems include video games such as the chess example from above and personal assistants such as Amazon's Alexa and Apple's Siri. You ask the assistant a question, and it answers it for you.

Strong artificial intelligence systems are systems that carry on the tasks considered to be human-like. These tend to be more complex and complicated systems. They are programmed to handle situations in which they may be required to problem solve without having a person intervene. These kinds of systems can be found in applications like self-driving cars or in hospital operating rooms.

Special Considerations

Since its beginning, artificial intelligence has come under scrutiny from scientists and the public alike. One common theme is the idea that machines will become so highly developed that humans will not be able to keep up and they will take off on their own, redesigning themselves at an exponential rate.

Another is that machines can hack into people's privacy and even be weaponized. Other arguments debate the ethics of artificial intelligence and whether intelligent systems such as robots should be treated with the same rights as humans.

Self-driving cars have been fairly controversial as their machines tend to be designed for the lowest possible risk and the least casualties. If presented with a scenario of colliding with one person or another at the same time, these cars would calculate the option that would cause the least amount of damage.

Another contentious issue many people have with artificial intelligence is how it may affect human employment. With many industries looking to automate certain jobs through the use of intelligent machinery, there is a concern that people would be pushed out of the workforce. Self-driving cars may remove the need for taxis and car-share programs, while manufacturers may easily replace human labor with machines, making people's skills obsolete.

The first artificial intelligence is thought to be a checkers-playing computer built by Oxford University (UK) computer scientists in 1951.1

What Are the 4 Types of AI?

Artificial intelligence can be categorized into one of four types.

- **Reactive AI** uses algorithms to optimize outputs based on a set of inputs. Chess-playing AIs, for example, are reactive systems that

optimize the best strategy to win the game. Reactive AI tends to be fairly static, unable to learn or adapt to novel situations. Thus, it will produce the same output given identical inputs.

- **Limited memory AI** can adapt to past experience or update itself based on new observations or data. Often, the amount of updating is limited (hence the name), and the length of memory is relatively short. Autonomous vehicles, for example, can "read the road" and adapt to novel situations, even "learning" from past experience.

- **Theory-of-mind AI** are fully-adaptive and have an extensive ability to learn and retain past experiences. These types of AI include advanced chat-bots that could pass the Turing Test, fooling a person into believing the AI was a human being. While advanced and impressive, these AI are not self-aware.

- **Self-aware AI**, as the name suggests, become sentient and aware of their own existence. Still in the realm of science fiction, some experts believe that an AI will never become conscious or "alive".

How Is AI Used Today?

AI is used extensively across a range of applications today, with varying levels of sophistication. Recommendation algorithms that suggest what you might like next are popular AI implementations, as are chatbots that appear on websites or in the form of smart speakers (e.g., Alexa or Siri). AI is used to make predictions in terms of weather and financial forecasting, to streamline production processes, and to cut down on various forms of redundant cognitive labor (e.g., tax accounting or editing). AI is also used to play games, operate autonomous vehicles, process language, and much, much, more.

How Is AI Used in Healthcare?

In healthcare settings, AI is used to assist in diagnostics. AI is very good at identifying small anomalies in scans and can better triangulate diagnoses

from a patient's symptoms and vitals. AI is also used to classify patients, maintain and <mark>track medical records</mark>, and deal with <mark>health insurance claims</mark>. Future innovations are thought to include <mark>AI-assisted robotic surgery</mark>, virtual nurses or doctors, and <mark>collaborative clinical judgment</mark>.

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