



# Opinion: Artificial intelligence should be embraced

## Evan Leong, Scot Scoop Editor

John McCarthy, who coined the term artificial intelligence (AI) in 1955, defined AI as “the science and engineering of making intelligent machines.” As these intelligent machines develop, people should embrace their emergence.

According to Statista.com, funding for AI increased exponentially to the point where \$16.5 billion were being invested into AI in 2019. Their emergence is supported for a reason, and that is the potential for AI to help the world.

Artificial intelligence has been around for many decades. Early examples of AI emerged in the 1940s, with code-breaking machines being developed during World War II. In 1951 the first commercially available computer emerged, and it could do skills such as basic chess.

The next breakthrough in AI came with the expert system in 1980. The expert system uses algorithms and artificial intelligence to solve problems that need a high level of human expertise in the field that the expert system is working on. In 1997, computers surpassed humans in chess, showing how machines had caught up to human intelligence.

Nowadays, AI can be seen everywhere, including in restaurants and schools. The future has much more to offer with the tantalizing possibilities of self-driving cars and robotic surgeries. The potential for AI is simply limitless, and there are so many ways people can use it to help others.

AI is better at some things, and humans are better at others. Humans and AI can complement each other in the workforce. AI is much better at storing information and performing complex computations. AI also excels in tasks involving lots of precision, whereas humans are more creative and better with emotions. Humans and AI combined working on one job is quite powerful and can accomplish many great things.

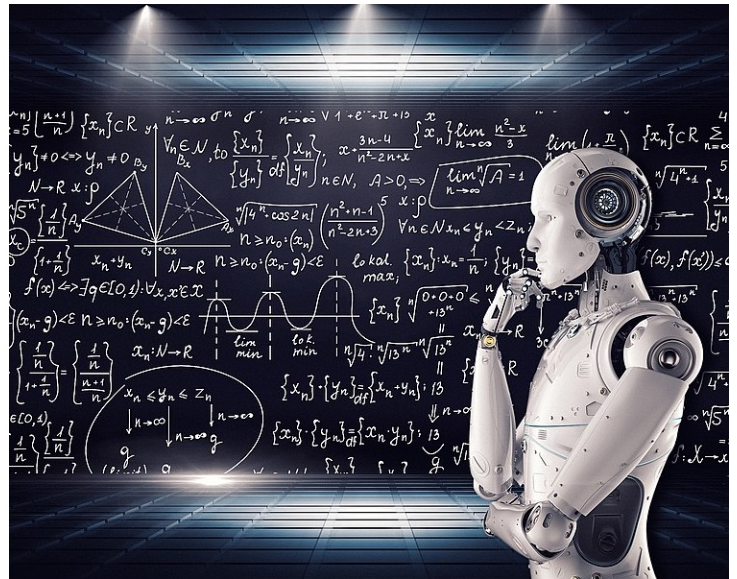
AI has so much potential to benefit humans. However, many disagree and argue that humans will lose their jobs to AI. They fail to consider that while AI takes over those jobs and does them better to benefit society further, humans can delve into other jobs that involve the things humans are good at.

A long time ago, most people worked in agriculture, but as technology progressed, people began to be able to delve into other, more specialized fields. Specialization will continue as people can find more enjoyable jobs due to AI being able to do the more tedious jobs. AI can take the burden off the people already in those tedious jobs. In addition, many more jobs will open up because the AI itself will need to be created and improved.

People, in general, resist change, and that has been demonstrated time and time again. An article by Harvard Business Review explains that people are resistant to change because of the uncertainty change brings and concerns about how their current situation will change. Fundamentally, these concerns about AI come from a desire not to change, but this change can have countless benefits for society.

Others have argued that AI can become harmful to society if placed in the wrong hands, including prominent AI creator Elon Musk. However, this is true for any tool, and the benefits of AI outweigh the potential consequences. The AI available now is programmed to help society, and the benefits already being seen are countless.

Overall, there is much to be excited about in AI. The potential benefits will outweigh the possible consequences, and these benefits lead to life being more manageable for us. Combined, humans and AI have the potential to accomplish many incredible feats in the world.



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# Opinion    The AI we should fear is already here

By Daron Acemoglu

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Alarm over the rise of artificial intelligence tends to focus too much on some distant point in the future, when the world achieves Artificial General Intelligence. That is the moment when — as AI’s boosters dream — machines reach the ability to reason and perform at human or superhuman levels in most activities, including those that involve judgment, creativity and design.

AI detractors have focused on the potential danger to human civilization from a super-intelligence if it were to run amok. Such warnings have been sounded by tech entrepreneurs [Bill Gates](#) and [Elon Musk](#), physicist [Stephen Hawking](#) and leading AI researcher [Stuart Russell](#).

We should indeed be afraid — not of what AI might become, but of what it is *now*.

Almost all of the progress in artificial intelligence to date has little to do with the imagined Artificial General Intelligence; instead, it has concentrated on narrow tasks. AI capabilities do not involve anything close to true reasoning. Still, the effects can be pernicious.

Narrow AI is already displacing workers. My research, with David Autor, Jonathon Hazell and Pascual Restrepo, finds that firms that increase their AI adoption by 1 percent reduce their hiring by approximately 1 percent. And of course narrow AI is powering new monitoring technologies used by corporations and governments — as with the surveillance state that Uyghurs live under in China. It is also being used in the U.S. justice system for bail decisions and, now increasingly, in sentencing. And it is warping public discourse on social media, hampering the functioning of modern democracies.

The labor-market effects of AI may be the most ominous. The U.S. economy once created plentiful good jobs — paying decent wages and providing job security and career-building opportunities — for workers with all kinds of backgrounds and skills. From the end of World War II to the mid-1970s, the United States witnessed not just robust employment growth but also rapid wage growth for both high-education and low-education workers.

This growth stopped long before AI. From the 1980s onward, median wages stagnated. Men with less than a college degree started experiencing sharp declines in their real earnings.

During that period, automation and corporations' off-shoring jobs to other countries drove the declines. But now AI is accelerating the trend, approaching or sometimes even exceeding human productivity in some very specific tasks in offices, warehouses and elsewhere. Many employers, focused on cost-cutting, will jump at any opportunity to eliminate jobs using these nascent technologies.

Some economists think fears of automation and AI displacing workers are overblown. They argue that as work becomes more AI-automated, the resulting productivity gains will spearhead labor demand in other parts of the economy, and sometimes even in the same firms doing the AI-driven automation.

If AI technologies were truly spectacular in the tasks they performed today, the argument would have some validity. Alas, current AI technologies are not just far from general intelligence; they are not even that good at things that are second nature to humans — such as facial recognition, language comprehension and problem-solving. This means a double whammy for labor, because AI technologies displace labor and don't generate any of the labor-demand boost that would have resulted if the technology had delivered more meaningful productivity gains.

Other applications of AI are likely to exacerbate the growing power of corporations and capital over labor, adding to these troubling trends. AI enables much better monitoring of workers — for example, in warehouses, fast-food restaurants and the delivery business.

The applications of AI in government decision-making, most importantly in the criminal justice system, are no less worrying. Existing evidence suggests that algorithms are inheriting and sometimes intensifying existing biases and inequities.

Then there is AI's damage to democratic discourse and politics. This is not only because of algorithmic misinformation in social media but also because the growing ability of companies and governments to monitor and manipulate the behaviors of millions of people, which is fundamentally inconsistent with true democracy.

Every new technology creates challenges, necessitating critical decisions that determine who benefits and who loses out, and whether the benefits justify the damage.

This is doubly true for AI, and not just because of its pervasive effects throughout society and impacts on areas typically untouched by other technologies, such as human judgment. It is also because there are many different ways in which the future of AI can be shaped: Will AI be allowed to work increasingly to displace and monitor humans, or steered toward complementing and augmenting human capabilities, creating new opportunities for workers?

These choices need oversight from society and government to prevent misuses of the technology and to regulate its effects on the economy and democracy. If the choices are left in the hands of AI's loudest enthusiasts, decisions that benefit the decision-makers and impose myriad costs on the rest of us become more likely.

The best way to reverse this trend is to recognize the tangible costs that AI is imposing right now — and stop worrying about evil super-intelligence.

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