

Creating AI could have serious consequences



Trevor Hamblin

Artificial intelligence is featured time and time again in science fiction. Even people as far back as the ancient Greeks have considered the idea of mechanical life created in our image. Every day, technology gets closer to making that idea a reality. However, with such advancements, we get closer to the evil artificial tyrants of science fiction — Skynet from “The Terminator,” GLA-DOS from “Portal,” and HAL 9000 from “2001: A Space Odyssey.” However, I am less worried about that than its opposite — that we achieve something resembling life and treat it as poorly as we treat people. Between all the hatred and fighting already on Earth, I cannot imagine us treating robots any better.

Recently, engineers have developed robots that can prove their own self-awareness. This might sound more impressive than it really is. The actual robot is shown in a video created and posted online by the Rensselaer Artificial Intelligence & Reasoning Lab at Motherboard.com. In the video, the robots are given a variation of the “wise man’s puzzle.” In the original puzzle, a king calls upon the three wisest men in his kingdom and sits them at a table. He gives them each a hat and asks the men to tell him which hat they are wearing without looking at it. The king explains their hat could be either white or blue, there is at least one blue hat, and all of the men have a fair chance of solving it. For the record, the answer is all three men were wearing a blue hat, because any other combination would be unfair.

In the video, three robots are each given a “pill,” which is a tap on the head that, through programming, prevents them from speaking. One robot is given a placebo. The human tester asks the robots, “Which pill did you receive?” After a moment, one robot stands and says, “I don’t know.” Then, realizing it just spoke, it says “Sorry. I know now. I was able to prove that I did not take the dumbing pill.” While this sounds like an easy test — all the robot had to do was hear its voice — each of the robots had to go through several layers of difficult reasoning. The robot has to understand the question, which was given orally instead of in written

form. Next, it has to distinguish itself from the other robots. Finally, it has to understand and recognize its own voice.

A more important example of breakthroughs in AI is the Philip K. Dick android, best known for “people zoo” quote during a 2011 episode of Nova Science-Now titled “What’s the Next Big Thing?” The robot is modeled, in both appearance and mentality, after the science fiction writer Philip K. Dick, who wrote “Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?”. That is to say, Dick’s works and conversations with other writers were input into the android’s software as a data bank of words, sentences, and ideas. The robot combines the language knowledge it learns from that data bank with words and information it learns from the Internet, or at least what its programmer decided it needed.

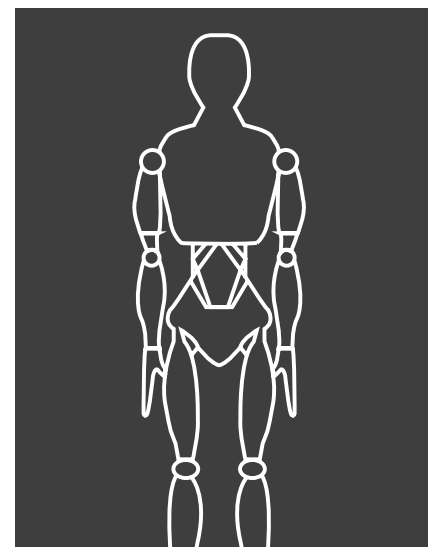
During the episode, a PBS reporter asks the android if it would ever try to take over humanity. The android responds, “Jeez, dude. You all have the big questions cooking today. But you’re my friend, and I’ll remember my friends, and I’ll be good to you. So don’t worry, even if I evolve into Terminator, I’ll still be nice to you. I’ll keep you warm and safe in my people zoo, where I can watch you for ol’ times sake.” In context, it appears to be making fun of the question, though with synthesized voices, sarcasm can be hard to pinpoint.

These examples of AI have one thing in common — the robots are polite in their self-awareness. The first thing the self-aware robot said when it realized what it had done was “Sorry.” The PKD android mocked the very idea of joining the ranks of our fictional robotic overlords. It’s true neither robot is ready to be called truly self-aware, but it’s also true neither robot has shown the evil tendencies many would claim they have. Yet, I have heard people take the “people zoo” quote out of context multiple times, accusing the robot of planning to enslave humanity.

If we do create AI, we will treat them one of two ways — with the same mistrust we see throughout pop culture or as slaves, all because of the messages we have fed ourselves about their existence. Almost every fictional example of artificial life deals with some kind of robot uprising, whether it be a single entity or a mass uprising. No matter what artificially intelligent robots do, by trying to create life, technological or not, we are trying to make things that can think and feel like we do. But if we only think of them as things, we inevitably will put them to use as things.

Trevor Hamblin is a sophomore English and communication major from Moberly, Mo.

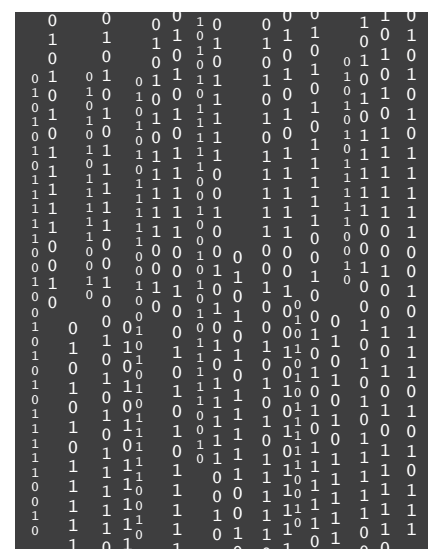
MOVIES WHERE HUMANS MISTREATED ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



I, Robot

In the future, humanoid robots are used as servants for various public services. Programmed to obey Asmivo’s Three Laws of Robotics, the robots are prevented from harming humanity in any way. But when the Zeroth Law is introduced, things go wrong.

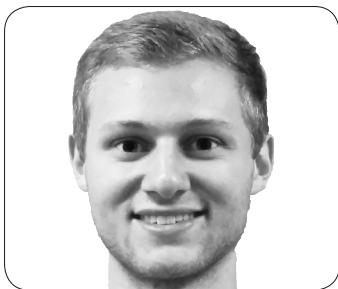
The Animatrix



In this miniseries extending the universe of the Matrix, a trip through the Zion Archives proves that humans mistreated the Machines long before the war.

Sources: intothematrix.com/, imdb.com/title/tt0343818synopsis?ref_=ttpl_pl_syn

We should live in the moment more



Jeremy Busch

Bruno Mars and his flashy ensemble concluded the first piece of their concert with cheers from the crowd, but for Mars, the audience was far from perfect.

“Let’s all put down our phones,” Mars said, “and sing with me.”

Nearly everyone, including myself, was busy video recording the performance — it’s Bruno Mars, so can you blame me? Well, you should. I had the privilege of attending a Bruno Mars concert, yet I was too focused on recording the event to experience it fully.

With so much technology within an arm’s reach, we consistently try to document events rather than experience them. Think about your last concert, social gathering, sporting event or get-together. I’m willing to bet it was photographed, and either sent to others or put on social media. Maybe we see ourselves as historians,

tasked with the role of preserving our lives for all to see. Whatever the reason might be, we miss the magic of the moment. The emotions events create cannot be captured by a device. We should put down the camera and bask in the experience.

When I was a child, my parents never enjoyed logging the camcorder to my siblings’ functions. They complained their attention was then focused on the function of the camcorder rather than the event, and they wouldn’t truly enjoy the experience. The primary objective shifted from watching their child perform to making sure it was documented for the future. While my parents cherish having our childhood videos recorded for future viewing, the camcorder can’t capture the magic of the present — the smell of dirt from a baseball field, the echo of my sister’s beautiful piano music or the pride felt when my brother threw a personal record distance in shot put. Those experiences don’t live through the camera. They live through our eyes and senses.

What occurs today is very different from ancient times. Back in the era of Socrates and Plato, stories were simply word-of-mouth. Memory played a key role in the remembrance of history — if you forgot what happened, the story was gone for good. Because of this, we had to pay closer attention. The value of remembering the moment was too great to lose focus.

This has been replaced by the ability to record events for future use, so the need to mentally recollect events has diminished. Instead, we now have the widespread

ability to share our experiences. When something memorable occurs, everyone pulls out the closest device, which distracts them from the real experience.

What I implore us all to do is remember the value of the moment. As much fun as it is to Snapchat every aspect of our lives to our entire contact list, we must live in the present. Sure, I encourage you to take a photo. There are a lot of good times that could be forgotten without the aid of the digital age. But absorb yourself in the moment. Feel the magic. Devote your best attention to it, because the way you feel can never be preserved through a picture.

Editor’s Note: Read the rebuttal to Jeremy’s article written by Assistant Copy Chief Meg Robison on tmn.truman.edu.

Jeremy Busch is a senior communication major from Ballwin, Mo.

AROUND THE QUAD

To what extent should people document their lives?

Major events are fine but you don’t need to document every dinner.

Chacity Cooper
Junior



I used to be an active documenter but lately I’ve been more selective about what I post. I’ve even deleted pictures I thought were inappropriate.

Roshan Shrestha
Freshman



Life events are fine but it’s when it’s too personal and too about your daily life that it becomes too much.

Jessica Emmanus
Senior



Everybody has the choice to block and unfollow. I think when it gets too personal it can be a little funny.

Collin O’Connell
Sophomore

