

# Is artificial intelligence a good thing?

"SMART MACHINES" ARE getting smarter every day and some say they will produce greater efficiencies in health care and education, creating a better world for all. Others worry these machines will eventually outthink humans, take over our jobs and battle us for control.

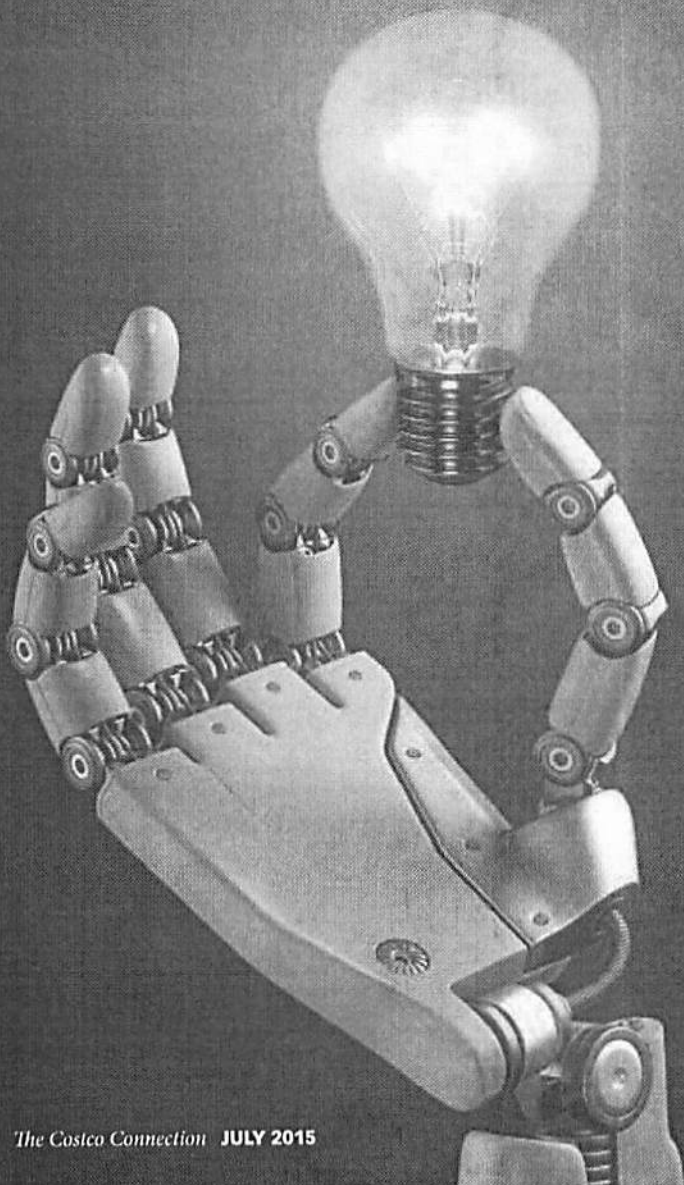
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**Oscar Rodriguez Gonzalez**

[Artificial Intelligence, or AI] can be beneficial in good hands, because [it allows] humans to evolve their thinking beyond trivial tasks.



**Robin Davis**

Artificial intelligence can never take the place of human interaction. There is too much that can go wrong if you depend on machines and software.



**Joey Carnes**

Anything that can aid in faster processing with less human error is a good thing.



**Danyalynn Dale**

Artificial intelligence is a blow to creativity and context-based solution problem-solving, which is ironic, since it takes creativity to create AI.



**Dexter Davies**

Artificial intelligence is a fantastic thing, though potentially scary. One of the biggest issues I see is in [how] we're going to deal with a decreasing need for human labor as machines become more and more capable.



**Christopher Kaphaem**

I'm more of a fan of natural intelligence, but that doesn't seem to exist much anymore.





**Dr. Peter H. Diamandis** is the Chairman and CEO of XPRIZE, a global leader in prize competition for innovation ([xprize.org](http://xprize.org)).

**YES**

ARTIFICIAL intelligence (AI) is the most powerful technology we're bringing online over the next decade, and it has massive potential to benefit humanity. In fact, today's versions of AI (Siri,

Google, Watson) have already revolutionized the way we work, play and live.

Google, Facebook, Amazon and Uber, to name a few, are companies powered by early versions of artificial intelligence. Google Translate uses big data and machine learning to translate among 90 different languages. Amazon uses AI to predict what we will desire. Facebook and LinkedIn use AI to predict which people we will want to connect with online. Every time we search the Internet or buy something online, AI is already at work in the background. It enables computers to understand what we are really looking for and provide us with the best answer.

IBM's Watson supercomputer made headlines in 2011 by winning *Jeopardy!*, and now it's helping doctors treat cancer patients by processing massive amounts of clinical data and cross-referencing thousands of individual cases and medical outcomes. Apple's Siri rests in the palm

of the hand, providing directions, making recommendations and even cracking jokes. And that's merely scratching the surface: In the near future, AI will be used as a primary physician and financial adviser.

AI will also become a personal teacher, capable of bringing literacy to children and adults around the world. Today the \$15 million Global Learning XPRIZE and the \$7 million Adult Literacy XPRIZE are both tapping into AI as the means to give hundreds of millions of people the tools to teach themselves basic reading, writing and numeracy in a rapid and scalable fashion.

We humans have the tendency to imagine the worst of technology, but ultimately we bring out the best. Thirty years ago, when scientists first discovered the power of recombinant DNA, we all imagined massive abuse and danger. The reality is that voluntary guidelines have ensured the safety of recombinant DNA technology and massive benefits for feeding the planet and saving lives.

In short, humanity will ultimately collaborate and co-evolve with AI. It will enable us to fulfill our dreams and help create a world of abundance for the 9 billion people who will inhabit the planet by 2050. [✉]



**James Barrat** is a filmmaker, speaker and author of *Our Final Invention: Artificial Intelligence and the End of the Human Era* ([jamesbarrat.com](http://jamesbarrat.com)).

**NO**

WE THINK about artificial intelligence (AI), the science of creating thinking machines, as just another technological endeavor. But AI is much more. It has the potential to threaten us with intelli-

gent weapons, take virtually all of our jobs and, ultimately, cause our extinction.

AI has kept us entertained with lots of fun, useful gadgets, such as the apps that help us navigate city streets, interact with virtual assistants like Siri and find answers on the Web. But AI also enables researchers to create battlefield robots and drones that can target and kill people without a human in the decision loop. This isn't science fiction: Terminator-like robots, and drones, are being developed today by China, Russia, Israel, the U.K. and the U.S.

On the job front, things aren't much better. Those self-driving cars you keep hearing about? In a few years they'll replace America's 4 million professional drivers. How will truckers, cabbies and delivery people make a living once vehicles drive themselves? Some 7 million Americans perform data entry and operations tasks for business. Those jobs are on the chopping block too, as automated systems perform them faster

and more cheaply.

Factory jobs may be coming back to America, but guess what? They'll go to robots as a new wave of automation takes over farm and factory work. And the middle class won't be spared either. A recent report from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology predicts smart machines will account for deep job cuts in the areas of law, financial services, education and medicine.

Autonomous assassins and massive unemployment are scary consequences of AI, but they aren't the worst. Right now, IBM, Google and dozens of companies and governments are pursuing AI's holy grail: machines as smart as or smarter than humans. In the next couple of decades we may share the planet with computers millions of times more intelligent than we are. The problem is we have no experience dealing with anything that smart. We humans run the planet not because we're the fastest or strongest animal, but because we're the most intelligent. When machine intelligence soars past ours, who will be in charge? Why do we assume super-intelligent machines will be friendly?

Nobel Prize-winning physicist Stephen Hawking has said that thinking machines pose a threat to humans' very existence.

If he worries about AI, so should we. [✉]



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