

AI. Artificial Intelligence is a buzzword eliciting both excitement and dread. The promise is that AI will improve human society with yet unimaginable future inventions and advancements. But seventy percent of AI researchers agree that advanced AI poses risks. In the short term, the risks are not futuristic machines of science fiction movies, but software AI on the internet, where an increasing amount of AI power is optimised toward inhuman values and when humans are not anymore the most intelligent agents on Earth.

after The Precipice by Toby Ord, Existential Risk and the Future of Humanity

"The development of full artificial intelligence could spell the end of the human race."

Stephen Hawking

"AI would be the biggest event in human history; unfortunately it might also be the last."

Elon Musk

"If you invent Artificial Intelligence, that's the last invention you'll ever have to make."

D. Scott Phoenix

"I don't understand why some people are not concerned."

Bill Gates

ALTRUISM. Altruism is the moral principle and practice of concern for the wellbeing of others, resulting in both material and spiritual quality of life. Altruism is a core aspect of many religions and secular world views. It is a virtue in many cultures ... a synonym of selflessness, opposite of selfishness. Altruism is an individual performing actions which are at a cost to themselves but of benefit to others, without expectation of reciprocity or recompense. Effective altruism encourages individuals to consider all causes and actions and to act in a way that brings about the greatest positive impact.

Effective altruism is a term used by the Australian philosopher Peter Singer. Altruism refers to improving the lives of others - as opposed to egoism, which emphasizes self-interest. Effectiveness refers to doing the most good with whatever resources are available, as opposed to only doing some amount of good; as well as determining what is the most good by using evidence and reason, as opposed to just doing what feels good or appears intuitively appealing.

It makes no moral difference whether the person I can help is a neighbour's child, ten yards away from me; or a Bengali whose name I'll never know, a thousand miles away. The moral point of view requires us to look beyond the interests of our own society. From a moral point of view, the prevention of the starvation of millions of people outside our society must be considered as pressing as the upholding of norms within our society.

Singer recalls a shocking video of a two-year-old girl in China who was hit by a van and ignored by passers-by as she lay dying. He asks: "Would you have stopped and helped this girl? Well, of course; but every day we don't help others is like leaving this girl crippled on the road. In 2012, six million children under five died from preventable poverty-related diseases like malaria. Does it really matter that we're not walking past these children in the street - that they are far away?" To Singer, there is no morally relevant difference.

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