

Why are we copying human intelligence?

Written by Mark Pavilons

Some people worry that artificial intelligence will make us feel inferior, but then, anybody in his right mind should have an inferiority complex every time he looks at a flower.

Alan Kay

Intelligence is defined as a capacity for learning, reasoning, understanding, and similar forms of mental activity; an aptitude in grasping truths, relationships, facts, meanings, etc. It's a manifestation of a high mental capacity.

These terms have qualities associated with advanced, living creatures.

We like to think we're the smartest critters on the planet, but history indicates otherwise. Granted, the human brain is an amazing gizmo, capable of all kinds of nifty and weird things. One could argue that you can't have intelligence without emotion, perspective and insight.

Computing intelligence ? the ability to process information ? lacks all of these.

And yet, artificial intelligence (AI) is all around us, albeit in less than human form. From our smart phones and self-driving vehicles, AI is critical in creating some major breakthroughs.

Should we be worried?

Elon Musk, a key investor in AI, said: "I think we should be very careful about artificial intelligence. If I had to guess at what our biggest existential threat is, I'd probably say that. So we need to be very careful."

Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg is a bit more optimistic.

"Whenever I hear people saying AI is going to hurt people in the future I think, yeah, technology can generally always be used for good and bad and you need to be careful about how you build it ? if you're arguing against AI then you're arguing against safer cars that aren't going to have accidents, and you're arguing against being able to better diagnose people when they're sick."

There's no mistaking our fascination with this field, and exploring it further.

Sophia the Humanoid Robot visited Toronto for the Ontario Centres of Excellence's (OCE's) award-winning Discovery conference.

Industry experts, and thought leaders from Ontario and around the world came to OCE's Discovery conference to highlight and celebrate the best in innovation.

Featured at the conference this year were some of the latest developments in robotics, including global media sensation Sophia the Humanoid Robot.

Appearing for the first time in Canada, Sophia addressed the audience and showcased her abilities to interact with humans in a profoundly personal way. She was joined on stage by her creator, Dr. David Hanson, founder and CEO of Hanson Robotics.

If you haven't seen Sophia in action, search for a video on the Internet. You may be fascinated, or a bit creeped out. I think the potential is amazing.

It will be some time before humans are sent scurrying into rabbit holes from our robot overlords. I'd recommend one of those back

yard, underground bunkers, just in case!

I love science and science fiction and can't wait to see what the future brings. I do wonder why humans are always in such a hurry.

I'm also perplexed by our self-aggrandizing nature, believing the human form is the ultimate in AI evolution. Do we really want our walking computers to look better than us, with perfect proportions and much nicer skin?

Some marine biologists may argue that dolphins are in fact the smartest creatures on our planet. After all, they turned their backs on terra firma and went back into the water. Most life arose from the bubbling primordial sludge and turned into more complex creatures. Many left their watery birthplace and came on land, evolving into a vast array of animals.

Archaeological evidence reveals that whales and dolphins evolved through time from four legged animals that were initially semi-aquatic, then mostly-aquatic, and finally to fully-aquatic marine mammals. They arrived roughly 12 to 15 million years ago, and evidence suggests they're related to hippos. But I digress.

Many cetaceans have bigger, more complex brains than humans.

They also have spindle cells, unique to only humans, the great apes and elephants. Many creatures have more advanced neocortexes and faster brain stem transmission.

Bottom line -is they're potentially smarter than we are.

That doesn't surprise me one iota. I think the only thing that gives us a leg up is our fingers and toes, giving us physical dexterity to create and build, mix cocktails, juggle and shuffle cards.

So why then are we fixed on the human form?? Why not create Flipper the Robot Dolphin, or Ronnie the Robot Elephant? They'd be much more fun!

God may have created us in his image, yet there are so many examples of biological perfection on earth that the mind boggles.

From simple plants and insects, to ocean-dwelling giants, our world is brimming with actual intelligence.

Why do we need to reproduce it?

I firmly believe our fellow creatures have a lot to teach us. Many scientists would likely agree. While I'm not a big fan of giant long-horned beetles (measuring 6 inches long) or foot-long centipedes, you have to admire God's handiwork. Simply marvellous.

Will dancing robots showcase human ingenuity, or merely give cause for lofty beings to laugh at our tinkering?

Maybe we should stick to learning the basics, and raising our collective IQs before making smart machines.