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More on (Or Moron?) Artificial Intelligence

By Donald B. Johnston

And now for something just a little bit different...

I blathered on, in a series of blog articles that no one apparently read, concerning the wonders of artificial intelligence and how it will transform the world we live in, bring in a glorious new day and make us all kings and queens in our own domains, etc., etc.

Now I want to make a pitch for something that we all need, and possibly even long for. I am referring, obviously, to artificial stupidity. But first I have to give you a little background.

Human inferiority

The inferiority of human beings, when compared with machines, has been well documented. It has even been demonstrated that the use of machines, and of technology generally, has weakened our race - intellectually, physically, emotionally, psychologically and in many other ways.

Don't believe me? Let me give you a few examples. First a low-tech example:

In my great-great-grandfather's day, no one thought of walking for several miles to another town, or of riding a horse to get there. (In fact, I still don't think much of it.) People walked everywhere. The result of all that walking was that everyone had a strong physique, a healthy appetite and a poetic view of the world. Walking promoted reflection and an appreciation of the beauties of nature.

It was all *mens sana in corpore sano*-like.¹

Then came the automobile and suddenly, people drove everywhere. They became weak of body, they ate too much, they debased their vocabulary by cursing and swearing at other motorists, and they lost all the poetry in their lives. In short, they devolved from the saintly to the moronic.

High-tech toys have done the same thing. I used to know my friends' telephone numbers by heart. Why? Because I had to rotate that little dial thingy on the telephone. (Which, by the way, was attached to the wall by a cord. I remember that we had to answer every call, because there were no answering machines and no call display. If we didn't answer the phone, we couldn't possibly know who had called.)

Thanks to modern smartphones, now we don't know anything. We don't know our friends' telephone numbers because the phone knows them. If we lose the phone, we can't call anyone because we never knew any phone numbers. We don't even know what streets our friends live on because the GPS on the phone takes care of getting us there.

I could give lots more examples.

The solution to our predicament - Stupidity By Design™

If I have managed to convince you of what you already, in your heart of hearts², know, then you will come to the inescapable conclusion that technology has made us stupid. All we can do to fight back is to make technology stupider than we are (if that can be imagined). Therefore, I introduce the idea of Artificial Stupidity.

By implementing the principles of Artificial Stupidity in all our modern-day technology tools, like smartphones, automobiles, computers, browsers, hospitals and other everyday things, we will be able to:

- Add up numbers in our heads again
- Multiply and divide numbers on paper, showing all the steps
- Remember our friends' and relatives' telephone numbers, and even dial them by pushing the little buttons on our phones one at a time
- Back up our cars using actual mirrors
- Parallel park³
- Go from one place to another without being forced to listen to a nagging voice that keeps stridently urging you to “make a legal U-turn”⁴
- Write stuff down on actual paper that won't “crash” or “corrupt”
- Read actual books made of paper, without needing tech support

Again, I could give lots more examples.

Are you with me, world? Are you ready for Stupidity By Design?

¹ That's Latin and has something to do with cleaning the male corporate washrooms, I think. Not sure. I'll get back to you.

² Except for lawyers. They don't have those things.

³ Okay, maybe not. But I can dream, can't I?

⁴ If you are in a relationship, this will not apply to you.

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