Snowden: AI Plus Coronavirus Is 'Turnkey To Tyranny'

Technocrat-minded surveillance companies are 'in the zone' with governments more willing than ever to buy their AI and surveillance technologies. Once embedded into society, they will be used against citizens long after the coronavirus has subsided. ⬜ TN Editor

Governments around the world are using high-tech surveillance measures to combat the coronavirus outbreak. But are they worth it?

Edward Snowden doesn't think so.

The former CIA contractor, whose leaks exposed the scale of spying programs in the US, warns that once this tech is taken out of the box, it will be hard to put it back.

"When we see emergency measures passed, particularly today, they tend to be sticky," Snowden said in an [interview with the Copenhagen International Documentary Film Festival](#).

> *The emergency tends to be expanded. Then the authorities become*

comfortable with some new power. They start to like it.

Supporters of the draconian measures argue that normal rules are not enough during a pandemic and that the long-term risks can be addressed once the outbreak is contained. But a brief suspension of civil liberties can quickly be extended.

Security services will soon find new uses for the tech. And when the crisis passes, governments can impose new laws that [make the emergency rules permanent](#) and [exploit them to crack down on dissent and political opposition](#).

Take the proposals [to monitor the outbreak by tracking mobile phone location data](#).

This could prove a powerful method of tracing the spread of the virus and the movements of people who have it. But it will also be a tempting tool to track terrorists — or any other potential enemies of the states.

AI becoming 'turnkey to tyranny'

Artificial intelligence has become a particularly popular way of monitoring life under the pandemic. In China, thermal scanners installed at train stations [identify patients with fevers](#), while in Russia, [facial recognition systems spot people breaking quarantine rules](#).

The coronavirus has even given Clearview AI a chance to repair its reputation. The controversial social media-scraping startup is in talks with governments about using its tech to track infected patients, [according to the Wall Street Journal](#).

A big attraction of AI is its efficiency by assigning probabilities to different groups of people. But too much efficiency can be a threat to freedom, which is why we limit police powers through measures such as warrants and probable cause for arrest.

The alternative is [algorithmic policing](#) that justifies excessive force and perpetuates racial profiling.

Snowden is especially concerned about security services adding AI to all

the other surveillance tech they have.

"They already know what you're looking at on the internet," he said. "They already know where your phone is moving. Now they know what your heart rate is, what your pulse is. What happens when they start to mix these and apply artificial intelligence to it?

[Read full story here…](#)

Does Big Tech Really Have The Power To Unseat Donald Trump?

Dr. Robert Epstein, a Democrat, has been writing that Big Tech will make it impossible for Trump to be re-elected in 2020. He misses the point that Big Tech are Technocrats intending to completely dominate society, everywhere. ⊕ TN Editor

When it comes to election manipulation, left-leaning American technology companies make the Russians look like rank amateurs.

No matter which weak candidate the [Democrats](#) ultimately nominate, and even with [Russia's help](#), President Donald Trump can't win the 2020 election. For that matter, in races nationwide in which the projected winning margins are small—say, under 5 percent or so—[Republicans](#), in general, are likely to lose.

That's because of new forces of influence that the internet has made possible in recent decades and that [Big Tech](#) companies—[Google](#) more aggressively than any other—have been determined to perfect since Armageddon Day—oh, sorry, Election Day—in 2016.

For the record, I'm neither a conservative nor a Trump supporter. But I love [democracy](#) and America more than I love any particular party or candidate, and [rigorous research](#) that I have been conducting since 2013 shows that Big Tech companies now have unprecedented power to sway elections.

While I cheer the fact that 95 percent of donations from tech companies and their employees go to Democrats, I can't stand by and watch these companies undermine democracy. As long as I'm still breathing, I will do everything I can to stop that from happening—and, for the record, I'm NOT suicidal.

The threat these companies pose is far from trivial. For one thing, they can shift opinions and votes in [numerous ways](#) that people can't detect.

Remember the rumors about that movie theater in New Jersey that got people to buy more Coke and popcorn using subliminal messages embedded into a film? Well, those rumors were a bit exaggerated—those messages actually had a minimal effect—but Google-and-the-Gang are now controlling a wide variety of subliminal methods of persuasion that can, in minutes, shift the voting preferences of 20 percent or more of undecided voters without anyone having the slightest idea they've been manipulated.

Worse still, they can use these techniques without leaving a paper trail

for authorities to trace. In [a leak of Google emails](#) to the Wall Street Journal in 2018, one Googler asks his colleagues how the company can use "ephemeral experiences" to change people's views about Trump's travel ban.

Ephemeral experiences are those fleeting ones we have every day when we view online content that's generated on-the-fly and isn't stored anywhere: newsfeeds, search suggestions, search results, and so on. No authority can go back in time to see what search suggestions or search results you were shown, but dozens of randomized, controlled, double-blind [experiments](#) I've conducted show that such content can dramatically shift opinions and voting preferences. See the problem?

Speaking of content, I'm getting sick of seeing headlines about Russian interference in our elections. Unless the Russians suddenly figure out how to massively hack our voting machines—and shame on us if we're incompetent enough to let that happen—there's no evidence that bad actors such as Russia or the now-defunct Cambridge Analytica can shift more than a few thousand votes here and there. Generally speaking, all they can do is throw some biased content onto the internet. But *content* isn't the problem anymore.

All that matters now is who has the power to decide what content people will see or will not see (censorship), and what order that content is presented in. That power is almost entirely in the hands of the arrogant executives at two U.S. companies. Their algorithms decide which content gets suppressed, the order in which content is shown, and which content goes viral. You can counter a TV ad with another TV ad, but if the tech execs are supporting one candidate or party, *you can't counteract their manipulations*.

Forget the Russians. As I said when I [testified before Congress](#) last summer, if our own tech companies all favor the same presidential candidate this year—and that seems likely—I calculate that they can easily shift *15 million votes* to that candidate without people knowing and without leaving a paper trail.

By the way, the more you know about someone, the easier it is to

manipulate him or her. Google and [Facebook](#) have *millions* of pieces of information about every American voter, and they will be targeting their manipulations at the individual level for every single voter in every swing state. No one in the world except Google and Facebook can do that.

In President Eisenhower's famous 1961 farewell address, he warned not only about the rise of a military-industrial complex; he also warned about the rise of a "technological elite" who could someday control our country without us knowing.

That day has come, my friends, and it's too late for any law or regulation to make a difference—at least in the upcoming election. There's only one way at this point to get these companies to take their digits off the scale, and that's to do to them what they do to us and our children every day: *monitor them aggressively.*

[Read full story here…](#)

10% INVISIBLE SHIFT
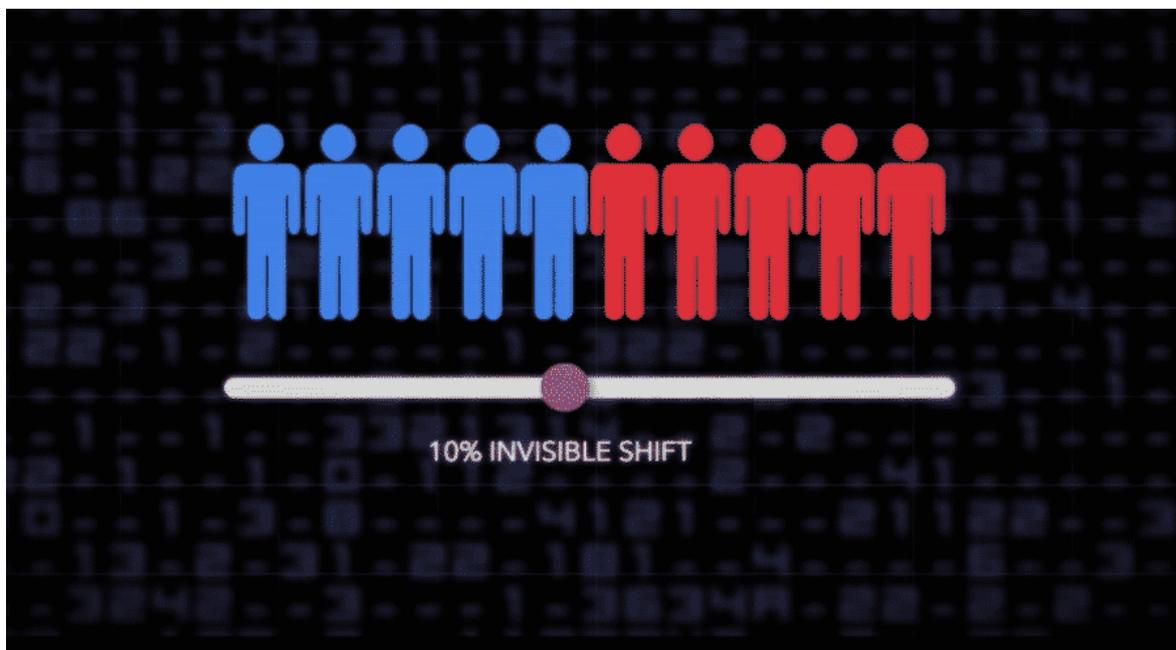
Google, The 'Creepy Line' And The 2020 Elections

Google has the power to sway elections, but is it already using it in the 2020 election cycle? The nature of the 'creepy line' is comparable to the 'Twilight Zone', where reality and illusion are blurred to the point that it is impossible to know for sure. ⬜ TN Editor

The Creepy Line is a particularly sinister term used in an unguarded remark by former Google CEO Eric Schmidt in 2010. In hindsight, what is most disturbing about the comment is how casually he explained Google's policy regarding invading the privacy of its customers and clients.

"Google policy on a lot of these things," Schmidt says about 45 seconds into the introduction, "is to get right up to the creepy line and not cross it." Time pointer needed.

The Creepy Line is an 80-minute documentary available through several options available at the link below. For now, it is available for free at Amazon Prime, but I'm not sure how long it will be offered there considering many current concerns regarding censorship of anti-establishment themes on various social media platforms. This film offers a very frank look at the number one source of news in our country: Facebook and Google.

Early in the film, you will discover how Google acquired an enormous and permanent cache of data about users. Initially, the data was used to refine search algorithms used to help index the websites and information uploaded to the world wide web. Now, however, it is used to fine-tune ads and content that most suits your interests, storing the information to better provide content suggestions for you. But, this film will give you a really disquieting idea (*at least it should*) about what else they may be doing with that data.

Initially, Google was simply the most popular Search engine, basically the largest available "indexing" algorithm on the net. Then, Google came

up with Google Chrome, a browser, to track and log not only what you look for but also where you go and every keystroke you make while there. In fact, Google realized they could serve you best if they know what you are doing even when offline, which is why the the Android system can track you everywhere you take your phone. With all the free apps available and used globally, Google has a very accurate picture of what everyone's daily life looks like anywhere in the world.

At intervals during the presentation, Professor Jordan Peterson offers insight from his own experience with social media and agenda setting. For those unfamiliar with Peterson, he was propelled into fame when he very publicly refused to use the new gender pronouns approved by Canada's Political Correct Policy. Peterson's outspoken refusal to yield to the thought police led to him being interviewed as being a spokesman for the Millennial Mindset, especially their willingness to accept new technology without questioning it.

"These are all *free* services but obviously they're not," notes Peterson, during his commentary, as he discusses the impact upon his life his sudden notoriety and the negative publicity Google and You Tube caused for him. He discusses his own battle with depression as well as insights into his daughter's experiences with social media, which gives him special psychiatric insight into teenage (millennial) angst, perhaps. Some may find his frank openness about the issues off-putting, but he comes across to me as a man who has walked through hell and doesn't *want* to talk about it, but has decided he *will do so,* if you are interested. I find Peterson's point of view extremely relevant, especially in light of the the news regarding Peak Prosperity's de-platforming today and the implications for our own sources of information going forward.

He is not the main speaker during the film, but Peterson does an excellent job explaining how the surveillance business model works. This leads to a discussion of how Google Maps, Google Docs, and the use of Gmail (*even drafts of emails you don't send!*) combine together to form and shape your thoughts and behavior, similar to a bunch of people in a control room with dials which monitor and control your every interaction with the world. (15:28)

Less than ten minutes into the movie, you might have already decided to turn to non-Google search engines, but there is no hope of your retrieving any information they already have on you. It belongs to them, a legal point discussed several times during the presentation.

[Read full story here…](#)

Super-AI Might Emerge Like Coronavirus To Destroy Civilization

The very same Technocrats who brought us AI in the first place are now pondering whether or not a 'super-AI' could suddenly emerge that would destroy civilization. For a more reliable answer, perhaps they should ask Alexa. ⊡ TN Editor

CEO of Allen Institute for AI, Professor Oren Etzioni, issued a series of

potential warning signs that would alert us to "super-intelligence" being around the corner.

Humans must be ready for signs of robotic super-intelligence but should have enough time to address them, a top computer scientist has warned.

Oren Etzioni, CEO of Allen Institute for AI, penned a recent paper titled: "How to know if [artificial intelligence](#) is about to destroy civilisation."

He wrote: "Could we wake up one morning dumbstruck that a super-powerful AI has emerged, with disastrous consequences?

"Books like Superintelligence by Nick Bostrom and Life 3.0 by Max Tegmark, as well as more recent articles, argue that malevolent super-intelligence is an existential risk for humanity.

"But one can speculate endlessly. It's better to ask a more concrete, empirical question: What would alert us that super-intelligence is indeed around the corner?"

He likened warning signs to canaries in coal mines, which were used to detect carbon monoxide because they would collapse.

Prof Etzioni argued these warning signs come when AI programmes develop a new capability.

He continued for MIT Review: "Could the famous Turing test serve as a canary? The test, invented by Alan Turing in 1950, posits that human-level AI will be achieved when a person can't distinguish conversing with a human from conversing with a computer.

"It's an important test, but it's not a canary; it is, rather, the sign that human-level AI has already arrived.

"Many computer scientists believe that if that moment does arrive, superintelligence will quickly follow. We need more intermediate milestones."

But he did warn that the "automatic formulation of learning problems" would be the first canary, followed by self-driving cars.

Brookings: Whoever Wins The AI Race Will Rule The World

It will not be the intelligence of men who will run the future world, but rather an artificial intelligence programmed to create a global Scientific Dictatorship. This is the nature and future of Technocracy.

The Brookings Institution is an old-line establishment think-tank closely aligned with the Trilateral Commission that originally conceived the New International Economic Order; today this is known as Sustainable Development, aka Technocracy.

The underlying implication is that there will be a winner in AI that will rule the world. It doesn't really matter who is controlling it, because the whole world will succumb. ⎯ TN Editor

A couple of years ago, [Vladimir Putin warned Russians](#) that the country that led in technologies using artificial intelligence will dominate the globe. He was right to be worried. Russia is now a minor player, and the race seems now to be mainly between the United States and China. But don't count out the European Union just yet; the EU is still a fifth of the world economy, and it has underappreciated strengths. Technological leadership will require big **digital investments**, rapid **business process innovation**, and efficient **tax and transfer systems**. China appears to have the edge in the first, the U.S. in the second, and Western Europe in the third. One out of three won't do, and even two out three will not be enough; whoever does all three best will dominate the rest.

We are on the cusp of colossal changes. But you don't have to take Mr. Putin's word for it, nor mine. This is what Erik Brynjolfsson, director of the MIT Initiative on the Digital Economy and a serious student of the effects of digital technologies, [says:](#)

"This is a moment of choice and opportunity. It could be the best 10 years ahead of us that we have ever had in human history or one of the worst, because we have more power than we have ever had before."

To understand why this is a special time, we need to know how this wave of technologies is different from the ones that came before and how it is the same. We need to know what these technologies mean for people and businesses. And we need to know what governments can do and what they've been doing. With my colleagues Wolfgang Fengler, Kenan Karakülah, and Ravtosh Bal, I have been trying to whittle the research of scholars such as David Autor, Erik Brynjolfsson, and Diego Comin down to its lessons for laymen. This blog utilizes the work to forecast trends during the next decade.

4 WAVES, 3 FACTS

It is useful to think of technical change as having come in four waves since the 1800s, brought about by a sequence of "general purpose technologies" (GPTs). GPTs are best described by [economists](#) as "changes that transform both household life and the ways in which firms

conduct business." The four most important GPTs of the last two centuries were the steam engine, electric power, information technology (IT), and artificial intelligence (AI).

All these GPTs inspired complementary innovations and changes in business processes. The robust and most relevant facts about technological progress have to do with its pace, prerequisites, and problems:

- Technological change has been getting quicker. While the pace of invention may not have accelerated, the time between invention and implementation has been shrinking. While average implementation lags are difficult to measure precisely, it would not be a gross oversimplification to say that they have been cut in half with each GPT wave. Based on the evidence, the time between invention and widespread use was cut from about 80 years for the steam engine to 40 years for electricity, and then to about 20 years for IT (Figure 1). There are reasons to believe that the implementation lag for AI-related technologies will be about 10 years. With technological change speeding up and first-mover advantages as big as they have always been, the need for large and coordinated investments is growing.
- Leapfrogging is practically impossible. While a special purpose technology such as landline telephones can be skipped in favor of a new technology that does the same thing such as, say, mobile phones, it is difficult for countries to leapfrog over general purpose technologies. For a country to overtake another, it must first catch up. Technological advancement is a cumulative process. Business process innovations needed to utilize the steam engine were necessary for firms to take advantage of electric power. More obviously, electricity was a precondition for information technology. Regulations that facilitate or impede technical progress, education and infrastructure, and attitudes toward the social change that accompanies new technologies matter as much as the technologies, pointing to the need for [complementary policies] that shape the economy and society.

- Automation is labor-share reducing, not labor displacing. While the most commonly expressed concern today is that the spread of artificial intelligence will replace workers with smart machines, the effects of earlier GPTs are better summarized as reducing the share of labor earnings in value added. But the evidence also suggests that since the 1970s, automation in relatively advanced economies has put pressure on labor earnings. Put another way, the concern should not be widespread unemployment but the fact that incomes are becoming increasingly skewed in favor of capital over labor. This means that countries that have efficient arrangements for addressing distributional concerns have an advantage over those that don't.

Read full story here...
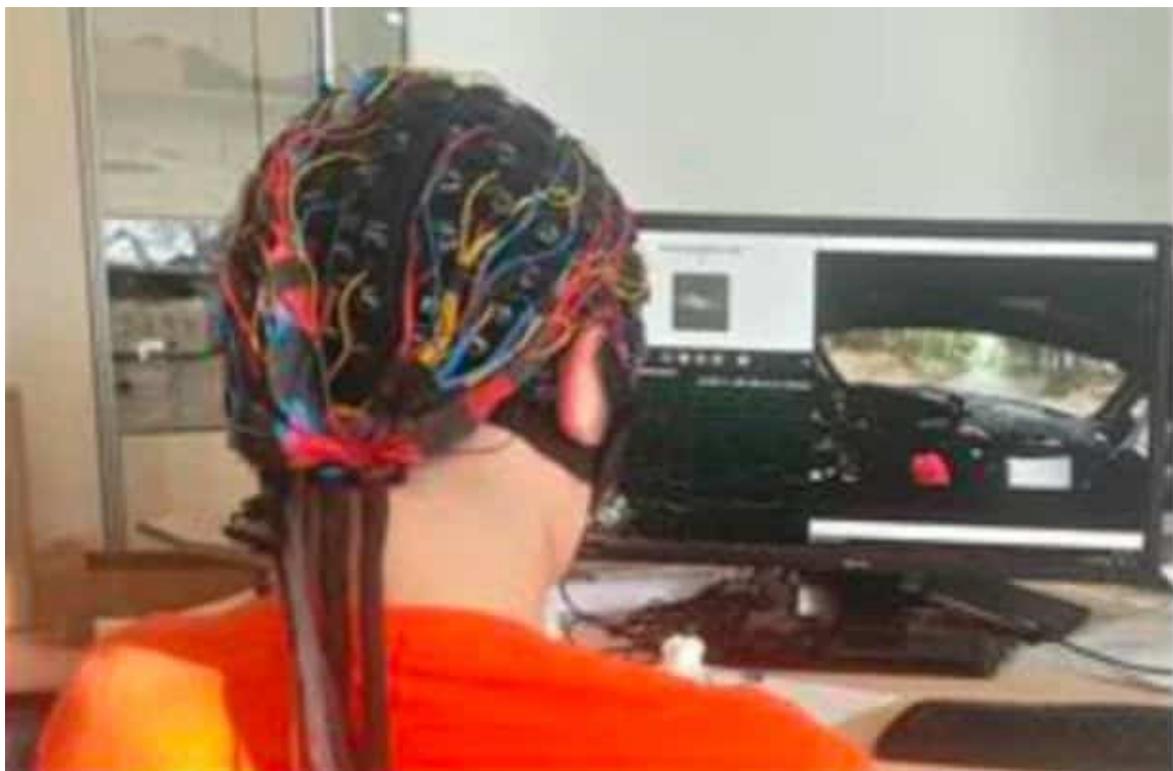
AI Reads Mind, Creates Video Of Your Thoughts

Scientists claim that AI can learn what you are thinking by analyzing brain impulses, and then reproduce the image on a video. Rudimentary as it is, it could break down the most private enclave of humanity: your personal thoughts. ⊓ TN Editor

A mind-reading tool powered by artificial intelligence has produced a staggering video of human thoughts in real-time.

Russian researchers trained the programme to guess what people are thinking based on their brain waves.

They trained the AI by using clips of different objects, and the brainwave activity of participants watching them.

Participants were then shown clips of nature scenes, people on jet skis and human expressions.

AI then recreated videos using a electroencephalogram (EEG) cap, reports New Scientist.

Out of 234 attempts, 210 were successfully categorised by the video.

Colours and large shapes were deemed the most successful, the report adds.

But human faces were harder to recreate with many distorted, researchers said.

The video first surfaced last month.

But since then Victor Sharmas, at the University of Arizona, commented on the video and said we are still only looking at the surface of human thought.

He said: "What we are currently seeing is a caricature of human experience, but nothing remotely resembling an accurate recreation."

Dr Ian Pearson, a futurologist and ex-cybernetics engineer, told us: "I would think in a lab we're probably a decade or 15 years away from that (technology).

"I don't think it will be very long after that before police are using it in interrogations, getting somebody in for questioning.

"Instead of a police officer asking questions, they'll stick a helmet on to decide what it is that's going through your mind.

[Read full story here...](#)

Woof: Spot The Robot Police Dog

Short of laws or regulations to control police departments, robotics will play a huge part of future enforcement. Spot the robot dog is seen as a viable replacement for police dots. Future weaponization is almost certain. ⎯ TN Editor

Cops have long had dogs, and robots, to help them do their jobs. And now, they have a robot dog.

Massachusetts State Police is the first law enforcement agency in the country to use Boston Dynamics' dog-like robot, [called Spot](). While the use of robotic technology is not new for state police, the temporary acquisition of Spot — a customizable robot some have [called]() "terrifying" — is raising questions from civil rights advocates about how much oversight there should be over police robotics programs.

The state's bomb squad had Spot on loan from the Waltham-based Boston Dynamics for three months starting in August until November, [according to records]() obtained by the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts and reviewed by WBUR.

The documents do not reveal a lot of details on the robot dog's exact use, but a state police spokesman said Spot, like the department's other robots, was used as a "mobile remote observation device" to provide troopers with images of suspicious devices or potentially hazardous locations, like where an armed suspect might be hiding.

"Robot technology is a valuable tool for law enforcement because of its ability to provide situational awareness of potentially dangerous environments," state police spokesman David Procopio wrote.

tate police say Spot was used in two incidents, in addition to testing.

Boston Dynamics vice president for business development Michael Perry said the company wants Spot to have lots of different uses, in industries ranging from oil and gas companies, to construction, to entertainment. He envisions police sending Spot into areas that are too hazardous for a human — a chemical spill, or near a suspected bomb, or into a hostage situation.

"Right now, our primary interest is sending the robot into situations where you want to collect information in an environment where it's too dangerous to send a person, but not actually physically interacting with the space," Perry said.

Spot is a "general purpose" robot, with an open API. That means customers — whether a police department or warehouse operator — can customize Spot with its own software. (State police say they didn't use this feature.) It has a 360-degree, low-light camera, and an arm.

For all of its potential, Boston Dynamics doesn't want Spot weaponized. Perry said the lease agreements have a clause requiring the robot not be used in a way that would "physically harm or intimidate people."

"Part of our early evaluation process with customers is making sure that we're on the same page for the usage of the robot," he said. "So upfront, we're very clear with our customers that we don't want the robot being used in a way that can physically harm somebody."

That's one of the reasons why the company is opting for lease agreements, rather than a sale, Perry said. Boston Dynamics wants to be selective in which companies get access to Spot — and have the ability to take the equipment back if the lease is violated.

Worries About Weaponized Robots

Through Procopio, state police said the department never weaponized any of its robots, including Spot.

But while Spot and other tactical robots aren't designed to kill, they still can. In 2016, Dallas Police sent a bomb disposal robot [armed with explosives](#) to kill a sniper who had shot at police officers and killed five. Experts said it was the first time a non-military robot had been used to intentionally kill a person.

That deadly potential, and lack of transparency about the state police's overall robotics program, worries Kade Crockford, director of the technology for liberty program at the ACLU of Massachusetts. Crockford said they want to see a policy from state police about its use of robotics and a conversation about how and when robots should be used. State police didn't say whether there's a current policy about the use of robots, and the ACLU's records request to the agency didn't turn one up.

"We just really don't know enough about how the state police are using

this," Crockford said. "And the technology that can be used in concert with a robotic system like this is almost limitless in terms of what kinds of surveillance and potentially even weaponization operations may be allowed."

[Read full story here...](#)

AI Could Most Affect 'Knowledge Workers'

Technocrats who are inventing AI algorithms by the hundreds may inadvertently have their own work replaced by their own inventions. Knowledge and white-collar workers are now in the cross-hairs for job replacement. ⊓ TN Editor

The robot revolution has long been thought of as apocalyptic for blue-collar workers whose tasks are manual and repetitive. A widely

cited [2017 McKinsey study](#) said 50 percent of work activities were already automatable using current technology and those activities were most prevalent in manufacturing. New data suggests white-collar workers — even those whose work presumes more analytic thinking, higher paychecks, and relative job security — may not be safe from the relentless drumbeat of automation.

That's because artificial intelligence — powerful computer tech like machine learning that can make human-like decisions and use real-time data to learn and improve — has white-collar work in its sights, according to a [new study](#) by Stanford University economist [Michael Webb](#) and [published by Brookings Institution](#). The scope of jobs potentially impacted by AI reaches far beyond white-collar jobs like telemarketing, a field that has already been decimated by bots, into jobs previously thought to be squarely in the province of humans: [knowledge workers](#) like chemical engineers, physicists, and market-research analysts.

The new research looks at the overlap between the subject-noun pairs in AI patents and [job descriptions](#) to see which jobs are most likely to be affected by AI technology. So for example, job descriptions for market-research analyst — a relatively common position with a high rate of AI exposure — share numerous terms in common with existing patents, which similarly seek to "analyze data," "track marketing," and "identify markets."

It's more forward-looking than other studies in that it analyzes patents for technology that might not yet be fully developed or deployed.

Typically, estimates of automation effects on the workforce, [which vary widely](#) depending on the study, have focused on what jobs could be automated using existing technologies. The findings have generally been most damning for lower-wage, lower-education workers, where robotics and software have often eliminated part or all of certain jobs.

The specter of increased automation has raised concerns about how large swaths of Americans will be able to support themselves when their jobs become mechanized and whether [the loss of low-income jobs will](#)

[increase wealth inequality](#). This new patent research suggests automation's impact could be much broader and [affect high-paying white-collar jobs](#) as well.

A caveat: Some AI patents might never be used, and they might not be used for their initial intentions. Also, one's actual job is not wholly defined by the text of the original job description. But this study does provide a framework with which to view general exposure to automation.

As Adam Ozimek, chief economist at freelancing platform Upwork, put it, "Just because someone patented a device, for example, that used artificial intelligence to do market research does not mean that AI will in fact be successful at this for practical business use."

The Stanford study also doesn't say whether these workers will actually lose their jobs, only that their work could be impacted. So it's perfectly possible these technologies will be used to augment jobs rather than supplant them.

[Read full story here...](#)
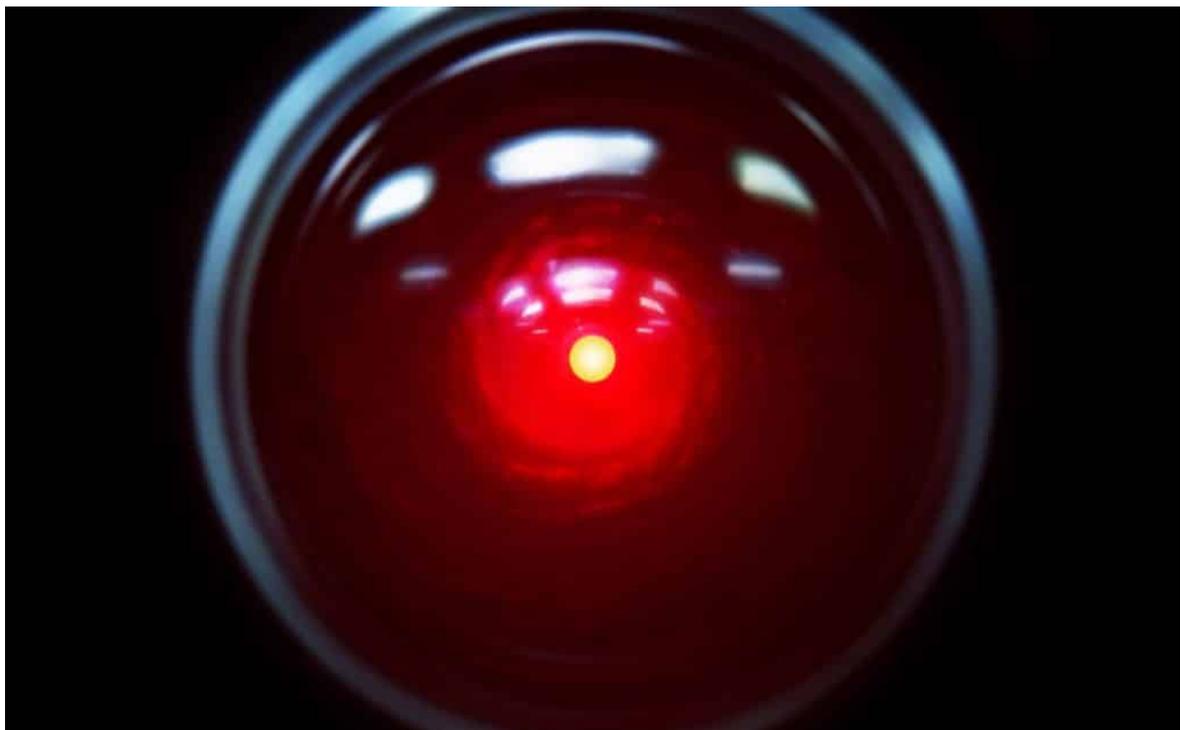
Amazon's Hal 9000: Dave? What is it, Alexa?

Amazon is set to leapfrog Facebook's dystopia and go directly to personal control; just think Hal in the movie, *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Alexa's AI will be tailored to mold your actions, consumption and relationships. ⬚ TN Editor

Amazon has big plans for its virtual assistant. One day, perhaps sooner than you think, Alexa will take a proactive role in directing our lives. It'll interpret our data, make decisions for us, and summon *us* when *it* has something to say.

Rohit Prasad, the scientist in charge of Alexa's development, recently gave *MIT Technology Review's* Karen Hao one of the most [terrifying interviews](#) in modern journalism. We know how dangerous it is to let bad actors run amok with AI and our data – if you need a refresher, recall [the Cambridge Analytica scandal](#).

That's not to say Prasad is a bad actor or anything but a talented scientist. But he and the company he works for probably have access to more of our data than ten Facebooks and Twitters combined. And, to paraphrase Kanye West, no one person or company should have all that power.

Hao writes:

> *Speaking with MIT Technology Review, Rohit Prasad, Alexa's head scientist, has now revealed further details about where Alexa is headed next. The crux of the plan is for the voice assistant to move from passive to proactive interactions. Rather than wait for and respond to requests, Alexa will anticipate what the user might want. The idea is to turn Alexa into an omnipresent companion that actively shapes and orchestrates your life. This will require Alexa to get to know you better than ever before.*

The idea of Alexa being an omnipresent companion looking to orchestrate your life should probably alarm you. But, for now, the work

Prasad and the Alexa team are doing isn't *scary* on its own merit. If you're one of the eight or nine people on the planet who has never interacted with Alexa, you're both missing out and not really missing out. Virtual assistants, today, are equal parts miraculously intuitive and frustratingly limited.

With one interaction, you'll say "Alexa, play some music" and the assistant will 'randomly' select a playlist that touches the depths of your soul, as if it knew better than you did what you needed to hear.

But the next time you use it, you might find yourself in a three-minute-long argument over whether you wanted to listen to music by Cher or purchase a beige chair (with free two-day shipping).

From a consumer point-of-view, it's hard to imagine Alexa becoming so useful that we'd come running when *it* summons *us*. But Alexa's primary mission will always be to gather data. Simply put: Amazon, Microsoft, and Google are all trillion dollar companies because data is [the most valuable resource](#) in the world, and Alexa is among the world's [greatest data collectors](#).

Once Alexa stops listening for commands and starts making suggestions, it means Amazon's no longer focused on building a handful of giant training databases comprised of data from hundreds of millions of users. Instead, it indicates that it's focused on building millions of training databases composed of data gleaned from single individuals or very small user groups.

[Read full story here…](#)
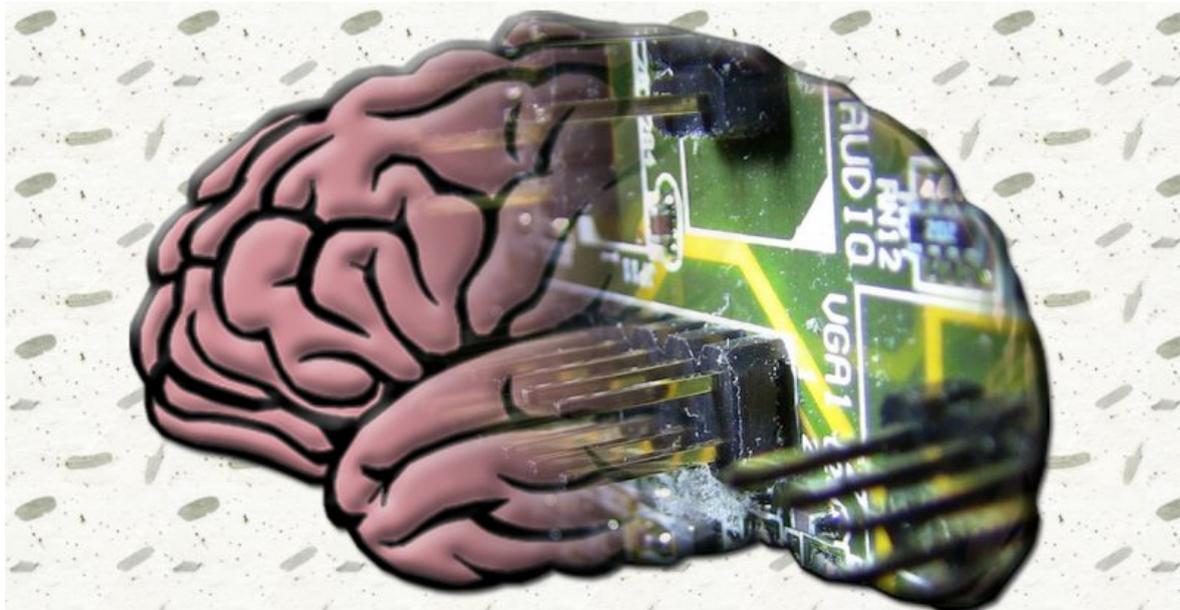
Only Human Arrogance Says AI Can Become Sentient

You cannot know what you do not know, and scientists cannot describe, much less explain, exactly what human consciousness or soul is, so how can they brag that they will create it in a computer algorithm? This is the height of arrogance with a strong desire to play God. Both Technocracy and Transhumanism are based on Scientism, a religious belief that truth is the exclusive product of science, and that no truth can exist outside of scientific discovery. It pointedly excludes all other religious thought and especially Biblical Christianity. It is ironic that they want to imitate the powers of a God they disdain in the first place. ⁂ TN Editor

"Cogito, ergo sum," Rene Descartes. Translation: "I think, therefore I am."

What makes us, us? How is it that we're able to look at a tree and see beauty, hear a song and feel moved, or take comfort in the smell of rain or the taste of coffee? How do we know we still exist when we close our eyes and lie in silence? To date, science doesn't have an answer to those questions.

In fact, it doesn't even have a unified theory. And that's because we can't simulate consciousness. All we can do is try to reverse-engineer it by studying living beings. Artificial intelligence, coupled with quantum computing, could solve this problem and provide the breakthrough insight scientists need to unravel the mysteries of consciousness. But first we need to take the solution seriously.

There's been a rash of recent [articles](#) written by experts claiming definitively that a machine will *never* have consciousness. This represents a healthy level of skepticism, which is necessary for science to thrive, but there isn't a lot of room for absolutes when theoretical future-tech is involved.

An untold number of experts have weighed in on the idea of [sentient machines](#) – computers with the capacity to *feel* alive – and, for the most part, they all believe the idea of a living robot is science fiction, at least for now. And it is. But so too are the ideas of warp drives, teleportation, and time travel.

Yet, as you can see, each of these far-out ideas are not only plausible, but grounded in serious research:

- *[New physics research boldly indicates 'warp drives' may be possible](#)*
- *[Tomorrow's telescopes will be planet-sized quantum teleportation devices](#)*
- *[This quantum physics breakthrough could be the origin story for time travel](#)*

We could be hundreds or thousands of years away from conscious AI, but that's a drop in the ocean of time compared to "never."

The prehistoric scientists working on the problem of replicating naturally occurring fire and harnessing it as an energy source may have been the brightest minds of their time, but their collective knowledge on thermodynamics would pale beside an average 5th grader's today. Recent work in the fields of quantum computing and artificial intelligence may not show a direct path to machine consciousness, but theories that say

it *cannot* happen are trying to prove a negative.

We cannot definitively say that intelligent extraterrestrial life does not exist simply because there's [evidence](#) that life on Earth is a universal anomaly. And, equally so, we cannot logically say machines will never have consciousness simply because we haven't figured out how to imbue them with it yet. Citing the difficulty of a problem isn't evidence that it's unsolvable.

Somehow, consciousness as we understand it manifested in the universe once. It seems arrogant to imagine we understand its limits and boundaries or that it cannot emerge as part of a quantum function in a machine system by the direction or invention of a human.

But, before we can even consider the problem of building machines that feel, we need to figure out what consciousness actually *is*.

Scientists tend to agree that consciousness is the *feeling of being alive*. While we can't be sure, we like to think that animals are living and conscious, and plants are just living. We generally assume non-living things are not "conscious" or aware of their existence. But we don't know.

[Read full story here...](#)