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AI Doesn't Have to Be the Bad Guy

By Michelle Mellon 8 min read

What do you think when you think of artificial intelligence (AI)? Until recently, generations of people only viewed AI technology through the lens of popular culture depictions. And one major touchstone in their experiences was the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year.

It was the highest-grossing film in North America in 1968, selected to be preserved in the U.S. Library of Congress National Film Registry, won an Academy Award for visual effects and a Hugo Award—one of science fiction's highest honors—for Best Dramatic Presentation.

Despite its accolades, the movie drew a mixed reception of awe and confusion over its depiction of evolution and the meaning of existence. And at its core was a prominent struggle between mankind and machine.

Independent AI: Fear of the machines we create

The movie *2001* underlined a chilling concept with only six words: "I'm afraid I can't do that." The idea? The machines we create might develop wills of their own.

The concern is not unique. Every new form of technology brings fears about its potential abuse. Since *2001* came on the scene, countless movies in different genres have explored the ramifications of independent AI, and though some have been heartwarming or comical, most have not.

Many also touch on a related theme—what does it mean to be human? What's the real difference between us and the machines we create to behave like us, only "better?" Because "better" is usually

the driver for exploring new ways to use technology.

When we put our reservations aside, we see that—like most of the technology around us—AI continues to make inroads in everyday areas that can benefit each of us in important ways.

How is AI used in smart homes, smart cars and more?

Most of us have some “smart” gadgets in our homes—mobile phones, watches, televisions, etc. The list of electronics and apps keeps expanding with the goal of increasing convenience and efficiency:

- **Around the house.** In-home AI is not just about hubs like Alexa and Google Home. In addition to the items mentioned above, we have fitness trainers, doorbells that alert us to activity outside the home, sensors that tie to climate systems for tailored comfort, devices to keep our pets entertained while we’re away, appliances that tell us when we need to go shopping for groceries and when the appliances themselves need service, programmable showers, connected toothbrushes, smart beauty mirrors, and more.
- **In the classroom.** Obvious instructional aids like laptops, tablets, and smart TVs notwithstanding, AI is being used in many ways to help both students and teachers. With testing and feedback for individualized instruction; grading assistance (for both multiple choice and essay assignments); tutoring; and curriculum recommendations freeing up teachers for planning, mentoring, and creative delivery approaches, AI is becoming an essential educational tool.
- **On the road.** Let’s face it: Modern vehicles are a rolling den of sophisticated computers and AI complexity. From proximity sensors to navigation systems to performance diagnostics, the driver experience continues to be optimized by new technology. Increasingly reliable speech and visual recognition capabilities are on the horizon. And with competition for Google’s pioneering technology and investment (\$80B+) from luxury carmakers, it looks like within the next few years autonomous cars will be hitting the streets as more than just novelties.
- **On the go.** On-demand lives mean on-demand information and entertainment. Anyone with a smartphone or tablet is holding a universe of AI potential in his or her hands. With more than 2,000,000 currently available, if you can imagine it, there’s sure to be “an app for that.” The convenience doesn’t even depend on the gadget. Algorithms determine what featured information accompanies the websites we visit, the content types that appear on our social media streams, and the recommendations we receive for music, movies, books, and more.
- **In our galleries.** Debate around what makes us distinctly human may have gained new fodder. The painting Portrait of Edmond de Belamy, which was created using generative adversarial network (GAN) technology, recently sold in a Christie’s auction for \$432,000. GAN has only been around since 2014, so there’s understandable curiosity about where it will go from here.

How is AI used in healthcare?

Medicine has always been an area rife for imagining with technology and AI. And while we don’t yet have machines that can immediately diagnose and fix our ailments, we do have an amazing wealth of improvements powered by AI:

- **Administration.** “Big data” is not just an issue for big business. AI is helping doctors break through the minutiae to create a more personalized and efficient wellness experience for their patients. One example is the use of AI technology to comb through thousands of medical papers and use natural language processing to shape improved treatment plans.
- **Diagnosis.** Those home DNA kits may just be the beginning. In the future, analysts predict that health care workers—doctors in particular—will focus more on counseling and care plans, while infections and disease diagnoses will be handled by in-home kits. Skeptical? A Stanford University study pitted an AI algorithm against dermatologists to detect skin cancers, and the AI performed at the same level as humans. And a Danish AI company conducted a test over emergency dispatch calls and detected cardiac arrests 93% of the time as opposed to 73% for humans.

- **Surgery.** One of the limiting factors in healthcare is access. AI can go where man can't. Like the miniature robot that can enter via a minimally invasive chest incision to perform mapping and therapy over the surface of the heart. And in terms of overall care, studies have shown that AI-assisted surgeries result in shorter hospital stays. In fact, one study of orthopedic patients found five times fewer complications in AI-assisted procedures compared to surgeons operating alone.

How is AI used in automation?

AI and automation are a natural pairing, but with so many fictional examples of AI gone awry, it's easy to see why people might want to keep them separate. Imagine, however, if your AI performed mundane tasks and solved—or better yet, prevented—problems to keep you and your business on track?

- **Customer service.** No doubt you've come across them when you visit certain websites: chatbots. These AI assistants can understand contextual questions and respond accordingly. In this way they help automate customer service, sales, and marketing messages for the most common inquiries or issues. Which leaves more time for representatives from these departments to adequately address more complicated or unique situations and deliver the highest possible level of customer service.
- **Testing.** Most products undergo varying degrees of testing before release. Pairing AI with digital products is a natural fit for saving time and money. In fact, in the video game industry, which has long made use of human testers, there's a growing tendency toward using intelligent tools or automated testing systems. These AI-powered solutions check and fix bugs as well as confirm player capacity and performance reliability. (The latter two are particularly critical for massively multiplayer online games, which are a \$30B+ industry.)
- **Production.** When companies use technologies like robotic process automation (RPA) to decrease manual tasks and errors and increase speed and efficiency, everybody wins. Contrary to fears that AI and automation will replace humans in the workplace, current evidence points to the benefits of automation of rote tasks and increasing the use of AI-driven decisions that free humans up to focus on strategy and continuing innovations.

An intelligent future belongs to all of us

Half a century may have passed since *2001: A Space Odyssey* was released, but the changes brought about by AI have happened in a mere fraction of that time and continue to accelerate.

It's important to remember that the human factor determines the ultimate use and impact of the technology we create. We are the ones to give ourselves license to celebrate our unique human creativity. We are also the ones to limit ourselves through a very human fear of change and the unknown.

Luckily for us, AI technology is rapidly changing the unknown to the known and normal. The [Celonis Intelligent Business Cloud](#) gets much of its "smarts" from AI and machine learning and empowers businesses to transform the unknown of their operations into improvements that bring them into the future—essentially helping them create a new normal.

This is just the beginning. AI has the potential to do many more incredible things and help millions of people. So, while it can be thrilling to explore a "what if?" scenario, it's more important to remember the benefits AI technology brings to us already, and the infinite positive possibilities that are still to come.

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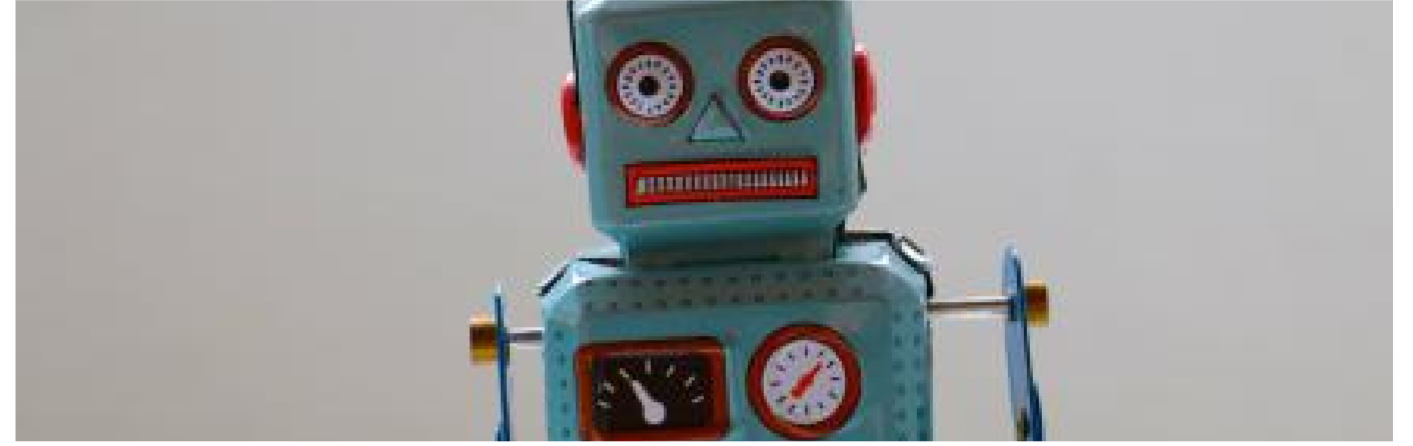
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