Kimbolton School

The Peter Smout Memorial Essay Writing Competition 2018

Should humanity fear advances in artificial intelligence?

Useful Info:

The increasing ability of machines in recent years to replicate or even supersede human abilities in complex tasks has been impressive. Already, artificial intelligence (AI) techniques have been used to allow machines to beat the best players in the world at chess. While such demonstrations of the potential for AI are intriguing, there are now more and more real-world applications for AI systems. For example, voice-recognition systems like Amazon's Alexa and Apple's Siri use AI techniques to learn what the most suitable answer to our questions might be. Purchase prediction techniques are already well established to provide personal recommendations of items which we might like to buy online. Driverless cars cannot be pre-programmed for every eventuality, but need to 'learn' through experience using AI. Combined with huge datasets, AI-enabled machines could learn to interpret x-rays and other scans, making diagnosis quicker and more accurate.

But the implications for society are only just becoming apparent. In 2015, the Bank of England's chief economist, Andrew Haldane, suggested that as many as one third of jobs in the UK – 15 million – could be lost to automation. Examples could include drivers replaced by autonomous vehicles and administrative staff replaced by intelligent assistants like Alexa. In the future, smarter machines and artificial intelligence could affect a much broader range of jobs, including many high-paid, high-skilled positions. Whilst facial recognition systems, combined with CCTV could call into question our privacy. The world-famous physicist, Stephen Hawking, even claimed that 'AI may replace humans altogether' as a 'new form of life' that can rapidly learn and improve, making people obsolete (Debating Matters website 2018).

So should we welcome AI's potential or are the perceived threats too great?

Essay structure:

We are looking for you to consider both sides of this debate, whilst presenting your own line of argument. It would be a good idea to include some specific examples of artificial intelligence in your response with some discussion about the impact of these advances.

Starting your research:

In addition to a range of resources available in the school library, a super introduction to the topic with plenty of recommended further reading can be found here;

http://www.debatingmatters.com/topicguides/topicguide/artificial_intelligence_2018/

Other useful websites:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-32334568

http://www.bbc.co.uk/timelines/zq376fr

Length of Essay:

Essays submitted should be in the region of 1500 words

Entry Deadline:

To Mr Newsam's pigeon hole by Monday 10th September 2018

Prizes:

Overall winning essay - £200

Two consolation prizes:

Senior Category (4th Form to L6) - £100

Junior Category (1st Form to 3rd Form) - £100