

The fork of wisdom or greed

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This article is about a specific aspect of how our collective intelligence which should in theory be much greater than individual intelligence gets reduced to less than individual intelligence when it comes to practical living in this world.

In a TV knowledge-based game show called “Jeopardy”, the most powerful computer-based expert system made by IBM at the time called Watson annihilated two top contestants in front of millions of viewers around the world. There were some doomsday pundits in the audience who asked what chance the less intelligent people than the two contestants had to stand up against these powerful machines. One of the contestants Ken Jennings who said he welcomed the powerful machines said in jest, “Brad (the other contestant) and I were the first knowledge industry workers put out of work by the new generation of thinking machines”.

The other day I watched the 2021 movie “Finch” available on Apple TV. It was a beautiful movie touching the heart many times showing the travails of this very intelligent scientist Finch Weinberg who is one of the few survivors of a global solar flare catastrophe which has killed almost everyone. Finch lives in an underground lab and has built this almost human robot called Jeff. Finch says he built Jeff to take care of his dog Goodyear. They travel to see the fabled “Golden Gate Bridge” in San Francisco. Finch dies before they reach the bridge and Jeff is left to take care of the dog.

Think about the subtle comparison between this movie and our lives, it seems we humans are doing exactly what Finch did. Putting great amounts of intelligence into robots and machines to take care of our pets when we are gone. We will surely be gone because of our frail biological bodies if not due to denial of resources from the super intelligent machines which we are racing to create.

Is it not better to build the intelligence into our biological bodies in some manner to enhance the capabilities of our race? Can the great computing power being deployed at the cost of 320 Bn dollars into data centres in 2025 alone not be used to purpose nano bots to prevent our ageing process than making machines more intelligent? Can we not innovate thought driven connections from our brains to access external computing resources to solve problems which our limited brain cannot? Can we not cap the capabilities of the intelligence built external to the human body by requiring it to connect to an operating controller located in the human brain?

These are existential questions which are not asked today. That they will be asked someday is sure, but it is also sure that the fork in the road would then be well past and behind us in time.

The battle is between wisdom and greed and greed always wins. It seems destiny has decided that the embodied are doomed to plod blindly through mindless, meaningless conflicts and suffering till they are no more.

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