

TED2017: Artificial Intelligence + Our Future



Whether it was the historic TED Talk from [Pope Francis](#), a pregnant [Serena Williams](#) or Elon Musk's plan for an [underground tunnel network](#), TED 2017 offered inspiring and innovative ideas dotting a diverse list of topics. With the theme "[The Future You](#)," the impact of artificial intelligence came up again and again. How will machines change what it means to be human? Can we trust these machines? How will we work with them and how will they change the way we are working today?

AI will profoundly shape our lives, but it remains unclear how. The exploration into how AI will change our relationships with one another, our homes and [the future of our work](#) is underway. Some of this year's TED Talks brought forth an air of concern. One session was titled "Our Robotic Overlords." Other talks relayed optimism about how people and technologies will partner to create tremendous value for society.

Here's a look at three 2017 TED Talks that helped raise questions and add insight into the debate around artificial intelligence.

DREAM BIG

The man who famously lost to IBM's supercomputer Deep Blue in 1997 had a surprisingly positive view on the rise of machine intelligence. [Garry Kasparov](#) told the TED crowd humans need to let go of their anxieties about what machines can and cannot do. According to [Pew Research Center](#), a lot of people are worried. Two-thirds of Americans expect robots and computers will do much of the work currently done by humans within 50 years.

Kasparov says it's not machines that will limit us, people will only be limited by our ambition. Machines may take over some of our the tasks we all do now. But, machines only have calculations, instructions and objectivity. Humans have understanding, purpose and passion. He encourages everyone to dream big and find solutions to huge problems with help from technology.

HUMANISTIC AI

The man who helped create Siri, [Tom Gruber](#), says smarter machines make for smarter people. Gruber develops AI to augment and work with people. He says instead of fighting us for our jobs, AI will make us better. He [referenced an experiment](#) with a computer program that recognizes cancer cells in tissue samples. People were still getting better results than the computer until people and the computer worked together. Then, the hospital's diagnosis accuracy hit 99.5 percent. He then asked the audience to imagine a future where technology can help us remember the name of everyone we've ever met and everything we've ever read. Working with computers can help us overcome limitations and help us do what we do, better.

COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE

Much of the discussion around AI is about the creation of one robot and how it compares to one human. But, imagine if we could harness the power of the kind of collective thinking we find in nature. [Radhika Nagpal](#) has spent her life studying collective intelligence systems such as a school of fish that move as one instead of hundreds of individuals. She says if we can understand the rules that govern these colonies, we can create collective AI.

Nagpal and her team (see the video above) has created a colony of hundreds off little robots. They engage with one another using rules found in nature such as pattern formation, spontaneous synchronization and migration. There are no leaders. They all work together. Nagpal says in the future we will be able to design our own rules and create groups of robots to do anything we want. Robotic bees can pollinate crops. Underwater robots can monitor coral reefs. The possibilities are limitless.

There were plenty of other demonstrations about how AI will impact our future. TED featured robotic suits that can help us fly, robotic dogs that can navigate an obstacle course, and even robots that can pass college entrance exams. TED bills itself as "a week to explore the most pressing questions of our time." How humans will adapt to artificial intelligence is certainly one of those questions.



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Rebecca, an Emmy-winning journalist, reports on global research impacting the places where people work, learn and heal. Over her career, Rebecca spent 17 years covering local and national news events on television and a variety of digital platforms. She directed a digital news group in Kansas City for three years before becoming news director in Grand Rapids, Michigan for more than five years. Prior to Steelcase, Rebecca worked with one of the four largest media groups in the United States to coordinate news coverage among 48 newsrooms from the east to west coast.

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