

# DO WE PRAISE OURSELVES AS SMART?

Which is the smartest of them all:

Chimpanzee, Dolphin, Elephant, Parrot, Crow, Dog, Pigeon, Octopus?



These animals have been claimed by people to be smart, but they never claim themselves to be smart.

Self praise is no praise. So if humans claim themselves to be smart, it is self-praise that does not confirm any value. However, **did someone else (i.e., God) tell us that we have become smart?**

*God said, "The Man has become like one of us, capable of knowing everything, ranging from good to evil. – Gen. 3:22a*

The above animals are smart in their own ways. It is not self-acclaim, but acclaim by humans, that even pigs are smart:



*"Researchers who have studied pigs have learned they have excellent long-term memories, solve mazes easily, can comprehend a simple symbolic language, love to play and play-fight with each other, can learn to operate a joystick to move an on-screen cursor, and use a mirror to find hidden food."<sup>2</sup>*

Humans have become smart – becoming capable of knowing good and evil. Unfortunately, our smartness may stop there. Nobody (perhaps, only we ourselves) tells us that we are smart to be capable in applying our knowledge of good and evil. We are smart to know that a knife is sharp and can help us in our work (good) and cause harm (evil), but our smartness stops at the knowledge level and does not extend to the application of the knowledge.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://healthypets.mercola.com/sites/healthypets/archive/2015/08/22/10-most-intelligent-animals.aspx>

Smart homes with smart appliances • smart warfare with smart weapons and smart bombs • smart consumerism with smart cashless systems • smart lifestyles with smart IOT (Internet of things) • smart environment protected by smart cameras • smart entertainment with smart games, smart glasses that give our eyes super vistas • smart genetic manipulations to produce smart genes • smart cities served by robots where humans can take a backseat from operations • smart adoption of Big Data analytics for smart solutions • smart this and smart that – **nowadays the word “smart” has become a ubiquitous adjective in our vocabulary to raise the human ego.**

Behold! Are we becoming too much of being smart alecks for our own good? Have we been held to ransom by our smartness that makes our life more fast-paced, more stressful, more nervous and more fragile?

Humans are being displaced, not by aliens (from another universe), but by androids (machines of our own inventions). Will robots become slaves to people, or people become slaves to thinking machines?



It is little wonder that big and powerful countries are in a race to develop Artificial Intelligence (AI) because normal human intelligence is inadequate to serve the human race. In the beginning, we may be in control of machines; but as machine intelligence evolves, will it happen that one day humans think less and leave most thinking to some AI monster that makes us mentally docile and subservient to all its thinking and decisions, including starting WW3?

*Such fears were prompted by a statement from Vladimir Putin that “artificial intelligence is the future, not only for Russia, but for all humankind ... It comes with colossal opportunities, but also threats that are difficult to predict. Whoever becomes the leader in this sphere will become the ruler of the world.”<sup>3</sup>*

As we are too preoccupied with the interminable race to up the level of our smartness, we become too involved with the immediate satisfaction (“good” and enjoyable) that our smart inventions provide but fail to be vigilant over the flip-side details of potential implications. We are missing the wood for the trees.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/sep/04/elon-musk-ai-third-world-war-vladimir-putin>

Concomitant with the extremely complex and rapid development of modern engineering, computer bugs present an inescapable challenge to human smartness. Computer bugs are like biological bugs – some can be relatively minor but some can be particularly nasty with catastrophic consequences. It just took an instance of a control-software error (in a case a few years ago) for the Bay Area Rapid Transit (in California) to shut down the system several times within 3 days, with attempts to correct the program error worsening the problem to boot!

Human smartness can be applied to make lives more comfortable (with smart gadgets) and safer (with smart surveillance equipment), but without the smartness to know what is good to invent and what is good to forgo, it may just take an error of stupidity for smart humans to send themselves to extinction by a mere press of a button, or even an auto-trigger, on one of their smart inventions.

When America invented the Atomic Bomb, nobody predicted that human survival would one day be held to ransom by the greater evil of the fission of atoms moving on to power the fusion of atoms to produce the Hydrogen Bomb.

Smart as humans are in inventions, they cannot give a perfect guarantee that they won't lose control to the momentum of AI advancement or the power of "bug-rule" – when an "inadvertent" bug leaves human passengers in a self-driving car (literally and metaphorically) helpless as the vehicle makes all its own moving, stopping and speeding decisions.

These are the days when in the midst of flattering ourselves for our smartness of knowledge to invent human-replacing talents (a.k.a. robots and intelligent android applications) we need to be smartly discriminating between good and evil. A vehicle gaining speed can throw us into an exhilarating experience tempting us to go for more of it; unfortunately, a loss of human control of the machine, surrendering reflexively to the AI-comandeered momentum, can send us on a dreadful spin or to a disastrous landing all of a sudden after a long breakneck drive of excitement.

Smart cities that are filled with all possible technological wonders are pretty charming to people who look in, but it is really the people who dwell within who must be truly smart to have a foolproof way to wrest back control of their human interests in the event of large-scale technological disasters (such as power outages, nuclear misadventures, machine running amok, etc.) unless they are intent on leaving their human welfare at the hands of the invented

systems that make the cities smart. Look at the ugly turmoils that drench the world, caused by human decisions to apply their human intelligence and human inventions. Human “smartness” for self-defeating is obvious.

Once upon a time, humans made fire by rubbing stones. They travelled on foot or on animals. The ancient methods of sending messages have evolved into the present ubiquitous mobile technology with which we can speak to anyone on the other side of the world instantly.

A lot can be said about tremendous human progress in living conveniences. Obviously, when we make progress, it is unimaginable for us to want to go back to our old ways of inefficiency. It wouldn't sound right for anyone to say, “Stop, let's stop progressing!” Today, we can't live without our mobile phones that seem to stick to our skin like glue.

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina shattered more than 1000 mobile phone base stations in Louisiana and Mississippi. In 2011, a tsunami similarly wrecked numerous mobile phone base stations in Tōhoku, Japan. In such situations, panic set in as the people's primary dependency on the modern technology for communications were suddenly cut off. Rescue efforts were seriously hampered as lives were paralysed when the “indispensable” communication system failed utterly in one fell swoop.

Can we imagine cyber-sabotage, electrical storms and such things that would have an abrupt and extensive devastating effect on lives that have been conditioned by smart humans themselves?

Certainly, I am not advocating that we regress to primitiveness. My point is that while generically progress is worthwhile, and stagnation or decline are anathema, pursuing smart progress restricted in essence to the proliferation of technologies without the genuine smart handling with God-given wisdom can prove to be man's greatest folly.

*For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” (1 Pet. 2:6)*

The wise inherit honor,  
but fools get only shame.

Proverbs 3:35

**Man seeking progress not by God-given wisdom is putting himself to shame because he has neglected**

## **God's cornerstone when erecting the effusive technological superstructures on egotistical foundations.**

Sadly, man's knowledge of good is mixed with knowledge of evil and he is unable to separate the two. The good knowledge for inventions to enjoy has been hijacked by the knowledge of evil to imperil himself. This paradox, or struggle between seeking good and scuttling by evil, is due to the seed of sin sown when Adam and Eve chose to rebel against God by eating from the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thereby giving up the great promise they had for being created in the image of God with dominion over all other creatures. (Gen. 1:26-27)

There is still hope. Read Isaiah 59:

*"Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God ... No one calls for justice; no one pleads a case with integrity. They rely on empty arguments, they utter lies; they conceive trouble and give birth to evil. They hatch the eggs of vipers and spin a spider's web ..."*

It is not that God cannot save, or that He cannot hear our cries. The problem is with our sins, convoluted like a spider's webs.

Despite our hopelessness in ourselves:

- There is hope for darkness and mourning to be turned to a day of light and rejoicing if only we have the longing for the day of redemption (59:9-15a)
- There is hope in the strong arm of the Lord to deliver us, as God is readying Himself to aid the Godly (59:15b-21)

God will reveal His glory to the ends of the earth. (Habakkuk 2:14)

*John Lee*