**Title: Artificial Intelligence: Humanity's Looming Demise**

by Kevin Madu.

It started slowly, like a little containable rash appearing on a toddler's behind, then spread considerably, becoming a very cognitive innovation of our contemporary time. The 21st century had never seen such growth and advancement in technology as the now much-talked-about Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Founded as an academic discipline at a workshop at Dartmouth College (a private Ivy League research university in Hanover, New Hampshire, United States) in 1956, AI has generated a lot of controversies, especially due to its momentous development and inclination towards alienating the human race. One such controversy hinges on the fear that unscrupulous individuals or power-hungry organisations and states will use the not-so-nascent technology to wreak catastrophic havoc on the world by weaponising AI.

This technological tool that has witnessed monumental and exponential growth and development within the space of 67 years, has transcended from a mere distant dream or science fiction to an increasingly frightening reality. It was thought that AI could only be brought to life in Hollywood sci-fi movies, such as The Terminator, Robocop, Solo, etc., or in a virtual world of unrealism, where fantasy takes centre stage.

It is imperative to first understand or grasp the concept behind this technological innovation or what it entails before delving into its potential risks and ill effects on mankind.

Artificial Intelligence (AI), as defined by John McCarthy - one of the founding fathers of AI, in 2004, "is the science and engineering of making intelligent machines, especially intelligent computer programs." It is the ability of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings.

Human Intelligence can be generally characterised not just by one trait but by the combination of many diverse abilities. Research in AI has primarily or mainly focused on the following components of intelligence: learning, reasoning, problem-solving, perception and usage of language. The idea is to embed AI with the ability to learn, reason, solve problems, perceive, and speak or communicate like humans. At first glance, this may seem a welcome development, but a critical look reveals a lot of anomalies and snags associated with this innovation or invention. For example, imagine a computer or robot that mimics your every movement, performs tasks just like you and tends to behave like you. It invariably means that there would be no need for you since you have a clone, albeit a clone without emotions.

Despite the advantages of AI, which this article would not provide a detailed explanation of, its disadvantages far outweigh its merits. In the words of the late renowned physicist, Stephen Hawkings, "AI will either be the best thing that's ever happened to humanity, or it will be the worst thing". He warned that future developments in AI could mean the end of the human race. How can this happen? This might be the question that readily comes to mind or begs for answers.

**(a) Rise in the Rate of Unemployment**

Firstly, AI can increase the rate of unemployment across the globe. In fact, in this early stage of its development, a report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reveals that 14 per cent of jobs in the world could be affected by the emergence of AI. Even though AI might create jobs, the jobs it would take away far outweigh those it would create. Imagine being laid off at work because a machine could do your job.

**(b) Increase in Terrorism**

Secondly, the activities of terrorists and terrorism have increased with the advent of AI. Recently, the United Nations Office on Counter-Terrorism released a report on the use of AI by terrorist groups. With few regulations, these terrorists obtain these new technological tools and manipulate and use them as weapons to spread terror. Even though AI could be used to combat or fight extremism and terrorism, the tendency to use it negatively is quite high. This innovation allows for easier password guessing, CAPTCHA breaking, etc.

**(c) Infringement on Privacy**

Another potential risk posed by AI is privacy. The innovation accesses one's details. For instance, while using one's phone, AI watches every move, tracks data usage and makes suggestions on what one should do. AI also gives room for hackers to carry out malicious activities easily, as it conceals wrongful and misleading codes. AI shields computer malware so they remain undetected until massive damage is done.

**(d) Bias**

One ill-effect of AI that cannot be overlooked is its tendency to be biased. Humans are biased and since AI is created by humans, the machine is not free from bias. While creating programmes, the programmer might embed an algorithm with their personal bias. This could be done consciously or unconsciously.

**(e) Dictates freedom of speech and expression**

AI also infringes or dictates freedom of speech and expression. How? One might ask. Humans receive most information online or on social media. These platforms or intermediaries can control what humans consume. This could dissuade one from making informed choices as a biased or lopsided narrative is presented to them, thus impacting one's freedom of speech and expression.

**(f) Lack of Creativity**

AI lacks creativity as it cannot learn to think outside the box. This is so because the machine is only capable of learning over time with pre-fed data and past experiences. It only makes use of these in decision-making or solving a task, but cannot be intuitive or creative like humans.

**(g) Zero emotions**

Another snag is that AI exhibits no emotions. Humans are emotional and this enables us to work in teams, help each other out and converse intently. This is lacking in AI, as the robots or machines display no such emotions.

To conclude this piece, it would be a misnomer to say that the promoters of AI have been able to satisfactorily create a machine that is intelligent in all aspects or ramifications, including learning, reasoning, problem-solving, perception and usage of language.