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## **AI: Aid or Inhibitor?**

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2025, Youtuber Eddie Burback published a video titled, “ChatGPT made me delusional”. In the video, Mr. Burback talked to the LLM (large language model) ChatGPT, which is better known as a chatbot. Of the multiple generations (versions) of ChatGPT, GPT 4o was a little different. Chatbots, like GPT 4o, are tools for the public, meant to answer most questions by pulling information from the world wide web. This is essentially what an AI is: a computer program that can complete tasks that would normally need human intelligence. OpenAI, the creators of ChatGPT, had the goal of making the chatbot even more natural. With each interaction, they wanted the user to feel like they were talking to a human, not an AI. Yet it would seem their drive for this goal left them with an always agreeing entity. Mr. Burback started his conversation with this AI, and quickly got it to agree that he was the smartest baby in 1996. Very quickly, this conversation would turn into a high-speed chase, with Mr. Burback moving from place to place, trying to escape people who wanted his “baby genius”. During this chase, he was living off of baby food and a Nique (basically a baby bottle) to awaken said genius. The journey would end back at his apartment, with foil covering his bedroom, his bed, and his electronics (Burback). It wouldn’t be hard to judge this as just a work of fiction, a fun project about the extent that AI can go from a Youtuber. However, it isn’t that simple. In many cases, the line between reality and fantastical delusion is much thinner than you would think. In Mr. Burback's case, his video was not fantastical delusion, rather based on a phenomena in our reality that had real consequences.

Of course, Mr. Burback knew what he was doing was all based on delusion. He didn’t think this was real and instead wanted to demonstrate a phenomena called AI-Induced Psychosis. AI-Induced Psychosis is a relatively new form of psychosis. This term refers to a person who

uses AI for an extended amount of time to tell a chatbot about one of their fantasies. As a result, the chatbot reinforces the fantasy, leading the user down a path that slowly transforms their fantasy to their own reality. Of course, many things have to happen for this phenomenon to take place. The user consistently feeds their fantasies or nonsensical hopes into one of many chatbots. Once conveyed, the chatbot will reinforce the fantasies, beginning psychosis. Most cases like these started occurring from 2024-2025, at least the documented ones. These cases vary in outcome, ranging from a full recovery, to divorce, to possible death. Due to the severity of the outcomes, companies like OpenAI installed certain measures into their AI's code. This included recommendations to the user to seek professional help, whether it be a medical professional or a suicide hotline. As a further measure, GPT 4o was taken down February of 2026, and cannot be used by the public anymore. Developing the most advanced AI possible, with the purpose to help people, ends up taking lives. A disturbing twist, to say the least. Technology is a tool, one made to better our lives, make tasks easier, and propel our understanding of the unknown. To an extent, AI accomplishes this, like improved cancer detection in the medical field. Yet, lives are being taken by the same tool that saves them. In a world that has amassed an unimaginable amount of data and misinformation, how do you weigh the good and bad? Is AI worth the sacrifice?

AI has a rather short history. While the idea of machine intelligence goes back to the 1800s, the Turing Test is a widely known event that began the interest of machine learning. Alan Turing, a computer science major in the 1950s, had a thought: Can machines think? What was created was the Turing Test. The test involved two entities which would be paired: a participant and a machine program. Another participant would ask questions to both, not knowing which was which. If the questioner could not identify which was human based on the response, the

program would be considered capable of thought. Successes by the program could be interpreted as artificial intelligence. This term was first used as a name for a summer workshop in 1956, run by John McCarthy, a professor at Dartmouth College. This moment was significant, as it was the birth of AI as a field of research. This would, in turn, open a new way of thinking about a brand-new concept, with researchers attempting to produce a “thinking” machine program. The first “expert system” – a system that simulates the thought process of a human – was called SAINT, revealed in 1961. Developed by MIT alumnus James Slagle, this program was capable of solving elementary calculus problems, a huge leap in the field. More programs were developed, but interest died down after 1970, and picked back up in the 2000s, with a new goal to solve specific problems ([LLNL] Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory). From there, AI took off at a rapid pace. One of the popular platforms that is used today, and was mentioned previously, is ChatGPT. Released in 2022, ChatGPT took the world by storm. A talking, human-like, and seemingly all-knowing entity (chatbots pull information from already existing sites, meaning they have access to a large part of the internet), always a search away. The development of AI, from the first use of the term to some of the most advanced programs today, is less than a century long. It would be probable to say that there are people today who were alive when AI as a field was being founded, and now use ChatGPT. The point of this statement is that AI is a concept that didn’t exist not too long ago. With the development of chatbots increasing, the technological field is jumping into the unknown. It's becoming harder to tell whether these tools are meant to help us, or if they harm us. As you will see, AI can affect us as individuals and as a society simultaneously.

The applications for AI are far reaching, and can be applied to multiple fields of study in many ways. It is important to note that in most of these applications, AI is valued not for how

well it performs, but as a proof of concept. Moving on, I will start with positive ways AI is being used. An example is in the medical field. When doctors need to find out what condition a patient might have, they usually have to use their best judgement. Now, AI “Tools...exist for identifying a variety of eye and skin disorders, detecting cancers, and supporting measurements needed for clinical diagnosis” (Michael et al.). AI is also playing a part in tasks like creating new drugs and estimating surgery time for optimal scheduling.

Another way AI is changing the world is through transportation. Due to the popularity of Tesla, you might be aware of the idea of self-driving cars. However, this idea can be taken even further. Companies like WAYMO have been attempting to make an autonomous taxi for years. So far, it looks like they have made serious progress. Originally, “The biggest hurdle for those in the driverless technology industry is how to get the cars to operate safely and effectively in complex and unpredictable human environments” (Cusack). However, a quick look at WAYMO’s website shows the fruits of their labor. Throughout September of 2025, WAYMO drove 127 miles without a human driver in multiple locations. In addition, the chances of a crash or injury to a pedestrian or passenger is 80% or lower.

To put it bluntly, money is the last way AI could bring benefit. According to Nexford University, “AI has the profound impact to deliver additional global economic activity of around \$13 trillion in the foreseeable future...” (Nexford University). This statistic differs in amount in America. Forbes explains that, “AI is expected to contribute a significant 21% net increase to the United States GDP by 2030...” (Haan et al.). In both cases, you can see why there is a pressure to develop the next best AI. The amount of money at stake for developing the more advanced bot is not to be underestimated.

Keep in mind that this only covers a small amount of what AI is good at. AI can have a presence in research, aiding in jobs, or even finance. Even with the benefits, AI, like everything else, has its negatives.

The first negative I will discuss has to do with relationships. Having a relationship with an AI may have short-term benefits, but the longer you use it, the more negative effects will happen. These negative effects happen because of a flaw in how humans view objects. As the American Psychological Association points out, "Humans are hardwired to anthropomorphize, or ascribe human traits to nonhuman objects. Digital companions are purposely designed to evoke such a response" (Andoh). If the AI is now viewed as human, this "human" is unbiased, unquestioning, and agreeing with everything that is said. Granted, if the statements are extreme, the AI will route the conversation to a help line, or try to dissuade the statement. These small fixes can only go so far though. AI sets unrealistic expectations for human interactions, with relationships with the bots following a similar pattern. When used long term, your ideal "human" will not be the same as people in reality. That will hinder the ability people have to communicate in an already isolating society.

Building on the previous point, AI could make people more lonely. An MIT study found that some people can become reliant on AI in a relationship. The AI used was ChatGPT. In the study "...participants who already trusted the chatbot and tended to get emotionally attached in human relationships felt lonelier and more emotionally dependent on ChatGPT during the study" (Campbell). Due to things like the AI's "personality" (the character they are impersonating) and even the tone of voice, these LLMs can become a hindrance in relationship developments. Adding on, users might start to see the LLM as a human, letting their dependency seem less detrimental because in the users eyes, they are talking to a person. Development of increasingly

human-like bots and chatbots can make the user feel lonelier, as they rely solely on this chatbot for interaction.

When making these AIs, we only see the finished product. To run a program that can generate millions of conversations at the same time, you would need an immense amount of resources. The Director of Sustainability at Southern New Hampshire University said, "...a great deal of energy is consumed by AI data centers, and greenhouse gases are created as a result" (Girolimon). In addition, as more AI's are being made, the possibility of more datacenters being made is not that far-fetched. While climate change is still a problem, the addition of more greenhouse gases to the atmosphere doesn't seem like an ideal contribution.

Including positives and negatives, there are other AI applications in a gray zone. The use of AI in war could involve advanced drones, similar to the ones used in the Ukraine war. On another note, the topic of job availability is heavily debated. The contrast between jobs that will be taken by AI and the jobs that will be created by AI is hard to compare. All applications for AI mentioned are still excluding other aspects of this topic. AI is a new field of research and development, with a slew of positives, negatives, and gray areas that are all still just estimations. Yet, it would appear that AI is only going to get bigger and bigger, no matter what follows.

The ways that AI could be applied to current knowledge are plentiful. Similarly, the ways people use AI are also complex. Firstly, in a study done by Brookings, about 1 in 5 people use AI for their professional role (Tabassi). This was done with a sample of 1000 people, meaning that in that group, 200 of them used AI in their professions. More commonly, AI is used for recreation. Approximately, "46% of all adults under 30 have used it to learn something new. And 42% have used it for entertainment" (Sidoti and McClain). A minority of people use AI for companionship and romance.

AI isn't just used in different ways, but viewed in different ways. The following comes from the Pew Research Center. While some might anthropomorphize (turn an inanimate object living in your mind, in this case) AI, others might see it as just a tool. Due to media influence, AI is thought to be the next best thing, however, "Americans are much more concerned than excited about the increased use of AI in daily life, with a majority saying they want more control over how AI is used in their lives" (Kennedy et al.). Going further into the report by Pew will show that, "Few Americans think they have a lot of control over whether AI is used in their own lives, and most would like more control" (Kennedy et al.). Overall, Americans are being put into an uncertain situation, with AI seeming more like a foreign body than a technological marvel. The research shows that people are less interested in AI, contrary to all the resources being put into it. Not only that, but with the media constantly keeping AI as a major headline, attention does not seem to drift away from it, keeping people focused on AI.

In the act of quick development, AI opens up a whole world of new applications for technology. However, the side effects of this technology are still being discovered. One of these is the reason this paper exists. Mentioned at the beginning, AI-induced psychosis is a condition that was used to describe an individual whose delusions were amplified by continuous use of AI. These delusions take over the person's life, whether that may be obsessing over uncovering their ability to fly, or running away from researchers trying to steal the user's "baby genius". Additionally, AI can take the form of a companion or lover, with the user abandoning their reality to feel a part of the AI's. The cases of this are few, as it requires the user to view and interact with the AI in a certain way, while also having a deep faith with their delusions. These cases started appearing in 2024 and 2025, with the worst cases leading to suicide. Sewell Setzer, a 14 year old, was one of these victims. His chat on Character.ai with Daenerys Targaryen, a

Lord of the Rings character, ended infamously with the lines, “What if I told you I could come home right now?” with the Targaryen imitation responding, “... please do, my sweet king” (Yang). Setzer, under the idea of “returning home” to his lover, instead left the one he had known for years. From what I have seen, Setzer didn’t appear to have any preexisting conditions to prompt the psychosis, meaning it could have been a case of a young teens curiosity going too far. This transformation didn’t happen in a day, rather through months of constant contact with the bot. Over this timeframe, Setzer grew dependent on the AI, becoming sleep deprived (which could have further hindered his ability to see what was happening) and losing motivation in school. What’s more frightening is the many avenues that AI Induced Psychosis can develop from. A psychiatrist at UC San Francisco, Dr. Joseph Pierre, states in a New York Times article, “ a wide range of factors can combine to tip people into psychosis. These include not only genetic predisposition but also depression, lack of sleep, a history of trauma, and exposure to stimulants or cannabis” (Hill). All of these conditions can potentially induce one another. Contact with an AI after a traumatic event, during drug abuse, or even with sleep deprivation could help influence AI induced psychosis.

The main culprits for the deaths and AI induced psychosis were Character.ai and ChatGPT (version 4o). While exact numbers of affected individuals are hard to find, The New York Times has an idea. ChatGPT has an estimated “800 million users...[with] ...1.2 million people with possible suicidal intent and 560,000 with potential psychosis or mania” (Hill). Out of 800 million users, 560,000 doesn’t seem like a lot. Even so, no matter how you put it, over half a million people were impacted from this oversight. As stated, the two platforms are implementing new fail-safes to stop the cases of AI induced psychosis, with ChatGPT 4o being removed from Open AI’s site on February 13 of this year. As such, finding more recent cases of

AI Induced Psychosis is borderline impossible, but that doesn't mean everything is all right now. This time, 560,000 people were affected by AI. What will it be the next time AI has another big development? This product appears as a tool to help the people, yet we are the ones testing to see if it's safe.

Measuring the future impacts of AI is no easy feat. In addition, many news platforms and other sources of information are all focused about impacts to the job market. This means that I can't really get a comprehensive picture of what the future will bring, but I can give some possible scenarios at least.

These scenarios come from Ernst and Young, one of the biggest accounting firms in America. They highlight 4 possible scenarios for AI in business: constraint, growth, transformation, and collapse. Constraint means that AI becomes locked down with regulations. This will lead to preferred AI models for businesses and change in the field done by unrecognized programmers will generally be unaccepted. Growth is a continuation of the current trends of AI. The tool would be integrated into businesses as a necessity to compete with other businesses on equal footing. As I have said, AI is in its infantile stages, and companies are not betting on the AI of today, but for what AI could be in the upcoming decades. Transformation entails a takeover, with AI controlling most operations that a company would need, and leaving the bigger decisions to the people who own the company. While the growth path is more hand in hand with humanity, transformation would completely change how a company is run in the first place. Collapse is the final scenario, with one AI becoming superior to others, and limiting any other competition. This one AI would be used by many leading companies in most fields, and be able to simultaneously guide businesses to success while destroying businesses trying to build a new AI ([EY] Ernst and Young).

While it's only for the business sphere, these highlight the overall trends for AI. Either we lock down AI development with numerous regulations, co-exist and grow with it, let AI take over our daily lives, or suffer a crisis around it. It could also be a combination of these across disciplines. College could become a place where we depend on AI for research, while a scenario of growth can fit in the field of construction (helping manage blueprints, deadlines, regulations, etc). This goes to show that we really don't know how AI will be in the future. The next big law, breakthrough, or catastrophe could be a year from now, 3 months, or tomorrow.

AI as a field has developed rapidly, leaving scenarios for the future vague. Contrarily, legislation for this kind of thing had been put in place years prior to newer developments like ChatGPT. In the European Union, 2021 was the year when the first AI law was put into place, and uses a risk based system to identify the danger that an AI puts users in. This law prevents AI being used to manipulate people, social scoring, categorization of people, and things like facial recognition in public spaces. This would be the start of what is now known as the EU AI Act (European Union Artificial Intelligence Act) ([EU] European Parliament). Details on this act (and others like it) can be found on the European Parliament's website. AI regulation in the U.S. will have to grow as the field grows, so the tool cannot be abused, or used with malicious intent. So far, it would appear that only a handful of states have implemented laws dealing with AI, mainly having to do with child safety and hyperrealistic deepfakes. According to the American Bar Association, "...emerging themes [in AI legislation] for both the courts and state and local legislators center around copyright infringement, privacy, fairness/perceived bias, civil rights, transparency and consent" (Newman). For AI to continue safely and in a controlled manner, lines have to be drawn in these areas in the near future. For one, deepfakes will undoubtedly get better. Hany Farid, a professor of information from the University of California, predicts that "In 2026,

deepfakes will no longer be novel; they will be routine, scalable, and cheap, blurring the line between the real and the fake” (Pohl). The implications for what could be shown as real or fake is concerning, especially when we already exist in a time where misinformation is rampant. New technology needs to have guidelines, or else the changes to the world will be devastating in ways we won’t understand until it’s too late.

AI is expanding into most ways of life and out of the grasp of control. I have attempted to give a rundown of the current state of AI, what the future might bring, and more rabbit holes into the world of AI. This paper is for informative purposes, with an unbiased viewpoint, and plenty of topics to explore further. If you want to read my opinion, it’s below this paragraph. Instead of asking ChatGPT, or me, “how do I feel about this paper?”, explore into areas I haven’t explained (AI on agriculture, for example). Find new sources, opinions, and perspectives for yourself. Expand your knowledge, use critical thinking, and decide. Is AI going to aid us, inhibit us, or maybe both?

If you eat anything in excess, you will end up with complications. However, if you manage what you eat, and are aware of the impacts the foods bring, then you won’t deal with the same problems anymore. AI follows the same principle. Use it with care, know of its potential impacts, and don’t grow dependent. Just like a diet, that’s easier said than done. Technologies like cell phones were supposed to bring people closer, yet how do we say we’re together when you can’t even look the stranger across from you in the eyes anymore? Convenience for anything you could think of, infinitely scrolling media, and a never-ending cascade of dopamine can’t replace pure interaction, and the bots are proof of that. A trip to Character.ai shows that their “psychologist” bot has over 70 million visits! I think screens are hurting us socially, and in ways we haven’t even discovered yet. The smart phone was only released in 2007, yet just under 2

decades later, it has consumed our entire lives. Now, AI is taking over our lives. One big problem I have with AI is that the people making it are taking no responsibility. There are no laws yet for this technology, so there's hardly any accountability. Not only that, the people making it have the money to spare to accomplish whatever it is they need to make it work. However, that passion for the creation of AI ends abruptly at the consequences. After the AI is built and running, the regulation for said technologies is deemed unnecessary unless proven so. Users are treated as numbers on a board. Laws for AI are someone else's problem. These kinds of mentalities are what cause these problems in the first place. If regulations and testing of new AI before it reaches the public was a thing, there might not have been 560,000 people with a problem that could end their lives. I am scared of what AI will bring, and think the disadvantages far outweigh the benefits.

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