

Slide 1 – Hello, my name is Benjamin Hodgkins, and I’m going to show you something beautiful. What you just saw was a montage of six different movies and video games who all have a central theme about interacting with artificial intelligence, or AI.

Slide 2 – The first five clips, from the movies listed here, all share a common plot. You’ve probably seen this plot before, where a robot or AI becomes sentient or otherwise rebels against humans. This is, unfortunately, the typical portrayal of AI in fiction.

Slide 3 – A good example of your typical AI baddie is Ultron, from the appropriately named Avengers: Age of Ultron. Ultron was created as a defense system to automatically deter outside threats, which are mostly hostile alien species in the Marvel universe. However, in an entirely unshocking twist Ultron turns on humanity and attempts to destroy the entire planet.

Slide 4 – So why is evil AI such a common plot? I see this as being a mix of two main factors. The first is that we as humans have for centuries feared the possibility of beings with greater intelligence than we possess. These innate fears of being overshadowed lead to evil AI generally being received well by audiences, which in turn makes it a standard plot. This is commonly seen in soft science fiction, which often glosses over technical details in favor of a better story.

Slide 5 – The last clip in the montage, however, is a bit different. It’s an atypical view of AI in the realm of fiction. Instead of being the villain, BT-7274 is actually one of the stories heroes.

Slide 6 – And BT-7274 is very different than Ultron or any of the bad AI. Unlike Ultron, BT has very clear protocols they must follow and does so throughout the plot. Ultimately, BT sacrifices themselves to follow Protocol 3, to protect their pilot. BT has goals and clear reasoning behind their actions.

Slide 7 – And this brings us to an important part of understanding the portrayal of AI in fiction, which I call “the why”. “The why” is the key ingredient missing from almost every story where an AI turns evil. Ultron turns against humanity, why? Ava is a psychopath, why? Kaizen is delusional, why? This can be explained by examining the people behind these stories. A majority of writers for all forms of media generally do not have technical backgrounds, which leads them into incorrect assumptions about AI. And a very big difference is visible when a writer *does* have a technical background, because those AI, like BT, have clear, defined goals.

Slide 8 – So why does this all matter? After all, it’s only fiction, right? Except it isn’t. The problem with this is, as the title of the slide suggests, culture is context. Research, after all, needs funding and funding is limited and opinions about said research can influence it. Projects can be shut down and defunded because the results might make misinformed citizens unhappy. Fiction is a lot like evidence at a trial, even if it isn’t true, it still has been presented and can’t be erased from the human mind. Think about all of the times, for example, that you might have hear the term *Orwellian*.

Slide 9 – And this negative public perception can help obscure real, beneficial progress being made in the world of AI. List off positive AI.

Slide 10 – List off positive AI.

Ending Statement: The thing about AI is that it’s not going away. In fact, it’s already everywhere if you know how to look. While most fiction on AI worries and fusses about revolutions and rampages, I hope I was able to show that when you peel back the curtain, there’s a lot of good work going on. AI will only

improve in the coming years and decades, and it's okay to be worried. But as Mr. Roger once said, "*Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.*" And that someone, now or in the future, just might be an AI. Thank you for watching.