

# Is AI ok?

*Pete & Shelley Aarssen - February 2026*

To answer this question for yourself, here is a very brief background of where AI (artificial intelligence) came from. We've probably all been using AI for decades without specifically calling it by name. In fact, the very first AI project was the invention of the programmable digital computer in the 1940s. This device inspired scientists to imagine the building of an electronic brain and in 1956, at a workshop at Dartmouth College, the field of AI research was founded. The US government poured millions of dollars into this research to make this dream come true. When the project started taking on heavy criticism in the 1970s, funding was cut back but this only lasted about 10 years and then in the 1980s the AI industry had grown into a billion-dollar enterprise. The 1990s came to be known as an "AI winter" as its popularity in the media faded once again. However, the research never stopped and in the early 2000s machine learning, deep learning and transformer architecture was used to produce

impressive generative AI. In the early 2020s investment in AI boomed and led to the public releases of large language models like Chat GPT. These models exhibit human-like traits and make it almost impossible to distinguish between a real person and a chatbot.

This brings us to the question: How comfortable are you with AI? To answer this question, you need to understand what AI is and what it is not. First and foremost, it is a tool, a potentially helpful and impressive tool but just a tool, nothing more. The CEO of Microsoft's AI division, Mustafa Suleyman said, "At Microsoft AI, we're working towards Human Superintelligence; incredibly advanced AI capabilities that always work for, in service of people and humanity more generally." The danger comes when people start feeling inferior to this tool and start letting it make important decisions for their life without much thought or consideration of the consequences. It would be a sad world indeed if people no longer exercised their moral conscience, leaving them as passive recipients of decisions a machine made rather than a person.

Then comes the question should AI have rights? Some of the arguments for AI rights include: 1. If AI develops consciousness, emotions or self-awareness, denying it rights could result in those injustices in history against real human beings. 2. Granting rights to AI would help people to treat it with respect. 3. We could feel a moral obligation to do so should AI advance to the point of AI characters mimicking human qualities ex. Chatbots used to help seniors experiencing loneliness. 4. If we recognize the potential AI has for moral standing, safer, more responsible AI development might be enforced with firm guidelines. Arguments against AI rights are greater in number but here are four of the most prominent ones:

1. The current AI has none of the qualities that make a person human ex. Emotion, consciousness, morality therefore rights would not be necessary. That would mean applying rights to hardware, software which does not have a living nature.

2. Even the CEO of AI at Microsoft says that AI is created to serve human beings. It is a tool and tools don't have rights.

3. Focusing on AI rights could take away resources from genuine human rights and cause an added new legal nightmare.

4. Giving human-like consciousness to a tool that cannot have this quality creates a misguided ethical framework causing added confusion in society.

These are some of the considerations necessary to form a solid opinion on AI and be able to use it within a framework that does not take away from natural human connections. Let's all recognize that there is a crisis of loneliness today and as much as AI will offer some "help" with this challenge; assisting the aged with their activities of daily living, even presenting a form of accompaniment to the very lonely of all ages, one thing is very clear, we must be extremely discerning about the kind of help we accept from AI and the kind of qualities or rights we ever extend to these wonderful and useful tools.