



# Stephen Hawking: Greed and Stupidity Will End Humanity Earlier than Expected

Although theoretical physicist and cosmologist Stephen Hawking is not a soothsayer, he has in the past predicted the future of humanity. Hawking has warned us on countless occasions about how humans are actively pursuing Artificial Intelligence (AI) without caution; concerned it will spell the end of humanity in the future.



Mr Hawking believes the current AI race will eventually usher humans into a stage when machines will become more intelligent than humans. This is when the total annihilation of humans would begin, Hawking claims.

Of course, the AI community prefers not to hear such a prominent and respected science proponent say such things. Hawking was heavily criticized within the AI community recently, facing accusations of being a pessimist, and should inculcate the spirit of positivism in the AI debate instead.

But despite the criticisms, Hawking is still expressing his views as an independent thinker in the arena of public discourse. Apart from the AI apocalypse, Hawking has summarized vices in humans that he thinks will destroy any progress made since the Stone Age period to current times.



In an interview with Larry King on the *Larry King Now* talk show last year, the distinguished physicist said although he has talked about AI in the past as a tool that could spell doom for humans, he believes strongly that such inventions are inspired by human vices.

Hawking stated that *greediness and stupidity are the biggest threats to humanity*. He said these two vices will eventually drive humans into extinction, and earlier than he previously expected. According to Hawking, humans are becoming increasingly stupid and greedy with each passing day. He noted that there has been a massive air pollution problem in the last six years, killing many around the world. Hawking said the situation will continue to worsen, bringing along more deaths and strange diseases in the near future.

*"We certainly have not become less greedy or less stupid. The population has grown by half a billion since our last meeting, with no end in sight. At this rate, it will be eleven billion by 2100. Air pollution has increased over the past five years. More than 80% of inhabitants of urban areas are exposed to unsafe levels of air pollution," he said.*



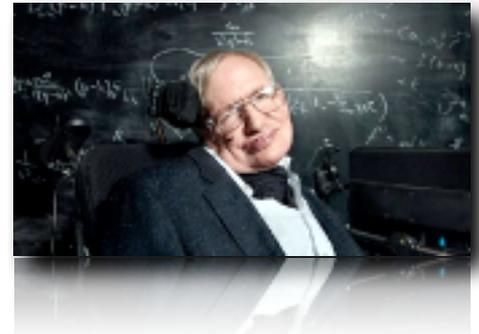
Hawking added that he is only reminding us of the things we are doing that will end up devouring us.

Hawking's warning is just like the hunter who finds a baby monster in the forest and brings it home. After nurturing the baby monster for it to grow into a giant beast, the monster eats the hunter one day.

If you look at what is currently happening across the world, people are increasingly being exposed to automated things.

Smartphones, robots working amid humans, and unmanned vehicles to name a few.

These machines are increasingly becoming more intelligent. On the other hand, humans seem to be losing their senses. Due to proliferation of smartphones and other integrated cell-phones; some are literally dying or injuring themselves, just for a common selfie.



The United States Department of Transportation estimates that during 2014, in the so-called "year of the selfie," 33,000 people were injured while driving and using a cell-phone in some fashion, which included talking, listening, and "manual button/control actuation" including taking, uploading, downloading, editing, or opening of selfies.

Also, a 2015 survey by *Erie Insurance Group* found that 4% of all drivers admitted to taking selfies while driving.

Again, the *Washington Post* reported in January 2016 that about half of at least 27 selfie deaths in 2015 had occurred in India. No official data on the number of people who died taking selfies in India exists, but reports show from 2014 up to August 2016, there have been at least 54 deaths in India while taking selfies.

This has encouraged the *Indian Tourism Ministry* to ask states to identify and barricade 'selfie danger' areas. The goal of the sign is to try and stop or reduce selfie-related deaths in the country.

So, you see, this is one of the exact stupidities Hawking is warning us about. Humans are becoming increasingly stupid while the machines they have created are becoming increasingly intelligent. The mockery of humanity has started. The machines seem to be controlling humans, not the other way around.

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## Pour le scientifique Stephen Hawking, "nous sommes au moment le plus dangereux du développement de l'humanité"

Dans une tribune [sur le site du Guardian](#) (lire ci-dessous), le célèbre astronome Stephen Hawking met en avant les défis immenses auxquels l'humanité est aujourd'hui confronté, du changement climatique à la surpopulation.

*"Tous ces facteurs nous rappellent que nous nous situons bien au moment le plus dangereux du développement de l'humanité."*

Comme il avait déjà pu le faire par le passé, le professeur a mis en garde contre l'intelligence artificielle et l'automatisation de la société, qui pourraient engendrer un bouleversement politique, suite à la destruction de nombreux emplois de la classe moyenne.

Stephen Hawking se montre d'ailleurs préoccupé par la situation politique, en évoquant l'élection de Donald Trump ou le Brexit.

*"L'aspect le plus préoccupant de cette situation est que désormais, plus qu'à n'importe quel moment de notre histoire, notre espèce a besoin de cohésion", continue-t-il.*

*"Nous n'avons qu'une seule et même planète et nous nous devons de nous serrer les coudes pour la préserver", a-t-il conclu en insistant sur le développement potentiellement dangereux de la technologie, qui menace selon lui, l'humanité et la planète d'auto-destruction.*

Stephen Hawking s'est cependant dit "optimiste" en affirmant que ces défis pouvaient être relevés. Mais pour cela, il faudra que

*"les élites" de par le monde "tirent les leçons de l'année qui vient de s'écouler et apprennent à retrouver une once d'humanité."*

## This is the most dangerous time for our planet

We can't go on ignoring inequality, because we have the means to destroy our world but not to escape it



As a theoretical physicist based in Cambridge, I have lived my life in an extraordinarily privileged bubble. Cambridge is an unusual town, centred around one of the world's great universities. Within that town, the scientific community that I became part of in my 20s is even more rarefied.

And within that scientific community, the small group of international theoretical physicists with whom I have spent my working life might sometimes be tempted to regard themselves as the pinnacle. In addition to this, with the celebrity that has come with my books, and the **isolation imposed by my illness**, I feel as though my ivory tower is getting taller.

So the recent apparent rejection of the elites in both America and Britain is surely aimed at me, as much as anyone. Whatever we might think about the decision by the British electorate to **reject membership of the European Union and by the American public to embrace Donald Trump** as their next president, there is no doubt in the minds of commentators that this was a cry of anger by people who felt they had been abandoned by their leaders.

It was, everyone seems to agree, the moment when the forgotten spoke, finding their voices to reject the advice and guidance of experts and the elite everywhere.

**What matters now, far more than the victories by Brexit and Trump, is how the elites react**

I am no exception to this rule. I warned before the Brexit vote that it would **damage scientific research** in Britain, that a vote to leave would **be a step backward**, and the electorate – or at least a sufficiently significant proportion of it – took no more notice of me than any of the other political leaders, trade unionists, artists, scientists, businessmen and celebrities who all gave the same unheeded advice to the rest of the country.

What matters now, far more than the choices made by these two electorates, is **how the elites react**. Should we, in turn, reject these votes as outpourings of crude populism that fail to take account of the facts, and attempt to circumvent or circumscribe the choices that they represent? I would argue that this would be a terrible mistake.

The concerns underlying these votes about the economic consequences of globalisation and **accelerating technological change** are absolutely understandable. The automation of factories has already decimated jobs in traditional manufacturing, and the **rise of artificial intelligence** is likely to extend this job destruction deep into the middle classes, with only the most caring, creative or supervisory roles remaining.

This in turn will accelerate the already widening economic inequality around the world. The internet and the platforms that it makes possible allow **very small groups of individuals to make enormous profits** while employing very few people.

This is inevitable, it is progress, **but it is also socially destructive.**

We need to put this alongside the financial crash, which brought home to people that a very few individuals working in the financial sector can accrue huge rewards and that the rest of us underwrite that success and pick up the bill when their greed leads us astray. So taken together we are living in a world of widening, not diminishing, financial inequality, in which many people can see not just their standard of living, but their ability to earn a living at all, disappearing. It is no wonder then that they are searching for a new deal, which Trump and *Brexit* might have appeared to represent.



**'In sub-Saharan Africa there are more people with a telephone than access to clean water.'**  
Photograph: Andy Hall for the Observer

It is also the case that another unintended consequence of the global spread of the internet and social media is that the stark nature of these inequalities is far more apparent than it has been in the past. For me, the ability to use technology to communicate has been a liberating and positive experience. Without it, I would not have been able to continue working these many years past.

But it also means that the lives of the richest people in the most prosperous parts of the world are agonisingly visible to anyone, however poor, who has access to a phone. And since there are now more people with a telephone than access to clean water in sub-Saharan Africa, this will shortly mean nearly everyone on our increasingly crowded planet will not be able to escape the inequality.

The consequences of this are plain to see: the rural poor flock to cities, to shanty towns, driven by hope. And then often, finding that the *Instagram* nirvana is not available there, they seek it overseas, joining the ever greater numbers of economic migrants in search of a better life. These migrants in turn place new demands on the infrastructures and economies of the countries in which they arrive, undermining tolerance and further fuelling political populism.

For me, the really concerning aspect of this is that now, more than at any time in our history, **our species needs to work together.** We face awesome environmental challenges: climate change, food production, overpopulation, the decimation of other species, epidemic disease, acidification of the oceans.

Together, they are a reminder that we are at the most dangerous moment in the development of humanity. We now have the technology to destroy the planet on which we live, but have **not yet developed the ability to escape it.** Perhaps in a few hundred years, we will have established human colonies amid the stars, but right now we only have one planet, and we need to work together to protect it.

To do that, we need to break down, not build up, barriers within and between nations. If we are to stand a chance of doing that, the world's leaders need to acknowledge that they have failed and are failing the many. With resources increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few, we are going to have to learn to share far more than at present.

With not only jobs but entire industries disappearing, we must help people to retrain for a new world and support them financially while they do so.

If communities and economies cannot cope with current levels of migration, we must do more to encourage global development, as that is the only way that the migratory millions will be persuaded to seek their future at home.

We can do this, I am an enormous optimist for my species; but it will require the elites, from London to Harvard, from Cambridge to Hollywood, to learn the lessons of the past year. *To learn above all a measure of humility.*

□ The writer launched [www.unlimited.world](http://www.unlimited.world) earlier this year