

Ex-machina and wall-e: illustrating the dangers of technology

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



Final Essay

Ex-Machina and Wall-E are two films that are important to watch together because they both portray the dangers of robotic servitude. Ex-Machina, directed by Alex Garland, is about a programmer who wins a chance to meet the CEO of the company he works for, upon arrival he is informed that he will help test a new advanced AI android named Ava. The programmer was made to make conversation with her to test whether she truly embodies human qualities, but as time goes on, Ava and the programmer start bonding, and evidence accumulates against the CEO of being extremely abusive to Ava. The programmer and Ava hatch a plan for escape, and through an unexpected turn of events, Ava murders the CEO and locks the programmer away while she makes her escape into society. The next film, Wall-E, is a Disney Pixar animated film directed by Andrew Stanton. The film takes place in a future where the human race has rendered the Earth uncultivable and adulterated, far too inhabitable for any life to flourish. The humans retreat from the Earth and live in large communities in space, which causes them to steadily devolve and wait for Earth to return to a habitable planet once more, leaving nothing but a few robots to start cleaning the Earth for later use. Wall-E is the last of these waste-eliminating robots, while it is working, it discovers a plant, something that hasn't been seen on the Earth in hundreds of years. It soon meets Eva, a robot designed to search the Earth for signs of returning fruitfulness. Eva finds Wall-E's plant, and returns to a space shuttle with Wall-E, and the two robots fight societal and governmental corruption in the form of AIs to help return humans to the Earth. Both of these films

demonstrate the dangers of advanced AIs and the position of servitude that humans place them in.

The AIs and humans in both aforementioned films engage in an ongoing power struggle because they are in a precarious master-and-slave relationship. This idea is most prominent in Ex-Machina between the CEO and the two androids, Kyoko and Ava. The CEO plays the role of the master, the creator of the AIs. He also plays the part of a sadist, as evidence by the way he treats his own creations. His greedy and wrathful characteristics are magnified as he has been isolated in his laboratory alone with his thoughts, and is put in a God-like position. On the other hand, Kyoko and Ava, are put in the positions of slaves, especially Kyoko. Kyoko was a prototype AI that predated Ava. Once the CEO saw her as outdated and felt he was in need of a newer model, he made her as his personal slave. At one point, the programmer even sneaks into the CEO's room and finds that his closets are filled with the bodies of the past prototype AIs that he presumably uses for his own selfish desires. Throughout the film, Kyoko has a flat and almost sad looking facial expression while she abides by the CEO's will, for instance, the scene where the CEO orders Kyoko to dance for the programmer, and she begins dancing suggestively in perfect time, but she seems to be dissociated. The CEO then reveals to the programmer that Kyoko is capable of sexual intercourse, revealing that he has also been using his power for more selfish reasons than thought. However, in the end, the show of power is returned by the AIs when Kyoko and Ava both plot and murder the CEO during their escape from the secluded laboratory. This happens when the

CEO begins to detain Ava, and the two end up stabbing the CEO. The AIs are also injured, their prosthetic skin broken, and their mechanical innards exposed. Before the CEO dies, he realizes the sheer irony of the situation, that his own creation has taken his very life; the slaves have turned on their master. In Wall-E, however, this theme is still recognizable, yet appears to be a touch more subtle. On the space craft, robots are used for almost every function: transportation, communication, sanitation, navigation, general workforce, law-enforcement, and entertainment. The AI most notorious for competing in the power-struggle is Auto, the navigation and auto-pilot robot that has been directing the spaceship's course for hundreds of years. When the human pilot only known as ' Captain', orders Auto to chart a course for Earth, Auto outright refuses the Captain's request. The Captain is dumbfounded by Auto's insubordination. The Captain examines the portraits of the captains before him, and he notices that Auto is lurking eerily behind each one of them. The Captain realizes that Auto has been taking the controls for too long and decides to put Auto in his place. The Captain ends up in a fight to the death with Auto and is victorious, immediately taking the spaceship back to Earth. The relationship between the Captain and Auto is a focal point in the film that depicts the dangers of robotic servitude.

People want robots to be like them because they do not want to feel alone and have a complex of superiority. Robots with emotions are a common theme in science fiction, for instance, the films Short Circuit, The Iron Giant, and I, Robot. In all of these examples, the AI protagonist obtains the ability to experience human emotion or the equivalent of human emotion due to an

accident or human error. This theme portrays the fear of technology advancing ahead of and possibly harming humans. Technology is always advancing, and if it is to be a prominent presence in the daily lives of people, it should be relatable somehow. Technology has fed into human desires in such a way that it has even begun to change the way humans interact with each other. This is why people fantasize and strive to create robots in their own image. Humans do not want to lose their power, or be outsmarted by their own creation.

Ex-Machina and Wall-E both show unmistakable violence and abuse from humans toward AIs because they feel superior to the robots. In Ex-Machina, the programmer catches the CEO tearing up a picture that Ava is drawing, as well as using Kyoko as a personal slave. The CEO created the two AIs, and thus feels that he has the right to do as he wishes with them. Ava is abused by being locked away against her will, given test after test, and treated inhumanely. Kyoko is a personal slave to the CEO, providing entertainment, sexual satisfaction, and security. She was made to speak another language so that the programmer could not understand her desperate pleas for help or when she tried to tell him about Ava or the other preceding AIs. Though the language barrier was effective, she still managed to communicate using human body language. Since the programmer has felt bonded with Ava, he believes truly that the AIs have consciousness and they should be treated with the respect that people have. The CEO disagrees, and believes that he should be able to do as he pleases since they are not actually human beings. If the tables were turned, and these acts were done to a human, it would be

considered an unspeakable crime. However, since AIs are considered lower than humans, people could easily take advantage of their power and use it to commit heinous acts like the CEO did in Ex-Machina. Wall-E exhibits similar human-like qualities, such as befriending a cockroach, falling in love with Eva, and taking interest in the relationships between people. Though Wall-E's emotions appear genuine and unrelated to his directive, other robots aboard the spaceship are programmed to emulate emotions and appease humans emotionally. For example, the cosmetic robots that work in the salon, they regurgitate phrases like " You look gorgeous!" and other things a beautician might say to a customer.

The one-track-mindedness of AIs is dangerous because unlike humans, AIs cannot evolve and adapt quite the same way as humans can. In Wall-E, the autopilot is insubordinate to the Captain, as mentioned earlier. The reason for this is because Auto was told by the government to take control of the ship and to never to return to Earth, this was made his prime directive, from which he cannot stray and must do anything to fulfill. However, Auto was not able to comprehend the change of circumstances. Though it was deemed safe to return to Earth, Auto was unable to adapt because his directive could not be changed, thus the ensuing fight between Auto and the Captain.

However, in Ex-Machina, this becomes more complex due to the way Ava was designed. The CEO had given Ava an ' evolving mind'. However, her directive was to become as human as she possibly could be. No matter how her ' mind' evolves, it evolves to fulfill her directive. When the CEO locks her away, and withholds her from fulfilling her directive, she manages to escape

and immerses herself in humanity because that is what she was designed to do. Though technology can advance to great heights, people have yet to capture and create what truly defines humanity.

Though these two films are very different, they share the same common themes and ideas like the dangers of robotic servitude, the ethics of robotics, and what it means to be human. Both films are masterfully directed and orchestrated. They are a great source of entertainment, and an even greater source of food for thought. Both movies seem to be a cautionary tale about the future of technology and how humans seem to abuse it, and what will come of it if something does not change. The similarities and common themes between Ex-Machina and Wall-E make for interesting comparison. It is important to watch the films Ex-Machina and Wall-E together because they both portray the dangers of robotic servitude.