

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/clips/smart-ai-and-society/>

Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, observes that the prospect of making an artificial general intelligence that is smarter than any human is naturally frightening, but he believes having more intelligent tools will do more good than bad. Humans have gotten smarter, he says, because society is smarter and more capable than any individual human.



## Transcript

Audience Member I wanted to ask 00:00:05,550 if the prospect of making something smarter than any human could possibly be scares you.. - It of course does, 00:00:13,230 and I think it would be, like, really weird and a bad sign if it didn't scare me.. Humans have gotten dramatically smarter and more capable over time.. You are dramatically more capable than your great-great grandparents.. And there's almost no biological drift over that period.. Like, sure you eat a little bit better and you've got better healthcare, maybe you eat worse, I don't know, but that's not the main reason you're more capable.. You are more capable because the infrastructure of society is way smarter and way more capable than any human.. And through that, it made you, society, people that came before you, made you the internet, the iPhone, a huge amount of knowledge available at your fingertips, and you can do things that your predecessors would find absolutely breathtaking.. Society is far smarter than you now.. Society is an AGI as far as you can tell..

And the way that that happened was not any individual's brain, but the space between all of us, that scaffolding that we build up and contribute to brick by brick, step by step, and then we used to go to far greater heights for the people that come after us.. Things that are smarter than us will contribute to that same scaffolding.. You will have, your children will have tools available that you didn't, and that scaffolding will have gotten built up to greater heights.. And that's always a little bit scary, but I think it's, like, way more good than bad and people will do better things and solve more problems and the people of the future will be able to use these new tools and the new scaffolding that these new tools contribute to.. If you think about a world that has AI making a bunch of scientific discovery, what happens to that scientific progress is it just gets added to the scaffolding and then your kids can do new things with it or you in 10 years can do new things with it.. But the way it's gonna feel to people I think is not that there is this, like, much smarter entity, because we're much smarter in some sense than the great-great-great grandparents, or more capable at least, but that any individual person can just do more...