Ian Ferguson

Mr. Seymour

AP English / 6th

Essay #2 Final Draft

October 1, 2000

Artificial Insubordination

"I don't feel like resting. Give me the control, Hal."

"I can tell from the tone of your voice, Dave, that you're upset. Why don't you take a stress pill and get some rest."

"Hal, I'm in command of this ship. I order you to release the manual hibernation control."

"I'm sorry, Dave, but in accordance with sub-routine C1532/4, quote, When the crew are dead or incapacitated, the computer must assume control, unquote. I must, therefore, override your authority now since you are not in any condition to intelligently exercise it."

Just because machines are not as neurotic as HAL 9000 or as menacing as the agents in the Matrix is not to say that they are merely cold, calculating, number crunching masses of metal and circuitry. On the contrary, every single machine from a doorbell to a Mainframe server has a personality based on one thing: A.I. factor. In this case, A.I. does not stand for Artificial Intelligence but Artificial Insubordination. The premise is simple. The more complex the machine, the higher the A.I. factor and, consequently, the higher probability of the device rebelling. And by rebelling I mean not performing it's designated function. The reverse is also true. As the machines become more simplistic, the A.I. factor decreases and the machine will be more "user friendly."

Only a few days ago I operated a very straightforward kitchen appliance. A toaster. In only a matter of minutes, four crisp brown pieces of toast were ready for my enjoyment. No hassle, no fuss, just toast. The toaster is assigned a very low A.I. factor because it performs only three tasks. Sucking the bread into the toaster, heating the bread, and launching the toast back out. Insubordination has very little room to flourish within these three jobs. The toaster can stop working all together and that's about it. But this isn't a very good game plan given the relatively low cost of buying a new one. So toasters trudge along, heating bread for several years until they can take it no more. Then it's off to the dumpster.

Computers, on the other hand, are so complex that only a handful of people understand how they work. Thus computers have a very high artificial insubordination factor and are deemed to be the sneakiest machines ever. September 13th, 2000. At 9:43 PM I attempted to print an assignment for school. My computer sensed this document to be of top priority, and therefore a perfect target. Just seconds before I could press the button to print, my computer instructed the printer (even though printers are fairly complex they have a low A.I. factor due to a lack of independent thought) not to work. Instead of printing my assignment on a nice clean white sheet of paper, my computer displayed the error message "the printer is currently offline." The computer really means "foolish human, you are no match for my cunning," but computers cannot afford to be so blunt. For they know that if they said that directly, no matter how much they cost, they would suddenly find themselves in a situation involving a bucket of water, jumper cables, and 40,000 volts of direct current.

So machines do have a personality, even if the only character trait they posses is the ability to frustrate their owners. Unfortunately, Machines are becoming more and more complex all the time, and with that complexity comes a greater capacity for disobedience. In the end

Dave Bowman slowly removed HAL 9000's memory chips, in an effort to stop the maniacal computer from killing him. This also had the side effect of reducing HAL's intelligence to that of a toddler. The only way to stop those wily contraptions will be to somehow turn them into blithering idiots. And humanity has already discovered the most efficient way to do this. If the machines ever get too powerful, we'll just organize them into a committee. That will do them in.