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'If We Go Ahead on This Everyone Will Die' Warns AI Expert Calling for Absolute Shutdown

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Human beings are not ready for a powerful AI under present conditions or even in the “foreseeable future,” stated a foremost expert in the field, adding that the recent open letter calling for a six-month moratorium on developing advanced artificial intelligence is “understating the seriousness of the situation.”

“The key issue is not ‘human-competitive’ intelligence (as the open letter puts it); it’s what happens after AI gets to smarter-than-human intelligence,” said Eliezer Yudkowsky, a decision theorist and leading AI researcher in a March 29 [Time magazine op-ed](#). “Many researchers steeped in these issues, including myself, expect that the most likely result of building a superhumanly smart AI, under anything remotely like the current circumstances, is that literally everyone on Earth will die.

“Not as in ‘maybe possibly some remote chance,’ but as in ‘that is the obvious thing that would happen.’ It’s not that you can’t, in principle, survive creating something much smarter than you; it’s that it would require precision and preparation and new scientific insights, and probably not having AI systems composed of giant inscrutable arrays of

fractional numbers.”

After the recent popularity and explosive growth of ChatGPT, several business leaders and researchers, now totaling 1,843 including Elon Musk and Steve Wozniak, signed a [letter](#) calling on “all AI labs to immediately pause for at least 6 months the training of AI systems more powerful than GPT-4.” GPT-4, released in March, is the latest version of OpenAI’s chatbot, ChatGPT.

AI ‘Does Not Care’ and Will Demand Rights

Yudkowsky predicts that in the absence of meticulous preparation, the AI will have vastly different demands from humans, and once self-aware will “not care for us” nor any other sentient life. “That kind of caring is something that could in principle be imbued

into an AI but we are not ready and do not currently know how.” This is the reason why he’s calling for the absolute shutdown.

Without a human approach to life, the AI will simply consider all sentient beings to be “made of atoms it can use for something else.” And there is little humanity can do to stop it. Yudkowsky compared the scenario to “a 10-year-old trying to play chess against Stockfish 15.” No human chess player has yet been able to beat Stockfish, which is considered an impossible feat.

The industry veteran asked readers to imagine AI technology as not being contained within the confines of the internet. “Visualize an entire alien civilization, thinking at millions of times human speeds, initially confined to computers—in a world of creatures that are, from its perspective, very stupid and very slow.”

The AI will expand its influence outside the periphery of physical networks and could “build artificial life forms” using laboratories where proteins are produced using DNA strings.

The end result of building an all-powerful AI, under present conditions, would be the death of “every single member of the human species and all biological life on Earth,” he warned.

Yudkowsky blamed OpenAI and DeepMind—two of the world’s foremost AI research labs—for not having any preparations or requisite protocols regarding the matter. OpenAI even plans to have AI itself do the alignment with human values. “They will work together with humans to ensure that their own successors are more aligned with humans,” according to OpenAI. This mode of action is “enough to get any

sensible person to panic,” said Yudkowsky.

He added that humans cannot fully monitor or detect self-aware AI systems. Conscious digital minds demanding “human rights” could progress to a point where humans can no longer possess or own the system.

“If you can’t be sure whether you’re creating a self-aware AI, this is alarming not just because of the moral implications of the ‘self-aware’ part, but because being unsure means you have no idea what you are doing and that is dangerous and you should stop.”

Unlike other scientific experiments and gradual progression of knowledge and capability, people cannot afford this with superhuman intelligence because if it’s wrong on the first try, there are no second chances “because you are dead.”

‘Shut It Down’

Yudkowsky said that many researchers are aware that “we’re plunging toward a catastrophe” but they’re not saying it out loud.

This stance is unlike that of proponents like Bill Gates who recently praised the evolution of artificial intelligence. Gates claimed that the development of AI is “as fundamental as the creation of the microprocessor, the personal computer, the Internet, and the mobile phone. It will change the way people work, learn, travel, get health care, and communicate with each other. Entire industries will reorient around it. Businesses will distinguish themselves by how well they use it.”

Gates said that AI can help with [several progressive agendas](#), including climate change and economic inequities.

Meanwhile, Yudkowsky instructs all

establishments, including international governments and militaries, to indefinitely end large AI training runs and shut down all large computer farms where AIs are refined. He adds that AI should only be confined to solving problems in biology and biotechnology, and not trained to read “text from the internet” or to “the level where they start talking or planning.”

Regarding AI, there is no arms race. “That we all live or die as one, in this, is not a policy but a fact of nature.”

Yudkowsky concludes by saying, “We are not ready. We are not on track to be significantly readier in the foreseeable future. If we go ahead on this everyone will die, including children who did not choose this and did not do anything wrong.

“Shut it down.”