

Artificial Intelligence Expert: It's Too Late to Prevent Thinking Machine Chaos

Computer scientist Dennis Foster believes it is already too late to prevent an autonomous weapons arms race, as well as sweeping deployment of AI in everyday life, creating the potential for previously unimagined progress, but also global catastrophe.

Entrepreneur Elon Musk, founder of Tesla Motors and Solar City, together with celebrity physicist Stephen Hawking, made headlines by digitally signing an open letter dedicated to mitigating the potential risks of autonomous weapons empowered by Artificial Intelligence (AI). One of the AI experts who also signed the letter, computer scientist and AI developer Dennis Foster, believes it is already too late to prevent an autonomous weapons arms race, as well as sweeping deployment of AI in everyday life. The result, according to Foster, holds the potential for previously unimagined progress, but also global catastrophe.

"Undoubtedly, equipping weapons with independent reasoning will spawn an AI weapons arms race," Foster asserted. "Russia rolled out its Armata T-14 fully robot-capable battle tank in August, the first of a planned fleet of 2,400 such death machines. America has been developing robotic aircraft and ground weapons since the 1970s. It's not by accident that the first electronic thinking machines were designed and built specifically to wage war. Already, a mind boggling assortment of AI weapons are ready to deploy, from robotic land mines and self-guided gun turrets to autonomous death machines and killer satellites." Foster points out that Dr. Hawking has predicted the self-extinction of humanity within 100 years as a result of our innate warring instincts.

However, beyond expert systems and machine-engineered updates, new research in "deep learning" aims to make use of artificial neural networks, similar to the architecture of the human brain, Foster stated. "Such networks theoretically could process complicated concepts, such as how to eradicate disease, poverty, and famine, or reverse global climate change, more efficiently and accurately than any team or organization composed of humans alone."

Foster is the CEO of Mundus Institute, one of the world's largest organizations involved in AI research, development, and deployment. He gave several examples of how current AI research will benefit society: "Computers that design human DNA, create new organisms, diagnose and treat disease, perform surgery, and formulate new wonder drugs; autonomous machines that seed and plow fields, manage farms, and distribute produce to market; devices that monitor, analyze, and manage economies, preventing stock market crashes, currency inequities, and financial malpractice; teaching machines capable of transferring the sum of human

knowledge to a learner in less time than it takes to download a Windows update; such machines are the stuff of science fiction. Yet, they could become integral to future civilizations."

Given the seeming inevitability, Foster is concerned about civilization becoming over-reliant on super computers. "Dwindling global resources and shrinking sustainability threaten to derail not only civilization, but also the quest for machines that reason. Ordinary planetary and astronomical influences are also serious perils to both existing and future integration of technology. Solar storms, magnetic field disturbances, rising oceans, and geological disturbances can disrupt and even extinguish the global power grid, instantly transforming every electrical device on earth into useless junk. The level of preparedness of nations and organizations for such catastrophes is at best a token effort."

"It's the not the rise of robots that we need to fear," according to Foster, "it's the vestige of the killer instinct still present in humans. As B. F. Skinner put it, the problem is not whether machines think, but whether humans do."

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