

Was This 161-Year-Old Prophecy About AI a Warning We Ignored?

On June 13, 1863, The Press newspaper of Christchurch, New Zealand published an ominous letter that warned that machines would eventually become more intelligent and more powerful than humans. The letter was entitled "Darwin Among the Machines", and it was written by an English sheep farmer living in New Zealand named Samuel Butler. He argued that humans are literally "creating our own successors," and he was entirely convinced that at some point in the future "we shall find ourselves the inferior race." Below is the most important paragraph from Butler's letter.

The views of machinery which we are thus feebly indicating will suggest the solution of one of the greatest and most mysterious questions of the day. We refer to the question: What sort of creature man's next successor in the supremacy of the earth is likely to be. We have often heard this debated; but it appears to us that we are ourselves creating our own successors; we are daily adding to the beauty and delicacy of their physical organisation; we are daily giving them greater power and supplying by all sorts of ingenious contrivances that self-regulating, self-acting power which will be to them what intellect has been to the human race. In the course of ages we shall find ourselves the inferior race. Inferior in power, inferior in that moral quality of self-control, we shall look up to them as the acme of all that the best and wisest man can ever dare to aim at. No evil passions, no jealousy, no avarice, no impure desires will disturb the serene might of those glorious creatures. Sin, shame, and sorrow will have no place among them. Their minds will be in a state of perpetual calm, the contentment of a spirit that knows no wants, is disturbed by no regrets.

Ambition will never torture them. Ingratitude will never cause them the uneasiness of a moment. The guilty conscience, the hope deferred, the pains of exile, the insolence of office, and the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes – these will be entirely unknown to them. If they want “feeding” (by the use of which very word we betray our recognition of them as living organism) they will be attended by patient slaves whose business and interest it will be to see that they shall want for nothing. If they are out of order they will be promptly attended to by physicians who are thoroughly acquainted with their constitutions; if they die, for even these glorious animals will not be exempt from that necessary and universal consummation, they will immediately enter into a new phase of existence, for what machine dies entirely in every part at one and the same instant?

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A “self-regulating, self-acting power which will be to them what intellect has been to the human race” sounds very much like what we call artificial intelligence.

Later in his letter, Butler warned that once machines become intelligent enough, “man will have become to the machine what the horse and the dog are to man.”

We take it that when the state of things shall have arrived which we have been above attempting to describe, man will have become to the machine what the horse and the dog are to man.

Today, AI can perform thousands upon thousands of tasks far better than humans can.

And every day, the gap between AI and humans continues to grow.

Butler envisioned a time when super-intelligent machines would eventually reign supreme over the entire globe.

Day by day, however, the machines are gaining ground upon us; day by day we are becoming more subservient to them; more men are daily bound down as slaves to tend them, more men are daily devoting the energies of their whole lives to the development of mechanical life. The upshot is simply a question of time, but that the time will come when the machines will hold the real supremacy over the world and its inhabitants is what no person of a truly philosophic mind can for a moment question.

If Butler could see how far things have advanced in our time, I wonder what he would think.

He was a farmer, and now AI is starting to take over farming. The following comes from a Breitbart article entitled “Farmers Not Required: John Deere Unveils Lineup of Autonomous Tractors and Other Work Vehicles.”

John Deere has announced plans to introduce a range of self-driving farm and work vehicles, including tractors, dump trucks, and even a robotic lawnmower. The company plans a fully-autonomous corn and soybean farming system by 2030.

Quartz reports that John Deere is doubling down on its commitment to autonomous technology. The company, which first introduced a driverless tractor in 2022, believes that self-driving machines will play a crucial role in the future of farming and help alleviate the industry’s perceived ongoing labor challenges.

At the recent Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, Jahmy Hindman, John Deere’s chief technology officer,

emphasized the company's focus on full autonomy. "When we talk about autonomy, we mean full autonomy," Hindman stated. "No one's in the machine." This commitment to developing vehicles that can operate independently in the complex and unique environments farmers face daily is at the core of John Deere's strategy.

A lot less farm labor will be needed once these machines are being widely used.

So what will those farm laborers do?

It is also being reported that John Deere is developing "driverless tractors that can spray nut orchards with pesticides."

John Deere also plans to release driverless tractors that can spray nut orchards with pesticides, growth regulators, and nutrients for the trees. It thinks those vehicles will have a particular benefit to the California nut farming industry, which has faced labor shortages.

Some argue that a reduction in demand for manual labor will be offset by an increase in demand for high-tech labor.

But I don't buy that.

According to a recent World Economic Forum survey, 41% of employers already intend to "downsize their workforce as AI automates certain tasks."

Artificial intelligence is coming for your job: 41% of employers intend to downsize their workforce as AI automates certain tasks, a World Economic Forum survey showed Wednesday.

What will all of those workers do once they are no longer needed?

It turns out that many common middle-class jobs are expected to be eliminated very rapidly by AI.

Postal service clerks, executive secretaries and payroll clerks are among jobs that employers expect to experience the fastest decline in numbers in coming years, whether due to the spread of AI or other trends.

“The presence of both graphic designers and legal secretaries just outside the top 10 fastest-declining job roles, a first-time prediction not seen in previous editions of the Future of Jobs Report, may illustrate GenAI’s increasing capacity to perform knowledge work,” the report said.

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For centuries, the elite have needed our labor, and they have provided us with wages in return.

But what happens when our labor is no longer needed?

At that point do we just become a bunch of “useless eaters” to the elite?

In my book titled “Chaos,” I have an entire chapter about the dangers of AI. Every area of our society is being dramatically affected by this technology, and it is being projected that the pace of change will continue to increase at an exponential rate in the years ahead.

The technology that is being released to the public now is absolutely breathtaking. For example, the Chinese have just developed a super-intelligent robot that can perform 550 trillion operations per second.

The CASBOT 01 is impressive with its ability to perform complex operations thanks to a phenomenal computing power of

550 trillion operations per second. With over four hours of continuous autonomy, this robot stands at 5 feet 10 inches and weighs around 132 pounds. It can run, jump, and even conduct meticulous tasks like sorting clothes or assembling objects such as table lamps. This autonomy is essential for practical applications in varied environments.

I don't know how it is possible for a robot to "think" that fast, but apparently it can.

And this particular robot reportedly has an "organic and aesthetically pleasing external design that gives it a friendly appearance."

"Wednesday" stands out not only for its physical capabilities but also for its organic and aesthetically pleasing external design that gives it a friendly appearance. Equipped with advanced sensors, it integrates visual and auditory interaction which enhances its engagement with humans, making it ideal for multiple scenarios ranging from smart homes to commercial services. This integration facilitates the adoption of "Wednesday" in both domestic and professional contexts.

How are we supposed to compete with such an entity?

And this robot is nothing compared to what is eventually coming.

We live in a world where "science fiction" is rapidly become "science reality."

There is no turning back now, and it is just a matter of time before ultra-intelligent entities dominate everything.

Is humanity prepared for what this will mean?

Michael Snyder's new book titled "Why" is available in

paperback and for the Kindle on , and you can subscribe to his Substack newsletter at .

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