

People have been worrying about computers taking over the world since they used tape reels and punchcards. But for at least some people, the threat now seems much more plausible. As artificial intelligence advances into new—and sometimes scary—capabilities, there is a growing movement to sound the alarm about the technology. Pessimists—including some of the top executives building advanced AI systems—argue that its creations could lead to catastrophe. In the other camp are scientists who say such concerns are overblown, and that we should be focusing primarily on how AI is being implemented right now and how it could cause harm in our daily lives, such as tools that help produce potent misinformation about elections or systems that amplify the impact of human biases. For insight into the issue, The Wall Street Journal asked experts on each side of the divide to lay out their best argument. Dan Hendrycks, director of the Center for AI Safety, argues that AI is an existential threat that demands urgent action. Arvind Narayanan, a professor of computer science at Princeton University, and Sayash Kapoor, a doctoral candidate at the university, argue the doomsayers are exaggerating the risks, and that humanity has a significant edge over AI.