

'Maximally curious' AI could have disastrous consequences

Publication Date: 2023-07-19

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Section: Technology

Tags: Artificial intelligence (AI), Elon Musk, Universities, Higher education, Computing, Consciousness, letters

Article URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/jul/19/maximally-curious-ai-could-have-disastrous-consequences>



Elon Musk believes that making artificial intelligence “maximally curious” means that it would be “pro-humanity” (Elon Musk launches AI startup and warns of a ‘Terminator future’, 13 July). Before Mr Musk creates such an entity, perhaps he should visit some of the hallowed institutions of curiosity and reflect on how the “maximal curiosity” of previous self-appointed “higher/superior” intelligence has worked out historically for what it has been curious about: the display cabinets of pinned beetles, butterflies and moths; the jars of preserved and pickled dissected animals and animal foetuses; or the desecrated and mutilated “savages” whom Victorian colonialists, explorers and ethnographers put on display for “curious” crowds in museums, zoos and exhibitions. All culminating in Unit 731 and Dr Mengele’s “curiosity” about the limits of the physiology of “inferior beings”. Curiosity killed the cat, skinned it and dissected it. But what do I know? I wasted my time studying “low-value” humanities at university when I should have been studying economics or perhaps philosophy, politics and economics, whose graduates have done so much recently to contribute to human happiness and progress in this country (Sunak to force English universities to cap numbers of students on ‘low-value’ degrees, 14 July). David Ansell London • Have an opinion on anything you’ve read in the Guardian today? Please email us your letter and it will be considered for publication in our letters section.