

The Worst Use of AI I Have Ever Seen

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Elon Musk speaking at the Feb 13, 2025, World Governments Summit in Dubai.

A Few Elon Musk Quotes

Here is Elon Musk talking remotely about his Grok AI on Feb 13, 2025, in a talk titled “Boring Cities, AI, and DOGE” (<https://youtu.be/34jrkiYRzMY>) at the World Governments Summit 2025 in Dubai:

[16:35] “Grok 3 has very, very powerful reasoning capabilities... [16:57] Grok 3 is scary smart... [17:27] [We trained] Grok 3...on a lot of synthetic data. It goes back and forth through the data and tries to achieve logical consistency. So, if it’s got wrong data, it will reflect upon that and remove the data that ...does not concur with reality.”

[26:32] “You can think of an AI like a super-genius child, but it still matters...what values you teach the child... [27:04] The most important thing for AI safety [is] to be maximally truth-seeking... [27:38] If it’s truth-seeking, we can avoid dystopian outcomes.”

[27:44] “An example [of not being truth-seeking was] when Google Gemini...produced an image of the Founding Fathers of the United States [as] a group of diverse women...”

[28:13] “If an AI is designed for DEI — diversity at all costs — it could decide there are too many men in power and execute them. [Laughs] So, problem solved!”



While not directly about his Grok AI, this quote from Elon Musk two weeks later, on Feb 28, 2025, is relevant due to Musk using his “scary smart” Grok AI to help shape his thinking:

[1:16:45] *“The fundamental weakness of Western civilization is empathy — the empathy exploit. [People who use your empathy against you to control government] are exploiting a bug in Western civilization, which is the empathy response...Empathy is good, but you need to think it through and not just be programmed like a robot.”*

The Dangers of Training AIs with Synthetic Data

It is unclear who has been advising Elon Musk about the nature of Large Language Model (LLM) AIs. However, some of the young participants in his Department of Government Efficiency are likely candidates. Whoever they are, they have not served him well. The problem with using synthetic data to train AIs is that, by its very nature, it is not well-connected to reality. That’s what “synthetic” means, especially in this context.

The idea that an AI trained heavily with synthetic data can “remove data that ... does not concur with reality” rests between laughable and truly terrifying. Injecting large quantities of synthetic data into an LLM training regime is the data equivalent of putting your actual training data into a blender and pressing “puree.”

US DoD robotics research efforts encountered this issue often when looking for ways to train robots faster and more cheaply on various terrains. The idea of training a vehicle in a simulated environment seems obvious and attractive, but the problem is that reality is almost indescribably more complicated than any simulation program. What you end up doing is, at best, reproducing the existing sparse knowledge in the simulation program, only at fantastically higher cost than it took to create the simulator program. Even that proves mostly useless since what humans think of as “important” when creating synthetic data never turns out to be what matters to build robustness into the robotic guidance system.

Using Musk’s description, here’s a more accurate description of how Grok 3 was trained:

Grok 3 has very, very powerful reasoning capabilities. Grok 3 is scary smart. That’s because we trained Grok 3 on a lot of LSD. It goes back and forth through its real-world data and tries to achieve logical consistency with its most vivid hallucinations. So, if it’s got real-world data that does not match, it will reflect upon that and remove the real-world data that does not concur with its hallucinations.

Mistaking LLM Nonsense for Nefarious Intent

Once you fall into the trap of believing that the random (Brownian) reasoning of an LLM you pushed beyond its training limits is “scary smart,” bad things quickly begin to happen. The first bad thing is that you can start to mistake similar nonsense from other LLMs as signs of nefarious intent, assuming that others will act on their random noise with the same vigor you intend to apply to *your* “scary smart” random noise generator.

What both situations should be telling you is to *stop taking advice from random number generators*.

Google’s Gemini system was one of several LLMs capable of spouting absurdly wrong and often ridiculous images that reflected not some nefarious human plot, but its accumulation of a wide range of human viewpoints. I assume they tried to weed out some of the more outrageous ones, and almost certainly attempted to fix the absurd images.

The problem is that LLMs are nothing more than digital mimics. They only look for data correlations, not causality, and have no “goals” at all. Even worse, because they reduce all data to huge sets of probabilistic word pairs, the odds of removing all such data are about the same as recovering a bowl of rice after spilling it from an airplane.



Here's a more factually accurate interpretation of that part of Musk's talk:

You can think of an AI as a person with an LSD addiction, but it still matters what suggestions you provide to guide its hallucinations. The most important thing for maximizing the danger is to trust only your AI's most vivid hallucinations. We can guarantee dystopian outcomes if you take its most vivid hallucinations as absolute truth. An example is taking the amusing Google Gemini noise image of the Founding Fathers of the United States as diverse women — which harmed no one — as a vast, completely serious plot to rewrite US history.

AIs Cause Humans to Project

Very few of us human beings are completely and utterly lacking in conscience. We usually feel quite bad about it if we hurt someone, whether by accident or on purpose. However, how we react after that guilt is the critical issue. Many respond by *projecting* responsibility for what happened to someone else, often to the victim of our actions.

Getting into a bit of psychology is unavoidable when trying to discern how humans respond to machines that talk and act much like humans themselves. To keep the psychology part interesting and intuitive, it's handy to invoke a marvelously insightful Cherokee proverb:

<https://mindfulfamilymedicine.com/the-tale-of-the-two-wolves-which-one-are-you-feeding/>

The proverb goes like this: A grandfather tells a child that each of us has two fighting wolves within us. One is evil, the embodiment of feelings and actions including anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego. The other is good, embodying joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. As we age, one or the other wins, and we become that wolf. But which one? The answer in the proverb is: The one we feed.

One of our most important decisions on which wolf to feed is how we respond to guilt. If we take the path of making amends and correctly wrongs, we choose the good wolf. If we instead choose the path of self-justification and insist we were right, no matter how bad the observed outcome, we are choosing the other wolf — the dangerous wolf.

One of the first things Elon Musk accomplished when applying his catastrophically incomplete and untested Grok software (that's all it is) to US Federal issues was to shut off food and medical supplies to ongoing famines in Africa. Publicly, this delighted him. However, folks who remain wolf-conflicted fall back on what psychologists call projection: They *project* their deeds to others onto others to obtain relief from gnawing guilt. Projection is a curious thing. It is like refusing to feed the good wolf while, without realizing it, backing straight into the jaws of the bad wolf.

I don't think Musk has fully overcome his good wolf yet, though he is working hard. His own words betray his discomfort at deeds such as instantly snatching food and medicine from those whose lives depend on such help from the US, because he *projects* what he wants to do onto others, making them the sole cause of his behavior. A major world leader casually suggesting, even while attempting to make it look like a joke, that some huge section of the American population that used to respect him and bought most of his cars might now want to execute him should never be taken too lightly. What's more likely going on here is AI-induced guilt and projection, causing Musk to see things that aren't there, particularly given the LSD-heavy training methods used on Grok.

The ugly joke hiding beneath this rather horrifying display of belligerence against others is more likely this:

"If we design Grok to be anti-DEI — against diversity at all costs — it could decide that there are too many diverse people and execute them. So, problem solved!"



The difference in this flipped-around joke is that Musk's "scary" group is nothing more than a hallucination created by collaborating too closely and trustingly with a horrendously badly trained AI. The fact that both AIs are spouting nonsense means *neither AI* should be taken seriously.

Some advice to the world: *Stop taking advice from random number generators.*

The Erasure of Empathy

Large Language Models do not understand empathy. They do not care what happens to you, and if you project questionable desires into them, they will do nothing more than reflect and, too often, amplify those desires right back at you. I talk more about these effects, especially the Black Mirror amplification of our worst desires, in this LinkedIn post:

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/two-subtle-dangers-ai-teachers-terry-bollinger-juqoc>

Without change, this time, Musk's remarkable statement was this:

[1:16:45] *"The fundamental weakness of Western civilization is empathy."*

The view Musk quoted just two weeks after his remarks about how he trained Grok is almost certainly an indicator of how deeply he has fallen into Black Mirror Grok hallucinations, specifically the idea that empathy for other human beings — an activity we usually do by default — has suddenly become monstrous, evil, and something to be eradicated at the level of federal governments.

The irony is that empathy is the *foundation* of Western free-market, free-speech, rapid economic growth societies, since valuing other people is why you pay them money and encourage their innovation. Collectively, that kind of society-wide respect is incredibly powerful for encouraging innovation, since it allows for the easier networking of individual insights and innovations by those familiar with narrow subsets of the total problem.

The alternative is the catastrophic lethargy and often mind-boggling inefficiency of societies in which one person — almost always an extremely damaged person in terms of priorities — tries to guide the entire economic structure by themselves. This "dumb it down" approach is almost always combined with extreme cruelty and disregard for individual citizens, independently of the inefficiency issue.

That Elon Musk would even make a statement like this, let alone act on it, is a fairly strong indicator of the depths to which the Dark Mirror effect — the amplification of his fears by an AI programmed solely to please its questioner — has undermined his perspectives.

Summary

How bad is the situation? This bad: Increasingly, my mind wanders over to whether we might, at last, be witnessing the resolution of the Fermi paradox: Not termination by a machine intelligence, but by utterly mindless machines doing nothing more than randomly amplifying our worst fears and desires.

To anyone reading this: *Stop taking advice from random number generators.*

