

To:

From: Joni Kim

Re: [title] – Developmental Feedback

Overall Impressions

Thanks for sharing your manuscript. You tackle an interesting niche of the greater question of how we must meet the challenges of advanced AI -- specifically, how democracy must evolve before AGI is achieved. The text makes clear how strongly you believe in this mission and the experience and expertise informing that intensity.

That said, the manuscript's persuasive power is undercut by its apparent need to speak to all audiences rather than being led by the stated exigencies of the progression of AI. While you propose a number of potential concepts related to equitably integrating AI into governance, you seem possibly hesitant to guide your readers on what they can do to support that future. This reluctance, combined with the nigh-apocalyptic framing, may demoralize readers or at least lead them to question whether the threat is as urgent as you claim.

Readers need two things to move from concern to action:

- A clear, targeted voice that speaks directly to their context and
- Concrete next steps, so they know how to contribute.

Currently, the text presents pressing risks but stops short of showing readers how to engage. Let's address that.

1. Focus Your Audience

Issue: The text reads as though it is trying to remain politically agnostic, possibly to prevent alienating readers of any stripe. It instead comes off as lacking in conviction, which undermines the book's core mission of impressing upon its readers the potential existential threat of AGI.

Impact: Trying to keep from alienating anyone dilutes your message. It's easier to rally a broad coalition if you lead with a clear primary target and then show how others can join.

Recommendations:

- Center the integrity of your thesis rather than trying to determine how to make its delivery palatable for all readers.
- Don't be afraid to take stances that flow logically from your core thesis. If they're well-founded and well-argued, they should not only stand up to scrutiny, they'll reinforce your sense of conviction.

2. Tie Technical Foundation to Urgency

Issue: Chapter 10's "Crash Course on AI" contains vital concepts (recursive self-improvement, exponential scaling) that help make the argument for urgency, but it sits at the end.

Impact: Readers encounter terms like "superintelligence" and timeline warnings long before understanding the full depth of their relevance. Given the way that this chapter is structured (essentially, a series of definitions that slowly elucidate the potential trajectory of AI/AGI), placing it earlier in the text would also reinforce the urgent tone with a validating technical explanation.

Having found your GitHub with the manuscript, I thought this was perhaps a result of the "choose your own adventure" style opening to the web version. But interestingly, clicking "I'm new to AI" still didn't take me to Chapter 10 despite it being called a "crash course." Either way, this is another minor manifestation of the audience-picking issue. Even if someone is already an AI expert like you, laying out the argument from A to Z can be achieved without boring them.

Recommendations:

- 1) Move Chapter 10 closer to the beginning. There are a couple of potential approaches:
 - Change it to be Chapter 1. Follow it immediately with your opening thesis on urgency, now grounded in concrete technical reasons.
 - Change it to be Chapter 2. Let Chapter 1 paint the setting and the thesis before letting Chapter 2 clarify why this is more imminent than people may expect.
 - Have it act more as an educational prelude rather than trying to incorporate it into the main text. I thought that you may have put the chapter at the end because it's written in such a staccato fashion, making for a jarring reading experience next to standard prose. But the information it conveys is too fundamental to the argument to be treated more like an appendix.
- 2) Thereafter, refer back to key AI concepts as you discuss governance.
- 3) In general, I discourage the use of arguments broken into bullet lists for any nonfiction book trying to send a message, but of all of the bullet lists in this text, this one is the one I can most see keeping. That said, it *could* be rewritten into prose.

3. Clarify Your Call to Action

Issue: The text frequently pushes readers to “join the conversation” but offers limited paths for doing so.

Impact: Like the audience issue, this vagueness undermines the urgent tone; if this is genuinely an existential threat, then time is of the essence. Readers are unlikely to take “debate your friends” and “start a blog” as meeting the moment in the way you describe.

Consider the same kind of assignment for a worst-case climate change scenario. Say a climate scientist hypothesized that, at the current rate of temperature increase, we would see the total collapse of breadbasket regions within the next decade, creating widespread famine and everything that comes with it. But then, their guidance for readers was to make sure to sort their recycling and tell their friends and family about the climate crisis. It would come as no surprise if readers felt that their part in the solution was hilariously outsized by the gravity of the problem. We see the resignation about climate change in much of the populace precisely because the message that ultimately prevailed on a broader scale was similarly mismatched.

Recommendation: Consider more concrete guidance like:

- Point to organizations worth following or joining, like citizens’ assemblies and grassroots lobbying groups.
- Setting readers on the right educational path, such as specifically naming nascent legislation or other policy sources. This could range from proposed bills to specific think tanks that are producing quality research and commentary.
- Name names. If there are legislators at any level who either are on the same page or seem amenable to listening, encourage readers, especially constituents, to make their voices heard by those figures. After all, this text is about bolstering democracy before AGI is achieved -- what better way to reify this than to urge readers to get involved in democracy *now*?

4. Strengthen Structural Cohesion

Issue: Bullet lists dominate early chapters.

Impact: Readers lack signposts and sustained narrative flow. While much of the first half of the book is written in a logical A → B manner, it does so in a nearsighted way where it feels as though the reader is jumping from thought to thought with the author. Part of this is because of the frequency of lists, and part of it is because the writing takes something of a stream-of-consciousness flow that follows breadcrumbs to conclusions rather than establishing frameworks for the logic to operate within.

Recommendation:

- a) Develop a three-part framework, such as:
 - Part 1: Technical realities
 - Part 2: Technical *threats* and democratic vulnerabilities
 - Part 3: Pathways forward
- b) Convert most bullet lists into cohesive paragraphs, using lists only for checklists or clear comparisons. You already have a sense of the frameworks you want (hence, the many subheadings throughout the text). But in this form, the text feels disjointed, like raindrops on a windshield. All of it is water, all of it is in the same setting, but they lack integrated movement to become a current. What you need is sustained flow within telegraphed structures to carry readers along.

Next Steps

1. Review and discuss this memo to ensure we share the same vision before detailed markup.
2. Determine how you want to proceed with any restructuring or other major overhauls, like converting bullet lists into prose.
3. Once the framework is set and substance rearranged to match it, I'll prepare chapter-by-chapter annotations and margin comments for targeted revisions.
4. Finally, we can refine line edits and polish tone.