



Written by [Paul Dragu](#) on June 2, 2025

AI Creator Releases Eye Scanner to Distinguish Man From Machine

As the line between man and machine becomes increasingly blurry, one of the people who helped create this trend has invented a gadget to supposedly address the problem. The machine, an eye scanner that issues a personal “World ID,” raises serious concerns about privacy.

The Orb

Sam Altman, the CEO of [OpenAI](#), which creates artificial intelligence technology, wants everyone in the world to get the Orb. *Time* magazine [featured](#) the new contraption on the cover of its June 23 issue. Here’s how it works:



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It’s a white sphere about the size of a beach ball, with a camera at its center. The company that makes it, known as Tools for Humanity, calls this mysterious device the Orb. Stare into the heart of the plastic-and-silicon globe and it will map the unique furrows and ciliary zones of your iris. Seconds later, you’ll receive inviolable proof of your humanity: a 12,800-digit binary number, known as an iris code, sent to an app on your phone. At the same time, a packet of cryptocurrency called Worldcoin, worth approximately \$42, will be transferred to your digital wallet — your reward for becoming a “verified human.”

The Orb is part of Tools for Humanity’s biometric identity project called World, which used to be called Worldcoin. Altman said he created it after realizing that AI is becoming so advanced and human-like “that you would no longer be able to tell whether what you read, saw, or heard online came from a real person.”

Good & Bad

AI will bring with it good and bad, Altman acknowledges. As machines develop agency — the ability to act without prompting from humans — they will begin solving problems in the workforce, they’ll use tailored approaches to tutor children, and they’ll diagnose illnesses. In short, in the eyes of AI advocates, they “will turbocharge our productivity and unleash an age of material abundance.”

But AI will also create problems. AI agents will do the bidding of bad human actors in the online realm. Swarms of bots are already proliferating through social media platforms. This threatens various businesses that rely on human views. The Orb supposedly solves this conundrum.

The Orb would also come in handy if governments roll out universal basic income to deal with all the human jobs AI will eliminate. Governments will need a way to ensure that no one human gets a second helping. Enter the Orb, advocates point out. Altman sees this potential as a plus. But the idea that we



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may be entering a world in which AI will render swaths of people essentially useless is incredibly dystopian and anti-human.

The Way It Works

Here's the way the Orb works: The user first downloads the World App. He then follows the prompts, which create a QR code. Then he takes the QR code and flashes it at the Orb, before staring into it to have his eye scanned. A minute later, the user receives a personal World ID and some Worldcoin. The *Time* reporter described technically how the Orb worked for him:

A neural network took inputs from multiple sensors — an infrared camera, a thermometer — to confirm I was a living human. Simultaneously, a telephoto lens zoomed in on my iris, capturing the physical traits within that distinguish me from every other human on Earth. It then converted that image into an iris code: a numerical abstraction of my unique biometric data. Then the Orb checked to see if my iris code matched any it had seen before, using a technique allowing encrypted data to be compared without revealing the underlying information. Before the Orb deleted my data, it turned my iris code into several derivative codes — none of which on its own can be linked back to the original — encrypted them, deleted the only copies of the decryption keys, and sent each one to a different secure server, so that future users' iris codes can be checked for uniqueness against mine.

Altman's goal is to have 50 million people verified with their personal World IDs by the end of this year. Over the next 12 months, thousands of Orbs, about 7,500 of them, "will be arriving in dozens of American cities, in locations like gas stations, bodegas, and flagship stores in Los Angeles, Austin, and Miami."

Surveillance Concerns

The concern with the Orb is obvious. Developers say the device poses no threats to privacy because it doesn't require names, emails, or phone numbers. But many aren't convinced. Justin Kloczko, a tech and privacy advocate at Consumer Watchdog, [told](#) the *Los Angeles Times*, "You can't get new eyeballs. I don't care what this company says. Biometric data like these retinal scans will get out. Hacks and leaks happen all the time. Your eyeballs are going to be like gold to ... thieves." Researcher and former executive director of the California Privacy Protection Agency Ashkan Soltani said, "Even if companies don't store raw biometric data, like retina scans, the derived identifiers are immutable ... and permanently linked to the individuals they were captured from."

A cybersecurity expert [told](#) Fox Business, "Once you link an unchangeable biometric like your eye to a global ID system, you can't take it back. It's the ultimate honeypot for surveillance." And speaking of unfettered spying, Edward Snowden, known for leaking classified information revealing that the U.S. government is conducting mass surveillance on everyone, said of the Orb, "The human body is not a ticket-punch."

Even the reporter who put together *Time's* cover story acknowledged the company is being disingenuous. He said:

Only weeks later, when researching what would happen if I wanted to delete my data, do I discover that Tools for Humanity's privacy claims rest on what feels like a sleight of hand.



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The company argues that in modifying your iris code, it has “effectively anonymized” your biometric data. If you ask Tools for Humanity to delete your iris codes, they will delete the one stored on your phone, but not the derivatives. Those, they argue, are no longer your personal data at all. But if I were to return to an Orb after deleting my data, it would still recognize those codes as uniquely mine. Once you look into the Orb, a piece of your identity remains in the system forever.

Altman’s World project has already faced hurdles with multiple governments. According to *Fox Business*, Spanish authorities have banned the project. In Argentina, World has been hit with fines because of its data terms. Kenya conducted a criminal investigation before shutting the project down. And Hong Kong regulators have put an end to operations there because of its “excessive and unnecessary” biometric data collection.

Mark of the Beast?

For those familiar with biblical eschatology or fantasy lore, the Orb and the World ID summon thoughts of Revelation 13 or J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*. The word *orb* comes from Latin *orbis*, which means “sphere,” or “ring.” In Tolkien’s lore classic, the dark lord Sauron seeks the “one right to rule them all.” It’s not difficult to see how technology like this, which Altman admits he’d like for everyone in the world to use, can be adopted by governments and made mandatory.

In the biblical book of Revelation, written nearly 2,000 years ago, Chapter 13 mentions the mark of the beast and how people will not be able to buy or sell anything without it. People have been theorizing about what that mark is ever since John of Patmos wrote about it. The Orb’s World ID presents an obvious guess. Its creators have already pointed out that the ID code it creates “will become a new type of digital passport, without which you might be denied passage to the Internet of the future, from dating apps to government services.” This is more or less in line with other ideas of digital IDs globalists have floated and seek to level on the world’s peasant class.

Whatever happens going forward, AI promises to be a major disruptor. Humanity has a great task ahead navigating technology with the potential for control that tyrants of yore only dreamed about.



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