

# Digital Ethics by Futurist Gerd Leonhard

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Futurist Gerd Leonhard's latest findings from the intersection of humanity and technology, focusing on Digital Ethics i.e. the ethics of exponential technological change and related Technology/Humanity topics

This newsletter is a highly curated weekly collection of topics and opinions that will hopefully add some momentum to the [Digital Ethics](#) and [#TechVsHuman](#) conversation.

We are always interested in your opinion, so please feel free to [ping us anytime](#) with comments or feedback.

Live long and prosper!

[Gerd Leonhard](#)

Zurich / Switzerland

This newsletter is co-created by Futures Agency Curator [Peter Van](#)

Check out Gerd's best-selling book '[Technology vs Humanity](#)' for more context, now available in 10+ languages

Check out Gerd's [2019 speaking topics](#).

## Introduction

Welcome to the fifth issue of our Digital Ethics Newsletter. This week, we are sharing some articles that tackle thorny issues such as privacy and China's social credit systems. We also included some interesting approaches to Digital Ethics, such as the creation of an FDA-like organisation to make algorithms more ethical.

You may have also noticed that we're slimming down our newsletter - we hope you like it!

Please feel free to share your feedback and input on social media via the links below. As always, thanks for reading.

## Highlights

### Do companies need a Chief AI Officer?

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Many organisations have strong AI teams - but are now wondering whether they have to elevate AI governance to the C-Level.



"The person in charge has to understand AI well enough to stay ahead of any unintended consequences."

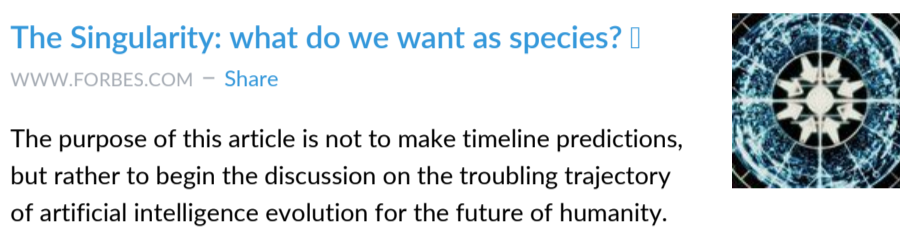
### AI ethics: It's time to move beyond a list of principles.

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A [new report](#) (PDF) from the UK sets out a broad roadmap for work on the ethical and societal implications of Algorithms, Data and AI (ADA).



"AI ethics should be a universally accepted practice... An ethical approach to the development and deployment of algorithms, data and AI (ADA) requires clarity and consensus on ethical concepts and resolution of tensions between values."



Gerd's Digital Ethics Council moves beyond a list of Digital Ethics principles

## Justice/Court/Law

### Do we need a new Bill of Rights? (George Church)

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Should we give different rights to robots, algorithms, machines and transhumans based on the argument that their reasoning may be superior/inferior than that of the human tribe?



"The line between human and machines blurs, both because machines become more humanlike and humans become more machine-like... millions of us are transhuman already—with most of us asking for more."

## Challenges

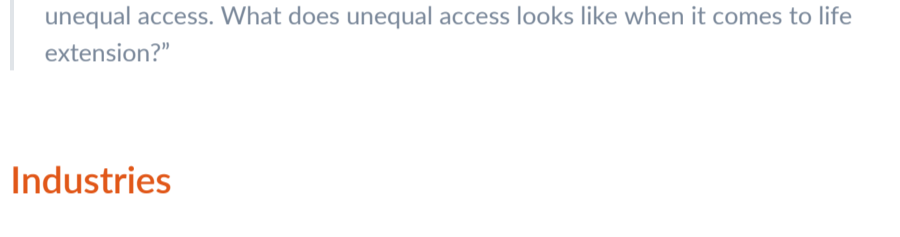
### The Singularity: what do we want as species? ¶

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The purpose of this article is not to make timeline predictions, but rather to begin the discussion on the troubling trajectory of artificial intelligence evolution for the future of humanity.



"Whether we believe that singularity is near or not, the very thought raises crucial security and risk questions for the future of humanity, forcing us to think seriously about what we want as a species."



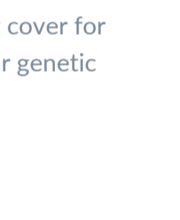
AI forces us to raise crucial questions for the future of humanity (Gerd techvshuman.com)

## Technologies

### Is living longer a good thing? Here are the ethical implications (WEF)

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Whether or not living longer/forever is a good or bad thing, this WEF article dives deeper into philosophical and ethical considerations: who will benefit, and at what cost?



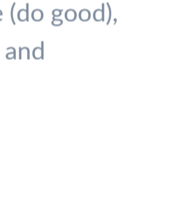
"There are many possible harms: Dictators might live far too long, society might become too conservative and risk-averse and pensions might have to be limited, to name a few. One that stands out to me is the injustice of unequal access. What does unequal access look like when it comes to life extension?"

## Industries

### The pros and cons of insurance companies embracing artificial intelligence

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Three-quarters of insurance executives believe artificial intelligence will revolutionise the industry within a few years. It promises lower premiums, but brings ethical risks too...

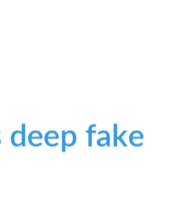


"Already quite well known is the problem of genetic discrimination - the risk of a health or life insurer increasing premiums or even denying cover for certain conditions based on what your DNA reveals about your genetic disposition to certain conditions."

## Organizations

### European Commission - Draft Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI

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At the end last year, the European High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence (AI HLEG) published its [Draft Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI](#). More than 500 comments have been received so far.

Ensure that AI is human-centric; AI should be developed, deployed and used with an "ethical purpose", grounded in, and reflective of, fundamental rights, societal values and the ethical principles of Beneficence (do good), Non-Maleficence (do no harm), Autonomy of humans, Justice, and Explicability.

## Reports/Whitepapers

### Possible Minds: 25 Ways of Looking at AI

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Brook a set of reports and twenty-five of his [new book John Brockman](#) assembles twenty-five of the most important scientific minds, for an unparalleled round-table examination about mind, thinking, intelligence and what it means to be human. A must read!

"Artificial intelligence is today's story—the story behind all other stories. It is the Second Coming and the Apocalypse at the same time: Good AI versus evil AI."

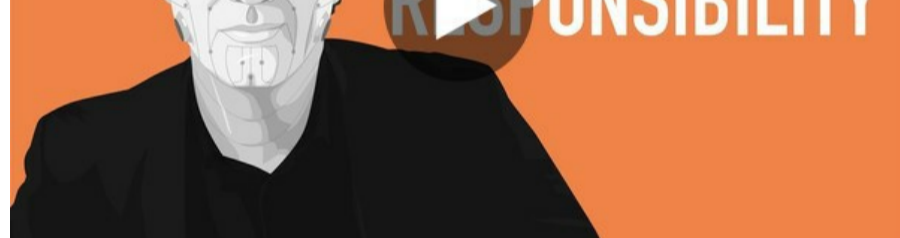
## Disturbing things

### The escalator from hell: an AI system that generates deep fake news

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The creators of a revolutionary AI system that can write news stories and works of fiction - dubbed "deepfakes for text" - have taken the unusual step of not releasing their research publicly, for fear of potential misuse.

"I have a term for this: *the escalator from hell*. It's always bringing the technology down in cost and down in price. The rules by which you can control technology have fundamentally changed."



The Future is Hellven: Hell+Heaven simultaneously

### Google and Microsoft are cautioning their investors about AI

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Google and Microsoft have added warnings to their "risk factors" for investors about potential legal and ethical problems from their artificial intelligence projects. Is this a first real step in making the risks of AI more transparent and discussable?

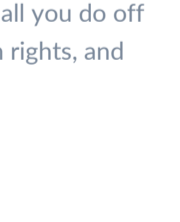
"Cybersecurity used to make a rare appearance in SEC filings; now mentioning it is pro forma. AI could be next. I think it's kind of the natural progression of things"



With great power comes great responsibility! Short video by Gerd

### Is a Tech-Based Social Credit Score Really a Good Idea?

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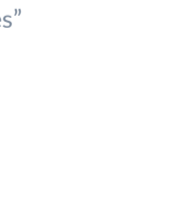
Even just raising this question feels uncomfortable and disturbing. It should be common sense to reject the concept of a social credit score. But, following the mantra "if it can be done, it will be done", [Frank Landman](#) explores the pros/cons of a Western social credit system.

"Overall, a social credit system is fine in theory. It has a ton of perks and doesn't necessarily predict a dystopia. The problem is, there are too many variables to consider for something as subjective as a person's social trustworthiness, and unless we're confident in our assessments, we shouldn't be condemning people to any lifestyle or freedom-based punishment."

## People

### Professor Luciano Floridi and "Soft Ethics"

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In this video, [Oxford Digital Ethics Lab](#) Professor [Luciano Floridi](#) positions [Digital Ethics](#) as an "enabler" and introduces the notion of hard vs. soft ethics.

"We have detached the ability to solve problems (agency) from the need for being intelligent... What's playing to win? That is ethics: that's all you do off and above, within the constraints of compliance (legal), human rights, and feasibility."

## Snippet of the week

### We have to embrace a post-privacy world (Albert Wenger)

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[Albert Wenger](#) is done with privacy. Continuing last week's conversation that [privacy is not compatible with technological progress](#), Wenger says that privacy can't be done technically, and it can not be enforced anyway. His motto? The best way to solve a problem is to get rid of it.

"The answer, I think, is to embrace a post-privacy world. We should work to protect people and their freedom, instead of protecting data and privacy. In other words allowing more information to become public but strengthening individual freedom to stand against the potential consequences"

## Podcasts & Audio

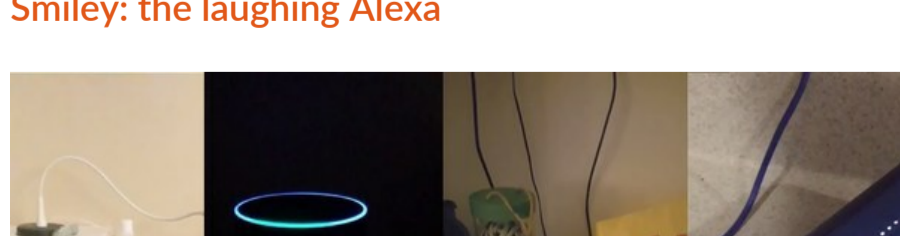
### New podcast: Gerd Leonhard and Peter Van on Chapter 3 of Gerd's book "Technology vs Humanity: The Megashifts"

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[New podcast](#) on the key themes set forth in my book [Technology vs Humanity](#), chapter 3, entitled 'The Megashifts'.

The [Megashifts](#) include digitisation, automation, datafication, virtualisation, robotisation, and others for a total of 10). Understanding them is crucial to future success. This podcast includes questions such as "KPI vs KHI / Key Human Indicators".

Subscribe to my podcasts on [Spotify](#), on [iTunes](#) or on [Soundcloud](#).



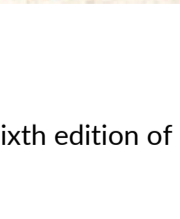
Click on the image to download the free Megashifts chapter from my book

Download the free Megashifts chapter from my book [here](#).

## Meme of the week

### Is it time for a Good Algorithm Practice (GAP)? Should we establish an FDA for algorithms?

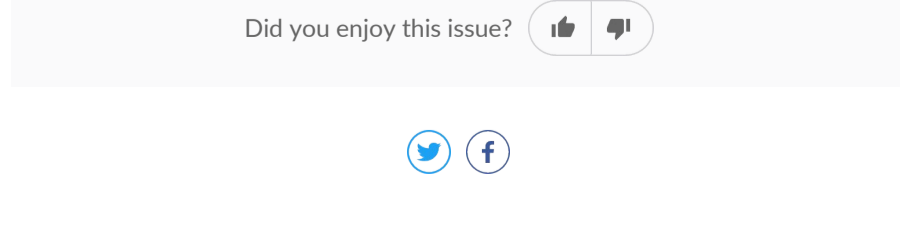
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For decades, pharma and biotech companies have tested drugs through meticulously fine-tuned clinical trials. Why not take some of those best practices and use them to create algorithms that are safer, more effective, and even more ethical?

"In drug development, manufacturers are required to prove the safety and effectiveness of drug products before they go on the market. But while the FDA has created and enforces such protocols, algorithms remain largely unregulated."

## Smiley: the laughing Alexa



Why is Alexa Laughing?

That's it for this week. I'll be back next Tuesday with the sixth edition of our newsletter.

The [Digital Ethics \(DE\)](#) newsletter is provided at no cost. If you are reading it and value it, I wouldn't mind if you gave my digest some love through [Twitter](#) :-)) - or just forward it to a friend.

Warm regards,

[Gerd.](#)

Check out my [new presentation format](#): [The Future Show](#)

Have a look at [the bottom-lines presented in my book](#)

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