



Digital Ethics by Futurist Gerd Leonhard

February 26 - Issue #6 - [View online](#)

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 help you 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](#)

Have you seen Gerd's best-selling book ["Technology vs Humanity"](#) for more context, now available in 11 languages...?

Check out Gerd's [new Future Show format](#) for keynotes in large venues.

Introduction

Welcome to the sixth issue of our Digital Ethics Newsletter.

In this week's edition, we look into what matters most: what it means to be human, and how to remain human. Not exactly an easy question! We found some good articles balancing efficiency and creativity, and also noticed how some Big Techs and Telcos are getting organised for serious discussions and explorations on Digital Ethics. Nice.

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

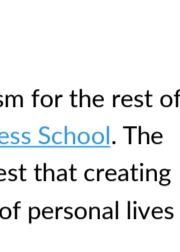
Highlights

What do we want as species? (asks Jaysree Pandya)

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Reading Jaysree Pandya's piece, ["The Troubling Trajectory of Technological Singularity"](#) on [Forbes](#), this particular quote caught our attention:

"Irrespective of whether we believe that the singularity will happen or not, the very thought raises many concerns and critical security risk uncertainties for the future of humanity... This forces us to begin a conversation with ourselves and with others (individually and collectively) about what we want as a species."

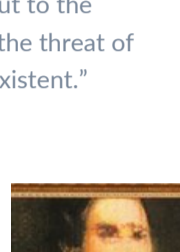


We're doing ethics on a deadline (says Lucas Perry)

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In this [Forbes](#) article, [Tom Vander Ark](#) describes the work of [The Future of Life Institute](#). Code that learns is both powerful and dangerous - so now is the time for community conversations about ethics and opportunities.

"We're doing ethics on a deadline. If you survey the top 100 AI safety researchers or AI researchers in the world, you'll see that they give a probability distribution of the likelihood of human level artificial intelligence with about a 50% probability at 2050."



When we mistake the Internet as our reality

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[Michael C. Spencer](#) writes about the advent of the Digital Dark Age and the coercive nature of the Internet.

The digital dark age becomes a reality when we mistake the internet as our reality. This is the first sign that something has gone terribly wrong with our digital technology infatuation."



The future is human (via London Business School)

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"The machines are coming... but there are still grounds for optimism for the rest of us", say Lynda Gratton and Andrew Scott from the [London Business School](#). The story is not about machines, the story is about people. They suggest that creating a narrative that makes sense of the big sweep of change in terms of personal lives is the first step towards human agency.

"Ultimately, human beings have to live up to their essential, irrepressible, questioning humanity: inventing new narratives, exploring new worlds, building new relationships."

Efficiency vs. Creativity

AI will never match human creativity (says Alex Wulff)

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[Alex Wulff](#) explores the modern misconception that machines are creative - in the human sense. He looks to horror movies and Google's Deep Dream Generator as examples of modern narratives perpetuating the idea that machines can create and think on their own. Which, of course, he says, they cannot.

"True machine creativity cannot be derived from a system that solely takes input, performs mathematical functions, and presents an output to the eager programmer that created it... As long as this is the case, the threat of machines completely displacing the human labor force is nonexistent."

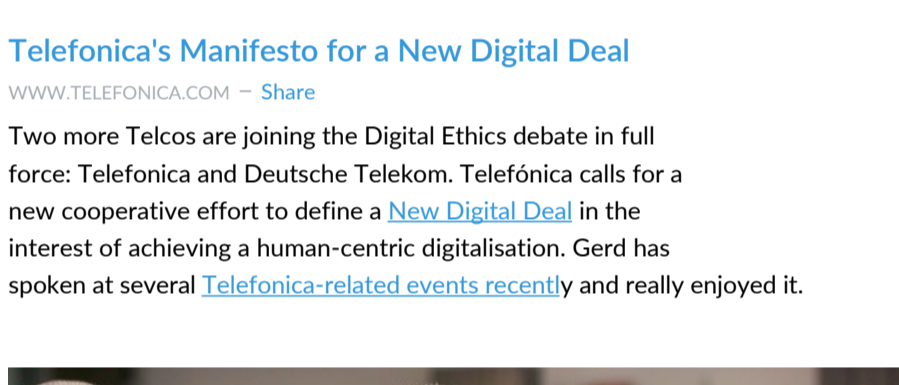
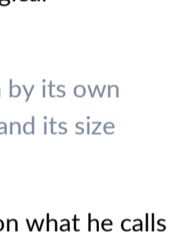


Creativity will always remain human (echoes Sean Dorrance Kelly)

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And in this superb essay, [Sean Dorrance Kelly](#) argues creativity is, and always will be, a human endeavour.

But the supercomputer is not doing anything creative by checking a huge number of cases. Instead, it is doing something boring a huge number of times. This seems like almost the opposite of creativity.



From Efficiency to Creativity - From Algorithm to Andorithm

Challenges

52 Experts believe AI will go out of control

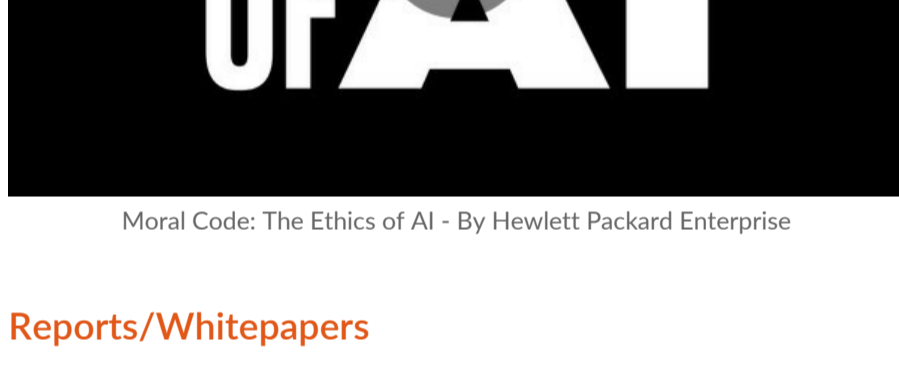
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'Summoning the demon.' 'The new tools of our oppression.' 'Children playing with a bomb.' These are just a few ways the world's top researchers and industry leaders have described the threat that artificial intelligence poses to mankind.

"AI doesn't have to be evil to destroy humanity - if AI has a goal and humanity just happens in the way, it will [destroy humanity as a matter of course](#) without even thinking about it, no hard feelings." - Elon Musk



Technology has no ethics!



Gerd is more of an optimist but wagers that technology will have no hard feelings about enslaving us... if that's the mission.

Technologies

Identity is a vital, risky and changing business (by The Economist)

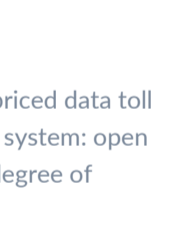
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The Economist published a well-researched essay about digital identity. Starting in Renaissance Florence, the humanist era of the governing classes, painters, goldsmiths, and sculptors, the author takes a sweeping tour of many opportunities and pitfalls of this technological cornerstone.

Like Aadhaar, Facebook is a juggernaut dimly understood even by its own creators. Its complexity makes it difficult to foresee problems and its size makes it impossible to control.

Our own content curator [Petervan](#) also shared some reflections on what he calls ["The Cambrian Explosion of Identity"](#).

"Identity reduced to a number sitting on a chip of a smart card. It always felt so limiting, and with hindsight plain wrong."

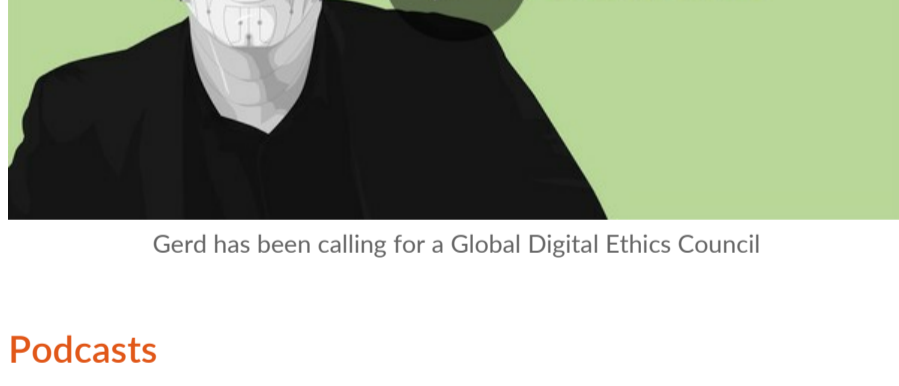


Big Tech and Telcos jump onto the ethics train

Telefonica's Manifesto for a New Digital Deal

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Two more Telcos are joining the Digital Ethics debate in full force: Telefonica and Deutsche Telekom. Telefonica calls for a new cooperative effort to define a [New Digital Deal](#) in the interest of achieving a human-centric digitalisation. Gerd has spoken at several [Telefonica-related events recently](#) and really enjoyed it.



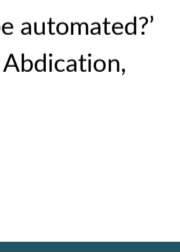
Telefonica's New Digital Deal

Deutsche Telekom Digital Ethics Conference

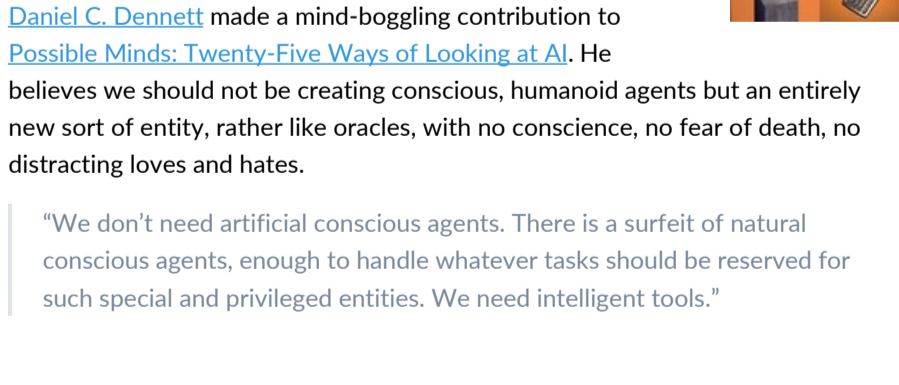
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Deutsche Telekom's ["Digital Ethics Conference"](#) will take place on March 13. The event highlights the opportunities and challenges of AI from a technological, economic and social perspective. You can download the agenda [here](#) (PDF).

Big Techs are also preparing themselves. Already last year we saw this solid video compilation of Digital Ethics issues by HP. I hope to see more of these in the weeks/months to come.



Moral Code: The Ethics of AI - By Hewlett Packard Enterprise



Reports/Whitepapers

IEEE releases guidelines for Ethically Aligned Design

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At the [World Government Summit in Dubai](#), IEEE presented their latest version of Ethically Aligned Design. [Click here](#) to this glossy brochure with some serious research about Digital Ethics.



"Zucked" - Roger McNamee's book on Facebook

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In [The Washington Post](#), [Eugeny Morozov](#) reviews Roger McNamee's latest book about Facebook: ["Zucked"](#). Morozov seems disappointed, and proposes some more ambitious fixes to the problem of data exploitation:

"Perhaps what's needed is not a bivalent patchwork of overpriced data toll roads but, rather, the data equivalent of an interstate highway system: open to all, backed by public resources, and rolled out with a good degree of planning and coordination."



21 Lessons for the 21st Century - by Yuval Noah Harari

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We are reading ["21 Lessons for the 21st Century"](#) by [Yuval Noah Harari](#) and wanted to share this quote with you.

"Big Data algorithms might create digital dictatorships in which all power is concentrated in the hands of a tiny elite while most people suffer not from exploitation but from something far worse—irrelevance."

Start reading it for free: <http://a.co/hqjTDB4>



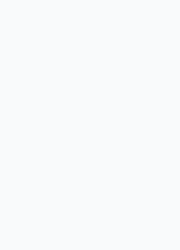
Disturbing things

DNA "talent" tests find a market in China

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Fears of seeing their children fall behind their peers have left Chinese parents searching for anything to give them a leg up. Some are now turning to genetic testing companies that claim they can find children's hidden talents within their DNA.

"Currently, I don't think it is a good idea to promote this kind of talent testing to the public, but I believe due to the rapid development of genomic techniques and AI-based data analysis methods we will have a better understanding of 'talent' in the near future."



Snippet of the week

Every company should have a Chief Ethics Officer.

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[Kriti Sharma](#) summarises the grand debates of experts on the topic of Digital Ethics:

- 1) establishing corporate ethical frameworks and principles should not be an afterthought or reaction to public exposure; and 2) ethical tech practices should be designed by people who are building the products and solutions guided by independent, effective oversight.

She calls for the design of ethical frameworks and proposes a new leadership role: the Chief Ethics Officer.

Gerd has been calling for a Global Digital Ethics Council

Podcasts

Chapter 4 of my book "Technology vs. Humanity": The automation of society.

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In this week's podcast, we talk through Chapter 4 of my book [Technology vs Humanity](#), entitled "Automating Society".

This chapter includes questions such as, 'what is the future of work?' and 'what should be automated?' - or, more accurately, 'what should NOT be automated?' We also take a deep dive into the 5A's: Automation, Assentation, Abdication, Aggravation, and Abomination.

Subscribe to Gerd's podcasts on [Spotify](#), [iTunes](#) or [Soundcloud](#)

Embrace Technology But Don't Become It (Gerd's favourite keynote-closer)

Meme of the week

We don't need artificial conscious agents, we need intelligent tools (says Daniel Dennett)

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[Daniel C. Dennett](#), [Twenty-Five Ways of Looking at AI](#), He believes we should not be creating conscious, humanoid agents but an entirely new sort of entity, rather like oracles, no conscience, no fear of death, no distracting loves and hates.

"We don't need artificial conscious agents. There is a surfeit of natural conscious agents, enough to handle whatever tasks should be reserved for such special and privileged entities. We need intelligent tools."

Gerd's Latest

This is the complete video recording of my keynote at Microsoft ATIVAR 2019 - check out my new animations :)

My keynote on "Technology vs. Humanity" at Microsoft ATIVAR 2019 Lisbon

Next week, I will be speaking on [#techshuman](#) [www.techshuman.com](#) at [@EmiratesLitFest](#) March 2 in Dubai <https://gerd.fm/2l727L9>

I am also preparing a brand new presentation format, fusing animations, video, audio, and much more. Stay tuned for [The Future Show!](#)

In the meantime, [here is a brand-new compilation](#) of my key themes from the past 3 months: technology vs humanity, exponential change, digital ethics, leadership and .. how to DO the future.

Smiley

The role of humans in the AI black-box (sometimes called the Chinese room challenge)

End note

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

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

Warm regards,

[Gerd](#) and Peter Van

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The Futures Agency, Zurich, Switzerland