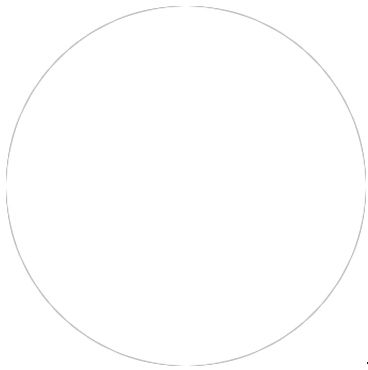# Digital Ethics by Futurist Gerd Leonhard - Issue #1

[Digital Ethics by Futurist Gerd Leonhard](#)

January 17 · Issue #1 · [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

Welcome to my brand-new **Digital Ethics** newsletter, a weekly set of curated articles and must-reads from the intersection of technology and humanity, handpicked by me and my team.

As many of you may know, Digital Ethics is one of the core themes in my [2016 book Technology vs Humanity](#); one that has now become prominent [in all of my work](#) and in most of my keynotes.

This newsletter is a key element in my 2019 focus on Digital Ethics (read more about that, and about my **updated mission statements**, [here](#)). More is to come: a new blog, a new podcast (in addition to my current audio-only-keynote channel, [here](#)), and who knows, maybe a new book. Stay tuned!

Here, I will on questions such as: What will it mean to be human in a world that is becoming hyper-connected, and that will increasingly be run by algorithms and machines? What will real happiness [aka Eudaemonia](#) actually mean in this new world? How will we ensure that all these amazing technological gains still result in human flourishing? How will we avoid selling-out our humanity in return for economic growth, or for the endless convenience of a connected lifestyle?

I promise to limit the information stream in this newsletter to a manageable and digestible number of entries (I know that sounds unlikely, coming from me... but let me surprise you:), but if you really want to hang onto the firehose, I suggest you subscribe to my Instapaper-fuelled highlights at www.gerdfeed.com and of course you can browse some of my past

work on Digital Ethics on my main site FuturistGerd.com and watch my many keynotes and films on Youtube.

Enjoy and please feel free to ping me anytime with comments or feedback.

Gerd Leonhard

Convenience over consciousness ? Which side are you on?

Foreword

In this first edition, I am presenting these sections to get ourselves organised:

- Challenges: preferred narratives, underlying motivations, and governance
- Technologies: I really want to go beyond AI-only so we will also cover topics such as surveillance, synthetic biology, longevity, human hard- and software extensions, facial recognition, Natural Language Processing and much more
- Industries: Digital Ethics cuts across all industries: Finance, Retail, Insurance, Health, Government, Automotive, Transport, etc
- Organizations: countless private and governmental organisations are already looking at Dgital Ethics
- Reports/Whitepapers: pointing you to the most relevant ones from the last couple of weeks
- People: experts, visionaries, futurists, and wise men/women who have an interesting perspective on the topic
- Gerd-stuff: links to recent things I have published that might be of interest

Please let me know your feedback (email)

Gerd Leonhard

Highlights

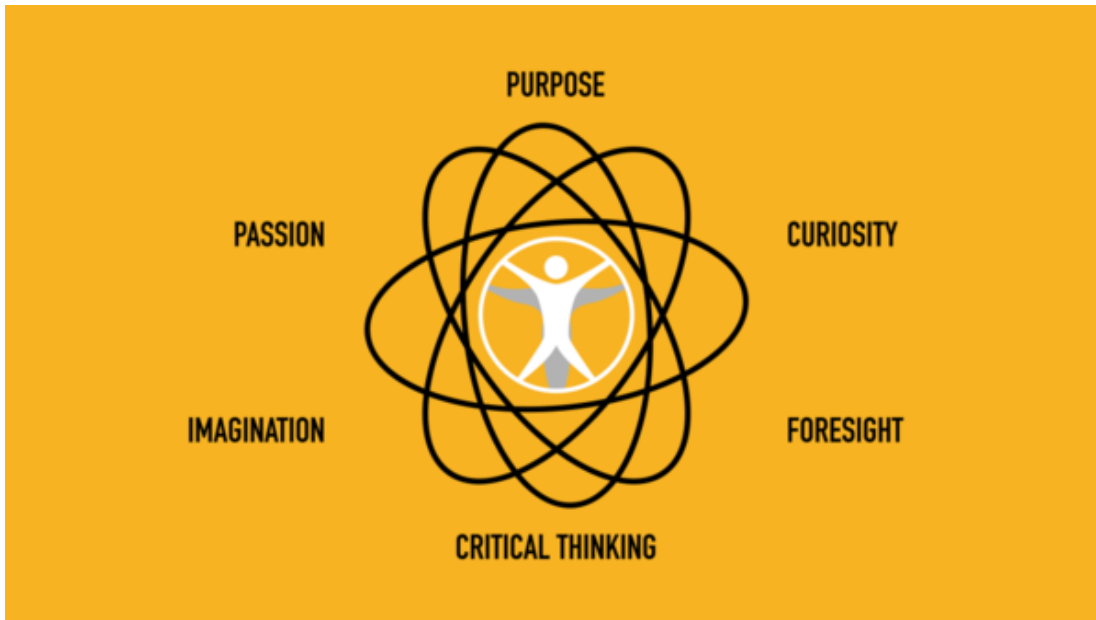[Childhood's End: The digital revolution isn't over but has turned into something else](Childhood's End)

Absolute highlight of this week. George Dyson, author of Turing's Cathedral , shares his concerns in his Edge's New Years Essay.

What deserves our full attention is not the success of a few companies that have harnessed the powers of hybrid analog/digital computing, but what is happening as these powers escape into the wild and consume the rest of the world.

[Edge Perspectives with John Hagel: Mindset and Heartset](Edge Perspectives with John Hagel)

John Hagel hits the nail on the head when he says: ***"Our institutions have cultivated a very narrow and misleading view of ourselves as people."*** This is a powerful call for

action to expand that view with what makes humans unique: emotions, heart and passion.

Human Qualities (remember: whatever is easy for humans is hard for computers:)

[Kick-Start the Conversation on Digital Ethics](#)

Related video: "Ethical considerations should be built-in, not bolted-on". Gerd discusses Power and Responsibility: *"Digital Ethics is the #1 Topic of 2019 (Gartner)"*

With great power comes great responsibility! #digitalethics #deletefacebook

[The future of humanity depends on design ethics, says Tim Wu](#)

"Very few things are more important now to the future of humanity than design ethics," says Tim Wu. *"Design should help users achieve their goals, rather than exploit their weaknesses."*

[IBM Chief Sounds Cautionary Note on Deep Data, AI, Quantum Computing](#)

In her keynote kicking off CES in Las Vegas, IBM CEO Ginni Rometty urged development teams to *"always remember the purpose of these technologies is to augment man. It is not to replace man."*

Challenges

[Wanted: The 'perfect babysitter.' AI scans for respect and attitude?](#)

A bit of a dystopian story on AI being used to do a criminal-background check on your baby sitter. The problem is that *the system 1) makes errors, 2) offers no appeal, and 3)*

doesn't explain why it had made that decision

[Data Alone doesn't Move People](#)
Why Data Needs Humans as Much as Humans Need Data
"The moral of this story is that simply accepting the data points is entirely missing the point. ***Facts alone don't move people.*** The power is in finding the relevant human truth and meaning of the facts, interpreting the data in a way that connects on a real, human level. ***And that takes intuitive, perceptive and creative humans.***"

Technologies

[Facial Recognition Has to Be Regulated to Protect the Public, Says AI Report](#)
A new report from the [AINow Institute](#) (large PDF), an influential think tank based in New York, has just identified facial recognition as a key challenge for society and policymakers. The report comes with an interesting categorisation of challenges to be solved.
"It's time to regulate facial recognition and affect recognition," says Kate Crawford, a researcher at Microsoft and one of the lead authors of the report.

"Claiming to 'see' into people's interior states is neither scientific nor ethical."

Industries

[A New Approach to Understanding How Machines Think](#)
Neural networks are famously incomprehensible. Been Kim, a research scientist at Google Brain, is developing a "translator for humans." for neural networks in healthcare.
"Prior to this, interpretability methods only explained what neural networks were doing in terms of "input features." ***That's fine for computers, but humans don't think that way.*** I don't tell you, "Oh, look at pixels 100 to 200, the RGB values are 0.2 and 0.3." I say, "There's a picture of a dog with really puffy hair." That's how ***humans communicate — with concepts.***

[Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Humans | Pew Research Center](#)
"As emerging algorithm-driven artificial intelligence (AI) continues to spread, will people be better off than they are today?" That's the question 900+ experts are trying to answer in this latest Pew Research. Many focused their optimistic remarks on broad public-health programs and changes in formal and informal education systems, ***most experts expressed concerns about the long-term impact of these new tools on the essential elements of being human***.
Comes with a well organised table of threats and remedies.

Organizations

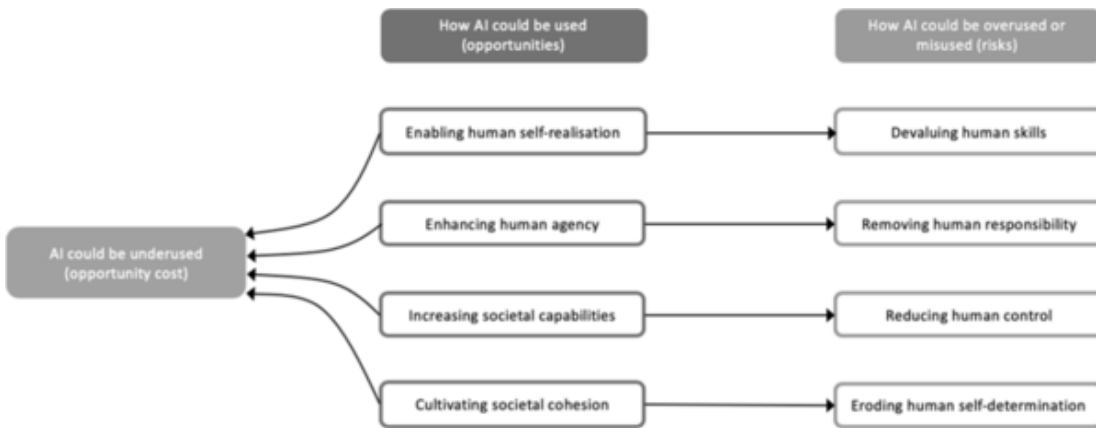[Technology needs ethics. Oxford philosopher Luciano Floridi explains why. 5*!](#)
Luciano Floridi directs the Digital Ethics Lab at the University of Oxford, and is the president of the Data Ethics Group of the Air Turing Institute. In this interview he discusses the need for ethical policy of data:

"The commitment to work on a digital human project. That means: a form of human life—individual, collective, and public—that a society presents and promotes as desirable"

Reports/Whitepapers

[An Ethical Framework for a Good AI Society: Opportunities, Risks, Principles, and Recommendations](#)
An excellent report by [AI4People](#), an initiative designed to lay the foundations for a "Good AI Society", introducing the core opportunities and risks of AI for society;...

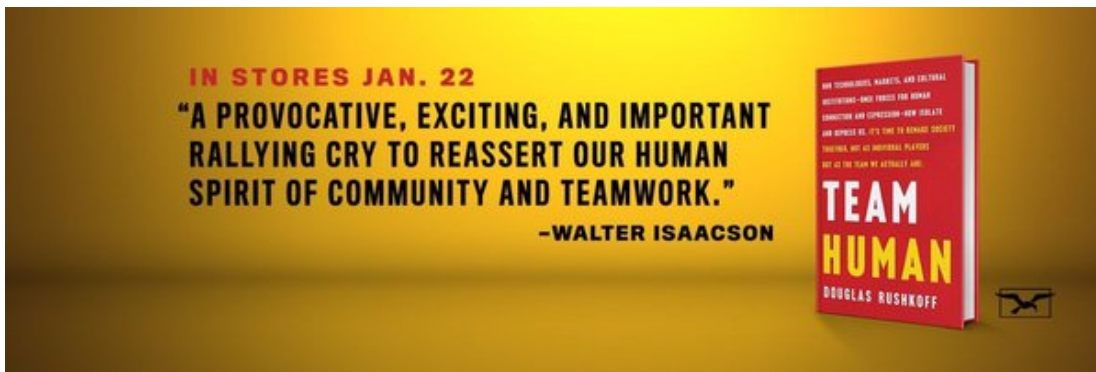Overview of the four core opportunities and risks offered by AI

People

I'm reading "The Humans: A Novel" by **Matt Haig.** An alien comes to Earth and discovers what it means to be human. I wanted to share this quote with you.
"You can't find happiness looking for the meaning of life. Meaning is only the third most important thing. It comes after loving and being."
Start reading it for free: http://a.co/77YocrN

Snippet of the week

Rushkoff's new book: "Team Human"

"*The anti-human agenda of technologists* might not be so bad—or might never be fully realized—if it didn't dovetail so neatly with the anti-human agenda of corporate capitalism. Each enables the other, reinforcing an abstract, growth-based scheme of infinite expansion —*utterly incompatible with human life or the sustainability of our ecosystem.*" in The Anti-Human Religion of Silicon Valley – Douglas Rushkoff – Medium
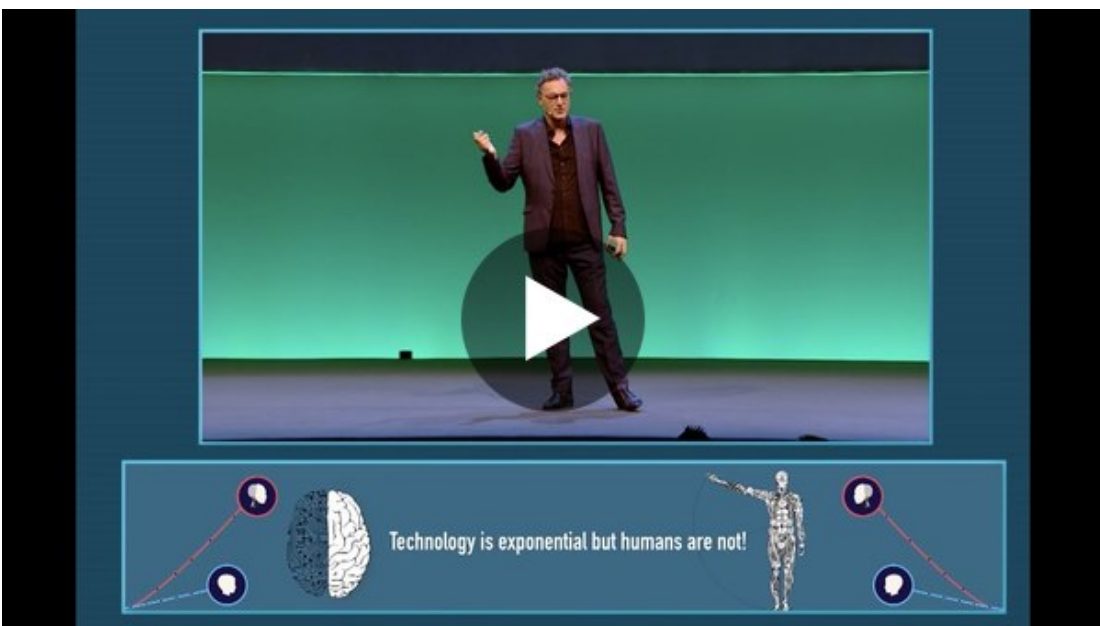
Podcasts

Checkout my recent podcast with Matt Ward from Disruptors.fm on **Megashifts, AI and Why the Future is More Unknowable than Ever**.

Meme of the week

Gerd's Latest

My Xerocon London Keynote: Technology and Humanity: the next 10 years (huge stage!!)

Hilarious stuff

[Robot to run for mayor in Japan promising 'fairness and balance' | World | News | Express.co.uk](#)
A ROBOT has been nominated to run for Mayor of Tokyo in a world first that see the machine promising to be "fair and balanced" to all its constituents in a major breakthrough for Artificial Intelligence (AI).

End note

That's it for my first issue. Hope you liked it. Please share your feedback.
The *Digital Ethics (DE)* newsletter is provided for free. 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 Leonhard, Futurist, Keynote Speaker, Author, CEO [The Futures Agency](#)
[LinkedIn](#)
Videos from my talks: [Gerdtube.com](#)
My main website: [Futuristgerd.com](#)

My book: [Technology vs Humanity](#)

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