

1.1 The conditions for data have increased

The first thing we can state is that the conditions for effective, if not awe-inspiring applications of AI, the data that is to be processed, analyzed and then acted upon, has taken huge leaps over the past year. According to IDC, the total amount of data generated in the world every year will by 2025 reach over 160 zetabytes (160 followed by 21 zeroes, or about 40 trillion DVD discs). Gartner, in turn, estimates the number of “things” online to grow to far beyond 8 billion – the flow of data is rapidly expanding. [By McKinsey's estimates](#) the global data flow has increased by a factor of 45 over the past decade, and is set to increase by a factor of 9 in the next 2 years.

Data has thus become the most important raw material of the global economy, data has in effect become the new oil, the black gold. It stands to reason that people will need as much help as they can get to analyze these enormous quantities of data, and that's where we've been awash in applications of AI technology. This is also the area of current technology in development that digital power players such as the [former CEO of Google](#) has put their stock in. ”There are strong arguments that AI and machine learning will change society just as much as the smartphone and the internet once did”. Which has

then been confirmed by surveys, such as one from PwC, which [estimated a significant rise in the global economy](#) following the increased adoption of AI in data management and business by 15.7 billion in BNP over the next decade.

1.2 The AI applications that will wash over us

So if AI [was "up and coming" last year](#), it has exploded in significance this year. AI today permeates our daily lives to such an extent this year that we can find just as many economic applications in place today as the most bizarre social ones.

1.2.1 AI applications in B2B

On the B2B side, we find a multitude of different areas, where there are examples of how the management of trucks is reduced from 15% to a mere 3%. None the least in my old field of expertise, digital marketing, we have been far advanced in the field, with [one third of all digital marketing companies already working with AI](#), eagerly cheered on by 60% of consumers that consider themselves ready for it. This has traditionally focused on potential uses in the [mainstream media industries](#), primarily with viewership surveys and data analysis, but with new applications for AI every day it has been proven to excel even with [creative endeavors](#).

For companies and businesses, AI has become less of a question of how/when and more of a binary choice - "do or die".

1.2.2 AI-applications as our friend

In the grey areas between B2B and B2C, we find everything from smart drones, self-driving cars and trucks and even [airplanes](#). But in B2C itself, the most ostentatious to happen this year have been about matters closer to the heart, more personal - or rather, more human.

From simple solutions such as [a Starbucks AI](#) taking your orders to even more personal chatbots, which despite their [long-term memory deficiencies](#) have made a huge impact as of late. Bots such as Rinna and Xiaoice have millions of user interactions across the relevant nations of China and Japan. We similarly have the refugee app Kari to process Syrian refugees, as well as KBT-bots such as Woebot that puts you right into the closest equivalent to a morning TV debate, right there on Facebook.

And don't forget that you can lie there and lie as you chat away with your bot-buddies or languishing on your therapist's couch. This year we also have the AI that I foresaw already last year – the [AI that can tell when you're lying](#).

Now we see the end of little white lies like “that dress doesn't make you look

fat at all”, or that you're “working late” to see your mistress or that you haven't been binge-eating ice cream for your “workout”. Everything will come to light.

Maybe you've heard the statistics – the average person lies in one form or another 150 times a day. Forget about it, we'll inevitably be reduced to either ethically correct or otherwise emotionless drones, depending on how you look at it.

1.2.3 AI-applications as something more than just our friends

But this goes for bots, what about robots? Has the Asimovian ideal of self-sufficient intelligent machines been realized? A lot of people certainly think it's on the horizon, to a degree where it's become a public question for us all [what a "robot" even is](#), and we've had a wonderfully lively debate around the question if [robots and bots should be afforded the same rights](#) as human beings. While the [European parliament has granted AI-bots the status of "personhood"](#), others argue that the whole debate is ridiculous to an extent where we as humans should be able to [outright torture robots](#) if we so choose. The most absurd of all is of course the [case of the robot "Sophia"](#), who, last fall, was granted citizenship in Saudi Arabia. As a “female” robot, she has

already been granted more rights to most women there, as she appears in public without a veil and without a male companion. It's an exciting indication for those who think that bots shouldn't just be assigned equal worth as us humans, but even more.

This isn't some far-fetched scifi-scenario gleaned from the books of Asimov or P.K. Dick, this is already our reality.

On an even more bizarre note, the sexrobot Harmony has been launched, with a built-in AI, for whoever can afford the pricetag of 20 000 USD. Brothels all around Europe are already offering sex with robot prostitutes. We're not just meeting our AI-friends in dialogue as with Alexa, Rinna and Sophia, but also in our bedrooms with Harmony and not just privately but “professionally” as well.

The best Turing-test of all might still be when Gizmodo publically announced that 80% of all subscriptions to Ashley Madison is from men that have no idea they may very well be talking to a bot designed to inflate the perceived number of women on the site, all of which pointing to AI interactions and intimacy being more than enough to get people to open their wallets.

1.2.4 AI-applications that never end

And the abovementioned examples never really, truly end. Fact is that our old friend Seth Godin already listed [23 things that AI can do better than we can right now](#), and for those who want to gaze into a more reliable crystal ball, there are [so many AI experiments in action today](#) that it's all but absolutely embarrassing that people haven't gotten the message yet. It's time to get into the game.

1.3 AI-applications that supersede everything

But the fact of the matter is that in most of the instances I listed above, the AI is still in our servitude, designed to increase efficiency in our work and in our daily lives. And since AI-bots are themselves largely unpaid and dependent on human handlers, regardless of operating expenses, they may also just as easily be called our slaves (even, as with some instances mentioned above, our sex slaves).

The big thing with AI this year is however all the signs that we are nearing the transition wherein machines no longer serve man, but man serves the machine. When the AI outsmarts humans, reaching not only superior intelligence by any traditional measurement but also capacity to act on said

intelligence, which was [already demonstrated last year](#) when AlphaGo and Deepmind beat the world champion in Go using the “inhuman” move 37.

This year will mark another change on a global scale. Now, we as people will not only be summarily [beaten, destroyed and utterly annihilated by machines in Go or gaming](#), but we will even be schooled in how embarrassingly easy our “difficult” games such as chess are, as the proven best-of-the-best AI Deepmind and its disciple AlphaZero [learned all the ins and outs of the game in a mere 4 hours](#), only to immediately annihilate the previously reigning champion – another AI known as Stockfish, which no human has ever beaten. The game was won 28-0.

And this is only our first inkling into what the future has in store for us, where the games and spectacles of tomorrow will occur between rivaling AI's, just as the sports scene of tomorrow will be between RO-bots.

1.3.1 AI as a macropolitical power player

That digital giants such as Alphabet, Amazon, Azure and even older dinosaurs such as IBM have [poured money into the field](#) feels like the most obvious consequence of the emerging technology. Something more interesting than that however, is when the same phenomenon is being felt on a

national level, where claims have been made that AI is about to become the [biggest geopolitical force to date](#).

It's apparent to all in the know, as it should be to you know – WHOEVER LEADS AI LEADS THE WORLD. And now, sadly, even [Putin got the message](#), as did China, with plans to make the far east dictatorship the world's leading force in AI development by 2030. To this end, they have three major advantages – a large pool of data engineers, 750 million internet users and above all, a government decree to share data with commercial partners.

Our friend Elon Musk thus tweeted: "Competition for AI superiority on a national level most likely cause of WW3 imo".

The silliest part of it all is that it's the countries themselves that sit on the goldmine – data. By opening up government databases and cooperating in the research with trusted commercial corporations, countries can feed AI and attract the digital giants – something my own native [Sweden both has strong prerequisites for](#) but remain behind on.

1.3.2 AI with a goal of its own?

But we're still talking about companies and superpowers that think they can rule over AI, that they can use it as a tool for expanding their existing power

and resources. The biggest question remains if we as a species will even be able to continue our reign over a machine that's rapidly surpassing us in intelligence.

One of the biggest notabilities in such questions surrounding AI is [Max Tegmark](#), who I was a bold man would say could be regarded the smartest swede in the world (perhaps only challenged by my other favorite academic, Nick Boström). For now I'd settle for stating the facts that the old kth-engineer and HHS-economist now has risen to be an esteemed professor at MIT, where he's founded the institute “Future of Life”, together with the founder of Skype, Jaan Tallinn (and with, among others in the board, Elon Musk and the late Stephen Hawking), and is now one of the world's most cited researchers.

Tegmark's questions are directly related to what I, as a digital strategist, and my peers always saw as the first and most important question going forward – [what is your goal, your endgame with your digital strategy?](#) To simplify things a little bit, that should really be the maxim of all digital ventures to follow. Usually, this isn't a great head scratcher, you as a strategist simply put forth a goal together with the properly initiated parties who can then

contextualize it. Then the digital technologies to be used are decided upon and with the least possible amount of resources in the shortest possible time, put in effect to reach said goal.

But the thing about this method is that technology itself is an “independent variable” that you analyze for efficiency and then enter into the strategic equation given that it “affects the variation in the dependent variable” that is your goal. The technology itself doesn't have a goal of its own, and most people who whine that the “computer rules all”, or that “digitalization has made society cold” are deluding themselves. The technology itself is absolutely neutral. In lectures I always say it's “like a hammer” - you can use it to kill people, or you can use it to build a hospital to save them. The hammer itself isn't good or evil, it's the intent of who's wielding it that matters (the difference between Putin, Jinping and Trump or Gates, Musk and Obama, so to speak).

None of this applies anymore.

The biggest difference between previous digital tools and the superintelligent generic AI we have now is precisely that this no longer applies. The AI can have it's own goals(!) and they already do. A heatseeking missile with AI

being the most obvious crude example, picking its goals independently. And they may very well have entirely different goals than what we would consider be good for us. And it's not that they're (thus far at least) “evil” in any traditional sense of the word, but just as you might step on an ant or that you have to remove an anthill as you're building your family home, the goals of an AI may diverge significantly from what we would want for ourselves.

We just have to avoid being the ants.

Intelligence means control – we don't control the lions in the zoo because we are stronger, but because we are more intelligent. That a superintelligent AI will control intelligent or less than intelligent people isn't even a question, but a given. Tegmark argues that our question of “what should we do with AI” is the same as when the neanderthals argued what to do with the emerging Homo Sapiens Sapiens.

And he makes a valid point. All our defense mechanisms that are for us unique, where we live with the belief that we're the “chosen ones”, singularly given dominion of this earth by God, nature or some other higher cosmic power, are rendered blatantly irrelevant when we consider that the size of our brains are limited by our mother's pelvis, our intelligence dictated by the cold,

hard laws of biology, while the AI is presented with no limitations whatsoever.

However, Tegmark also argues, along with a few of us in support of him, that this new power elite paradigm shift from human to machine doesn't necessarily mean our end. Instead, he points out, that we have submitted to higher intelligences before – our parents, our teachers, our superiors and politicians (who we can only hope are fit for the task) – because their goals are usually somewhat correspondent to our own.

All while we are today, in what Tegmark calls Life 2.0, still limited by our biological hardware. Going forward though, we will inevitably be freed of the shackles of biology and evolution, through one massive, revolutionary upgrade reach Life 3.0. And here there are no real limits of what AI can achieve to help people, with everything for extended longevity to climate, renewable energy sources and elimination of hard labor, or indeed any labor whatsoever.

1.3.3 AI that goes from our lords to our gods

We as people stand to go from lords to slaves, and we'll do so voluntarily. We are already doing it today to varying extents. Who's choosing your movies, your music, your hotel or your restaurants? Who's selecting the news feeds you're exposed to, your social contacts? Think about it.

But how much longer can we keep submitting to these AI bots as our rulers? We, as human beings, who have barely 100 terabyte's worth of information capacity in our brains, who are simple enough that it doesn't even take 2 gigabyte to store our DNA sequences?

We might as well use 3D printers to clone ourselves, or why not a somewhat improved version of ourselves or someone other predecessor? We have all the data. We might make ourselves into true gods that way, make our own story of genesis, and not just transport ourselves to Mars as Musk so eagerly desires, but clone ourselves on Mars with an alter ego for a God, watching from up on high.

Why not?

In one of my dear friends most infamous quotes, Nietzsche stated "God is dead. Dead forever. And we killed him." He followed this with the far less

quoted “Isn't the grandeur of this deed too overwhelming for us? Don't we need to ourselves become gods to prove ourselves worthy of it?”

Now, we have reached that point. We have not only proven that we can create life, create other human beings in test tubes and other forms of artificial insemination, now we've even created something that's smarter than us, a superintelligent AI, which will in turn be able to innovate how we can recreate human beings as pure information (and later on, as other carbon-based beings).

If we're not gods by then, we will never be.

1.3.4 AI as a direct threat to our species

The irony is complete when the circle is closed and we're killed by the product of our imagination, just as how God was destroyed by us. The next time that passage is recited and recontextualized, it may not be as a prophetic statement but a description of a history long past. All this authored by an AI journalist who paraphrases the golden words “The human is dead. Dead forever. And we killed him.”

As superstition is increasingly supplanted with science, as faith gives way to facts and theories, it is becoming more apparent that the least superstitious

and the most logically based and scientific of all will assume power – the machines. And those who take in the full spectrum of possible scenarios will soon discover that the fear of a superintelligent AI [wiping us out](#) is not altogether unfounded.

If you think that would present an insurmountable task due to our global spread and sheer numbers, think again. Those who have seriously understood how we as people are becoming completely digitized ([see part 1](#)), will also realize that on November 2, the opposite was proven true. And it was proven by the simple fact that Trump's twitter page was down for 11 minutes. This time, it was a Twitter-employee's mistake, but it goes to show what a prankster or malicious agent would be able to do – or, more relevant, what an AI could do if they chose to wipe out these pesky humans the same way Anticimex wipes out vermin – with a few typed letters, 140 characters or less, directed at Kim Jong-un stating “Got tired of you today, will push the button. SAD!”.

The internet has not only consumed our daily lives, but even politics. As soon as AI gains control of the internet, they have effectively taken control of both our everyday lives as well as political capital. As gods. True gods.

Time to get used to the idea of being considered vermin?

1.4 AI as something to adopt rather than condemn

You may feel now that everything here is overwhelming, an overpowering flood of information, painting a picture of a future vastly different than our present. I don't blame you. When I've held lectures in digital trendspotting over the past year, with everything from packed auditoriums with every marketer in Sweden to one-off talks with some of the biggest companies and charitable organizations in the world, the reaction tends to be roughly similarly divisive – those who are horrified but intrigued and those who want to abandon everything to go live out their Neo-Luddite dreams out in the wilderness, far removed from all that AI can reach today. To the latter, all I can say is that with 5G processing and edge computing, this trend will do nothing but accelerate – and either you're leading the way or you reflect on your existence as the new ant beneath the boot of the future.

But that's all we have to offer for now, I'll [see you soon for the next technology that will change your life in the present as well as your future](#), and likely the rest of the world of nations and companies as you know it today too.

Until then, I wish you well going deeper into a year that will go down in history as the most awesome year to date.