

2017 Festival Ars Electronica

AI – Das andere Ich / The Other I

(Linz, April 4, 2017) Artificial intelligence has done it again. Now that Facebook, Uber and Co. are suffering from an increasingly bad public image, the reinvention of Virtual Reality has already lost its allure, and the Internet of Things doesn't seem to be able to get beyond the self-replenishing refrigerator, the thrill engendered by futuristic super-machines is dominating the headlines. So what are we to make of artificial intelligence? Gigantic job eliminator? Or the next step in evolution, the one in which technology finally asserts its mastery over us? Or maybe the source of redemptive systems that develop new medications for us and operate on us, that invest and multiply our capital, and that even make better business executives because the boss is finally a more rational decision-maker? Artificial intelligence has many faces and they're sure to pay attention to us all.

Dispassionately considered, the latest developments in artificial intelligence truly are astounding. And they'll soon be proceeding even faster. The reason for this is simple—never before has so much investment capital been in pursuit of successful technologies and promising innovations. The concentration of scientific and economic power as now exists among the so-called Big Four of the Internet is shifting scientific research from the military and elite universities into the private sector, and establishing it on a broad basis.

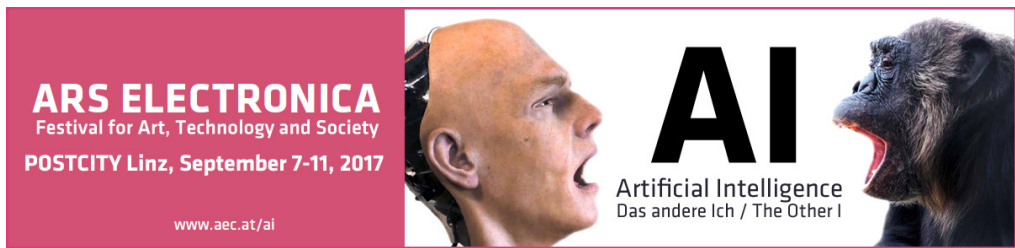
Thus, the expectations are high and the investments promise to yield huge future profits. Deep learning, self-learning neuronal networks, autonomous mobile robots and smart digital assistants—they're said to be the next big game changers, and they undoubtedly have the right stuff to do so.

“Das andere Ich / The Other I” – Technology as Antagonist or Alter Ego?

In light of this background, the theme of the 2017 Ars Electronica Festival is “Artificial Intelligence – Das andere Ich / The Other I.” And as the subtitle suggests, we will be focusing our attention beyond the technological and economic horizon to scrutinize cultural, psychological, philosophical and spiritual aspects. From the perspective of a festival dedicated to art, technology and society, Ars Electronica is interested above all in the visions, expectations and fears that we associate with the conception of a future, all-encompassing artificial intelligence. This is a development that brings us to an up-close-and-personal encounter with fundamental questions of our own identity and existence. For instance, what would it mean for us as “creatures capable of reason” if we suddenly no longer had a monopoly on thinking? Would we remain the “crown of creation”? And, even then, will there still be something that only human beings are capable of doing—and if so, what? How are we to come up with ethical principles for our future super-robots when we're unable to accomplish this among our fellow human beings? Will we ever even be able to accept the

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fundamental otherness of such an artificial intelligence considering how difficult this is for us in our interactions with other people with a different skin color or of another religion? And what about a potential human-machine conflict of interest—aren't we massively impairing our prospects for success by degrading our ecosystem and everything else that we human beings—in contradistinction to machines—are dependent upon?

Our urge to create a perfect likeness of ourselves and our fear of someday being overthrown by that very creature intertwine in our vision of artificial intelligence to an extent unmatched by any other technology. Artificial intelligence is thus the perfect projection surface upon which to consider the images of human beings and worldviews that are widespread in this Digital Age today. Together with artists, scientists, scholars and experts in business, politics and religion, this year's Ars Electronica Festival will endeavor to ascertain which of our fears are justified and which are just manifestations of our ambivalent attitude towards technology. After all, if we might ultimately be risking everything in this gambit, why are we even getting involved in an adventure like artificial intelligence in the first place? This is indeed a question that is good enough to dedicate an Ars Electronica Festival to!

2017 Ars Electronica Festival

September 7-11, Linz will host an exciting, comprehensive confrontation with the reality and the vision of artificial intelligence. Symposia, exhibitions, performances, workshops and artistic interventions will elaborate in depth on its cultural, psychological, philosophical and spiritual dimensions. Consideration of the essence of a future artificial intelligence created by human beings will also be the point of departure of a process of reflection about ourselves, our weaknesses and strengths—in short, about what makes us human.

Artificial Intelligence – Das andere Ich / The Other I: Festival-Website: www.aec.at/ai/en

Interviews, features, foto-stories & videos / Festival-Blog: www.aec.at/aeblog/en

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