

# IF YOU ARE RETHINKING YOUR CORPORATE ETH- ICS



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# 1 The Singularity Comedy

**In line with developments in digitalisation, artificial intelligence, superintelligence and singularity.**

Subtitled 'The Singularity Comedy', for reasons which include a significant reference to the ethical heritage to be found in Dante's 'Divine Comedy', this article explores three crucial questions:

- ▶ Which ethical premises underlie predominant forces behind the development of digitalisation, artificial intelligence, superintelligence and singularity?
- ▶ What challenges to current thinking will the boards of West European and other organisations have to address and resolve at the level of corporate ethics, culture, visions and strategies?
- ▶ What are the implications for managers regarding the health of their organisations, their employees and themselves?

Linking corporate ethics to the topic of corporate visions, which he addresses in a previous article in this series (Robinson, 2016), Stuart Robinson traces the historical development of the core ethical premises which underlie the digitalisation of society and the economy. Following the words of Larry Siedentop in 'Inventing the Individual':

*«If we in the West do not understand the moral depth of our own tradition, how can we hope to shape the conversation of mankind?»*,

Stuart Robinson explores, in significant depth, the ethics behind not only past and current, but also future technological developments – as a contribution to the way in which the conversation between senior managers can shape their organisations.

As he points out, robots, drones, big-data exploitation-tools and dark-web artefacts for cybercrime and political subterfuge operate with ethical premises which have been consciously or unconsciously programmed into them by humans. Whilst the Civil Law Rules on Robotics of the European Union (2017) underline the need to protect the right of human beings to dignity and to self-determination, it is precisely the same premise of self-determination which, in combination with others, lies at the source of 'emergent', self-generated, humanly-uncontrollable robot behaviour. Foreseeably, new generations of AI-artefacts will develop

artificial ethics, which lie even further beyond human controllability and imagination. If, as certain founding philosophers of current market-economy ethics have proclaimed, Nature is either indifferent or indeed hostile to human beings, and if artificial intelligence picks up on this premise also, then what does artificial ethics have in store for us and our organisations? Whilst Stephen Hawking, Nick Bostrom and Bill Gates advise us to be very cautious about where artificial intelligence is leading, other people such as Ray Kurzweil and Peter Diamandis at the Singularity University in San Francisco advise the leaders of organisations to embrace and fully participate in current developments in order not to be ‘passed by’.

Tracing the evolution of contemporary ethics back to the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, which found strong resonance with Mao Zedong, Che Guevara, Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, Benito Mussolini, Charles de Gaulle, Theodore Roosevelt and Adolf Hitler, alongside world-famous philosophers, psychologists and sociologists such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Emil Cioran, Osip Mandelstam, Max Weber, Hermann Hesse, Theodor Herzl, Sigmund Freud, C.J. Jung and Carl Rogers, Stuart Robinson throws light not only on the question of the legitimacy of following a certain set of ethical premises, but also on the fact that the argumentation of ethical legitimacy is largely circular. It is this inherent circularity makes meaningful inter-ethical dialogue in politics, business and private life virtually impossible. This leads him to the conclusion that, if left unchallenged, the Nietzschean-like set of ethical premises which is currently driving the digitalisation of society and the economy is likely to stay: in other words, the ethical super-dice – as he calls them – could remain exactly how they fell more than two hundred years ago and humanity’s ethical footprints may have come to a dead-end. If reverse-Darwinism – including aspirations of perfection and supremacy towards the super-human, super-intelligence and the super-race – continues in its present form, then the disenfranchisement of those ‘passed by’, i.e. those whose ethics do not conform with the mainstream, will also continue.

When reading this article, it soon becomes clear that Stuart Robinson is writing from a position of ethical neutrality, which he terms anethicality. He proposes that today's stewards of societal development – and, in particular, business leaders – have an opportunity to apply this same anethicality in order

- ▶ to break out of the circularity of the argumentation of ethical legitimacy,
- ▶ to generate an ethically-reflected foundation upon which to build corporate visions, strategies and cultures and
- ▶ thereby to contribute to societal development and, not least, to safeguarding the psychological health of their employees, their loved ones and themselves in a sustainable way.

Whilst the members of a great majority of societies are conditioned to think mono-ethically, and whilst anethicality does not come naturally to most of us, human beings currently have the great advantage over AI-artefacts that they can potentially empathise with both human and non-human ethics.

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## 2 CNO Netzwerk – The Interchange of New Ideas

Im Chief Networking Officer (CNO) Netzwerk erforschen und entwickeln wir Ideen und Lösungen für ein besseres Verständnis der Anforderungen an die Informatik und ein besseres Verständnis für die Nützlichkeit der Informatik für Unternehmen und Verwaltungen. Das Projekt wird getragen von Partnern aus Wissenschaft, Wirtschaft, Verwaltung und Medien.

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Mit Chief Networking Officer (CNO) ist jene Person gemeint, die im Top-Management die Verantwortung für die Vernetzung des Unternehmens mit Kunden, Lieferanten und Partnern übernimmt. Der oder die CNO unterstützt unternehmensinterne und betriebsübergreifende Geschäftsprozesse mit Informatik und Telekommunikation, damit die beteiligten Mitarbeiter/innen effizient und effektiv zusammenarbeiten können, damit neue Geschäftsfelder erschlossen und die Wertschöpfung im Unternehmen oder in der Verwaltung gesteigert werden kann.

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