##### [00:00:00.130] - Speaker 1

Dear Florian, my apologies for not joining today. While you're listening to this, I am doing another presentation across town. No doubt in the not so diststant future, I'll be able to be in two places at once. What was sneered at as deep fake with the evolution of AI will simply be replicated iterations of the self that keep us performing everything, everywhere, all at once. It's a neoliberal, if not colonial, dream come true of 24/7 extraction across all longitudes and latitude. The sun will never set on this computational empire, where data is mined and CPUs endlessly render. FOMO. That abbreviation for the fear of missing out will be neatly filed away in what the science fiction writer Bruce Sterling named a dead media project with the ubiquitous presence of our proliferated selves. FOMO, along with dialup modems. Welcome to my home page. Floppy disks and MySpace will be nothing but nostalgia for technologists and fodder for media archaeologists. But for the moment, let's remain in this present while knowing we're always in the archive with history nipping at our heels. You asked whether I could give a few reflections on AI, and to do so I begin with a disclaimer.

##### [00:01:20.690] - Speaker 1

I am not an expert in the field. My perspective is that of a mother, teacher, learner, artist, gardener, cook, lover, Netflix, watcher, and Internet user. A computer engineer or economist would undoubtedly lend insights regarding the infrastructural, programmatic and financial underpinnings integral to AI. As we both know, matter matters form informs, and you've got to follow the money to understand where power resides. Nonetheless, AI is embedded in my daily routine. It permeates my Google searches, suggests autogenerated responses in Outlook, gives Amazon recommendations, provides grammatical corrections in grammarly, and tells me I might like season five of The Handmaid's Tale, even though I've never seen season one. Stalking my activities, the machines munch and crunch, ingesting and combining my data with others. It is a mirror, a projection, a mirage, a prompt, and a directive. A profile can be viewed as a composite. Multitudes, glued together like a collage. But rather than a composite, what if these processes were more akin to composting? As I write this message, I'm sitting in my garden, looking at my vegetable beds. Once my courgettes, pumpkins and beans have gone through their cycle, the leaves and stems are put into the compost and eventually provide nutrients for the following year.

##### [00:02:50.390] - Speaker 1

Every gardener knows the significance of soil and compost. The golden rule is it's only as good as what goes into it, and as the pile is sifted and turned from one box to another. A gardener also knows compost is not just fertilizer, but the future in the making. Like those who plant trees, they understand themselves within a longer timeline, a continuum that is greater than their own. Sadly, I suspect datasets and their algorithmic perimeters don't get the same attention. Instead, data is just another resource to be exploited. Like fossil fuel it is something to be mined. Unlike the permaculture paradigm of renewal and regeneration, this worldview is one of total consumption. In this model, the motto is, It's only as good as what we can get out of it. And as the Indian writer Amitav Ghosh warns in his book "The Nut makes curse, parables for a planet in crisis", the view of the world as resource has deep and destructive colonial roots. Recounting the history of the VOCs monopolization of the Nutmeg trade and the subsequent slaughter and eradication of the Bandanese in 1621, he exposes how these legacies are directly linked to our current climate crisis.

##### [00:04:09.590] - Speaker 1

Bersch contrasts this colonial domination and catastrophic violence with indigenous knowledge, which values the human and more than human, the animate and socalled inanimate as equally vibrant and, most importantly, interdependent.

##### [00:04:25.670] - Speaker 2

Lately, I've been wondering if maybe the word artificial blinds us to the reality that AI is of this Earth. Despite the deceptive moniker, cloud computing is far from ethereal. It is matiere, that is, it is made of material substance. System boards are forged from metals and minerals, processors need enormous amounts of energy, and ever expansive server farms require continuous water cooling. To sustain these systems, extraction happens on multiple and interconnected levels. Some time ago, I read that Google considers its water usage a proprietary trade secret and bars even public officials from disclosing the company's consumption. But from legal cases in 2019 alone, it was surmised that over 2.3 billion gallons of water were being used across three states. One of those states, Texas, where I'm from, has suffered unprecedented drought in the past years. I can't help but ask myself, how can something essential to our existence beat Google's proprietary trade secret? Clearly, this munching and crunching has an environmental impact.

##### [00:05:38.930] - Speaker 1

At this point, you might think I'm going to make a luddite argument for turning back the clock, closing Pandora's box, or putting a spanner in the wheels of acceleration. But I'm not. I'm suspicious of such positions. Technology never uninvents itself. It only becomes obsolete. With this in mind, I return to my humble compost pile. It's lessons and the golden rule of "it's only as good as what goes into it", as opposed to "It's only as good as what we can get out of it". Or, as Donna Haraway writes, I compost my soul in this hot pile. The worms are not human, their undulating bodies ingest and reach, and their feces fertilize worlds. AI is a part of the pile too. Many have said this before, and much better than I can. We need to think outside the longstanding beliefs of our own exceptionalism, acknowledge complexity and interdependency, and consider the long view this planet is a wondrous and precious place to be, and in our compost, we must think about what futures we bring to fruition. In her book Dear Science, catherine Mcitrich writes about predictive algorithms, saying they are anticipatory computations that tell us what we already know.

##### [00:07:00.390] - Speaker 1

But in the future. If we want different or better or more just futures and worlds, it is important to notice what kind of knowledge networks are already predicting our futures. McKitrick is right. As I mentioned earlier, we're always in the archive with history nipping at our heels, immersed and implicated without any authoritative view. The question is how to proceed consciously and critically with care, with a sense of tending to and with an eye on what might be at stake rather than training AI. What if education was emphasized? It might sound odd in this context, but if we don't, I believe we'll never witness any intelligence, and only the artificial will remain. Please stop.

##### [00:07:47.390] - Speaker 2

Whatever you do, don't put that garbage in the compost.

##### [00:07:51.650] - Speaker 1

If we think about AI within the framework of education, critical questions can be raised about its curriculum, pedagogical approaches that might be required, and the disciplinary frameworks that are needed to enrich knowledge beyond what is solely instrumental. We can start to question who its teachers are, what biases are being concretized, what the assessment criteria of its successes and failures are, and according to whom. Playing around for this presentation, I spent several hours testing Dall-E 2 which, according to their marketing description, is a new AI system that can create realistic images and art from a description in natural language. I entered the simple sentence "she sits in her garden writing a letter while wearing a straw hat". All the results, and there were over 100 of them, were images of white women sitting in gardens. I suppose they've never read the antigen american writer and gardener Jamaica Kinkade. I thought to myself, it's the manifestation of such an impoverished imagination. But is this the fault of the machines, datasets and algorithms? But of those who educate them? I often think about the fact that Alan Turing's 1950 seminal essay, computing Machinery and Intelligence was published in "Mind a quarterly review of Philosophy", and not a computer science journal.

##### [00:09:16.440] - Speaker 1

And as we abandon AI to corporate interests, I think there is a profound message in his choice, which is well worth mulling over as we churn together in the compost of our present and create toxins or nutrients for our future. There are choices to be made of desolation and neglect, or of love, stewardship and care. Much affection, Renee.