

MONDAY MORNING: SCATTERED

That's how I feel this morning – my head feels like a bunch of scattered pictures lying on my bedroom floor. Can't tell how much of this sensation is work hangover from a too-busy weekend, or a result of a themeless news morning.

Often as I browse my feeds I find narratives emerge on their own, bubbling up on their own. Today? Not so much. There are too many topics in flight, too many major stories juggled, too many balls in the air, everything's a blur.

The biggest stories adrift and muddled are those in which elections are central:

- U.S. primary season wrap-up and the general election ahead – and I'm not going to touch this topic with a 20-foot pole. Imma' let better writers and statisticians handle it without me piling on.
- The Philippines election – the leading candidate is alleged to encourage urban vigilante death squads to reduce crime.
- Brexit – Britain votes on a referendum next month on whether to exit the EU. Brexit played a role in the election last week of London's new mayor, Sadiq Khan, who also happens to be London's first Muslim mayor.

- Australia's double-dissolution election – PM Malcolm Turnbull last week announced both the House of Representatives and the Senate would be dissolved and replaced in an election on July 2nd. Turnbull faces replacement depending on which party amasses the most power during the election. There have only been seven double dissolutions since Australia's federation under its constitution in 1901.

Anyhoo...here's some miscellaneous flotsam that caught my eye in today's debris field.

- Number of unique mobile device users: 5 BILLION (Tomi Ahonen) – Do read this blog post, the numbers are mind-boggling. And intelligence agencies want to map and store ALL of the communications generated by these numbers?
- Browser company Opera just went after iOS market with VPN offering (PC World) – Opera already announced a free VPN to Windows and Linux users; today it targeted Apple users with a VPN for iOS (do note the limited country availability). Don't feel

left out, Android users, you'll get a VPN offering from Opera soon.

- Swarm of earthquakes detected at Mount St. Helens (KOM0) – The eight-week-long swarm has been likened to those in 2013 and 2014 due to fault slippage. An eruption may not be imminent.
- Jihadi Gang Warfare (@thegruq at Medium) – A really good read about the Islamic militant gang in Brussels and how their amateurishness prevented even greater bloodshed in both Paris and Brussels. Unfortunately a primer on how not to do urban terror.
- Google isn't just feeding romance novels to its AI to teach it language (Le Monde) – ZOMG, it's using them to teach it morals, too! That's what Le Monde reported that BuzzFeed didn't.

Valeurs morales

Deux chercheurs de Georgia Tech, Mark Riedl et Brent Harrison, vont encore plus loin. Selon eux, la littérature peut inculquer des valeurs morales à des programmes d'intelligence artificielle. « Nous n'avons pas de manuel rassemblant toutes les valeurs

d'une culture, mais nous avons des collections d'histoires issues de ces différentes cultures », expliquent-ils dans leur article de recherche publié en février.

«Les histoires encodent de nombreuses formes de connaissances implicites. Les fables et les contes ont fait passer de génération en génération des valeurs et des exemples de bons comportements. (...) Donner aux intelligences artificielles la capacité de lire et de comprendre des histoires pourrait être la façon la plus efficace de les acculturer afin qu'elles s'intègrent mieux dans les sociétés humaines et contribuent à notre bien-être.»

Moral values

Two researchers from Georgia Tech, Mark Riedl and Brent Harrison, go even further. They believe literature can inculcate moral values in artificial intelligence programs. "We have no manual containing all the values of a culture, but we have collections of stories from different cultures," they explain in their research article published in February.

"The stories encode many forms of implicit knowledge. Fables and tales were passing generation to generation the values and examples of good behavior. (...) Giving artificial intelligence the ability to read and understand stories may

be the most effective way to acculturate them so they can better integrate into human society and contribute to our well-being."

Gods help us, I hope they didn't feed the AI that POS Fifty Shades of freaking Grey. Though I'd rather 90% of romance novels for morals over Lord of the Flies or The Handmaid's Tale, because romance's depiction of right and wrong is much more straightforward than in literary fiction, even the very best of it.

That's quite enough trouble to kick off our week, even if it's not particularly coherent. Catch you tomorrow morning!