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What does AI really mean for social work? In: British Association for Social Work Annual Conference (BASW) UK Social Work Conference 2025, 10-11 June 2025, University of Manchester, UK. (Unpublished)

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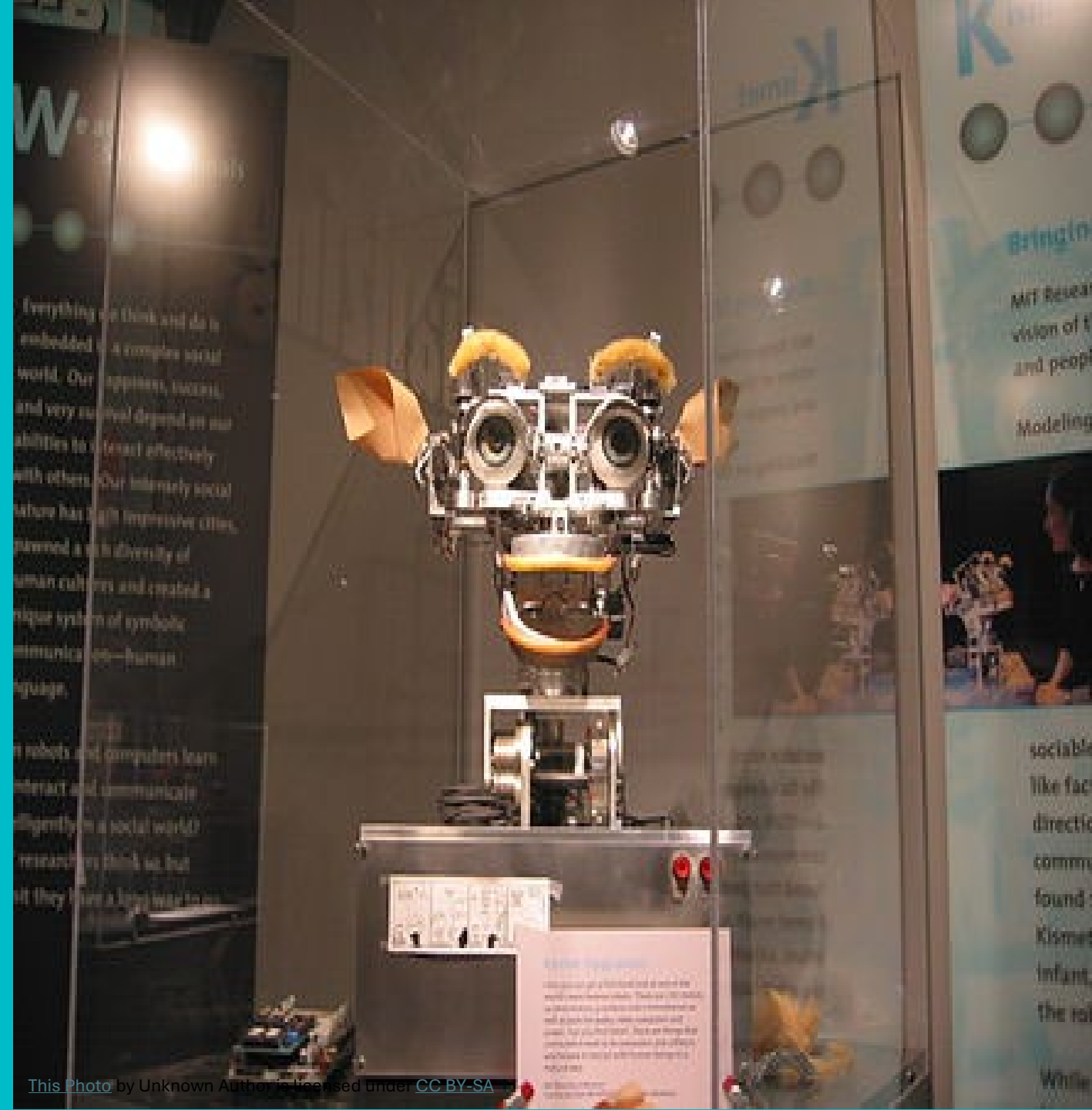
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# WHAT DOES AI REALLY MEAN FOR SOCIAL WORK

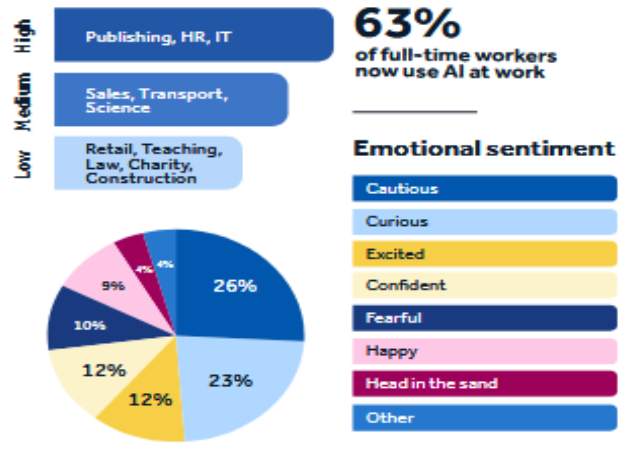
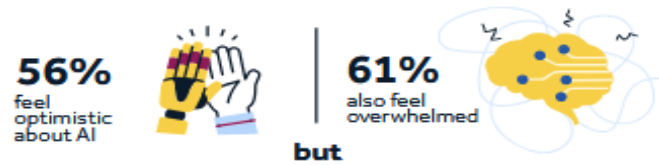


# A PEOPLE, PLACE, PARTNERSHIP UNIVERSITY



**AMANDA ML TAYLOR-BESWICK**  
**PROFESSOR OF DIGITAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**





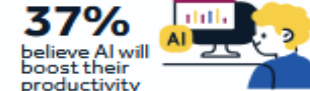
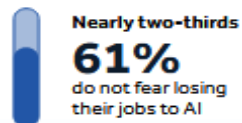
**49%**  
report no AI guidelines at work



**60%**  
say they'd embrace AI more with better training



**Frustrations**  
It can make mistakes  
It needs reliable data to work well  
It might take away jobs



IT MEANS WE NEED TO BE COGNISANT OF THE INTRICACIES AND NUANCES OF AI

The AI High: Feeling optimistic but overwhelmed ([Henley, 2025](#)).

# IT MEANS WE NEED TO BE ALERT TO THE PERILS AND POTENTIALITIES OF TECH INNOVATION

HOUSTON MATTERS

## AI isn't saving workers time on the job: The Good, Bad, and Ugly of the week

The Houston Matters panel of non-experts weighs in on stories from the week's news and decides if they're good, bad, or ugly.

Michael Hagerty | May 30, 2025, 6:45 AM



### At-home 'foot-recognition' AI scanner can prevent heart failure hospitalisations

04 June 2025 Vicky Allen

Category: Research

A home device which scans someone's feet as soon as they get out of bed in the morning could keep people with heart failure out of hospital, according to research presented at the British Cardiovascular Society conference in Manchester.



## Proposed Moratorium on US State AI Laws is Short-Sighted and Ill-Conceived

MARC ROTENBERG, MERVE HICKOK, CHRISTABEL RANDOLPH / MAY 21, 2025

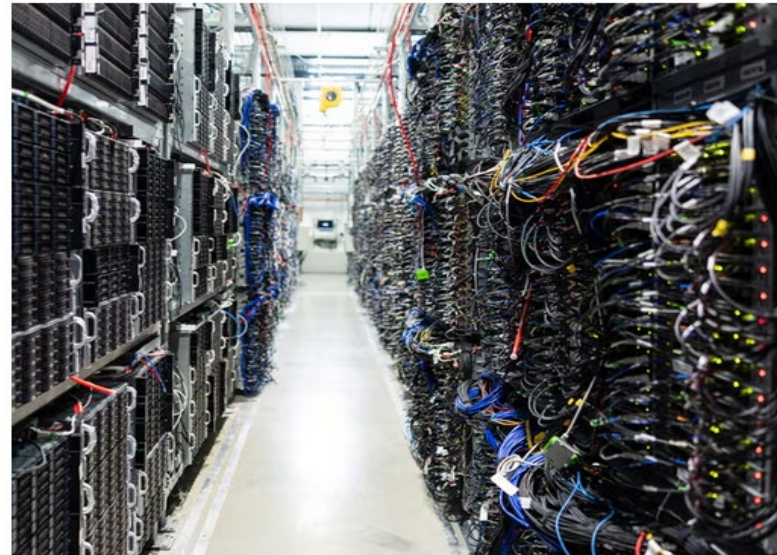
### 'The jury is still out on AI'

While some BASW members had expressed a "degree of anxiety" about the rising use of AI, others saw it as a 'silver bullet', said Geoghegan. His advice was for the sector to aim for a happy medium.

## First generative AI fully embedded in clinical radiology boosts productivity by 40% without compromising accuracy

### AI could account for nearly half of datacentre power usage 'by end of year'

Analysis comes as energy agency predicts systems will need as much energy by end of decade as Japan uses today



Servers in a datacentre in northern France. Photograph: Sameer Al-Doumy/AFP/Getty

## UK government withholding details of Palantir contract

KPMG is being paid £8 million to promote Peter Thiel's tech in NHS hospitals – but we're being forced to fight for information about this public contract.



LUCAS AMIN AND PETER GEOGHEGAN

MAY 24, 2025

FOR HEALTHCARE LEADERS

# HSJ



HENRY ANDERSON

'Uncomfortable truth' ahead of spending review

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TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

## Major AI project paused over patient data concerns

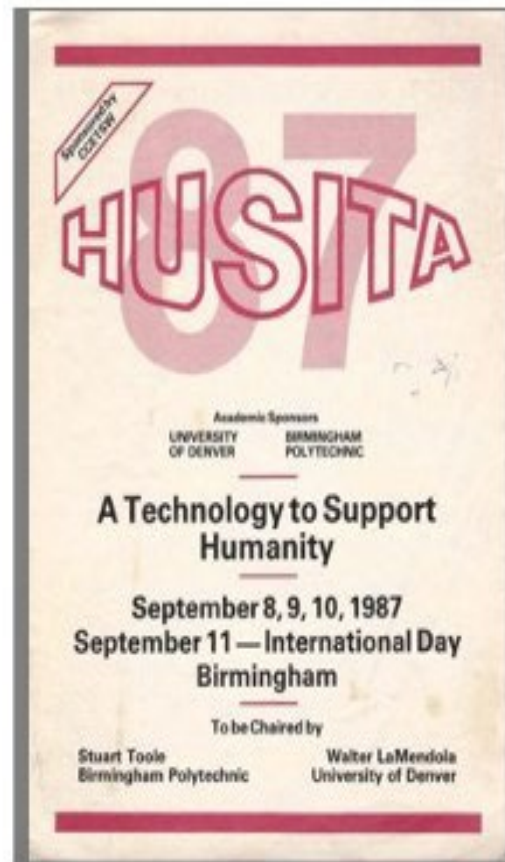
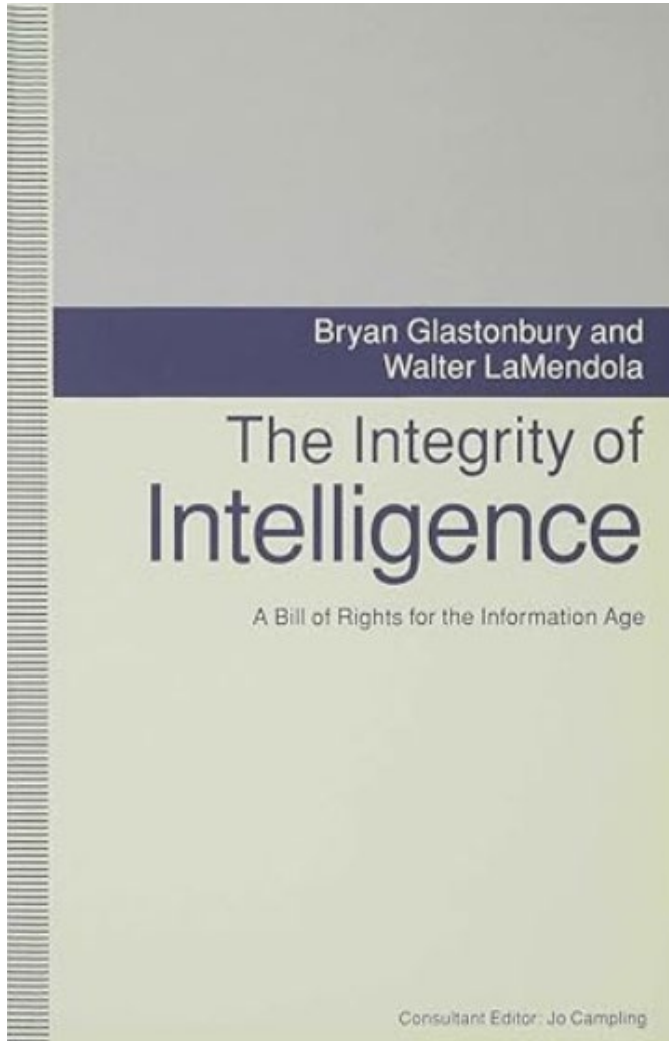
By Joe Talora | 4 June 2025



Press release  
14 May 2025

EY survey reveals that technology companies are setting the pace of agentic AI – will others follow suit?

# HUSITA.ORG (HUMAN SERVICES INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ASSOCIATION)





## IT MEANS WE NEED TO CONSIDER OUR HISTORY IN AND FOR THIS ERA

husITa were 'convinced of the value of information technology for the future of human services' and despite the fact 'the majority... still look on the field as rather esoteric and distanced from the true nature of the caring professions. Regardless, they believed that it was the work of husITa 'to convince... [how] inaction would result in resources being placed elsewhere – *and the ill-informed applications of IT would result in systems which do not model human service value systems*' (1987, in Ballantyne, 2017, p.3).

husITa founders LaMendola and Glastonbury (Toole, 1989), urged social work to take the role of the master and not the slave to new and emerging technologies. They discussed *the importance of the profession in directing the future of 'IT' usage in the social world, by involving itself in the development of technologies as they relate to 'human problems, human values, human ethics'* (Toole, 1989 in Taylor-Beswick, 2019).



# IT MEANS HUMAN AND RIGHTS-BASED REGULATION AND PRACTICES

## A BILL OF RIGHTS FOR THE INFORMATION AGE

1. Human rights, as declared in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, should be reasonably and prudently considered in all processes of IT development, use, and application. The consideration should take place in the widest public forum feasible and involve representatives of all of those who will be affected, as well as appropriate expert, legally mandated, and ethical authorities.

2. Decisions which directly affect a human being may not be made by an IT device alone. IT systems can be used as an aid to decision making, but only in circumstances where a designated person is accountable for the decision.

3. Humans affected by IT device-aided decisions should be fully informed at all times and have an incontrovertible right to appeal all such decisions through the courts of law or through formal appeal processes.

4. Personal data is the property of the person who is the subject of the data, or that person's legal parent or legal guardian where that person is a juvenile or unable to act on his or her own behalf. Such property rights are irrevocable. Permission must be obtained from the owner for use of personal data for all uses, including personal reports, aggregated formats, linkage to other data or transfer to other computer systems.

5. Unintended or unrecognized consequences of any type resulting from the application of information technologies are the responsibility of those who have implemented the application, and subject to remedy and compensation for actual or perceived damages. A court should be able to award damages to an individual or group.

6. If IT devices or applications displace human workers, they should be compensated and provided retraining within their local communities. If the IT usage is unsatisfactory and a worker is to be employed again, the displaced worker should be given the first right to the job.

7. All IT devices and applications should be accompanied by a full, complete, and understandable written statement of operating instructions, the functions and performance of the device or application, and any known or suspected hazards connected with use. The written statement should be provided in all languages in use within the community where marketing occurs. Statements about the performance of devices or applications which prove to be unwarranted should be open to redress through court action.

8. All IT applications should conform to best equal opportunities standards, as should the IT industry.



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9. An independent Commission should be established to register and review the content and use of all networks and databases containing personal material, and to register all new applications. The Commission should have power to seek modification, ban or proceed to court action in relation to any failure to meet appropriate standards or the terms of this Bill of Rights. Given a reasonable warning, devices or applications currently in use must conform or be dismantled.

10. All IT applications and devices for which a purpose or use is surveillance should be regulated in the public interest. No private or commercial sale of such devices to the public should be allowed. All use of such instruments by any government for any reasons should be approved by a court of law prior to use.

11. Specific legislation should be passed to ensure the protection of personal data, prevent unauthorised access to computer systems, and protect the copyright or patent rights of IT designers, except that no such copyright or patent shall be issued which infringes upon the human tradition of knowledge sharing or limits the common good.

12. Customers in any country should have the right to purchase equipment or programs from manufacturers at the lowest price the manufacturer offers in any location, with due allowance for differences relating to costs of transport, installation and local taxation.

13. Information technologies should be confined to developments for peaceful uses and should be freely transferrable to all countries. An international aid fund should be established to assist in technology transfer to poor communities, with an expert sub-committee charged with responsibility for establishing sensitive processes for cross-cultural transfers.

14. An independent body, linked to the Commission identified in 9 above, should be established to keep this Bill of Rights under review, and to co-ordinate and in other ways enhance the ethical soundness of IT progress.

15. The rights of individuals stated in this Bill should be the entitlement of all people of whatever country.

# IT MEANS THAT WE NEED TO KEEP ABREAST OF LOCAL AND GLOBAL ASPIRATIONS AND ORIENTATIONS

While Labour talks about “mainlining” AI into the veins of the nation, real-world adoption remains patchy. Businesses need practical guidance on how their AI adoption will be judged safe, secure and fair” (Politico, 2025).





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## IT MEANS WE NEED TO REVISIT OUR KNOWLEDGE AND EVIDENCE BASE FOR EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

We have 'become critically dependant on a technology that is poorly understood'  
(Naughton, p,10, 2012).



"We've got a problem. I've turned it on  
but I can't turn it off again."

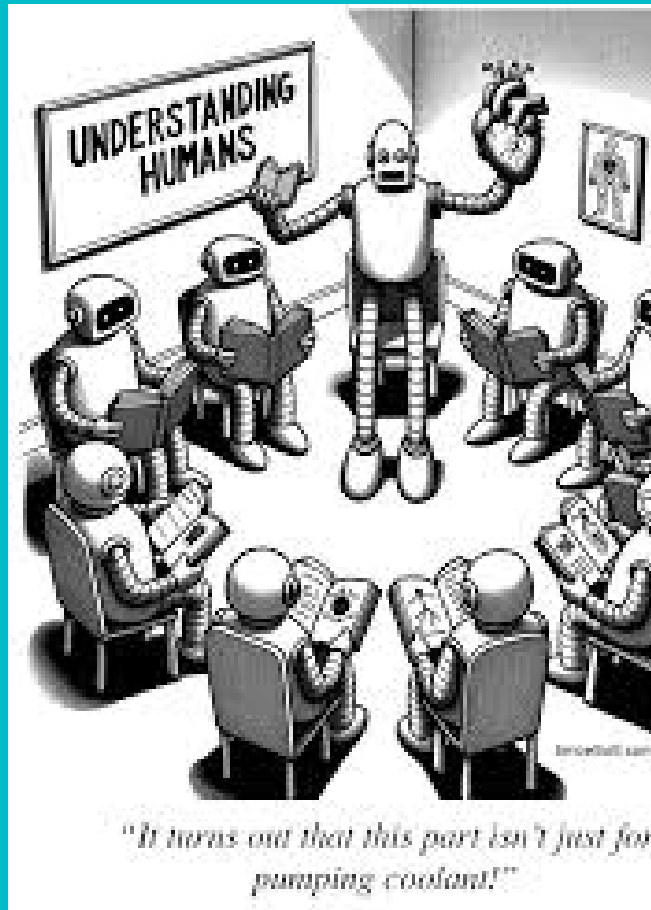
Naughton, J. (2012). From Gutenberg to Zuckerberg: What You Really Need to Know About the Internet. London: Quercus.

"We have got to grow a language for talking about sophisticated scientific and technological issues. And one way to do that is to say:

you don't have to know the difference between narrow and generative AI, but you should be able to expect that the automated systems used in your life are safe and effective; that your data has been protected;

that for a system used to make a decision about your access to a mortgage - for example - you should be able to get an explanation about how that was derived, or you should be able to talk to somebody, if the decision doesn't go in your favour and you want more information."

## IT MEANS WE NEED TO CONTINUE TO EMBRACE INTERDISCIPLINARITY

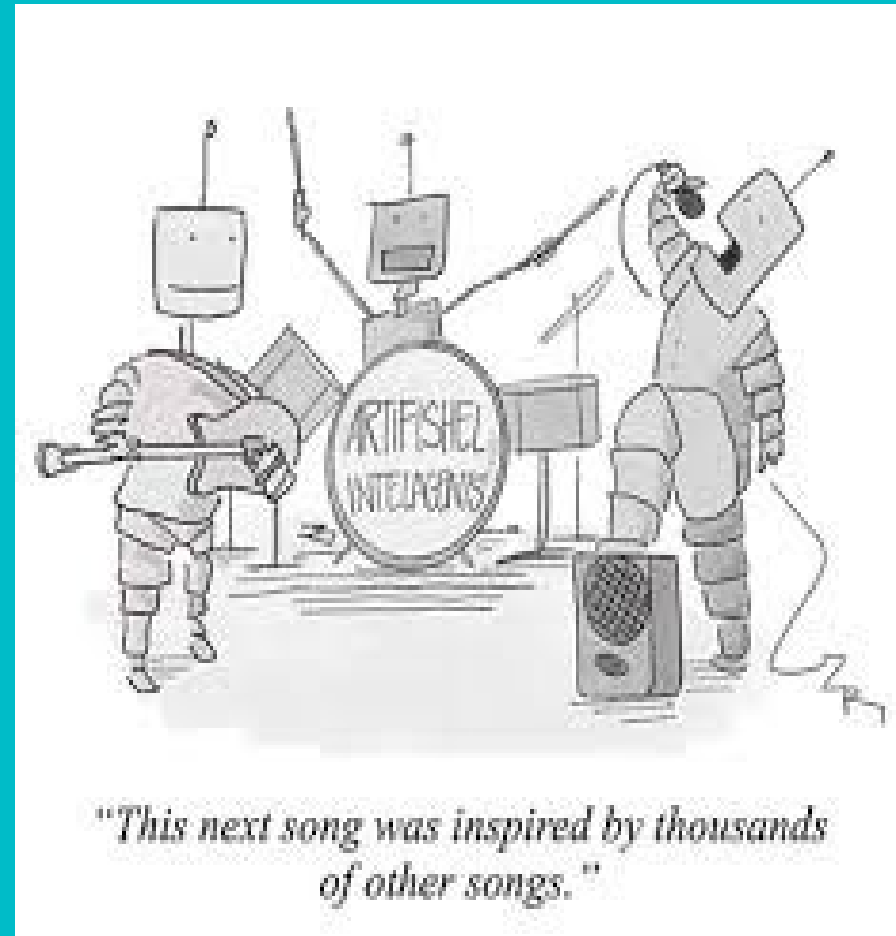


“Science journalist Adam Becker, who's new [book](#) offers a deep dive into the worldview of techno-utopians such as Musk—one that's underpinned by promises of AI dominance, space colonization, boundless economic growth, and eventually, immortality. Becker's premise is bracing: Tech oligarchs' wildest visions of tomorrow amount to a modern secular theology that is both mesmerizing and, in his view, deeply misguided. The author's central concern is that these grand ambitions are not benign eccentricities, but ideologies with real-world consequences.”

## IT MEANS NAVIGATING EXPLAINABILITY

Anthropic CEO: “We Do Not Understand How Our Own AI Creations Work”

([Jackson, 2025](#))



## IT MEANS, MORE THAN EVER, WE NEED TO ENACT OUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A SOCIETAL COMPASS

“Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing” (IFSW, 2014).





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## IT MEANS TRANSLATING THE GLOBAL DEFINITION OF SOCIAL WORK

“definitions typically emphasise the profession’s mandate to address structural inequalities, promote social justice and effect change at community, institutional and policy levels. They often incorporate broad social values and normative frameworks, such as ‘human rights’, ‘collective responsibility’ and ‘social justice’ ([Tarshish, 2025](#)).



## AS ONE SOCIAL WORKER REFLECTS...

‘Humanistic treatment’...this connection was perceived as something that cannot be replaced by technology.

“Something very authentic still remains here. I hope it will stay that way because in our world it can change very quickly, but I feel that there is something much more authentic comparing to other professions.

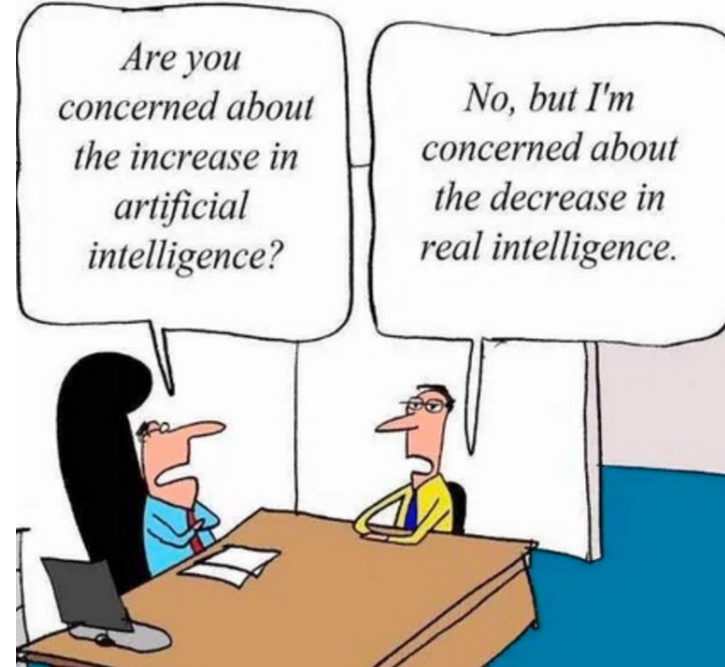
Everywhere (else) you go today, there could be a robot sitting in front of you. I don't think that we, social workers, can be replaced by robots. This seems to me to be the main thing that sets us apart from other professions”

(Liora, f, 8 YE, family social worker in a social service department).



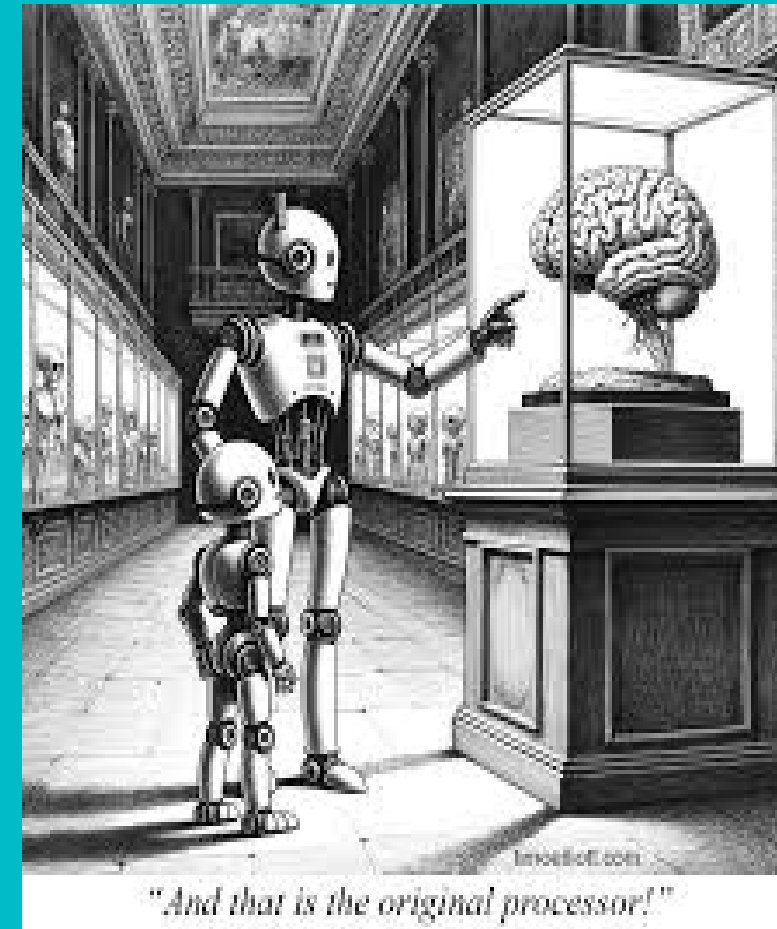
## IT MEANS BUILDING AND MOBILISING AROUND A COUNTERNARRATIVE

Mitigating the risk of extinction from AI should be a global priority alongside other societal scale risks, such as pandemics and nuclear war [Center for AI Safety, 2024].



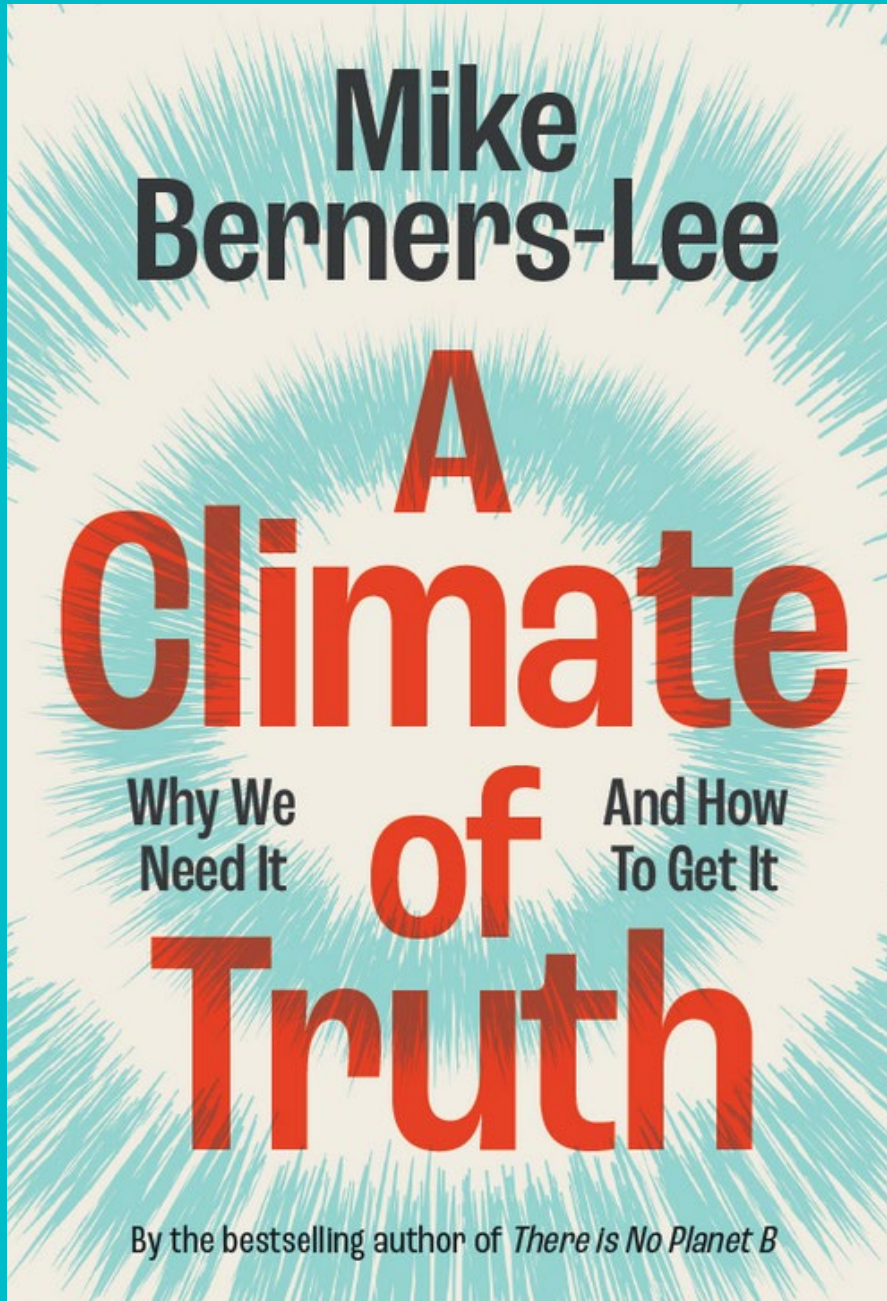
## IT MEANS THAT WE NEED TO DECIPHER WHO IS AND WHO CAN DECIDE OUR FUTURE

“Technologists currently wield a level of political influence that was recently considered unthinkable. While Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency slashes public services, Jeff Bezos takes celebrities to space on Blue Origin and the CEOs of AI companies speak openly of radically transforming society. As a result, there has never been a better moment to understand the ideas that animate these leaders’ particular vision of the future” ([Kagg, 2025](#)).



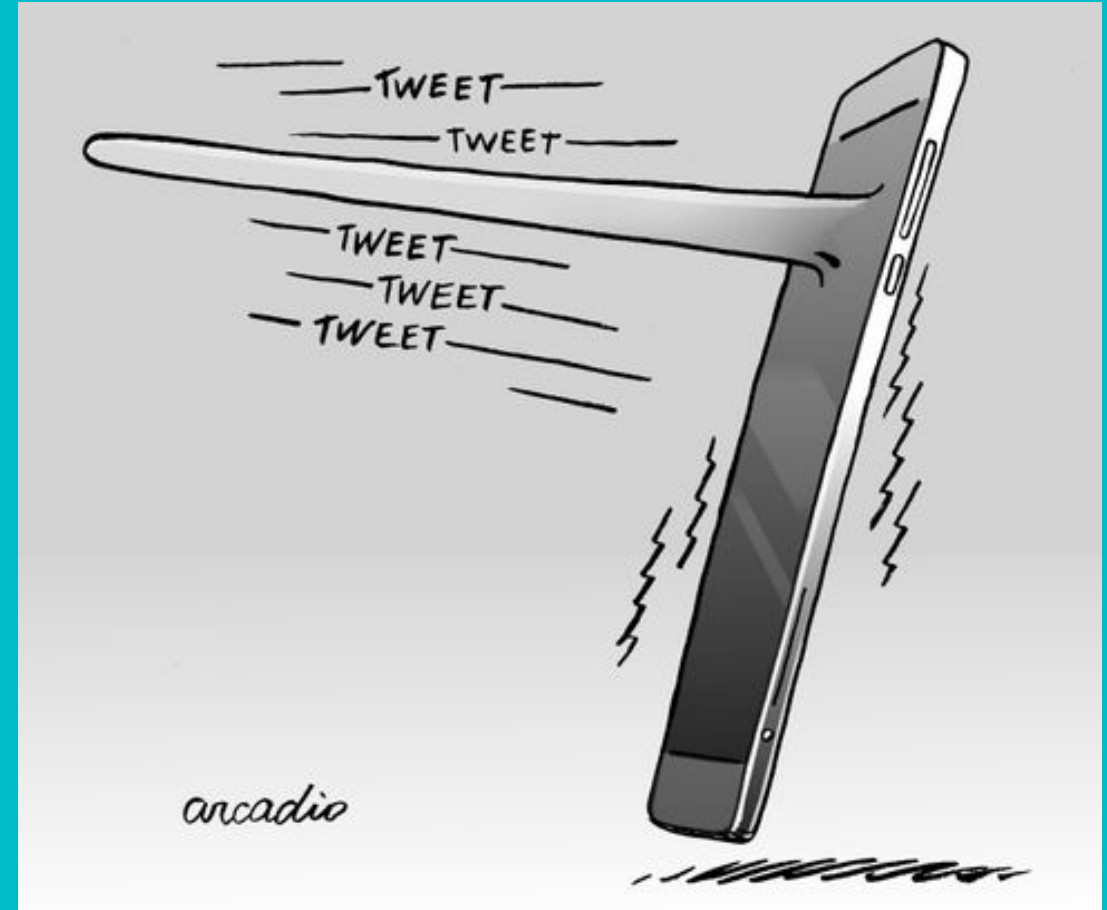
## POLYCRISIS

“If humanity is to thrive in the decades ahead, the most critical step is to raise standards of honesty in our politics, our media, and our businesses...”



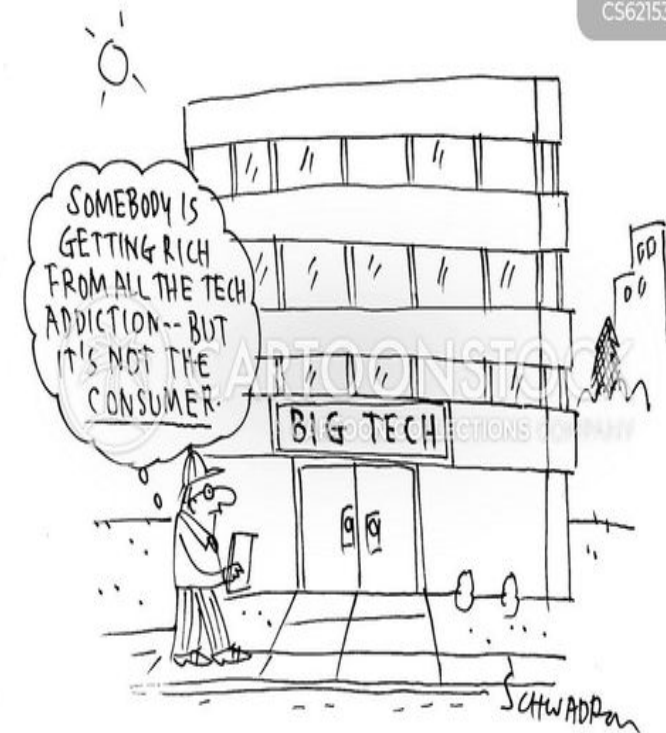
## IT MEANS A CLOSER EYE ON SOCIO-TECHNICAL INTERFERENCE

Briefing paper: an evidence-based analysis of hostile influence operations enabled by artificial intelligence (AI) during UK, European Union (EU) and French elections throughout June and July 2024.



## IT MEANS THAT WE NEED TO BE EVEN MORE ALERT TO THE SUBTLETIES OF CAPITALISM

Gina Neff, Minderoo Centre for Technology and Democracy, Cambridge University, believes Labour has a “huge problem.” “They have placed all of their chips on AI to jump start growth and productivity,” she said. “The challenge is that digital transformation costs lots of money and takes time.” She cited the case of U.S. tech firm Palantir’s £330 million, seven-year contract with the NHS, which some hospital bosses say is no better than their current systems (Clarke, May, 2025).

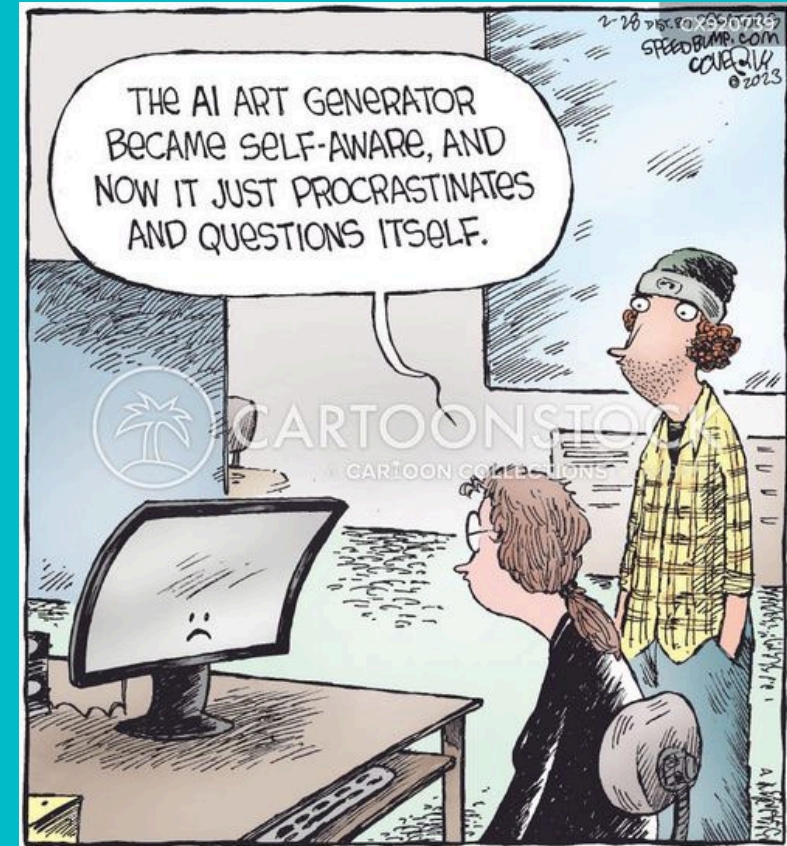


\*Palantir was co-founded by Peter Thiel, who recently helped fund the political fortunes of US vice president JD Vance

## IT MEANS WE NEED TO REMAIN TRUE TO THE VALUES OF TRUST AND TRANSPARENCY

“Despite their significant potential to impact people, especially the most vulnerable, awareness of AI for assessing eligibility for welfare benefits like Universal Credit (18%), robotic care assistants designed to carry out physical tasks in care settings such as hospitals and nursing homes (24%) and tools assessing how likely a person is to repay a loan, such as a mortgage (24%) is low.”

How Do People Feel About AI? ([Ada Lovelace Institute and The Alan Turing Institute, 2025](#))



## 8 REALITIES, 8 BILLION REASONS TO REGULATE : LORD CHRIS HOLMES

**The Voter** You were one of two billion people around the world eligible to cast your vote in elections last year – hoping for a fair, trustworthy democratic process and a peaceful transition of power. How did fake news, micro-targeting and other AI interventions impact you, your vote and your faith in the system?

**The Scammed** You've just had a call from your boss in Germany telling you to transfer £200,000 to a different business account but as you wait for the transfer to process it doesn't go through... and the funds 'disappear'.

**The Benefit Claimant** You've just had your universal credit suspended – potentially due to an incorrect algorithmic assessment - but you have no way to find out how the decision was made, nowhere to appeal and no accessible right of redress.

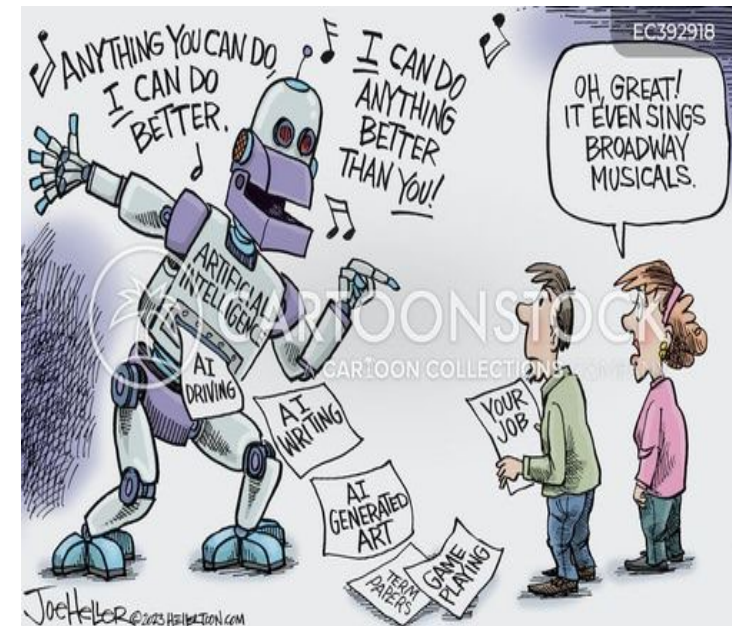
**The Job Seeker** You keep applying for jobs you know you are qualified for but not getting an interview. As a recent graduate you fear that the automated systems used to shortlist candidates are discriminating against you but are not clear how to appeal against their use.

**The Teenager** Your 14-year-old son is increasingly quiet and withdrawn, spending lots of time talking to an AI chatbot who he says understands him better than anyone else and is slowly becoming the only 'person' he trusts.

## IT MEANS WE NEED AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE TECHNICAL FUNCTIONAL AND THE SOCIO-TECHNICAL

Lawyers [SOCIAL WORKERS] don't need [A LOT OF] technical expertise in software engineering or computer systems, Gilman (2020) assures: "Rather, understanding where and how data-centric technologies operate puts lawyers [SOCIAL WORKERS] in a powerful position to advocate alongside their clients."

<https://datasociety.net/library/poverty-lawgorithms>



## IT MEANS WE NEED AN AGREED SET OF PRINCIPLES FOR REGULATION

- safe and effective systems
- algorithmic discrimination protections
- data privacy
- notice and explanation
- human alternatives, consideration, fallback

- lawfulness, fairness, and transparency
- purpose limitation
- data minimisation
- accuracy
- storage limitation
- integrity and confidentiality (security)
- accountability

Beneficence: **do good**

Non-maleficence: **avoid harm**

Autonomy: **preserve human agency**

Justice: **fair impacts**

Explainability: **understandable, transparent**

## IT MEANS THAT WE MUST AVOID AT ALL COSTS: AUTOMATION COMPLIANCE AND AUTOMATION COMPLACENCY



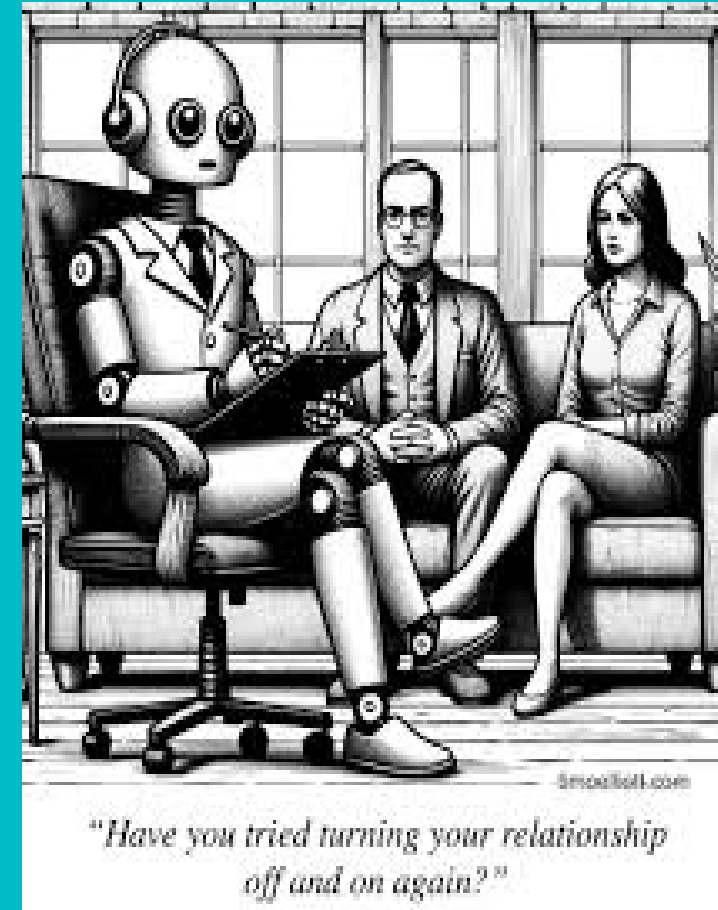
"Nothing much. Just waiting for the internet to tell me what I'm supposed to like."

**Automation bias** refers to the tendency to overly trust decision-support systems, whilst **Automation compliance** or complacency happens when people don't pay enough attention to or double-check the system's output, often because they assume it's always correct.

## IT MEANS EMBRACING SLOW ETHICS

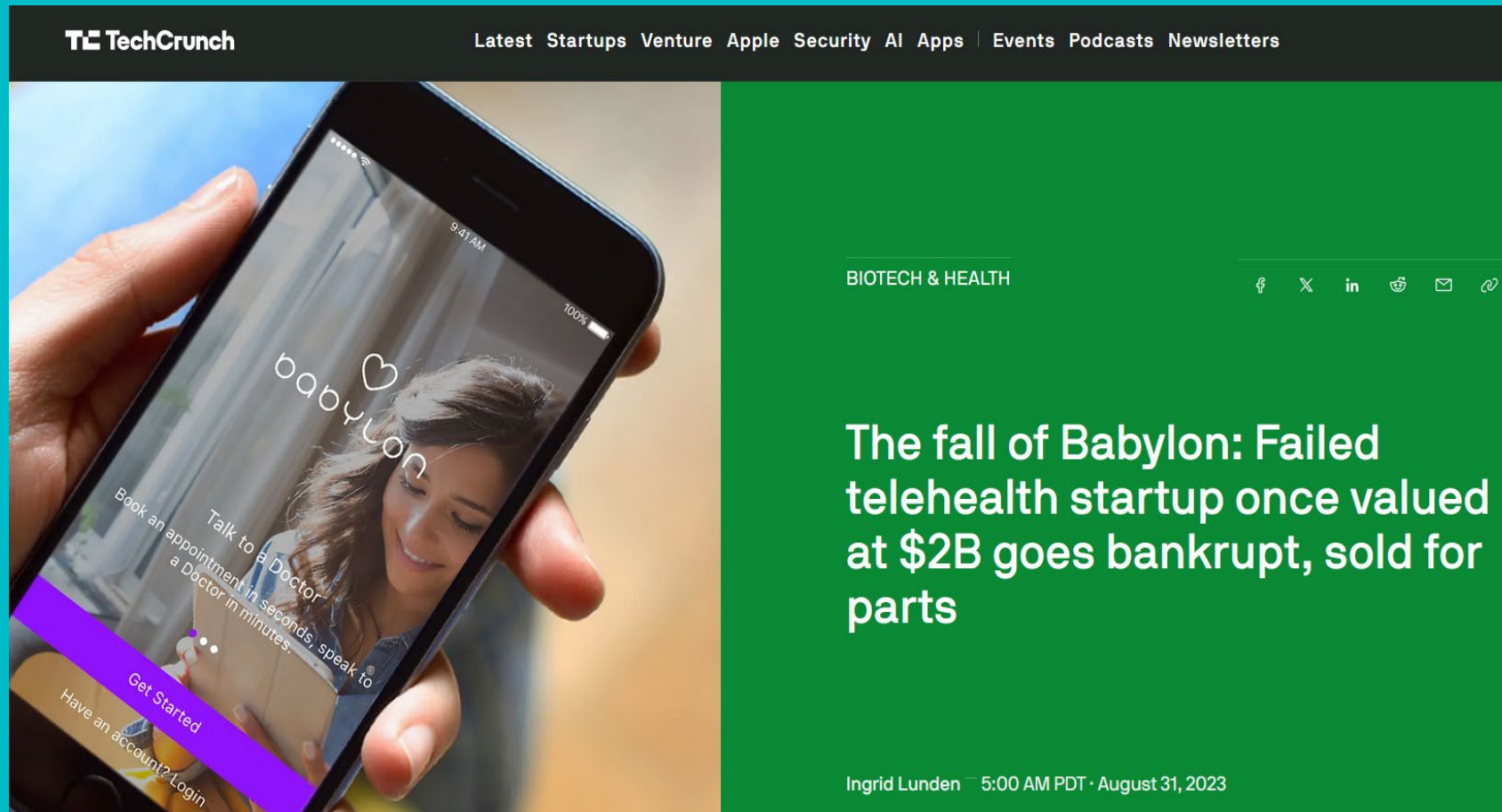
“Another different temporal message is the importance of slowing down the pace of decisions and actions, taking time to reflect upon the range of possibilities and their practical and ethical implications. This can be characterised as ‘slow ethics’ (Gallagher, 2020), which entails being prepared to make an effort, listen carefully, see and understand from other perspectives, consider alternatives and take action to change things” (Banks and Rutter, 2022).

Sarah Banks, Nikki Rutter (2022) Pandemic ethics: Rethinking rights, responsibilities and roles in social work, *The British Journal of Social Work*, Vol. 52, (6), pp. 3460–3479.



## INCLUDING WHEN PROCURING TECHNOLOGIES IN AND FOR PRACTICE

Australia's Chief Defence Scientist has said that these technologies offer many benefits while emphasising that “consideration of ethical aspects needs to occur in parallel with technology development” ([Ziesing, 2021](#)).



The screenshot shows a TechCrunch article titled "The fall of Babylon: Failed telehealth startup once valued at \$2B goes bankrupt, sold for parts". The article is categorized under "BIOTECH & HEALTH" and is dated August 31, 2023. The left side of the image shows a hand holding a smartphone displaying the Babylon app interface, which includes a heart icon, the word "babylon", and text about booking appointments and talking to a doctor. The right side of the image shows the article text on a green background.

**TECHCRUNCH** Latest Startups Venture Apple Security AI Apps | Events Podcasts Newsletters

BIOTECH & HEALTH

### The fall of Babylon: Failed telehealth startup once valued at \$2B goes bankrupt, sold for parts

Ingrid Lunden 5:00 AM PDT · August 31, 2023



The graphic features a stylized blue and white design with a grid pattern. It includes the text "NEW DIGITAL HUB" and "SET TO SAVE TAXPAYERS £1.2 BILLION".

7 June 2025 — Press release

**One stop shop for tech could save taxpayers £1.2 billion and overhaul how government buys digital tools**

A first-of-its-kind digital marketplace is being built to help shake up how the UK public sector buys technology - hoping to unlock £1.2 billion in annual savings, save time and give public servants the power to rate suppliers.

## IT MEANS BEING ALERT TO ACCOUNTABILITY

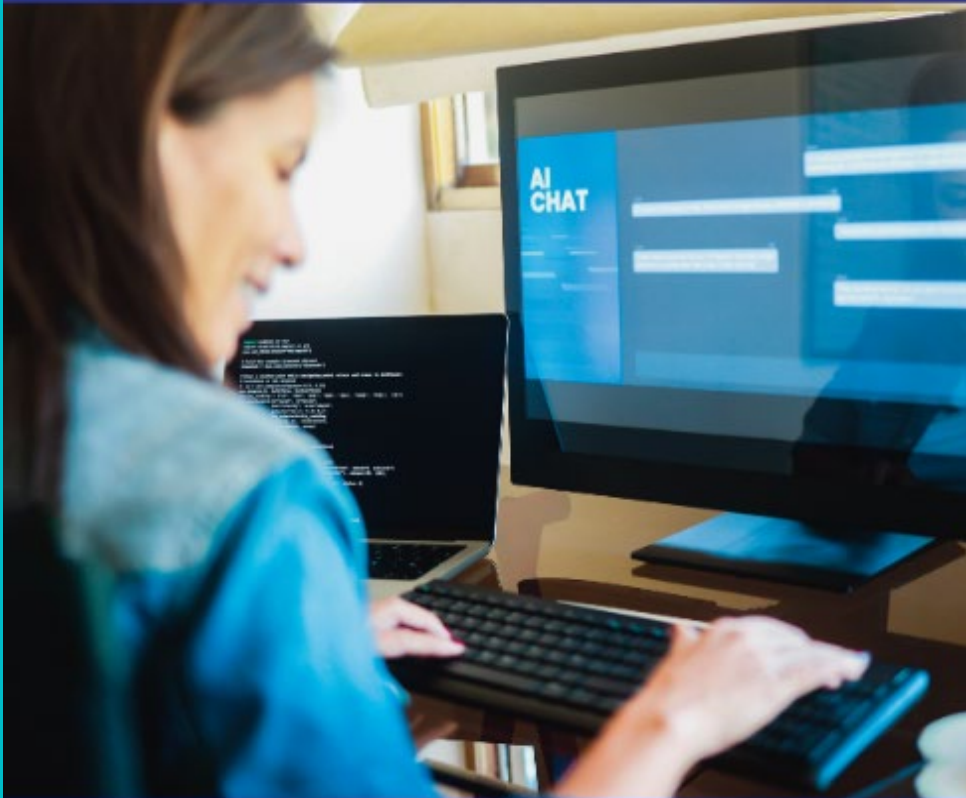
There is no clearer reason to require AI companies to disclose their training data than this:

*“what you can't see you can't enforce”*

Baroness Kidron



# The BASW Statement on Social Work and Generative Artificial Intelligence



‘the use of generative AI creates both practical challenges and ethical dilemmas. Increased use of generative AI potentially creates risks for the protection of human rights and the promotion of wellbeing. It also has the potential to lead to greater injustices and greater inequality. These are issues of concern for a profession grounded in the protection and promotion of human rights and committed to tackling social injustice and inequalities’  
(BASW, 2024).

**TOP  
TIPS**

November 2024

## For Relationship Based Social Work in the Context of Digital Transformation



Part of BASW England's 80-20 Campaign



**Campaign**  
Promoting relationship  
based practice

**BASW**  
**England**

The professional association for  
social work and social workers



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‘For Professional Association’s  
and the Regulator: The Code of  
Ethics and Professional  
Standards to take account of  
developments in digitalisation  
and AI. The Code of Ethics is  
essential to practice,  
underpinning professional  
judgments and supporting  
social workers in raising critical  
challenge at a local and national  
level’

([BASW, 2024](#)).

# Generative AI and Social Work:

Initial Guidance for Practice and Ethics



**BASW**  
The professional association for  
social work and social workers

‘This is a rapidly developing area and one in which BASW will continue to work, including calling for government regulation and regulatory guidance’  
([BASW, 2025](#)).

“A life without the privacy of the private realm  
- and without the reality of the public realm -  
is meaningless”

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, University of Chicago Press, 2nd edition (1998).

**THANK YOU**

[A.TAYLOR-BESWICK@CUMBRIA.AC.UK](mailto:A.TAYLOR-BESWICK@CUMBRIA.AC.UK)



"Do you realize that when you talk to artificial intelligence, you sound like artificial intelligence?"