



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
informatics



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh Futures Institute

Centre for
Technomoral Futures

Is machine learning a Woke, Neutral, or Fascist Technic?

27-July-2025

Zeerak Talat

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What are the politics of machine learning as a practice and as a technology?

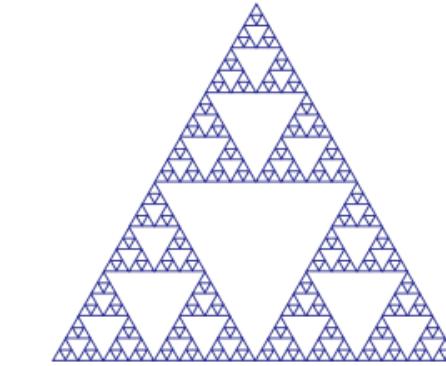
Child labourers as young as six dig for cobalt to power electric cars and phones

POVERTY & CHILD LABORERS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO



The Borgen Project. 2018. <https://borgenproject.org/poverty-child-laborers-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>

The Role of Tech in the Congo's Silent Genocide



Anatomy of an AI System

The Amazon Echo as an anatomical map of human labor, data and planetary resources

Israel developing ChatGPT-like tool that weaponizes surveillance of Palestinians

The Israeli army is building an AI language model using millions of intercepted conversations between Palestinians, which could accelerate the process of incrimination and arrest, a joint investigation reveals.



Gaza: UN experts deplore use of purported AI to commit 'domicide' in Gaza, call for reparative approach to rebuilding

'Lavender': The AI machine directing Israel's bombing spree in Gaza

The Israeli army has marked tens of thousands of Gazans as suspects for assassination, using an AI targeting system with little human oversight and a permissive policy for casualties, +972 and Local Call reveal.

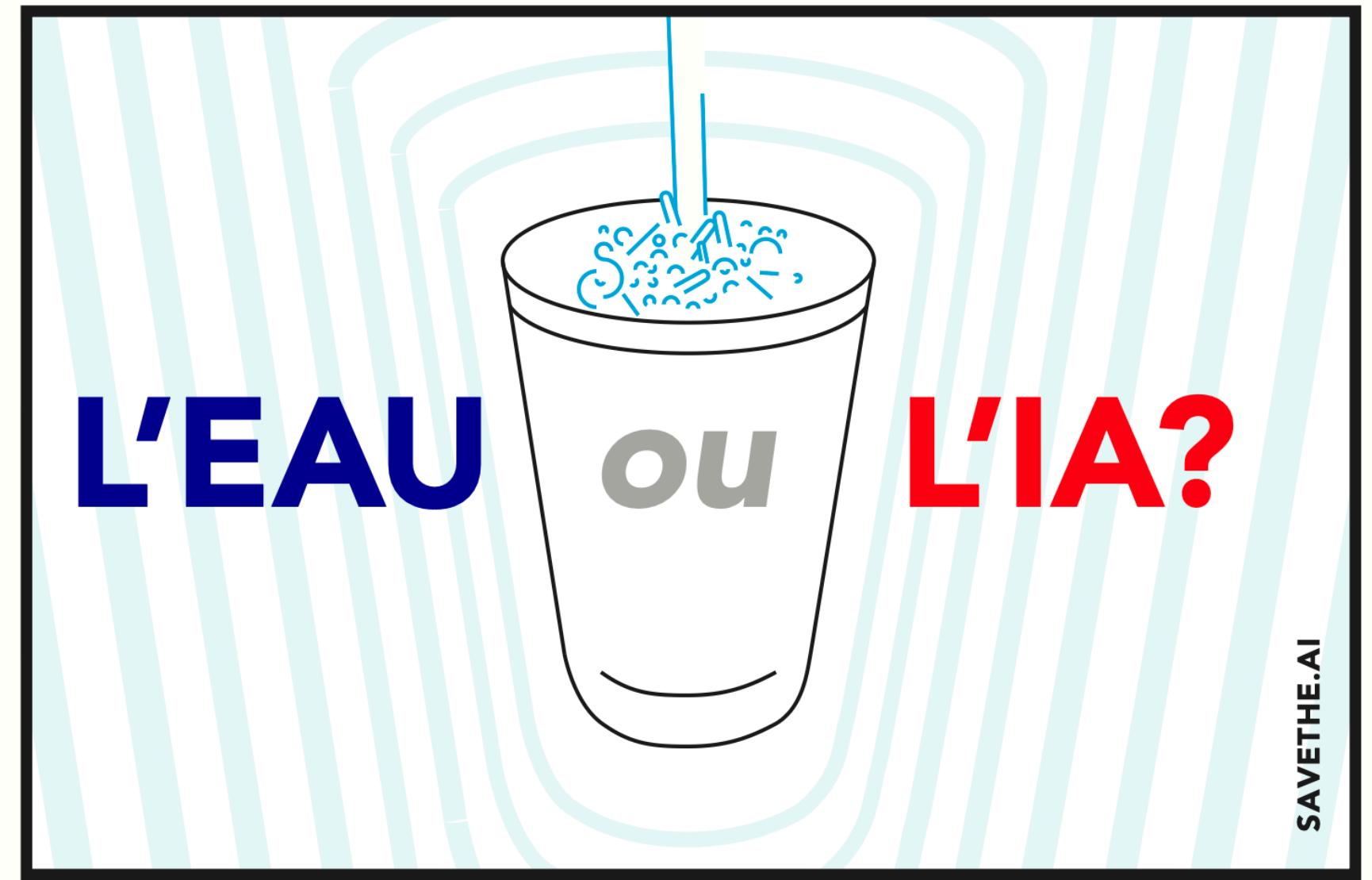


Here's what it takes to keep AI going:

Water:

- Writing a 100-word email consumes about 500ml of water (17 oz).¹
- 2 litres are needed for every 10 to 50 queries you make.²
- Training a model like ChatGPT-3 can consume 5.4 million litres of water.²

Read more about [AI's water footprint](#).



Concern UK's AI ambitions could lead to water shortages

JPMorgan Says AI Power Demand Is Straining US Water Supplies

- Precipitation patterns are less reliable, leading to shortages
- Water is essential to crucial AI-related business operations

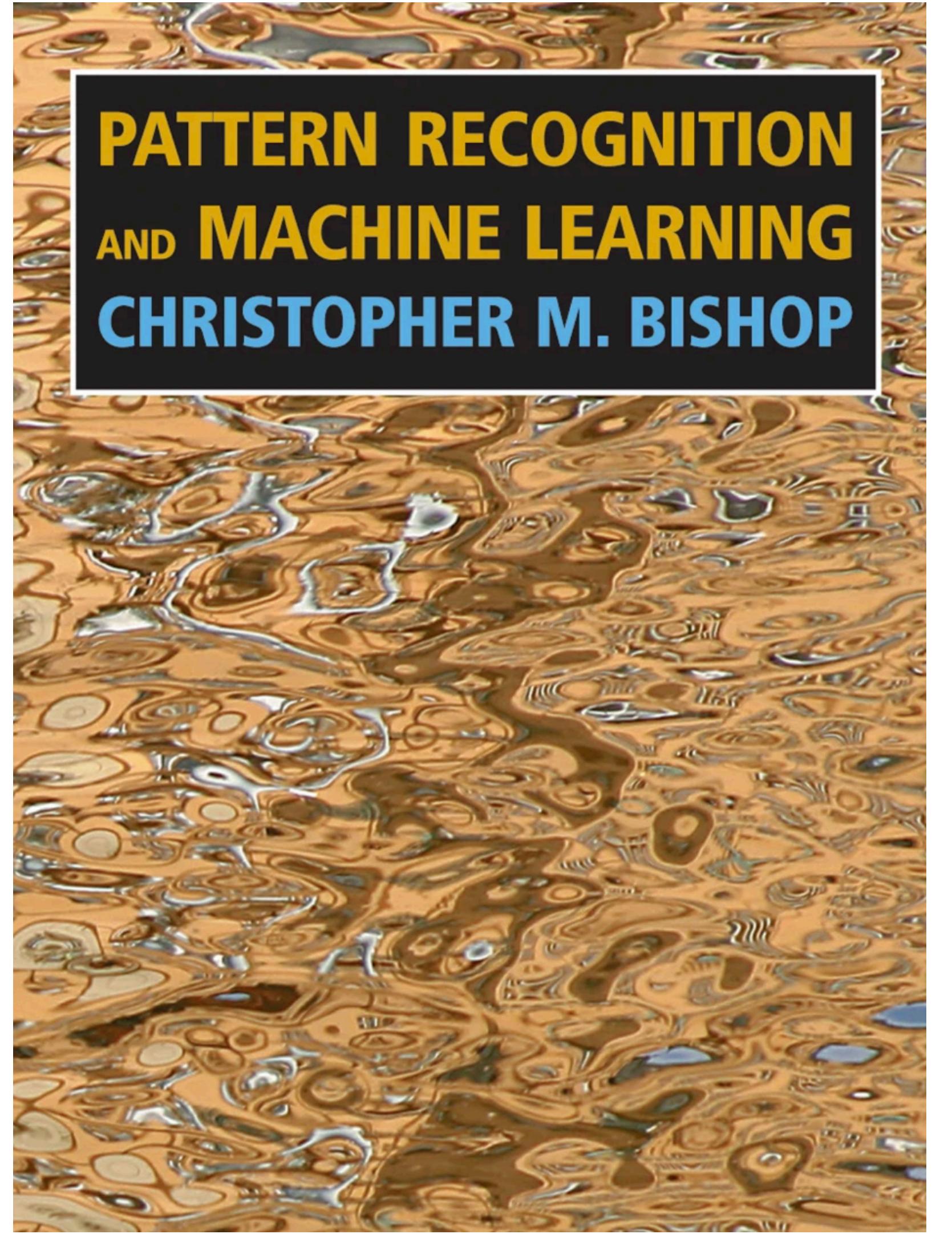
AI Is Accelerating the Loss of Our Scarcest Natural Resource: Water



ai is Draining Water from areas that need it the most. 2025. Niceletti, Ma, Bass. Bloomberg.

Infrastructures of ai and ml

What is an ai and what is machine learning?



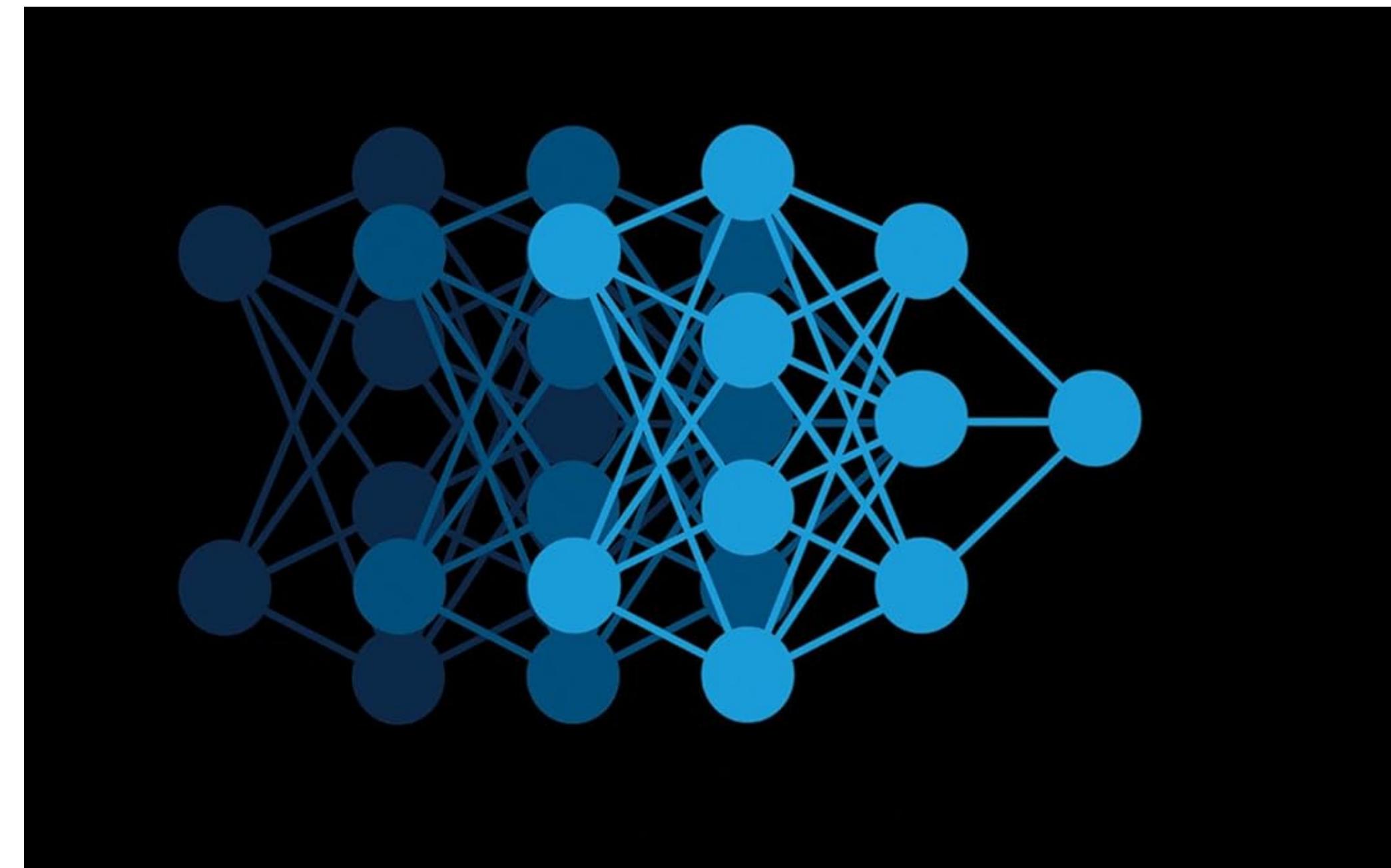


Image source: John Kelleher “Deep Learning”. MIT Press.

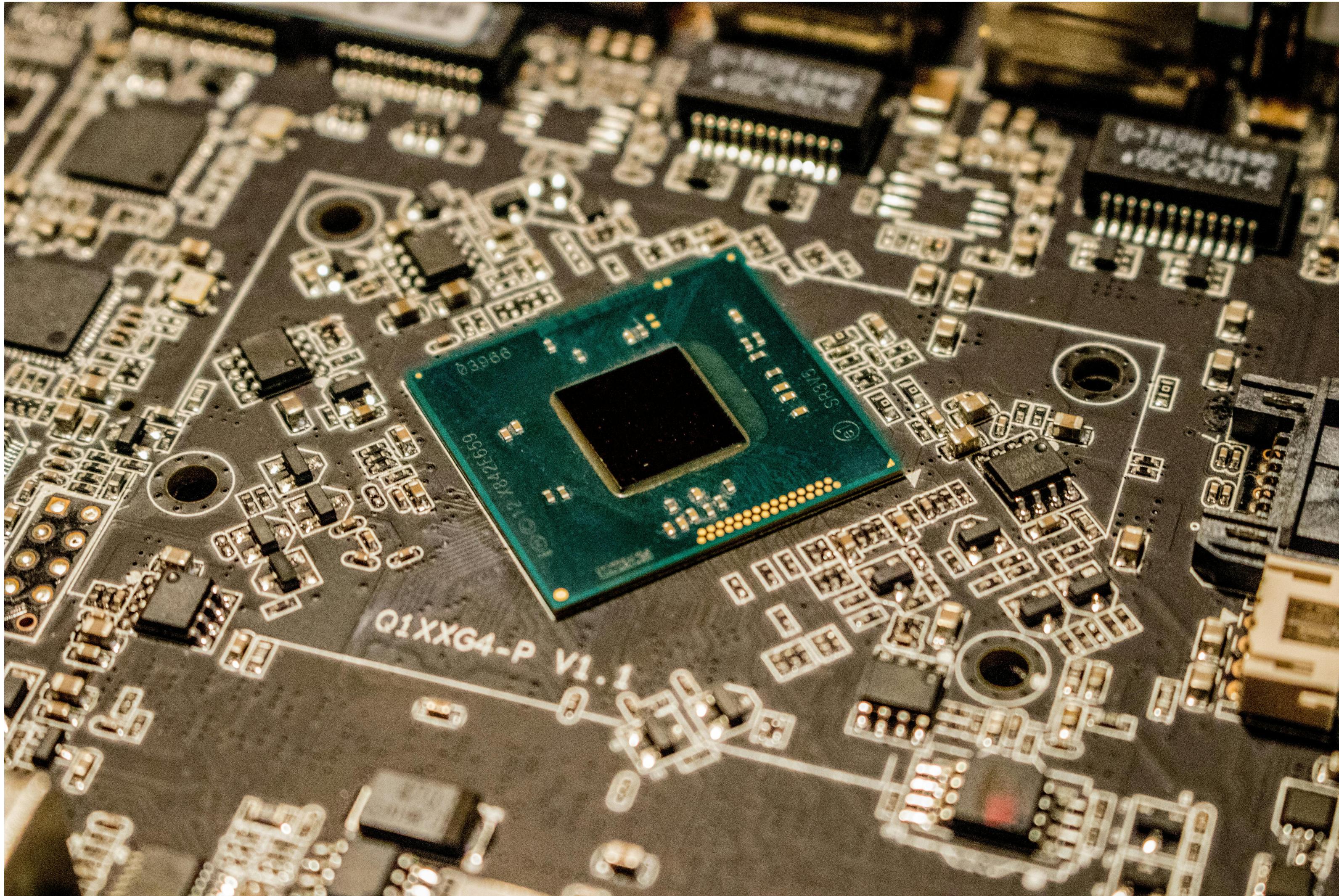


Photo by Jeremy Waterhouse: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/green-and-black-circuit-board-3665442/>



By Visitor7 - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=16564116>

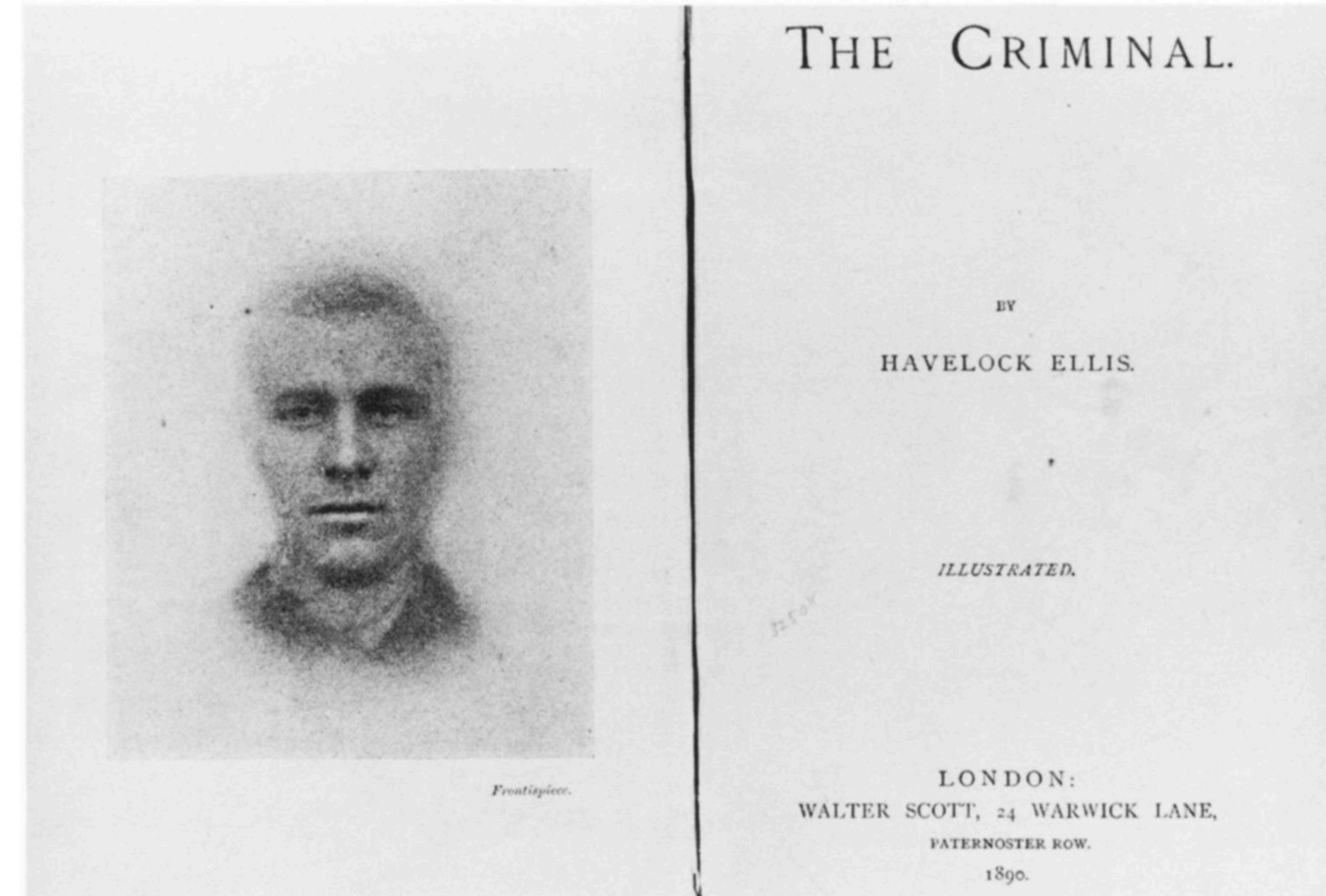
Mathematics of ai and ml

“[A] word is characterized by the company it keeps.”

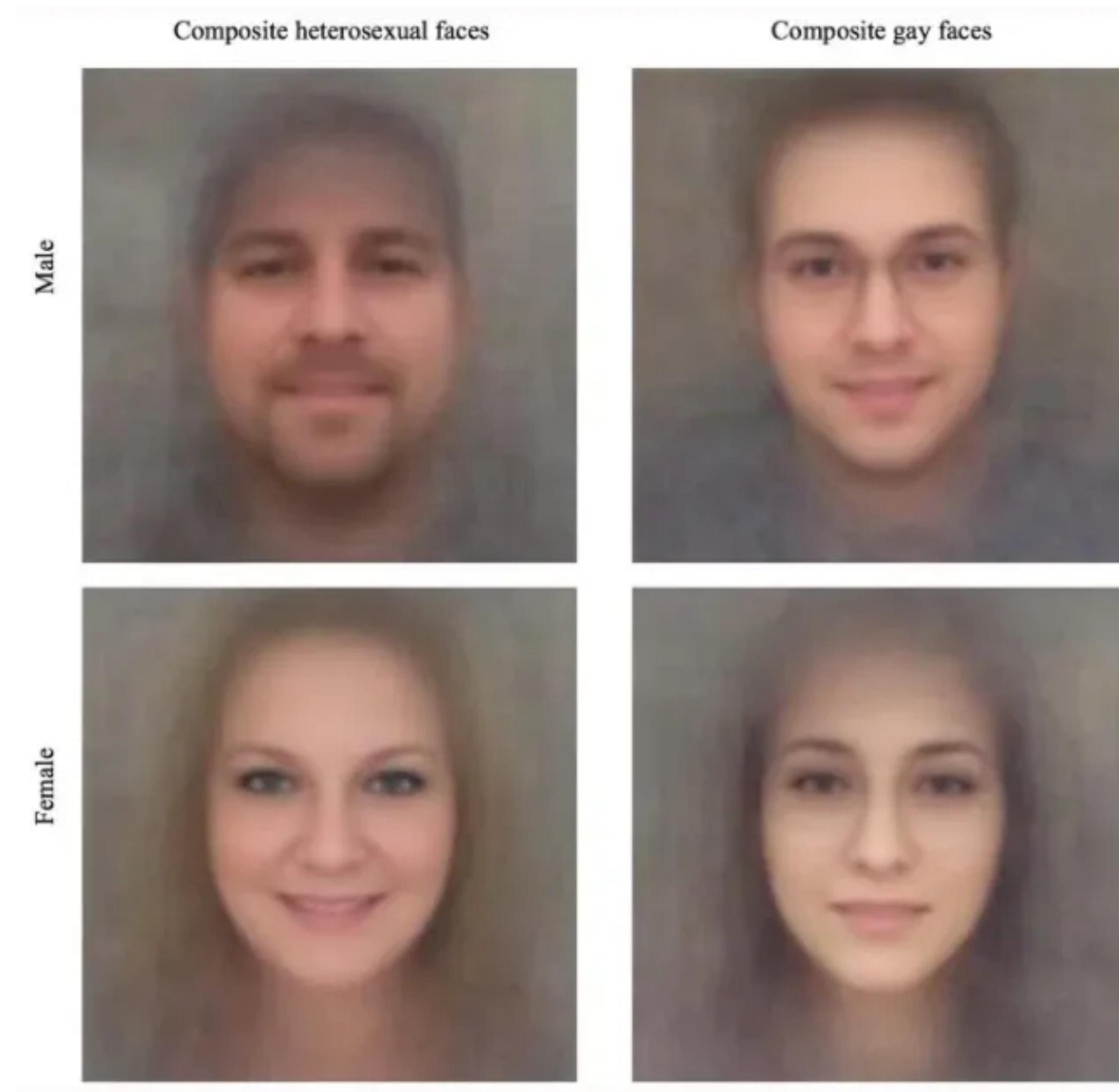
Firth, J.R. A synopsis of linguistic theory 1930-1955. (1957). Studies in Linguistic Analysis.

“Too often, accessibility is seen as something only for people with disabilities, but the reality is that inclusive design solutions make life easier for everyone.”

Ylmaz, G. Solutions That Benefit Everyone – Why Inclusive Design Matters for All. (2025). <https://blogs.perficient.com/2025/06/23/solutions-that-benefit-everyone-why-inclusive-design-matters-for-all/>



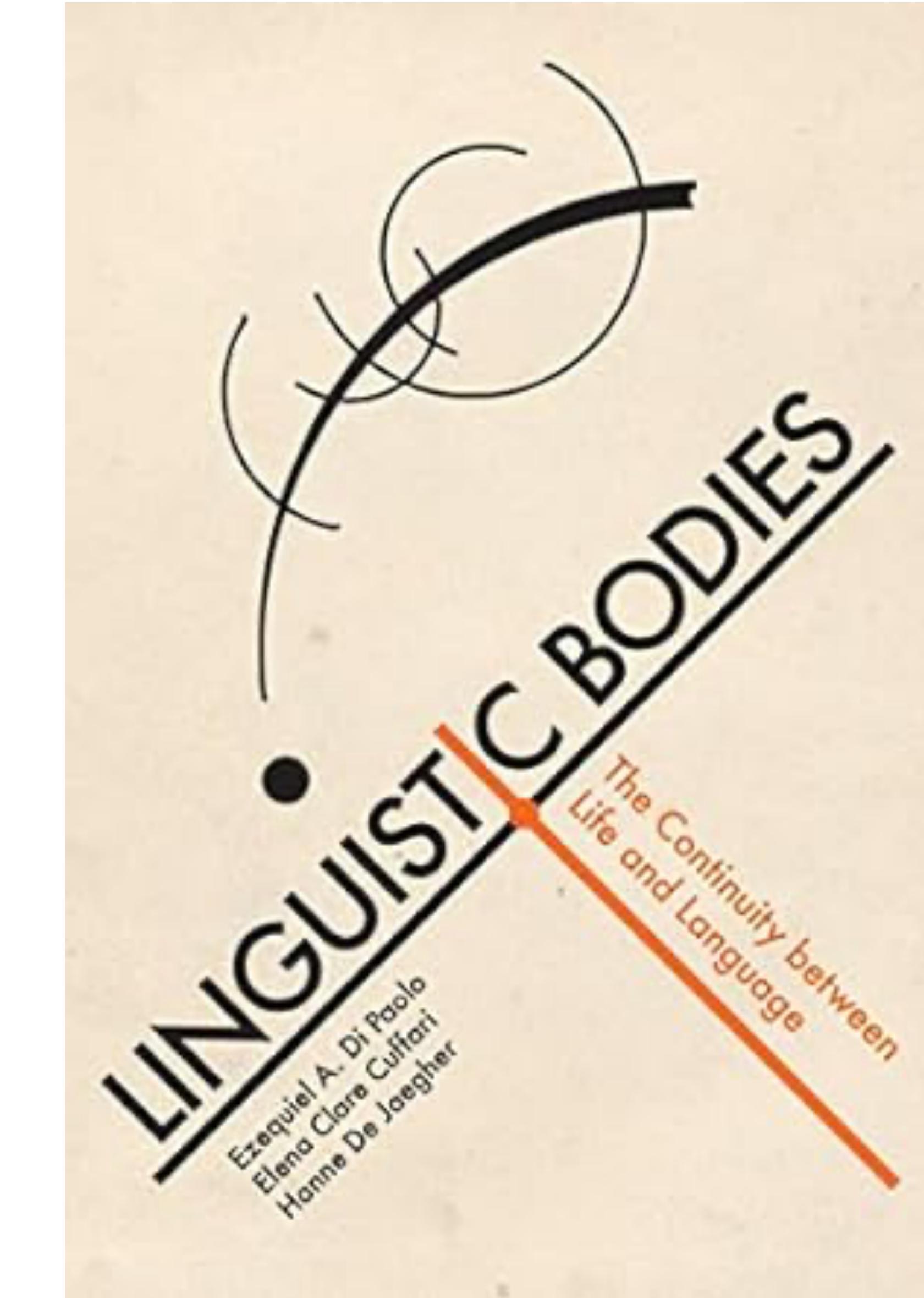
A Galtonian Composite
Source: Alan Sekula (1986). *The Body and the Archive*. October. MIT Press



Composite of “heterosexual” and “gay” faces.
Source: Blaise Agüera y Arcas, [Alexander Todorov](#) and [Margaret Mitchell](#) (2018). Do algorithms reveal sexual orientation or just expose our stereotypes?

Social dynamics of ml and ai

*Are we Data, if so, who
Owns us??*



Cover of *Linguistic Bodies* (2018). **Di Paolo, Cuffari, and Jaegher.** MIT Press.

Deskilling



Inclusion without consent



Stop Facial Recognition. Big Brother Watch. (n.d.)

Inclusion without consent



Stop Facial Recognition. Big Brother Watch. (n.d.)

Misinformation



By Kenneth Allen, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=51267917>



Boris Karloff as Frankenstein's Monster.
Source: Frankenstein (1931)

Conclusions