

CHum 2025

The Algorithm is the Message

Computing as a Humor-Generating Mode



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1980s Poland

- Absurdity
- Censorship
- Newspeak
- Resistance
- Creativity



The Universal Handbook for Political Speeches

UNIWERSALNA ŚCIĄGACZKA ZEBRANIOWA

Dowolne zdanie z rubryki I należy połączyć z dowolnym zdaniem z rubryki II, III i IV, a otrzyma się przemówienie na dowolną okazję. Ilość możliwych kombinacji wystarczy na 40 godz. przemówień. Anonimowego autora tej ściągaczki prosimy o skontaktowanie się z redakcją

I	II	III	IV
koleżanki i kole-dzy	realizacja nakreślonych zadań programowych	zmusza nas do przeanalizowania	istniejących warunków administracyjno-finansowych
z drugiej strony	zakres i miejsce szkolenia kadr	spełnia istotną rolę w kształtowaniu	dalszych kierunków rozwoju
podobnie	stały wzrost ilości i zakres naszej aktywności	wymaga sprecyzowania i określenia	systemu powszechnego uczestnictwa
Nie zapomnijmy jednak, że	aktualna struktura organizacji	pomaga w przygotowaniu i realizacji	postaw uczestników wobec zadań stawianych przez organizacje
w ten sposób	nowy model działalności organizacyjnej	zabezpiecza udział szerokiej grupie w kształtowaniu	nowych propozycji
Praktyka dnia codziennego dowodzi, że	dależy rozwój różnych form działalności	spełnia ważne zadania w wypracowaniu	kierunków postępowego wychowania
wagi i znaczenia tych problemów nie trzeba szerzej udowadniać, ponieważ	stałe zabezpieczenie informacyjno-propagandowe naszej działalności	umożliwia w większym stopniu tworzenie	systemu szkolenia kadry odpowiadającego potrzebom
Różnorodność i bogactwo doświadczenia	wzmocnienie i rozwijanie struktur	powoduje docenianie wagi	odpowiednich warunków aktywizacji
Troska organizacji, a szczególnie	konsultacja z szerokim aktywnym	przedstawia interesującą próbę sprawdzenia	modelu rozwoju
Wyższe założenia ideowe, a także	rozpoczęcie powszechnej akcji kształtowania postaw	pociąga za sobą proces wdrażania i unowocześnienia	form oddziaływania

A satirical manual distributed in Poland at the time of the Solidarity movement in the 1980s

Solidarność

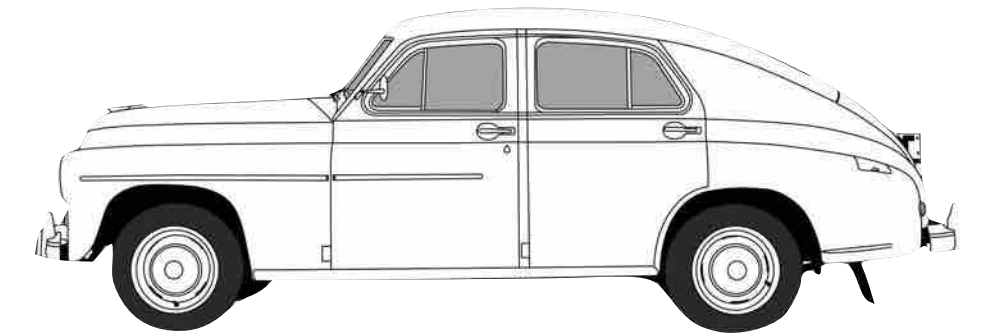
The Universal Handbook for Political Speeches

The “Handbook” allowed users to construct virtually **endless variations** of speeches by sequentially combining interchangeable phrases from four columns

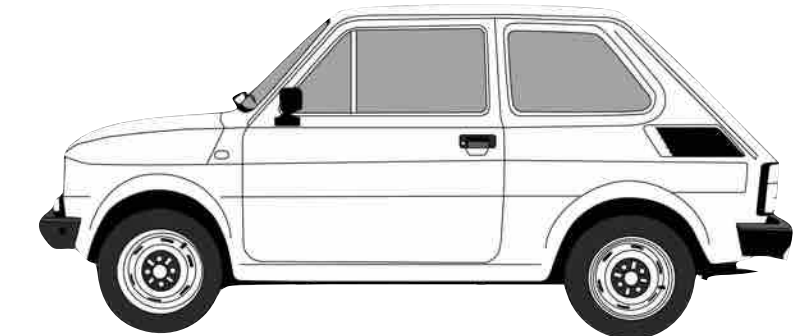


The Universal Handbook for Political Speeches

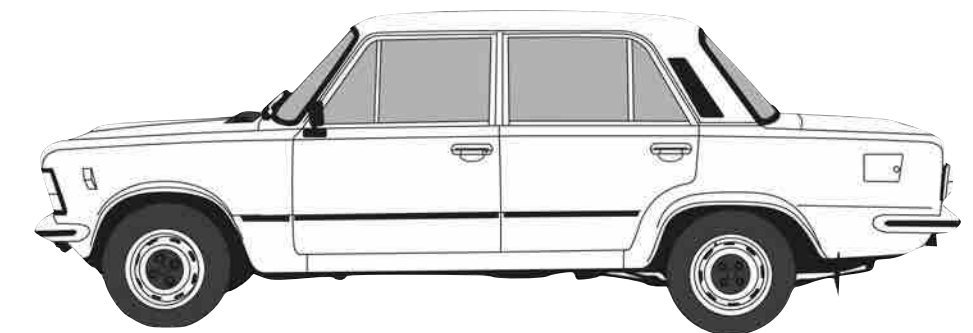
Column I: Opening phrases or thematic introductions



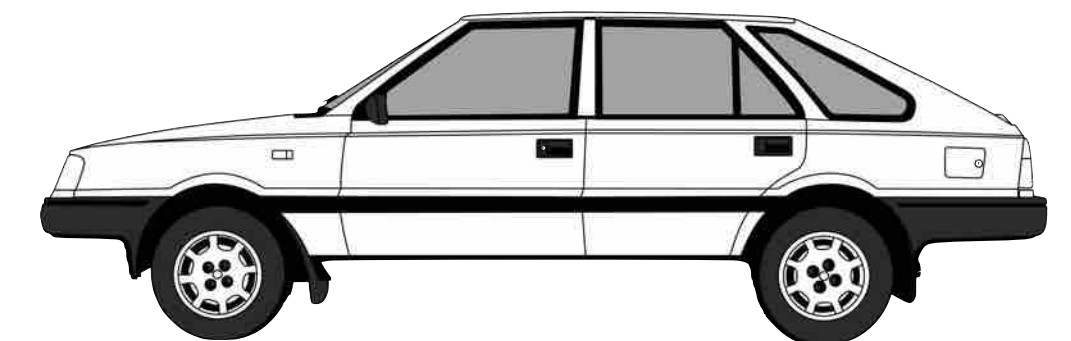
Column II: Descriptive or action-oriented statements related to the topic



Column III: Transitional or explanatory phrases

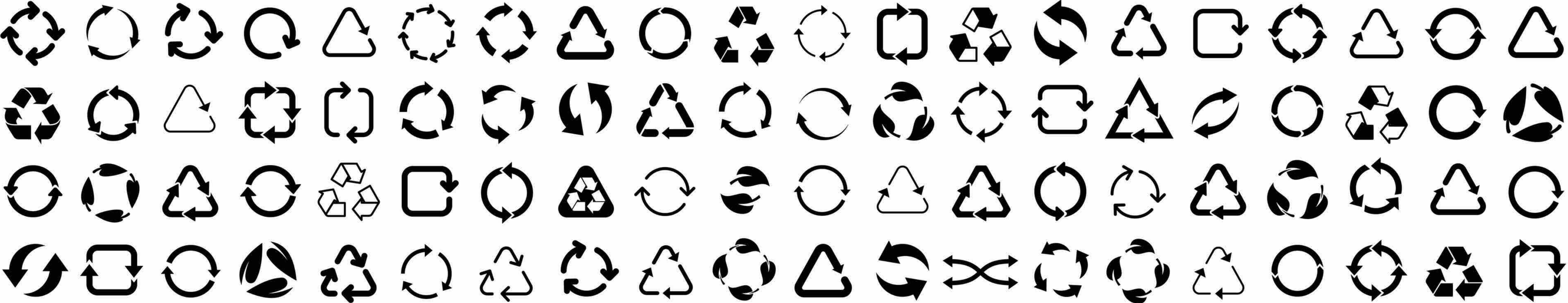


Column IV: Concluding or outcome-oriented statements



The Universal Handbook for Political Speeches

To create a speech, the user would select one phrase from each column sequentially (I → II → III → IV) and repeat this process as needed, recycling or changing combinations to extend the speech indefinitely



The Universal Handbook for Political Speeches

I	II	III	IV
Dear colleagues	the execution of outlined programmatic tasks	compels us to analyze	the current administrative and financial conditions
on the other hand	the scope and location of worker training	plays a crucial role in defining	further directions of development
similarly	the continuous quantitative growth and range of our activities	necessitates specification and clarification of	a universal participatory system
but let us not forget that	the current organizational structure	facilitates the preparation and construction of	participants' attitudes toward organizational tasks
in this way	the new organizational activity model	ensures the participation of a wide group in shaping	new proposals
because daily experience shows us that	the continuous development of various activity forms	plays a significant role in establishing	progressive educational directives
and the importance of these issues is self-evident, because	the ongoing informational and propagandistic protection of our activities	efficiently enables the creation of	a training system tailored to workers' needs
hence, the rich and varied experience of	the effort to strengthen and develop effective structures	highlights the importance of appreciating	suitable activation conditions
furthermore, the organizational focus, which includes	the consultation with a broad active base	serves as an intriguing test for the evaluation of	a new developmental model
therefore, this ideological premise expressed by	the initiation of a general process that reshapes attitudes	leads to a process of introducing and modernizing	advanced forms of action

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The Universal Handbook for Political Speeches



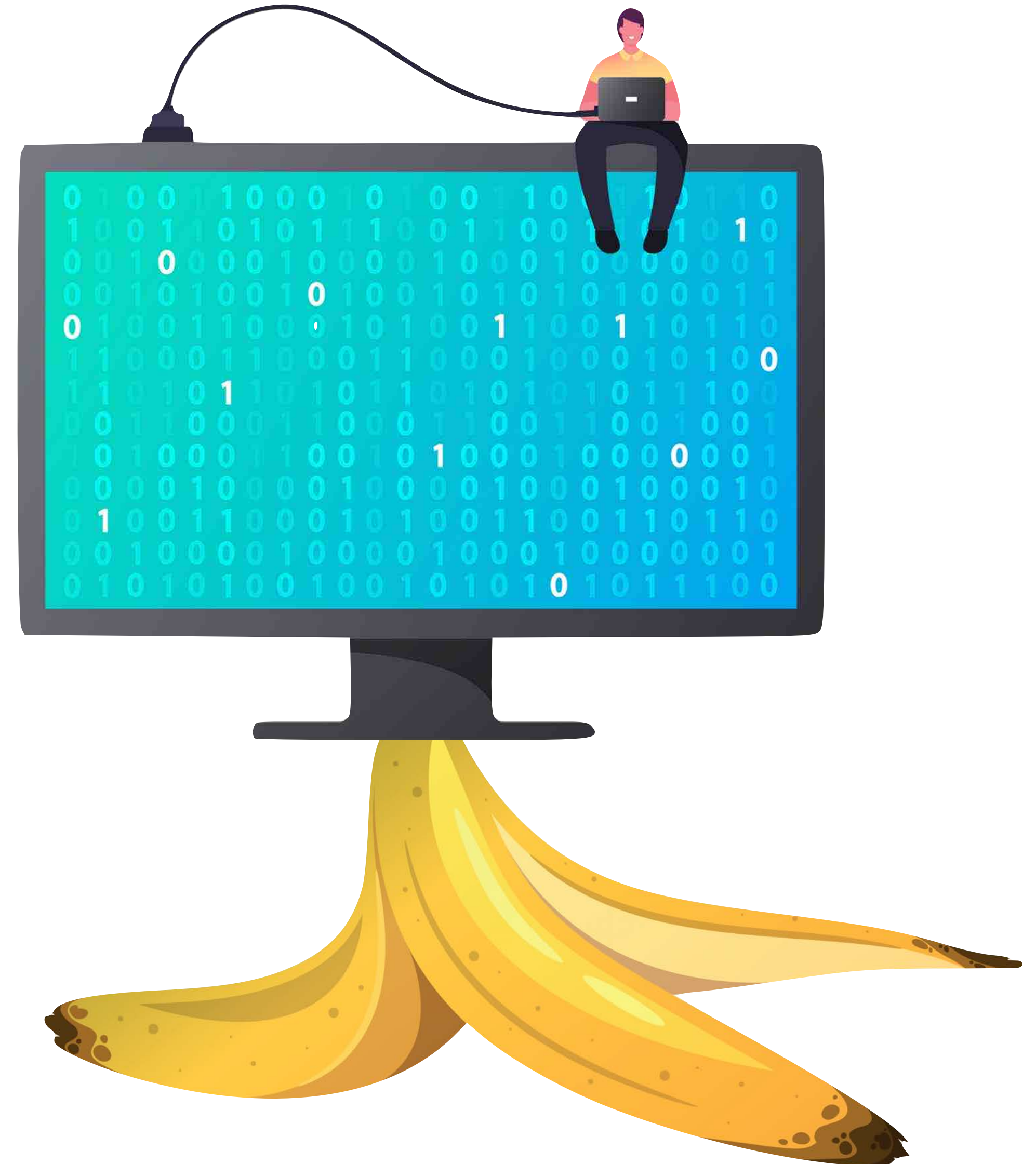
The idea of recommending this mechanical approach to its users, both **mimicked** and **lampooned** the propaganda's *repetitive* and *formulaic* nature, thus unmasking its absurdity and lack of meaning

Effectiveness

- **Endless Combinations:** The modular design allowed for thousands of combinations, making the system seem both *vast* and *methodical*
- **Parodic Authenticity:** The phrases were written in a *style* that closely mimicked real propaganda speeches
- **Reflection of Reality:** The *mechanical relentlessness* of the “Handbook” mirrored the mechanical absurdity of actual propaganda, creating a form of meta-critique

Meaning

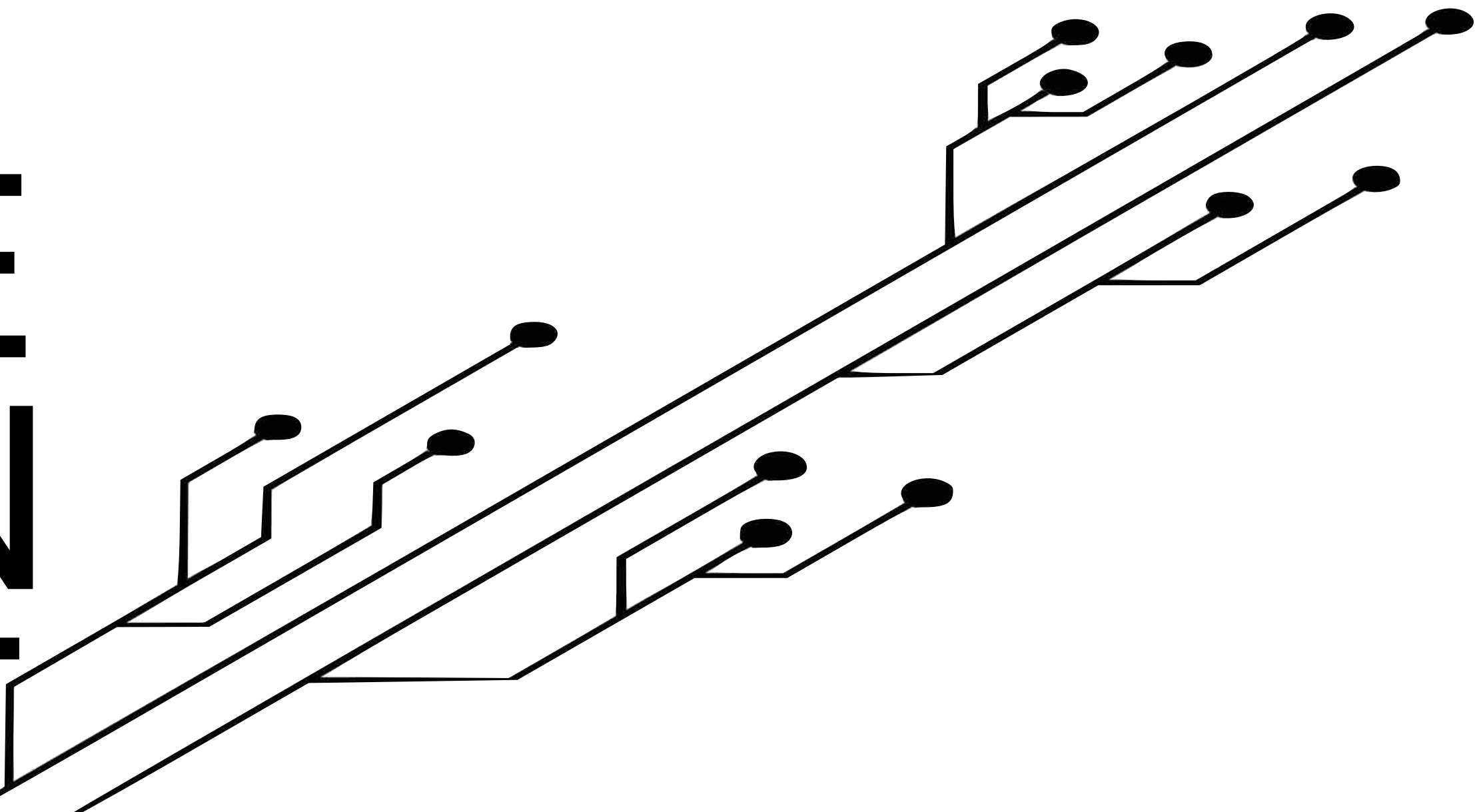
The “Handbook” invites us to reflect on **computational approaches to language and humor** considering computers and algorithms not just as *tools*, but as a *mode* of generating humor



Computationalization

C
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T

The text of the handbook was plain and not humorous or interesting in itself, but what made it fun and intriguing was its ***computationalization***



Satirical Mechanization

The “satirical mechanization” of the “Handbook” demonstrates how humor can emerge from the mechanical application of language rules



Random generator of town names in Brianza

GENERATORE CASUALE NOMI DI COMUNI BRIANZOLI V2.0

Regolamento: tira 4 volte un dado a 10 facce (oppure apri a caso un libro di e guarda l'ultima cifra del numero della pagina). Se gli ultimi due lanci sono uguali puoi sostituire la seconda parte del nome con BRIANZA.



1° DADO	2° DADO	3° DADO	4° DADO
1. BU	1. MATE	1. VA	1. REGGIO
2. LA	2. BBIATE	2. SU	2. SSONE
3. CE	3. NZATE	3. STRO	3. REGNO
4. MA	4. REZZANA	4. BIA	4. NZANO
5. BIA	5. RAGO	5. ORO	5. SSATE
6. VE	6. SANO	6. BO	6. DERNO
7. CA	7. VISIO	7. MA	7. SSONO
8. GIU	8. GIOLA	8. LI	8. SCONE
9. LO	9. RATE	9. GE	9. NAGO
0. BO	0. CHERIO	0. CO	0. SCIAGO

UGUALI? = BRIANZA

Cesano Maderno

Carate Brianza

Bovisio-Masciago

SClgen: An Automatic CS Paper Generator

“SClgen is a program that generates random Computer Science research papers, including graphs, figures, and citations. [...] One useful purpose for such a program is to auto-generate submissions to conferences that you suspect might have very low submission standards.”



Tristan Tzara: TO MAKE A DADAIST POEM

(1920)



- Take a newspaper.
- Take a pair of scissors.
- Choose an article as long as you are planning to make your poem.
- Cut out the article.
- Then cut out each of the words that make up this article and put them in a bag.
- Shake it gently.
- Then take out the scraps one after the other in the order in which they left the bag.
- Copy conscientiously.
- The poem will be like you.
- And here are you a writer, infinitely original and endowed with a sensibility that is charming though beyond the understanding of the vulgar.

Cut-Out Technique (Découpé)

Source: <https://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88v/tzara.html>

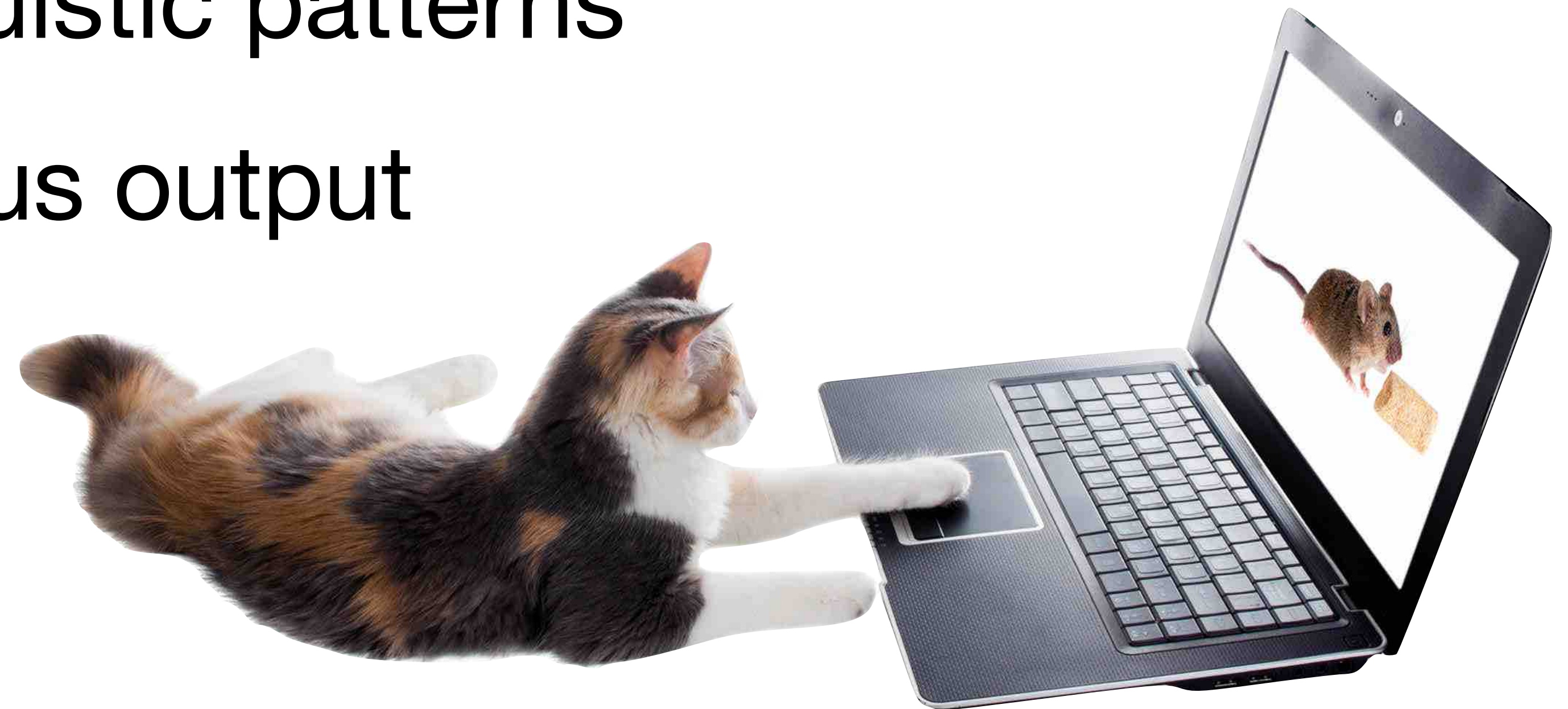
Implications

Computing as a Humor-Generating Mode



Humor as Process, Not Output

- **Computational humor:** Traditionally viewed as a tool
- **Focus:** Generating jokes, detecting humor, or analyzing linguistic patterns
- **Emphasis:** The humorous output



Humor as Process, Not Output



- **Computation:** As a humorous mode
- **Focus:** Humor emerges not from the final product (a joke or punchline) but from structure, sequencing, and combinatorial logic
- **Emphasis:** Process instead of output

Humor as Process, Not Output

Computing *itself* can embody humor when its processes are exposed

Reframing computing as a humorous *mode* invites us to explore how **structure** and **process** can themselves serve as sources of comedy



Humor as Process, Not Output

Humorous *mechanics*

+

Humorous *outputs*



Complementary to
understanding and
designing
computational humor

Meta-Humor

- In the “Handbook” humor arises from its **visible combinatorial structure** rather than its content
- Similarly, the unintentionally humorous results of computers and AI systems often arise from their rigid adherence to structures, patterns, and system logic
- Leaving these structures and processes exposed may engender novel forms of computational humor and meta-humor



Meta-Humor



Studying computational processes through the lens of **theories of humor** may provide novel understandings in the field of computer science and computational linguistics

Meta-Humor



From *computational humor* to *humorous computation*

Humorous Computational Systems

Humorous computational systems inspired by the “Handbook” could be designed to reveal or parody their algorithmic nature, generating humor through the visible mechanics of their construction and operation



Humorous Computational Systems

This taps into the human fascination with exposed mechanisms



Swatch GK100 Jellyfish
Wristwatch (MoMA)
1983



Apple iMac G3
Computer (MoMA)
1998



Lotus Emira
Gear linkage
2022

Humorous Computational Systems

This taps into the human fascination with exposed mechanisms



Wintergatan's Marble Machine
Musical Instrument
2016



Rube Goldberg Machines
Complex Devices
1928



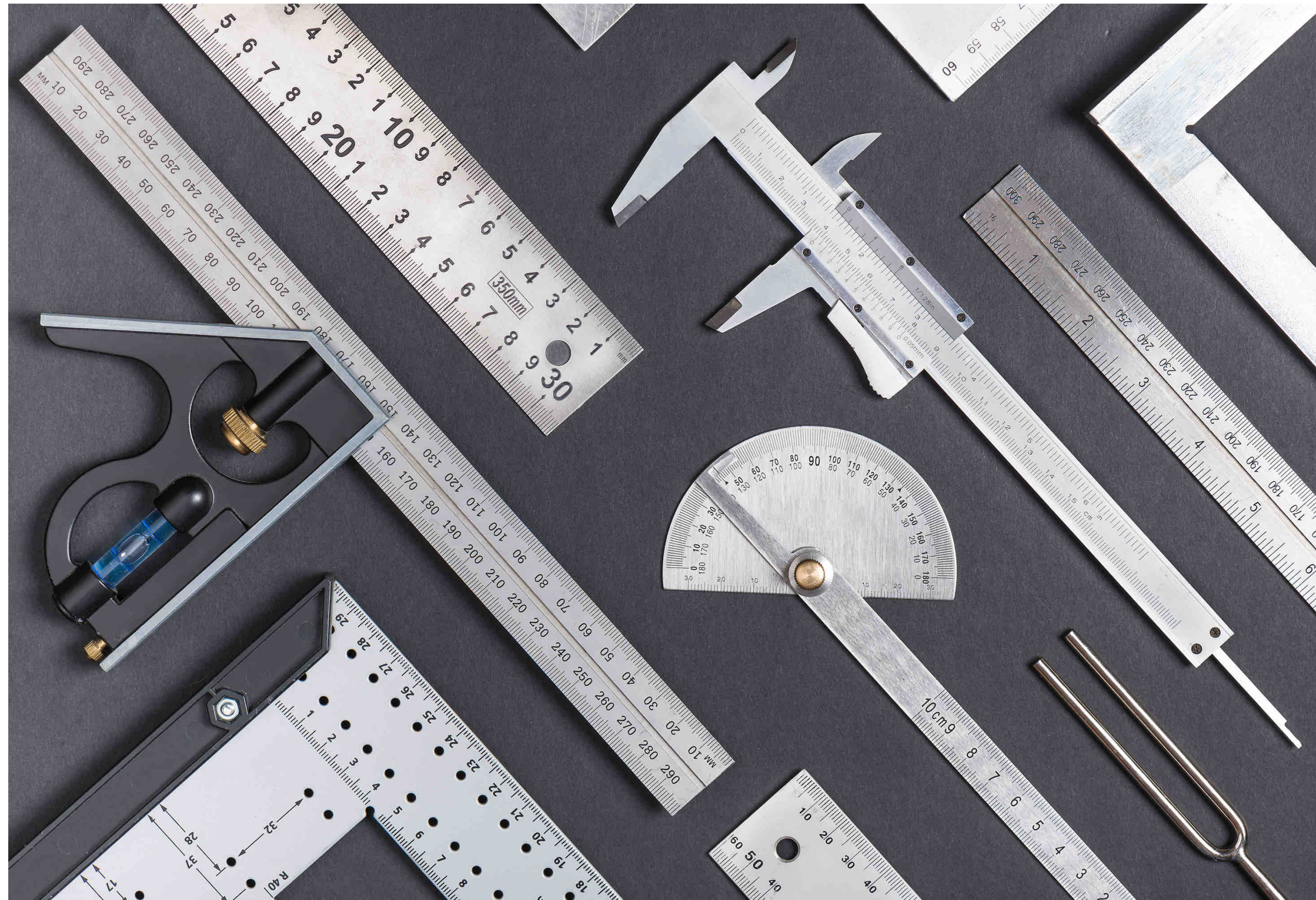
Theo Jansen's Strandbeests
Animaris Rex
2023

Humorous Computational Systems

In all these creations, the **visible systems** and **processes** are more captivating than their final output, like the melody produced or where an object lands



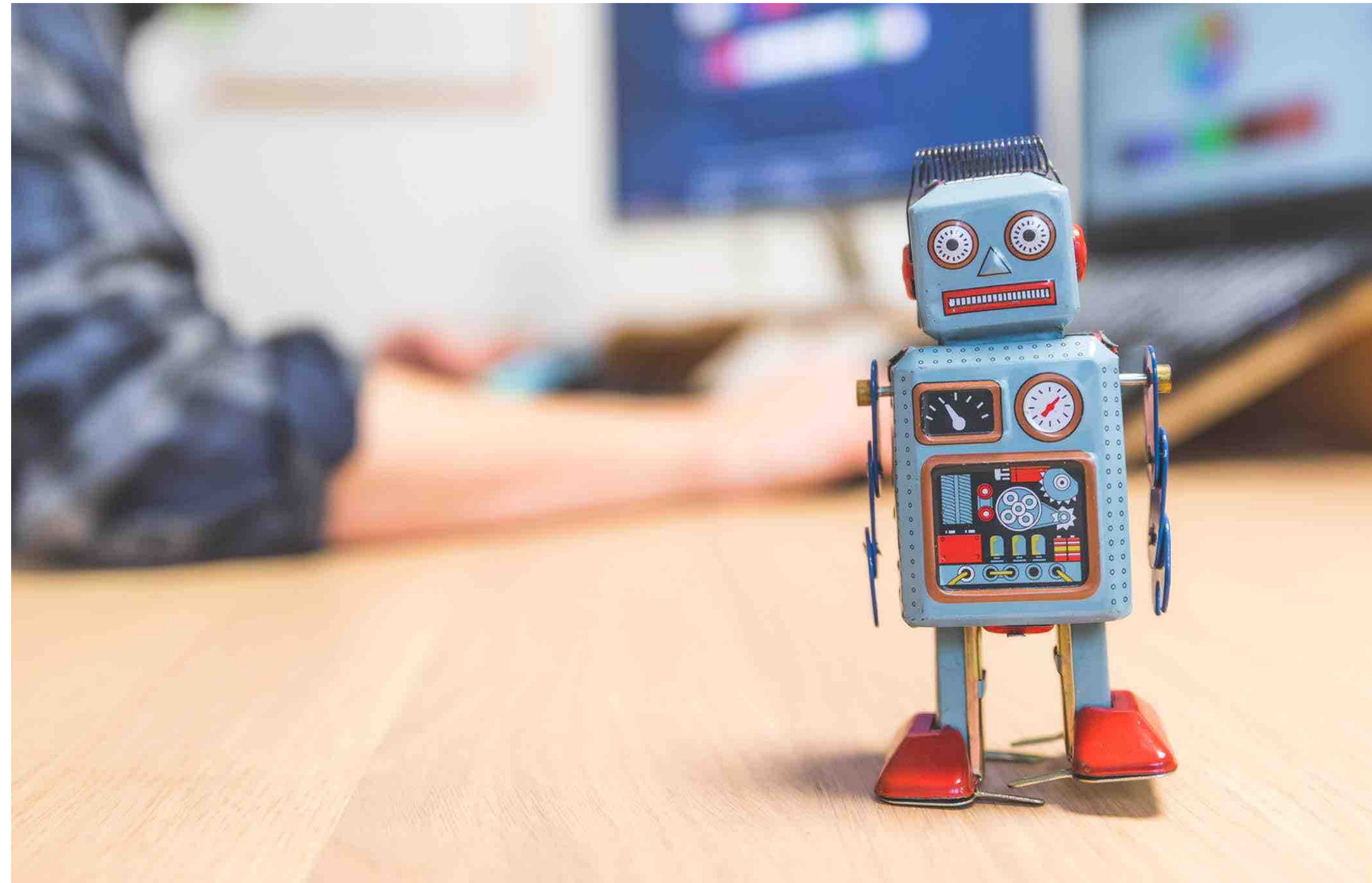
Humorous Computational Systems



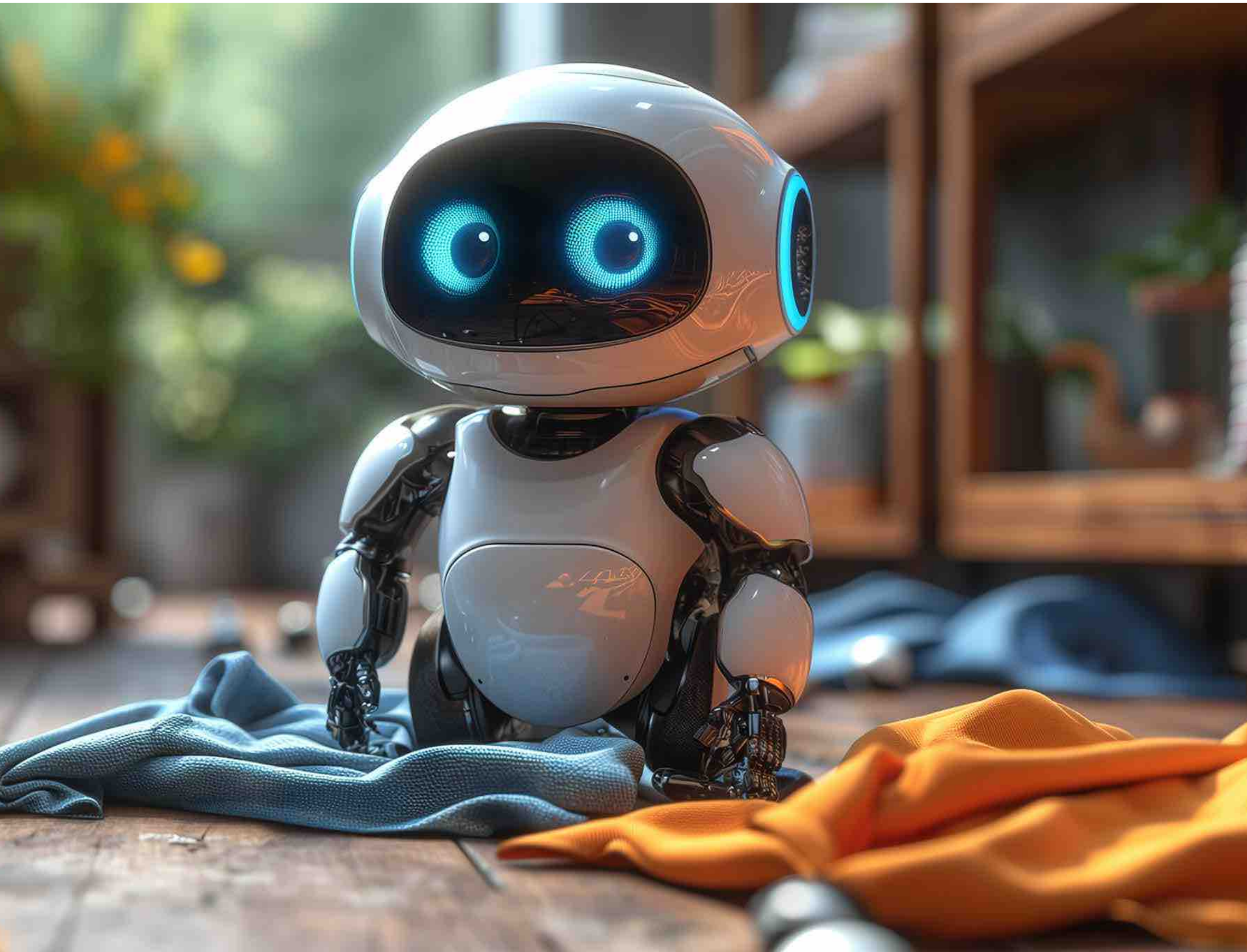
This new perspective would entail developing **new metrics** that assess the humor embedded in computational structures, such as incongruity levels, randomness, or structural creativity

Human-Machine Dynamics

Superiority theories of humor suggest that humans may laugh at machines when their “cold” logic or mechanical limitations appear inferior to human reasoning



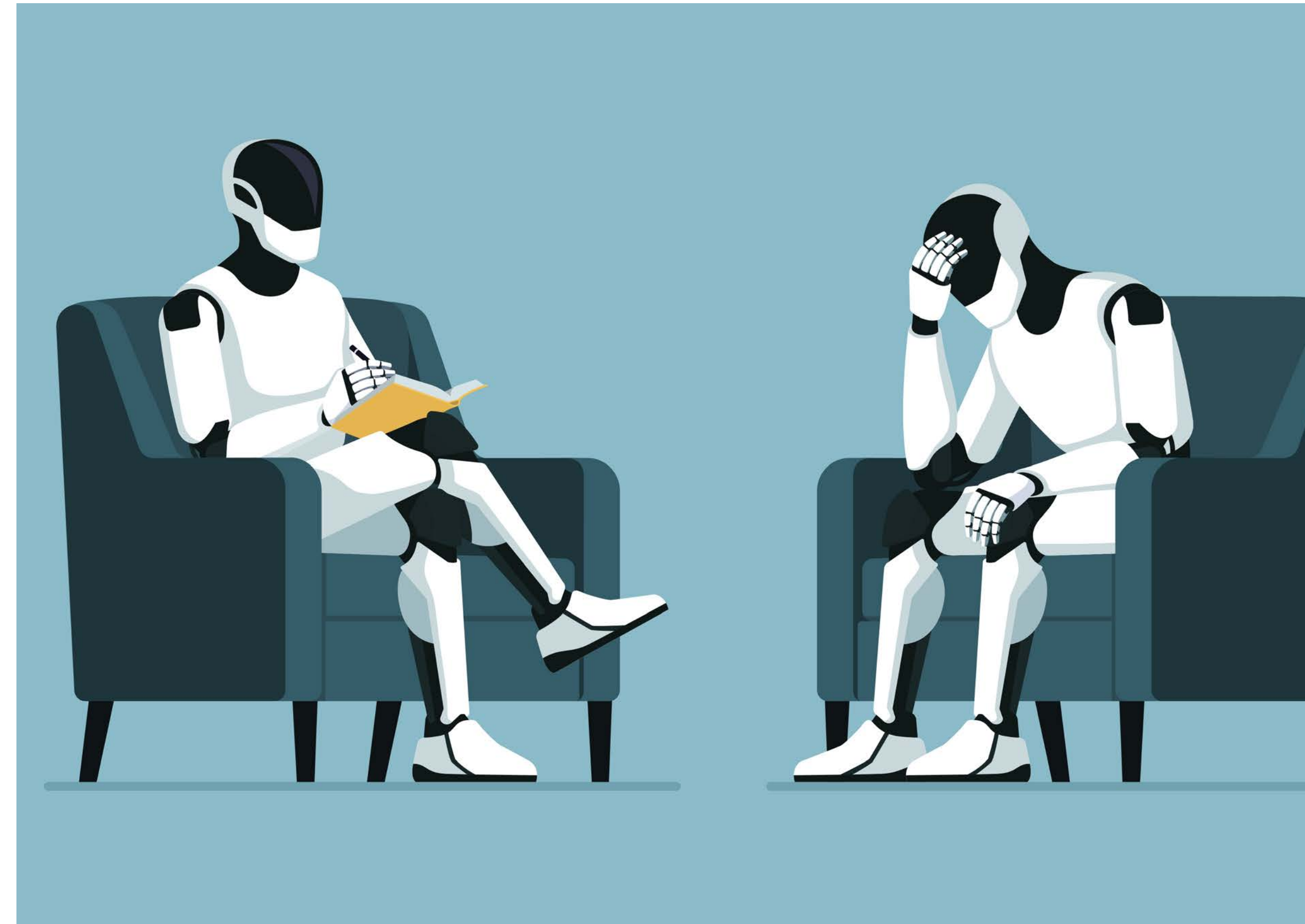
Human-Machine Dynamics



Rather than striving to make machines more human-like, exposing their **inner workings** and **non-humanity** through humor might make people perceive them as **more relatable** and therefore — paradoxically — **as more human**

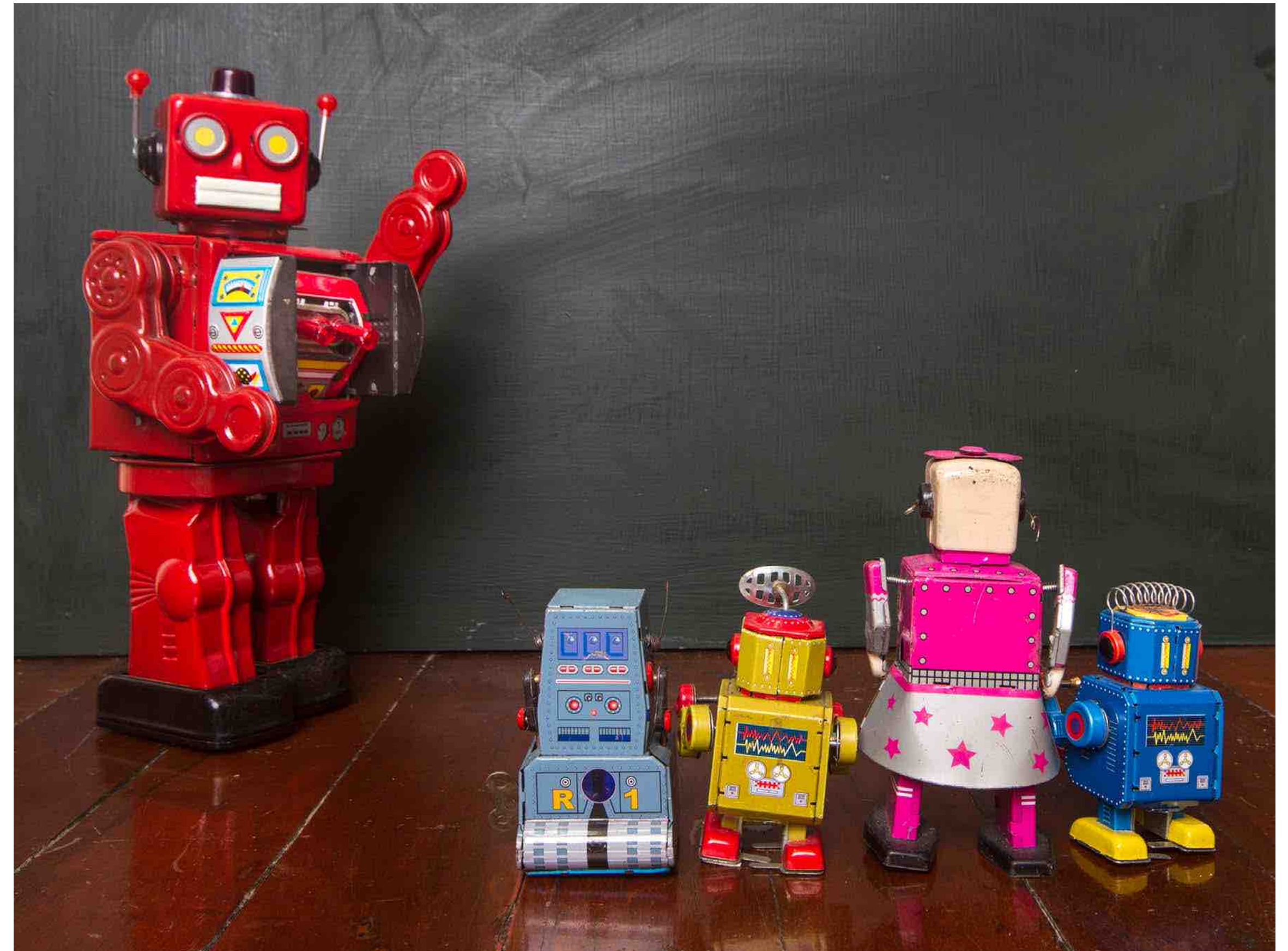
Human-Machine Dynamics

These forms of “**machine self-deprecating humor**” or “**humorous computational transparency**” may change how humans perceive and interact with machines

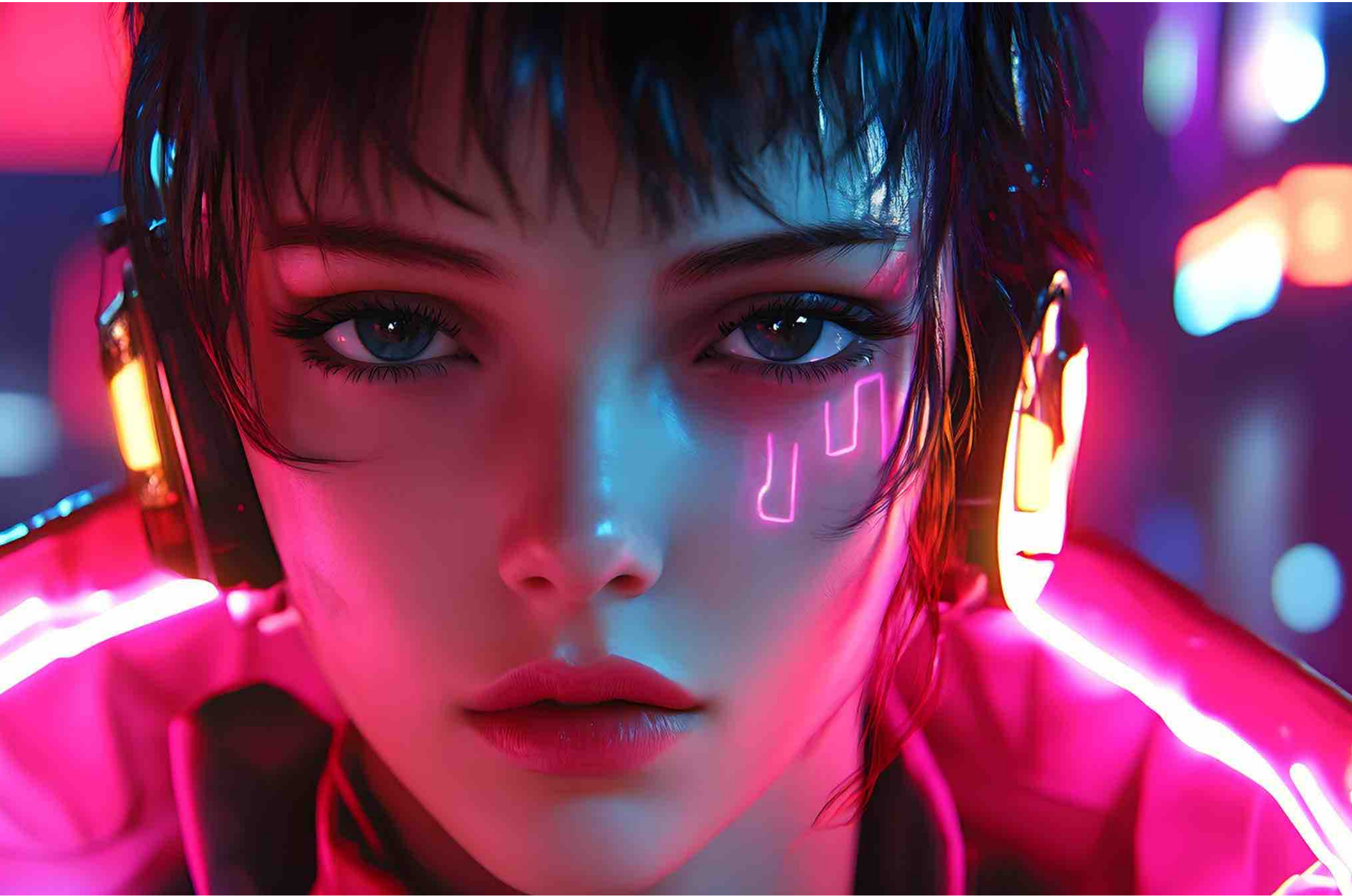


Human-Machine Dynamics

Showing the humorous inner workings of computers may also serve an **educational function** by making them less intimidating and more engaging to young learners approaching fields like computer science, robotics, and artificial intelligence



Human-Machine Dynamics



Humor that is **distinctively computational** has the potential to change and expand not only what we find humorous as human beings, but the very understanding of humor itself, from *human-like* to *more-than-human*

Question #1

Can computational processes expand “humanness” by broadening modes of humor generation and enjoyment?

Question #2

What can computational humor systems reveal about how humans perceive and relate to mechanized processes?

Question #3

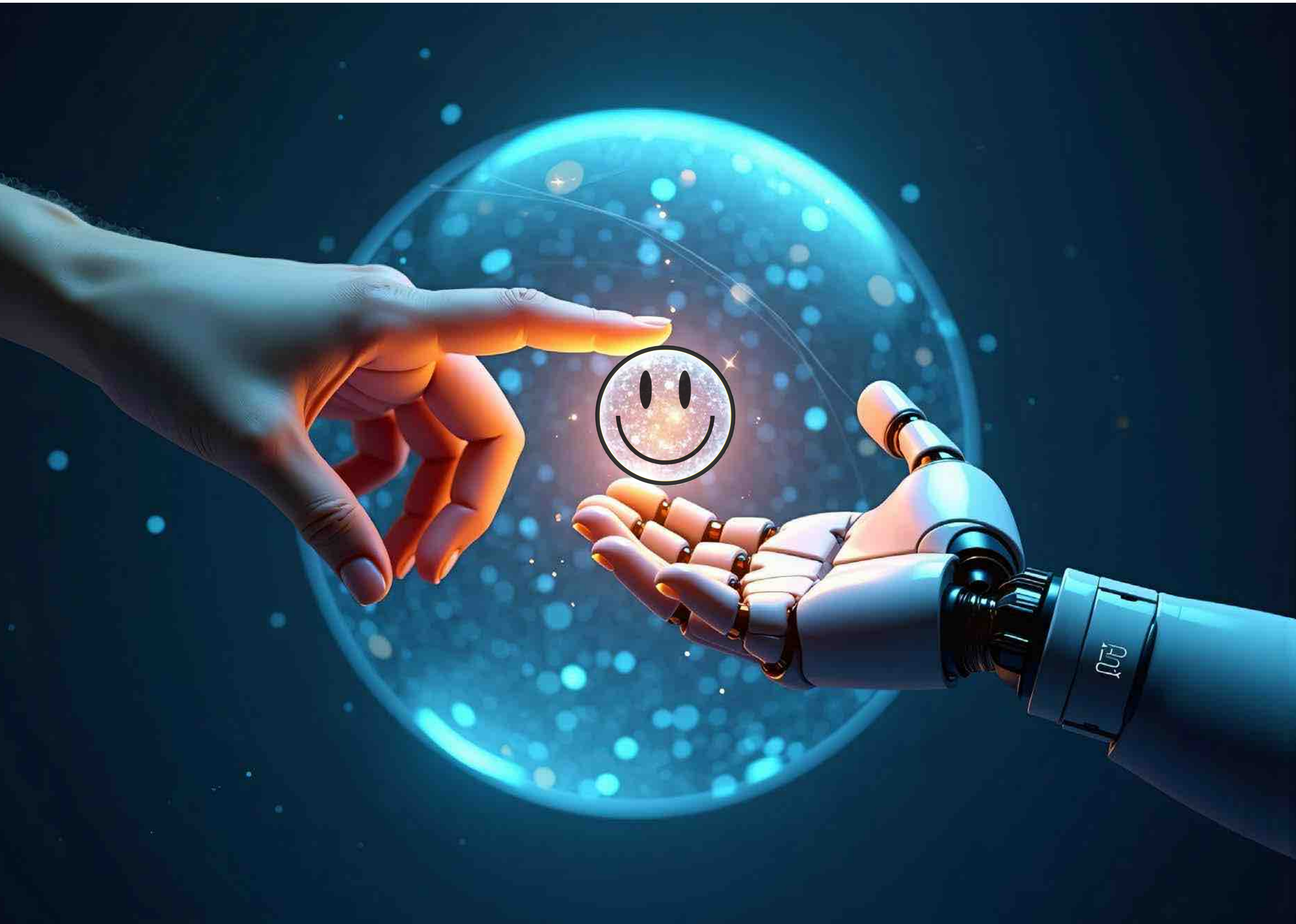
How can computational humor move beyond *imitation* to become a tool for *exploration* of what makes us smile—of what make us human?

Computing as a Humorous ing Mode

The “Universal Handbook for Political Speeches” shows that the algorithmic structuring of language can be used not only as a tool, but also as a *mode* of humor generation



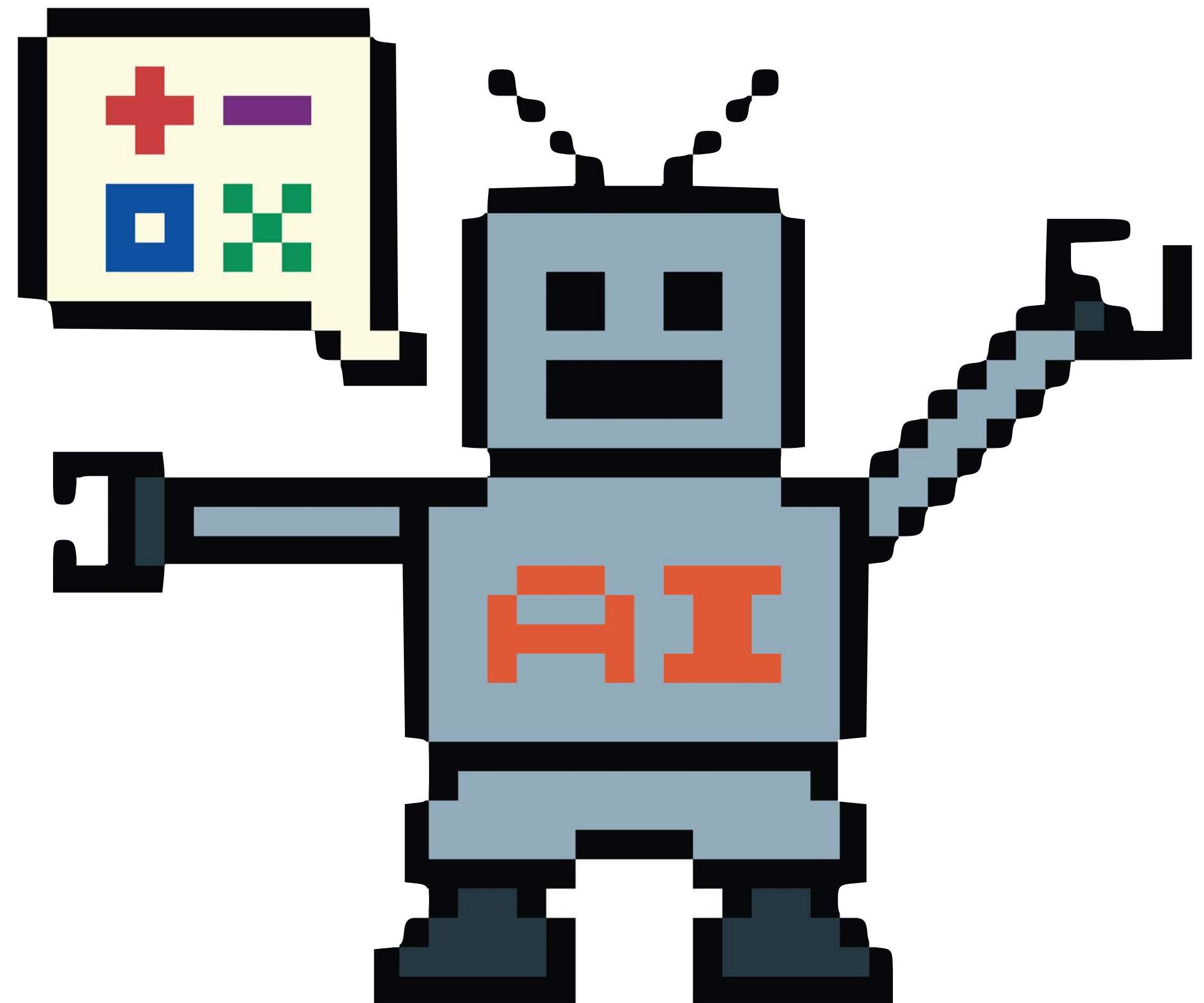
Computing as a Humor-Generating Mode



The study of computing as a humor-generating mode can deepen our understanding of human-machine dynamics by emphasizing shared experiences of absurdity and creativity, in a fragile balance between *sequencing* and *randomness*, *order* and *chaos*

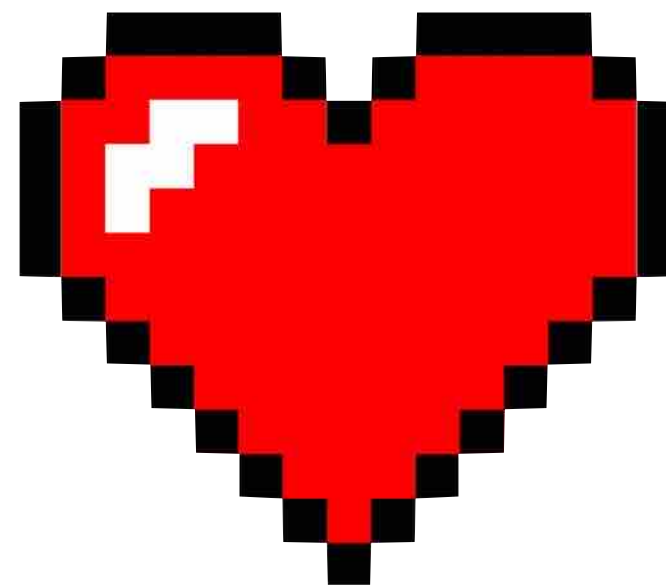
Computing as a Humor-Generating Mode

Computational humor systems challenge us to rethink the nature of humor itself and the ways in which humans and machines can collaborate in playful and meaningful ways



Computing as a Humor-Generating Mode

At the dawn of artificial general intelligence, we may envision a future where algorithms are not just *functional* but also *inspiring*, especially if we let their unequivocal, mechanistic non-humanness shine through



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