

POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY & TECH GOVERNANCE

Not a day goes by without a new story on the perils of technology: from increasingly clever machines that surpass human capability, comprehension and control to genetic technologies capable of altering the human genome in ways we cannot predict. How can we respond? What should we do politically? Focusing on the rise of robotics and artificial intelligence (AI), and the impact of new reproductive and genetic technologies (Repro-tech), Jude Browne questions who has political responsibility for the structural impacts of these technologies and considers how we might go about preparing for the far-reaching societal changes they may bring.

Jude Browne is Head of the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Cambridge, a Professorial Fellow in Social and Political Sciences at King's College and the Frankopan Director of the University of Cambridge Centre for Gender Studies. Browne's research interests are in political and feminist theories of equality, political responsibility, public interest, public policy, structural injustice and the impact of technology on society.

POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY & TECH GOVERNANCE

AI, Repro-tech and Structural Injustice

Jude Browne

University of Cambridge



Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-44735-5 — Political Responsibility and Tech Governance
AI, Repro-tech and Structural Injustice
Jude Browne
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009447355

DOI: 10.1017/9781009447362

© Jude Browne 2025

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take
place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009447362

First published 2025

Printed in the United Kingdom by CPI Group Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

A Cataloging-in-Publication data record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

ISBN 978-1-009-44735-5 Hardback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-44735-5 — Political Responsibility and Tech Governance
AI, Repro-tech and Structural Injustice
Jude Browne
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

*For Umar, Etta & Martha
And for my mother, Elizabeth 1935–2024*

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-44735-5 — Political Responsibility and Tech Governance
AI, Repro-tech and Structural Injustice
Jude Browne
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

Technology is the answer, but what was the question?
(Cedric Price, 1966)

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
Introduction	1
1 The Problem of Structural Injustice: Where No One Is Liable, Who Is Responsible?	12
What Do I Mean by Structural Injustice?	13
Thoughtlessness and Structural Speculation	22
The Limits of Liability	27
Imperfect Political Responsibility	36
If Not Liability, Then Benefit?	40
Political Transition and Responsibility	42
2 Artificial Intelligence and Ground Truth	49
AI’s Truth	50
AI-Generated Harm: Liability Based and Structural	53
AI, the Black Box and Untraceability	61
AI and Human Labour: A Hundred Years to Bliss?	63
AI Governance: The Example of the UK	68
Politics and AI	82
3 Repro-tech and the Genetic Supermarket	86
Repro-tech	87
Drivers of Proactive Egg Freezing	90
‘The Ultimate Factor’: Genetic Technologies	97
Human Enhancement and the Genetic Supermarket	99

CONTENTS

Repro-tech Governance: The Example of the UK	104
Repro-tech and the Limits of Liability	117
4 Putting the Public into the Public Body	119
State Failure to Address Structural Injustice	121
The Public Interest and Political Responsibility	127
The Perennial Problem of Public Political Engagement	133
The Mini-public and Its Limits	142
The Public Body	148
An Uncomfortable Political Realisation	153
5 Conclusion: Technology Is the Answer, What Was the Question?	154
<i>Appendix: Legal, Moral and Structural Actions, Injustices and Responsibilities</i>	159
<i>References</i>	163
<i>Index</i>	201

Preface

How should we think politically about the ways in which transformative technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and reproductive and genetic technologies (Repro-tech) structurally change society? Considering this question through the concept of structural injustice, I explore how we might begin to prepare for the potentially seismic societal changes these technologies promise to bring.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank so many people for encouraging me to write this book and for helping me craft the ideas that populate it over the past five years. For a sizeable chunk of this time I have been Head of the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Cambridge – a phenomenally supportive, collegiate and intellectually dynamic department, and I am indebted to my colleagues, both academic and professional, for all their support and encouragement along the way, as well as to the many brilliant students who engaged with my ideas in my lectures, seminars and supervisions – for me, this is what being an academic is all about.

There were also numerous audiences and interlocutors in both academic and public settings that provided immensely valuable constructive critical engagement. To name a few of these which were particularly key: ‘Structural Injustice and the Regulatory Public Body Landscape’, *Structural Injustice and the Law* (hosted by Virginia Mantouvalou (UCL) and Jonathan Wolff (Oxford). UCL, London, 28–29 March 2022); ‘AI and Structural Injustice’, Gender & Tech International Conference for Oxford University Press (21 September 2021 – conducted live on Zoom due to COVID). Proceedings published by Oxford University Press, 2024; Jude Browne in conversation with Amol Rajan, Hay Festival (27 June 2021); ‘Putting the Public into Public Bodies’, Penn State University School of Public Policy (discussant; Tony Bertelli, 21 June 2021); ‘Structural Injustice, Traceability and Political Responsibility’, International Workshop on Structural Injustice, University of Cambridge (co-hosted with Maeve McKeown and with Brooke Ackerly, Ryoa Chung, Monique Deveaux, Agomoni Ganguli-Mitra, Lewis Gordon, Sally Haslanger, Clarissa Hayward, Adam Hosein,

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Alison Jaggar, Catherine Lu, Virginia Mantouvalou, Mara Marin, Alasia Nuti, Serena Parekh, Jade Schiff, Theresa Tobin and Timothy Waligore, 22 March 2021); Lay-governance – the public body. Lay-Governance Workshop University of Cambridge and Sciences Po CAMPO (co-hosted with Annabelle Laver and with Jane Mansbridge, Tony Bertelli, David Owen, Phil Parvin, Joseph Heath and John Boswell, 12 April 2021); ‘Political Responsibility’, Contemporary Political Theory Seminar, University of Cambridge (chaired by Duncan Bell, Cambridge, 31 January 2020); ‘Technology, Gender & the Reproductive Habits of Future Generations’, University of Cambridge London Engagement Series 2019, ‘Structural Injustice and the Public Interest’, Ethics and Public Policy Conference, Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford (chaired by Jo Wolff, 7 June 2019); ‘Gender & Tech’, University of Cambridge (chaired by Stephen Toope, Hong Kong, 30 April 2019); ‘Political Responsibility and the Public Interest’, Department of Political Science, Yale University (supported by the European Studies Fund, chaired by Professor Seyla Benhabib, The Eugene Meyer Professor of Political Science and Philosophy, 14 November 2018); ‘100 Years to Bliss? AI, Politics and Regulation’, The Centre for the Future of Intelligence, University of Cambridge (chaired by David Runciman, Cambridge, 27 September 2018). As I have been writing this book, parts of it or some of the ideas have been published in the following: Browne, J. (forthcoming 2024) Structural injustice and the regulatory public body landscape. In Virginia Mantouvalou and Jonathan Wolff (eds.) *Structural Injustice and the Law*. London: UCL Press; Browne, J. (2023) AI & structural injustice: A feminist perspective. In Jude Browne, Steven Cave, Eleanor Drage and Kerry McInerney (eds.) *Feminist AI: Critical Perspectives on Algorithms, Data, and Intelligent Machines*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 328–346; Browne, J. (2023) Political implications of the ‘untraceability’ of structural injustice. *Contemporary Political Theory*. Early View: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41296-023-00634-4>. Browne, J. (2020) The regulatory gift: Politics, regulation and governance. *Regulation and Governance* 14(2): 165–388.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Helen Yanocuplous for so much encouragement and humorous commentary on the writing of this book.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Particular thanks also to Jason Sharman for reading early draft chapters and for his constant and invaluable encouragement with this project over the years; to Andrea Sangiovanni, Jonathan Wolff, Maeve McKeown, Duncan Bell, Sylvie Delacroix and Sheila Benhabib for the many, many hours of generous discussion on the theoretical arguments I make on structural injustices; to the members of my writing workshop group, Mette Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, Sarah Fine, Sylvie Delacroix and the others who joined us along the way; and to Ayse Zarakol, Devon Curtis and Melissa Calarescu for collectively providing me with the most productive writing periods in amongst the intensely busy terms of the academic year at Cambridge as well as for helping me think through the narrative of the book as it evolved over time. Special thanks to John Dunn for reading and discussing with me various drafts with excellent feedback and, most importantly, reassurance. I am extremely grateful to him for taking the time to discuss my ideas and to explore how they fit into current political debates.

Huge thanks to Emma King and Chloe Brown for helping me get this book over the line through their encouragement and support and to Llinos Edwards, an expert professional copy editor, and Carl Pierer, a PhD student in political theory at the University of Cambridge, who acted as my research assistant over the past two years. I had been thinking about the ideas in this book for so long that I often made assumptions in my writing that the reader could simply make the leaps from argument to argument without any explanatory bridge. Each of them, in their different ways, guided me to at least cast down a few stepping stones, and I owe them both a great debt of gratitude. Thanks also to Carrie Parkinson at Cambridge University Press, and to John Haslam, Executive Publisher, whose generous guidance, encouragement and patience were essential to the completion of this book. His great enthusiasm for bringing ideas about politics out into the world is infectious.

My deepest gratitude is to Umar, not only for his love, care and humour but for tolerating my obsessive monologues on why this idea or that idea worked or did not work and for helping me to wrestle with the most difficult parts. He deserves some sort of medal. Thanks too, to my extraordinary mother, Elizabeth, who was always a constant and wholly supportive sage; and finally, to my wonderful children, Etta and Martha, who spurred me on to try to find some answers . . .