

## Survival of the Least Biased: Humans v. Machines

By Marta Studnicka, J.D. Candidate 2021 | October 31, 2018

In the current political climate, many news sources have been heavily criticized as untruthful and polarized. It's not only the "traditional" news sources, however, that have come under fire. Much of the condemnation has been directed at tech giants like Facebook, Twitter, and Google.

Recently, the Senate questioned [Facebook's](#) commitment to privacy and distribution of news. The event added to an ongoing debate about whether these companies are media or technology businesses. Apple has almost miraculously managed to stay out of the limelight, even though its news app is used by roughly 90 million people.

Coincidentally, Apple is also the only company among the Silicon Valley corporations that chooses humans [over machines and algorithms to pick its headlines](#). Thirty former journalists currently work for Apple in Sydney, London, New York, and Silicon Valley, where they review the news and pick stories to highlight on the news app.

Apple's competitors, on the other hand, rely solely on algorithms. They argue that machines help to eliminate human bias. They forget, however, that algorithms are only as good as their creators. Therefore, they may propagate the systematic biases of their developers.

So, could human journalists be less biased than machines? Awareness of one's shortcomings is often the first step in addressing them. Human journalists can watch out for such biases, while machines might not be able to do so. Yet, engineers and app developers can similarly combat bias in their thinking.

The lack of public scrutiny over Apple's news app draws attention to another interesting phenomenon: [society's fundamental mistrust of machines](#). That sentiment could explain why Apple hasn't faced criticism similar to that of Facebook.

Humans have historically curated the news provided to the public. Bias has always been there, lurking behind the scenes. Now, that bias has assumed a more robotic and systematic face. Therefore, it has become a foreign threat. It is, after all, the human condition to fear the unknown — even as we rapidly forge ahead in our quest for new technology.

