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What Does Transparency Mean?

Today I'm thinking about **AI and transparency**. What does that mean? Academically, I ask: Who's making decisions about the AI methodologies and algorithms? How is auditing done? Then I think, what's AI? I use Claude as an editorial companion when I write. I consider my audience and what I want to communicate. I write something, then I submit it to Claude, ask questions, and review the responses. But really, what's the point of all that? The point is, there are different ways to use AI, and I don't always know when it's being used. It feels like AI is everywhere, but I'm not sure it's always obvious. That kind of creeps me out—just like I know there are electric wires, but I don't know exactly where they are. I know there are gas lines, but I don't always know where they leak. I just assume they're okay.

When I think about transparency, I ask myself, transparency about what? Do I really want to know? Is transparency like knowing **how** the sausage is made? Sometimes I find it fascinating to know that sausage **is** being made and that the sausage I get is made **somewhere** by **someone**. I have a limited attention span and bandwidth to understand how sausage is made.

What do I mean by transparency? I want to know what I don't know. Which is like almost everything, right? Although I'm full of myself, I know that there's so much I don't know about much.

The Light Collective emphasizes transparency in their mission, especially regarding governance and AI rights. They expect openness about how decisions are made, people's business arrangements and values, and how data is managed, gathered, processed, and interpreted. They believe transparency is a fundamental obligation and a basic right.

The Sausage Analogy: How Much Is Too Much?

But I can't help but think that when I talk about transparency, I mean understanding how the sausage is made. My dad was a meat packer. He sold casings and sausage skins, and I saw the process firsthand in the [meatpacking plants in Chicago](#). It was fascinating. At ten years old, I was excited to be there. OMG, I had no idea. This is what's involved in making sausage and what's inside. In a way, it's kind of gross; TMI—too much information. It's also very time-consuming.

I'm eager to understand how the sausage is made for things that are important to me, but just for a moment. It's hard to accept the work involved. So, what parts of the sausage-making do we want to know? Do we want to know whether there are artificial, natural, or collagen casings? If you wonder what those are, ask me. Do we want to know about the meat, the additives, or where they come from? What are the conditions of the animals from which the sausage casings come—natural casings, which are guts? Where do they come from? How are those animals treated? It's complex. I have to decide



what I want to know about how the sausage is made. I want to find out because I'm curious, and I'll seek that information and share it. It might be helpful for people to have a dashboard about transparency.

From Slogan to Action

Transparency is a slogan. Slogans are critical in advocacy and marketing. When it comes to slogans, I'm wired to ask for more clarity. Think sausage.

I'm action-oriented. What's the next step? How will I measure success? Wanting transparency leads to what actions?

I don't want less transparency; I want more. So, I guess we have to choose our battles, decide to learn something about how the sausage is made, stay vigilant, and identify what isn't transparent but should be. Would it be enough for me to learn some of how the sausage is made, share that, and figure out how to protect it?

Values are hard. Slogans are easy.

Seekers, Solvers, and Communicators

I've talked a lot about sausage. I treasure the analogy because it's a family business. But let's focus on transparency in healthcare AI, which is where I started. I'm a seeker, following [Susannah Fox's](#) idea of different types of health rebels. Some of us are seekers, meaning we want to learn more. So, what can we specifically learn about transparency? What are the features of transparency? How do business interests influence this push for transparency, and what role does policymaking play?

Then there are solvers. Who's working on transparency? Do they connect? Who's posting about it? Who's doing the work? Who's fighting? Who are the champions? Who's leading this effort? Who's networking? What are the networks, social media, virtual groups, and organizations, and where are they located?

Finally, I am a communicator, and I will continue to communicate about it. I'm a little bit of those other things, but more importantly, I gather all that and then share it with you. So, let's see where this goes. Hey, thanks so much for spending the time with me; I really appreciate it.

