Emerging technologies are not easily regulated: getting the regulatory environment right is a considerable challenge. Legal frameworks tend to lose connection with their technological targets; even when connected, laws are often relatively ineffective; and ethicists are unable to agree on the interpretation and application of respect for human rights and human dignity as the measure of regulatory legitimacy. At the same time, new technologies insinuate themselves into the regulatory environment as tools that promise greater effectiveness. In a context of rapid technological change coupled with deep regulatory uncertainty, it will be suggested that the priorities are to safeguard the integrity of the infrastructure for human life, to preserve the conditions in which communities with moral aspirations may flourish, and to encourage broader and more inclusive debates about the social licence to be given to modern technologies.

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