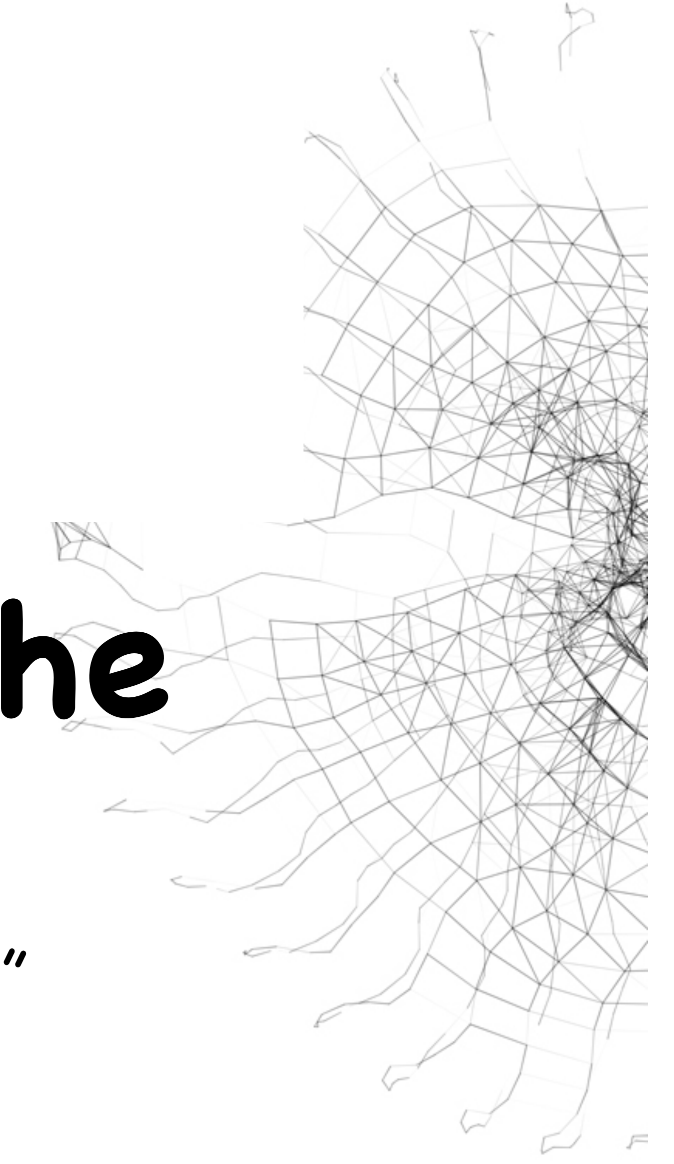
RTC 2017

THRIVING IN TESTING

Test automation – the bitter truth

Some unpleasant truths about “test automation”



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https://www.sli.do/ using code **#7346**

Before we start, few prerequisites:

Here's a story …

What do testers imagine when they see "manual testing"?

- Ineffective
- Boring
- Slow
- Easy to perform by anyone
- Mindless banging of keys

What do managers feel when they speak of "manual testing"?

- "You are wasting too much time. "
- "We have too much testers"
- "We can easily automate what you do."
- "You are not reliable"

How both managers and testers react when someone mentions “automation”?

- Totally fangirling
- We will reduce costs
- We will have more time for “manual” testing
- I will only hit the “Run” button and it will test on its own

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What do testers imagine, when they speak of "test automation"?

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About me

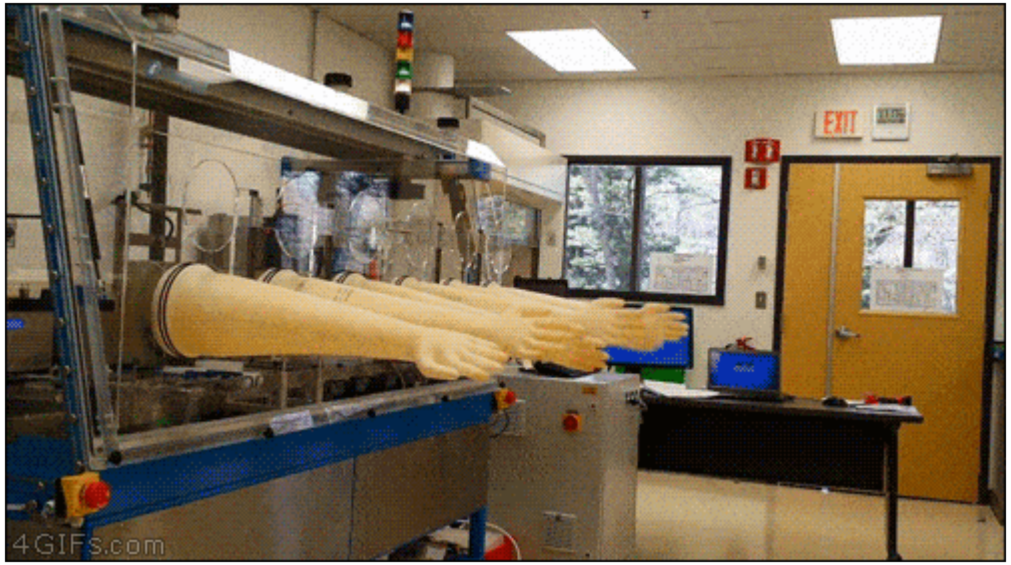
- Senior Software tester at http://siteground.com
- Lecturer at Pragmatic
- Interested in software testing from scientific perspective
- Would never say "Machines will replace us", because I don't believe it!
- Blogger at: http://mrslavchev.com

Definitions:

Manual testing:

- Totally useless term
- Failure to provide value by executing "steps"
- Please, don't dumb down your expertise by calling it "manual testing"

Better term: Analytical testing, Human testing or just Testing



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Automation testing:

- Made up “unicorn” term
- False belief that testing is simple sequence of steps
- Relies on false belief that testing is automate-able

Better term: Tool assisted testing, automated checking, automation in testing, programmatic testing

No “manual” and “automation” testing

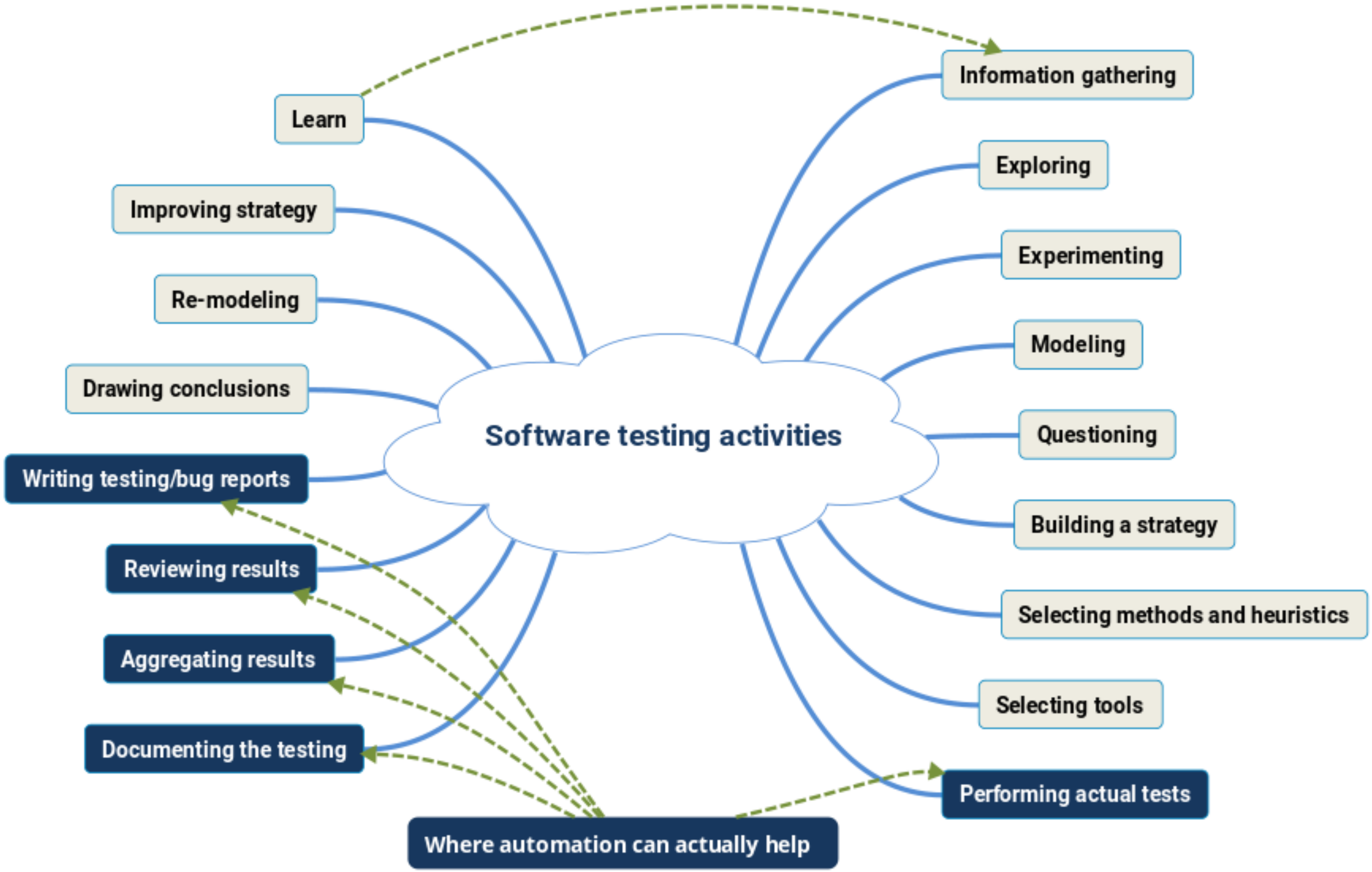
- Testing is not a car transmission
- Not all tasks in testing are equally automate-able
- Testing is analytical human activity
- Has nothing to do with hands or manuals

No hate intended

- I actually love coding and resolving problems in a programmatic way!
- I love testing, too
- I hate it, when false expectations of testing are spread
- We need to say some “bitter truths” in order to set things right
- So think of them as “**medicines**”

Bitter truth #1:
You can’t automate “all the tests”

Activities we perform during testing



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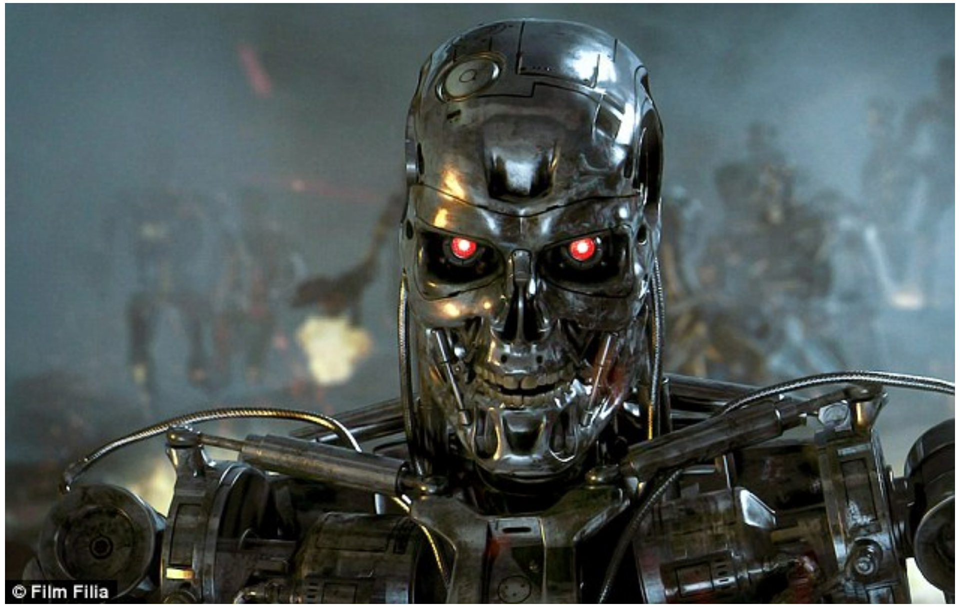
Tasks that are easily automatable

- Confirmation / Verification
- Low level checking
- Precision
- Functional correctness
- Deterministic tests
- **Solving machine problems**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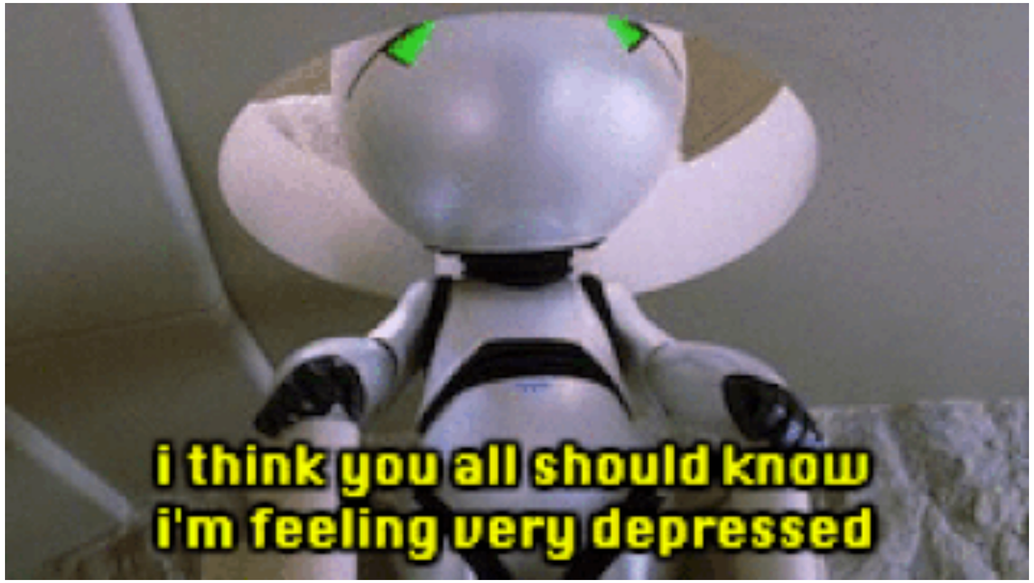
But automation sucks when dealing with:



- Exploration
- Unanticipated risks
- Qualitative evaluation
- Open ended questions
- Adaptive learning
- **Solving human problems**

Inspired by:Things Could Get Worse-Michael Bolton

Bitter truth #2: Test automation won't decrease cost of testing

And that's not even half the truth

Things we hear about automation:

- It will decrease time
- It will run faster
- It's more reliable
- It's cost effective

Thing is … it's only execution cost

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How automation can **increase** cost:

- Cost of tools/time
- Development
- Maintenance
- Debugging your own code
- Make the madaf***r work!

Bitter truth #3:
Don’t think automatic testing, think programmatic testing

Why does this distinction matter?

Automated testing

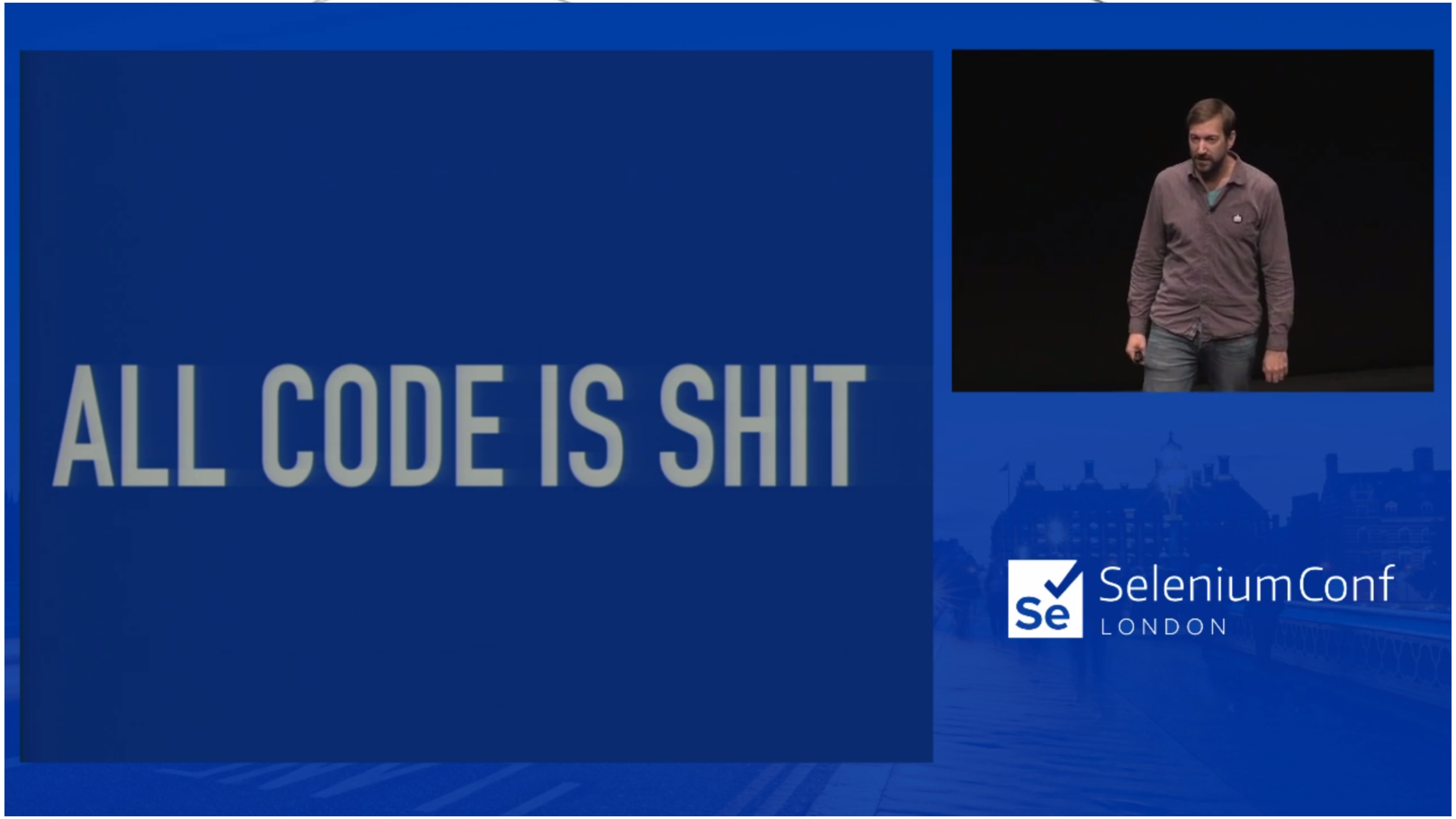
- Implies testing is fully **automatable**
- Implies human testing is **replaceable** with tools
- Defines testing as simple execution of steps
- Looks at testing as test **execution, only**

Programmatic testing

- Record and play tools = **totally useless**!
- Understanding of **limitations**
- Understanding of the **approach**
- Understanding of **goals**

Bitter truth #4:
Your testing code sux, just like any other

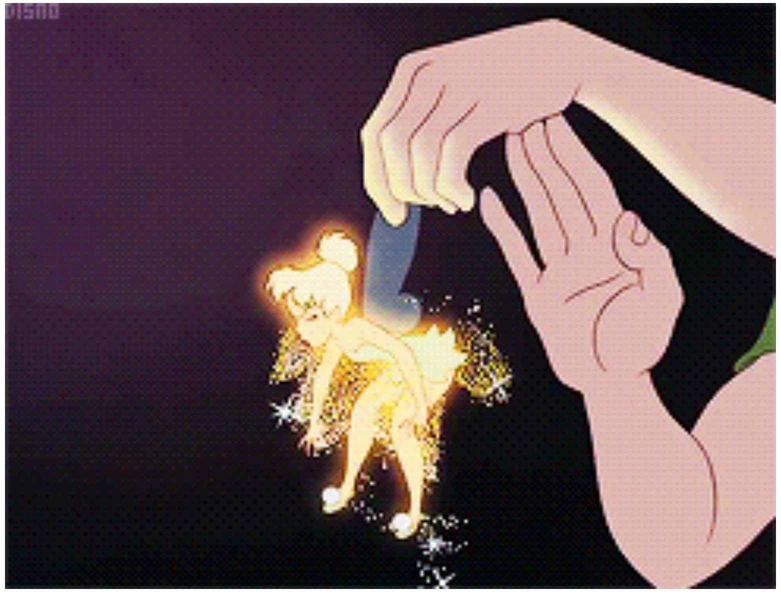
Because…



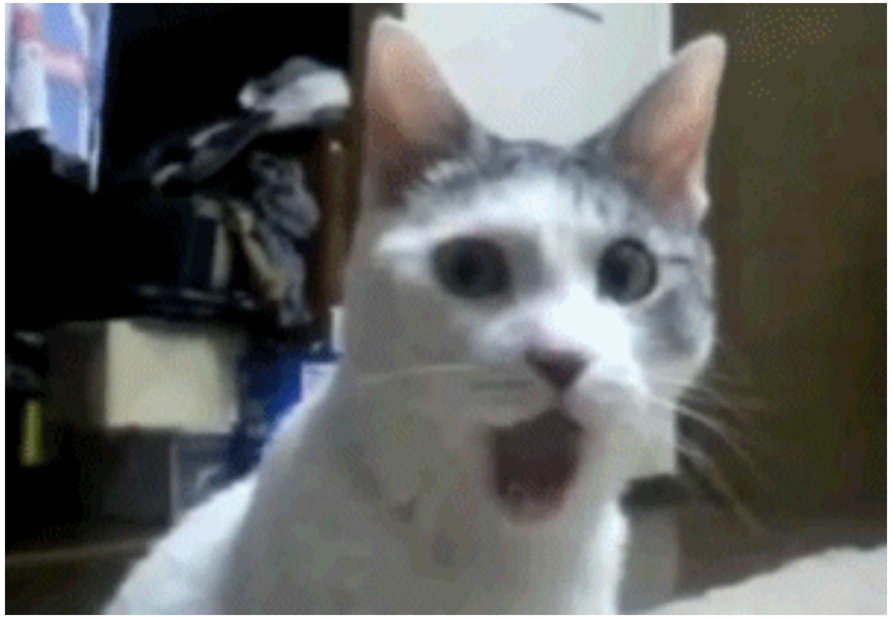
ALL CODE IS SHIT

Things that testers often forget:

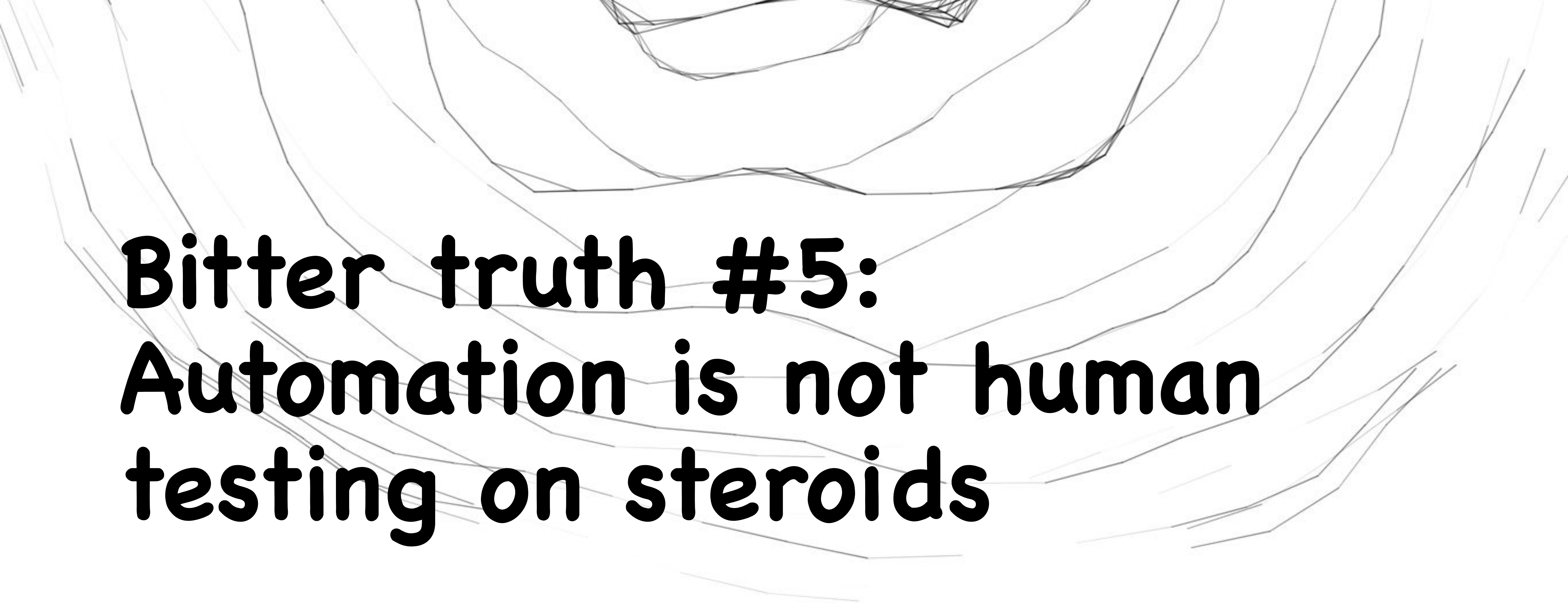
- We are “mere mortals” like anyone else
- We design bad tests
- We sometimes have no ides what the f**k are we up to
- Testing code is not pixie dust



What should be our focus, instead?

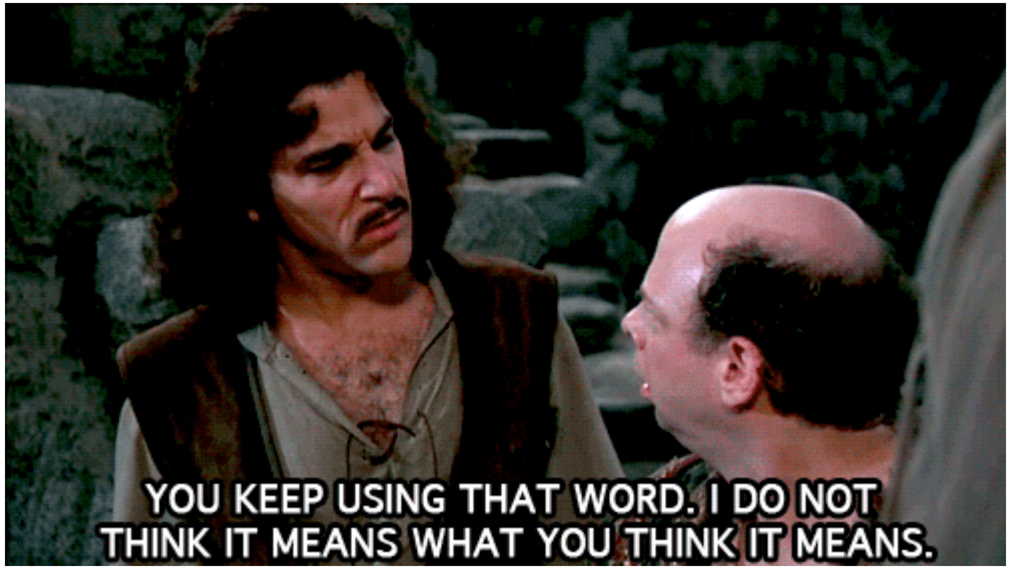


- Why are you automating? Value?
- Development approach
- Infrastructure and maintenance
- Testing your own code



Bitter truth #5: Automation is not human testing on steroids

The nature of "automation":


YOU KEEP USING THAT WORD. I DO NOT
THINK IT MEANS WHAT YOU THINK IT MEANS.

- We still use "test automation" without realizing what it means
- There's plenty of analytical "brain" work automation can't do.
- Humans won't be replaced by it, unless they act as script executors.

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Few important takeaways…

- It's a trend and it won't be easy
- People enjoy easy
- We can be successful by using tools for their right purpose
- "Manual" and "automated" testing are useless terms. Don't think inside the labeled boxes

Do I still think in those little yellow boxes?
I'm good.
Oooh, I missed you, little yellow boxes! What fun we shall have together!

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And most important...

- Try not to think like:

Automate to replace human testing

- but rather:

Automate to extend your testing and let it do whatever it can do better than you

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Thank you very much!

Any questions?

Feedback is love!
Feedback is life!
Share your
feedback with us!
https://www.sli.do/
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