Artificial Intelligence, Justice, and Democracy

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Artificial intelligence is an extremely powerful tool, employed in many kinds of human activity: from medicine to the world of work; from culture to the field of communications; from education to politics. It is now safe to assume that its use will increasingly influence the way we live, our social relationships and even the way we conceive of our identity as human beings. [3]

The question of artificial intelligence, however, is often perceived as ambiguous: on the one hand, it generates excitement for the possibilities it offers, while on the other it gives rise to fear for the consequences it foreshadows. In this regard, we could say that all of us, albeit to varying degrees, experience two emotions: we are enthusiastic when we imagine the advances that can result from artificial intelligence but, at the same time, we are fearful when we acknowledge the dangers inherent in its use. [4]

After all, we cannot doubt that the advent of artificial intelligence represents a true cognitive-industrial revolution, which will contribute to the creation of a new social system characterised by complex epochal transformations. For example, artificial intelligence could enable a democratization of access to knowledge, the exponential advancement of scientific research and the possibility of giving demanding and arduous work to machines. Yet at the same time, it could bring with it a greater injustice between advanced and developing nations or between dominant and oppressed social classes, raising the dangerous possibility that a "throwaway culture" be preferred to a "culture of encounter".

<u>Address of His Holiness Pope Francis, G7 Session on Artificial Intelligence</u>, Borgo Egnazia (Puglia), Friday, 14 June 2024

With the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI), we are at the cusp of grasping the promise of humankind's latest technological tools, which have great transformational potential. The development of new large language learning models—such as OpenAI's o1 and others—continues to propel AI into known and unknown technological frontiers.

Like all previous transformative technology, AI is raising a universe of possibilities and unleashing real and imagined threats. As with previous planetary technological changes, promise and peril co-exist, and threats and opportunities must be studied and acted upon. AI holds potential, but its advancement must not undermine citizen protections, data privacy, misinformation, or anti-discrimination efforts.

We must endeavor to understand how AI is reshaping the economy, society, work, and family. As with other powerful human tools, AI is a product of human creativity and has the potential to improve work conditions, democratize access to knowledge, open new avenues in education, advance scientific research, aid medical advances, fight climate change, automate routine and complex tasks, and more. Yet Pope Francis highlights AI's duality, showing promise and concern. AI offers multiple possibilities and poses risks, including increased inequality, misinformation, the displacement of workers, the reinforcement of biases, and the corrosion of democracy, justice, and human dignity. Geoffrey Hinton, the 2024 Nobel Laureate in Physics and the so-called Godfather of AI, has noted, *qua* AI, "We're entering a period of great uncertainty where we're dealing with things we've never dealt with before. And normally, the first time you deal with something totally novel, you get it wrong. And we can't afford to get it wrong with these things."

So, in times of great uncertainty, we offer faith and reason.

Towards an 'Algor-Ethics,' Human Dignity in the Age of AI

Pope Francis has made a powerful plea for putting ethical considerations first in the development and use of AI. He warns against allowing machines to make decisions that should remain under human control, particularly in areas such as automated weapons systems, the administration of justice, the pursuit of truth, and the practice of democratic citizenship. Indeed, AI's impact will depend on its educated uses, ethical considerations, and governance structures to maximize benefits and minimize risks.

The Holy Father introduces the concept of "algor-ethics," emphasizing the need for ethical moderation of algorithms and AI programs to ensure they serve humanity. With Pope Francis, we emphasize the importance of prioritizing human dignity, agency, and decision-making in the face of AI advancements. We warn against delegating decisions to machines when said decisions undermine human freedom and responsibility and are detached from ethical considerations. We echo Pope Francis' call for "healthy politics" to guide the ethical use of AI. Indeed, political action is necessary to ensure AI contributes positively to society and does not reinforce a technocratic

paragigm devoid of human wisdom and judgment.

In response to Pope Francis's plea, the Vatican Workshop on AI, Justice, and Democracy explores AI's multifaceted impacts with particular attention to the domains of justice and the practice of democracy.

Theme 1: AI and Justice – Ensuring Fairness and Equity

- Addressing Bias and Discrimination: Examining how AI can perpetuate and mitigate biases in systems, particularly in areas like criminal justice and employment and housing discrimination. Discussions will focus on developing strategies to ensure AI systems promote fairness and equity.
- Transparency and Accountability: Exploring the need for transparency in AI decision-making processes such as algorithmic development to ensure accountability and build public trust.

Theme 2: AI and Democracy – Safeguarding Democratic Processes

- Combatting Misinformation: This section analyzes AI's role in spreading misinformation and its implications for democratic processes. It will discuss strategies for using AI to enhance the integrity of information and protect democratic institutions.
- Enhancing Civic Engagement: Investigating how AI can increase citizen participation and engagement in democratic processes while addressing privacy and civil liberties threats.

Theme 3:– Preparing Citizens for an AI-Driven World

- Democratizing AI—Ethical and Responsible AI Use: Addressing the ethical considerations and responsibilities associated with AI, including bias, privacy, and protecting workers displaced by AI.