

Moral and Ethical Questions Using AI — Magisterium

<https://www.magisterium.com/s/c-4d323a8b-ace1-4c4a-8e5b-f94bd2c9d695>

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) raises several moral and ethical questions that need to be considered to ensure it serves humanity and the common good. These considerations include human dignity, ethical guidelines, and responsible innovation [3] [6] [1].

Here's a breakdown of the key areas:

Upholding Human Dignity

- **Intrinsic Dignity:** The inherent dignity of every human being must be the key criterion for evaluating emerging technologies [3] [6]. AI technologies should respect and increase the expression of human dignity at every level of human life, including in social and economic spheres [6].
- **Fraternity:** The sense of fraternity that binds humans together as members of one human family must undergird the development of new technologies and serve as an indisputable criterion for evaluating them before they are employed [3].

Ethical Guidelines and Considerations

- **Serving the Human Person:** Technological development must be directed to serve the human person and contribute to the pursuit of greater justice, fraternity, and a more humane order of social relations [2]. These are more valuable than advances in the technical field [2].
- **Moral Reflection:** Serious and in-depth moral reflection on the risks and possibilities associated with scientific and technological advances is essential [7]. International laws and regulations governing AI should concentrate on promoting integral human development and peace, rather than on progress as an end in itself [7].
- **Ethical Soundness:** Emerging technologies will prove ethically sound to the extent that they help respect human dignity and increase its expression at every level of human life [6].
- **Common Good:** An ethic inspired by a vision of the common good, and an ethic of freedom, responsibility, and fraternity, is capable of fostering the full development of people in relation to others and to the whole of creation [9].

Balancing Benefits and Risks

- **Human Responsibility:** Growth in technology requires a proportionate growth in human responsibility, values, and conscience [1]. With increased power comes a broadening of responsibility on the part of individuals and communities [1].
- **Potential Threats:** Without suitable guidelines provided by legislative assemblies and public authorities guided by a sense of social responsibility, technological innovations can become a threat to the dignity of the human person [7]. Examples of such threats include the misuse of personal data, attacks on critical infrastructures, and the spread of false information [7].

- **Prudent Legislation:** Prudent legislation can guide the development and application of technology in the service of the common good, protecting human dignity from potential threats [7].

Specific Ethical Concerns

- **Sanctity of Life:** The Church is particularly opposed to those AI applications that threaten the sanctity of life [2].
- **Discrimination and Bias:** AI systems should be designed and used in ways that avoid reinforcing or amplifying discrimination and bias [6].
- **Impact on Labor:** Consider the impact of AI on employment and ensure a just transition for workers [6].
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Promote transparency in AI development and deployment, and establish clear lines of accountability for its impacts [6].

In conclusion, the ethical considerations surrounding AI require a holistic approach, grounded in the principles of human dignity, the common good, and responsible innovation. By carefully considering these factors, we can harness the benefits of AI while mitigating its risks and ensuring a more just and humane future for all [7] [6].



[1] Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Dicastery for Culture and Education, *Antiqua et Nova (The Old and the New): Note on the Relationship Between Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence*, 1/28/2025, §50, “V. Specific Questions - AI and Society,”

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_dcf_doc_20250128_antiqua-et-nova_en.html?s=09.

[2] *Ibid.*, §42, “IV. The Role of Ethics in Guiding the Development and Use of AI.”

[3] *Ibid.*, §108, “VI. Concluding Reflections.”

[4] *Ibid.*, §38, “IV. The Role of Ethics in Guiding the Development and Use of AI.”

[5] Pope Francis, *To the Participants in the meeting promoted by the International Catholic Legislators Network*, 08/27/2021,

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2021/august/documents/20210827-internationalcatholic-legislatorsnetwork.html>.

[6] H. E. Archbishop Gabriele Giordano Caccia, *Statement of the Holy See to the United Nations at the UN High-Level Forum on the Culture of Peace under the theme “Promoting a Culture of Peace in the Digital Era”*, (New York, 31 August 2023), <https://holyseemission.org/contents/statements/64f10c460445f.php>.

+++++

How Does AI Affect Human Dignity?

AI's impact on human dignity is a complex issue with both potential benefits and risks. It can enhance human life in many ways, but also poses threats if not developed and used ethically.

Here's a breakdown of how AI affects human dignity:

Potential Benefits

- **Enhancing Human Capabilities:** AI can augment human intelligence and creativity, leading to new forms of expression and innovation [1]. It can assist in tasks that are dangerous, repetitive, or physically demanding, freeing humans to focus on more meaningful activities [1].
- **Improving Quality of Life:** AI can improve healthcare, education, and other essential services, leading to a better quality of life for individuals and communities [1]. It can help to address global challenges such as poverty, disease, and climate change [1].
- **Promoting Inclusion:** AI can help to overcome barriers to participation for people with disabilities or other disadvantages, promoting greater inclusion and equality [1].

Potential Risks

- **Erosion of Human Agency:** Over-reliance on AI can lead to a decline in human skills and decision-making abilities, eroding human agency and autonomy [1].
- **Loss of Human Connection:** AI-driven interactions can replace human relationships, leading to social isolation and a decline in empathy and compassion [1].
- **Discrimination and Bias:** AI systems can perpetuate and amplify existing biases, leading to unfair or discriminatory outcomes for certain groups of people [1].
- **Privacy and Security:** AI can be used to collect, analyze, and exploit personal data, threatening privacy and security [1].
- **Dehumanization:** AI can reduce human beings to mere data points or objects, leading to dehumanization and a loss of respect for human dignity [1].
- **Technocratic Paradigm:** AI may promote the “technocratic paradigm,” which perceives all the world's problems as solvable through technological means alone, setting aside human dignity and fraternity in the name of efficiency [4].

Protecting Human Dignity in the Age of AI

- **Ethical Development and Use:** AI must be developed and used in ways that respect human dignity and promote the common good [5]. This requires careful

consideration of the ethical implications of AI and the development of appropriate safeguards [5].

- **Human Oversight and Control:** Humans must retain ultimate control over AI systems, ensuring that they are used in ways that align with human values and interests [7].
- **Education and Awareness:** People need to be educated about the potential benefits and risks of AI, and empowered to make informed decisions about its use [7].
- **Regulation and Governance:** Governments and international organizations need to establish clear regulations and governance frameworks for AI, ensuring that it is used in a responsible and ethical manner [7].

Church's Perspective

- **Centrality of the Human Person:** Technological development must respect the centrality of the human person, whose place can never be taken by an algorithm or a machine [8].
- **Inherent Dignity:** The inherent dignity of each human being and the fraternity that binds us together as members of the one human family must undergird the development of new technologies and serve as indisputable criteria for evaluating them before they are employed [8].
- **Relational Intelligence:** AI should be considered within a framework of relational intelligence, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of individuals and communities and highlights our shared responsibility for fostering the integral well-being of others [10].

In conclusion, AI has the potential to both enhance and diminish human dignity. To ensure that AI serves humanity and promotes the common good, it is essential to develop and use it in an ethical and responsible manner, with a focus on human oversight, education, and regulation [5] [7].



[1]] Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Dicastery for Culture and Education, *Antiqua et Nova (The Old and the New): Note on the Relationship Between Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence*, 1/28/2025, §48, “IV. The Role of Ethics in Guiding the Development and Use of AI - Helping Human Freedom and Decision-Making,” https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_dcf_doc_20250128_antiqua-et-nova_en.html?s=09.

[2] *Ibid.*, §54, “V. Specific Questions - AI and Society.”

[3] *Ibid.*, §40, “IV. The Role of Ethics in Guiding the Development and Use of AI.”

[4] H. E. Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, *Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity: Accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals towards peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all*, 26 September 2023), <https://holyseemission.org/contents//statements/651347a05878f.php>.

[5] Pope Francis, *To members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See*, (8 January 2024), <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/january/documents/20240108-corpo-diplomatico.html>

[6] *Op. Cit.*, *Antiqua et Nova*, §111, “VI. Concluding Reflections.”

+++++

Implications for Social Justice?

AI has significant implications for social justice, with the potential to both exacerbate existing inequalities and create new ones, as well as to promote greater equity and inclusion if developed and used responsibly. [2].

Potential Negative Implications

- **Increased Inequality:** AI could be used to perpetuate marginalization and discrimination, create new forms of poverty, widen the “digital divide,” and worsen existing social inequalities [2].
- **Bias and Discrimination:** AI systems can reflect and amplify biases present in the data they are trained on, leading to discriminatory outcomes in areas such as hiring, lending, and criminal justice [2].
- **Job Displacement:** Automation driven by AI could lead to widespread job displacement, particularly in low-skilled occupations, exacerbating economic inequality and social unrest [2].
- **Erosion of Privacy:** AI-powered surveillance technologies could disproportionately target marginalized communities, further eroding their privacy and civil liberties [2].

Potential Positive Implications

- **Improved Access to Services:** AI can improve access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and legal assistance for underserved populations [2].
- **Fairer Decision-Making:** AI can be used to reduce bias and improve the fairness of decision-making processes in areas such as hiring and lending [2].
- **Empowerment of Marginalized Communities:** AI can empower marginalized communities by providing them with new tools and resources to advocate for their rights and interests [2].
- **Promotion of Inclusion:** AI can help to overcome barriers to participation for people with disabilities or other disadvantages, promoting greater inclusion and equality [2].

Ensuring Social Justice in the Age of AI

- **Ethical Development and Deployment:** AI systems should be developed and deployed in ways that promote fairness, equity, and inclusion [1]. This requires careful attention to issues such as data bias, algorithmic transparency, and accountability [1].
- **Investment in Education and Training:** Governments and businesses need to invest in education and training programs to prepare workers for the jobs of the future and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to benefit from AI [1].
- **Social Safety Nets:** Strengthen social safety nets to protect workers who are displaced by automation and ensure that everyone has access to basic necessities such as food, housing, and healthcare [1].
- **Regulation and Oversight:** Governments need to establish clear regulations and oversight mechanisms to prevent AI from being used to discriminate or exploit vulnerable populations [1].
- **Promoting Dialogue and Collaboration:** Foster dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders, including researchers, policymakers, businesses, and civil society organizations, to ensure that AI is developed and used in a way that benefits all of humanity [7].

Pope Francis's Concerns

- **Digital Technologies and Inequality:** Digital technologies have increased inequality in our world, not just differences in material wealth, but also differences in access to political and social influence [2].
- **Marginalization and Discrimination:** AI could be used to perpetuate marginalization and discrimination, create new forms of poverty, widen the “digital divide,” and worsen existing social inequalities [2].
- **Technocratic Paradigm:** Human dignity and the common good must never be violated for the sake of efficiency, and technological developments that do not lead to an improvement in the quality of life of all humanity, but on the contrary, aggravate inequalities and conflicts, can never count as true progress [4].

In conclusion, AI has the potential to both exacerbate and alleviate social injustices. To ensure that AI promotes social justice, it is essential to develop and use it in an ethical and responsible manner, with a focus on fairness, equity, and inclusion [1]. This requires a multi-faceted approach that includes ethical development, investment in education and training, strengthened social safety nets, regulation and oversight, and promotion of dialogue and collaboration [7].

[1] Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Dicastery for Culture and Education, *Antiqua et Nova (The Old and the New): Note on the Relationship Between Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence*, 1/28/2025, §52, “V. Specific Questions - AI and Society,”

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddf_doc_20250128_antiqua

[2] *Ibid.*, §47, “IV. The Role of Ethics in Guiding the Development and Use of AI - Helping Human Freedom and Decision-Making.”

[3] H. E. Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, *Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity: Accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals towards peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all*, 26 September 2023), <https://holyseemission.org/contents//statements/651347a05878f.php>.

[4] *Op. Cit.*, *Antiqua et Nova*, §54, “V. Specific Questions - AI and Society.”

+++++

