

Humanism and AI

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Abstract: Starting from the most significant events that have characterized the evolution and pervasiveness of information technology and the "new normal," one of the most impactful technologies recently introduced in our society is Artificial Intelligence, nowadays expressed by powerful Large Language Models. This long-lived technology, born in the 1950s, was considered too cryptic and too far removed from practical use by citizens. However, the exponential spread of AI platforms like ChatGPT and the immediate familiarity acquired by citizens have favoured the implementation of AI in a wide range of products, such as self-driving cars, drones, documents, and visual content created by Gen AI. This widespread implementation of AI and Gen AI has raised serious concerns about ethical issues involving human rights, fairness, transparency, trustworthiness, privacy, accountability, and social impact, as well as the need to address the legal position of AI in the event of harm and the related liability. In addition, these issues have highlighted some of the potential concerns regarding liability and responsibility in the case of systems operated by AI and Gen AI.

Keywords: Digital Transformation, AI, LLM, Ethics, Human Rights, Digital Humanism

0. Preamble

To better define the relevance of the ethical approach to AI, it's necessary to extend this vision to a brief overview of information technology and its recent evolution, both technologically and in terms of its use. The key aspects outlined in the title cannot be adequately described without considering the broader picture. Naturally, considering each individual technology and trend doesn't highlight specific concerns, and technology simply seems to simplify our daily lives. However, by analysing each individual innovation more deeply, or by piecing together all the visible "tiles" of the "new normal"¹ mosaic, we can raise some concerns. While the entire architecture is based on information technology with all the potential risks that entails, as we will outline later, the rules of the cyber-world can express a power that none of the "rules" in history had, information and big data are the assets to be analysed, influenced, reused. Today and more diffusely in the near future the power of cyber tech will be managed by Artificial Intelligence.

1. Setting the scene

In the last decades, periodically, we have received some messages that strengthened their impact on society as a mix of impending dangers, crises and, more recently, an ongoing complete reorganization of society on the one hand due to technological advances and geopolitical changes, a kind of imminent "new global order", on the other hand, global warming, exponential growth of the world population, lack of food and water, various pandemic crises, conflicts and more have had a profound impact on society, which combined with the reduced relevance of traditional values and beliefs as key references, has generated a widespread feeling that something is wrong [1 - Eckersley -1995]. Various concepts and movements such as "political correctness", "cancel culture" [2 - Vogels – 2023, 3 - Dudenhoefer 2020], the "last generation" and others have contributed to fuelling this sentiment. Some thinkers have predicted the end of the Anthropocene with a belief in antihumanism, not as a political agenda but as a philosophical idea. On the other hand, transhumanism glorifies some of the same things that antihumanism condemns, scientific and technological progress such as genetic engineering

¹ The "new normal" is the result of digital transformation and the socio-geo-political changes.

and nanotechnology, and the supremacy of reason. Others are convinced that general artificial intelligence design will improve itself to think faster and deeper, then the improved version would improve itself, and so on, exponentially. Both lines of thought fundamentally consider the disappearance of humans, on the one hand extinction, on the other cyborgs. Furthermore, the economic model pursued in the recent past is showing its limits [4 - Imad A. Moosa, 2023] as well as the globalisation that was its side effect. Nowadays we more often consider de-globalisation [5 WEF, 2023] as a scenario and the re-discover of local “*values*” and “*identities*” [6 - ECB, 2023].

2. Digital Technology and Society

The rapid success of the Internet, primarily due to e-commerce, information services, and social media, has fuelled the trend toward globalization and a shift toward uniformity, undermining diversity and spreading the vision of the cyber-majors. Social media and global content providers are shaping younger generations by offering a “*pensée unique*” approach², that will impact future generations and their cultural identity.

One of the key events that have characterized the recent period is the so-called digital transformation (DT), considered the natural evolution of today's society in the light of a pervasive technology such as digital technology. This ongoing process has impacted different countries at different levels. Some countries have invested significant resources to rapidly implement this transformation; others have behaved differently. These technologies become something to trap human beings with, violating privacy and, at times, even human rights [7 – Zuboff – 2019]. A significant part of the digital transformation is based on software platforms, mainly “*global*” platforms, a market sector that is not yet regulated, a “*grey area*”. The platforms are mainly private, and the key ones are concentrated in a few countries, creating a sort of “*oligarchy*” [8 – Ronchi, 2019]. The “*control buttons*” of our daily lives are often outside the control of our nation states. Decision makers' desire to go digital [9 – Ronchi, 2020] has laid the foundation for creating a cyber-information society based on “*digital*”. This pillar is quite fragile. The growing dependence on service platforms, which have disrupted the activities of previous value-added chains, can cause serious problems in the event of access problems to these platforms, whether due to malfunctions, hacker attacks, or a top-down decision to selectively disable the service. A Plan B in such a situation, if not present, will take a long time to implement. Furthermore, digital technology has so far acted primarily as a human isolation technology. The social dimension traditionally based on interpersonal relationships, on families with relatives and friends enjoying lunch and dinner together, and on quality time spent together, has been limited and replaced by social media and digital audio and video connections. Consequently, on the social front, Western citizens are immersed in their personal cybersphere in a sort of symbiotic relationship. They experience the world through an approach mediated by computing devices; the “*new reality*” is that offered by devices. Cyber loneliness, one of the foreseeable risks, is a kind of addiction to this “*parallel life*” that trains user to switch between real life and meta-life, blurring the boundaries between them; this could happen as often as the number of services and duties is transferred to the other side of Alice's mirror. Meta-life can propose a new normality [10 – ISPI 2023] that, once accepted in meta-life, could be accepted in real life. The same obviously applies to mainstream information, opinion dynamics, and nudging, especially if they are perceived as real and reliable.

3.1 Potential side effects of digital society

As can already happen today, even if a digital wallet is not yet fully implemented, the lack of access to digital infrastructure means no identity documents, no driver's license, no social security, no bank accounts, no certificates, and more. The surviving “*quasi-traditional*” documents will soon be cross validated using our digital ID. All our other personal data is already accessible somewhere in our country or abroad thanks to our “*friends*” such as smartphones, smart bracelets, or IoT devices.

² *pensée unique* based on a single cultural model

Recently, the European Commission and the European Central Bank promoted the project to create an official digital euro, potentially active by 2026, but now postponed to 2028. Naturally, given its origins, this cannot be considered a cryptocurrency, but rather a kind of digital voucher managed by the European Central Bank and subject to complete digital control. Its alleged total dependence on the cyber world represents a significant weakness and, at the same time, an incredible concentration of power in the "*digital domain*." Will artificial intelligence play this role? Taking into consideration each single technology and trend there are not specific concerns, and technology seems simply to ease our daily life but getting much more in depth of each single innovation or putting together all the visible "*tiles*" of the "*new normal*" mosaic we can be concerned. To conclude with sustainability aspects, the environmental impact of digital technologies including water and energy consumption from data centres and blockchain operations, as well as electronic waste from rapid device turnover raises questions about the sustainability and resilience of our current technological trajectory. Consequently, can cyber technology be considered green and resilient [11 – Ronchi 2024]?

3.2 The reborn Artificial Intelligence

The scenario depicted was recently enriched by the rapid diffusion of artificial intelligence generating some more concerns. Apart from direct concerns pertaining AI per se even major concerns can arise if AI will be placed on top of the whole digital "*society*" enabled to act autonomously, each digital "*service*" have a potential direct or indirect impact on human rights.

We must point out that Artificial Intelligence it is not a newcomer, the origin of this technology dates back to the middle of the previous century. Following the studies on Turing³ machine in 1950 a first release of the Touring Test was published by A. M. Turing on Mind, the incipit of the article is ⁴, "*I propose to consider the question, 'Can machines think?' This should begin with definitions of the meaning of the terms 'machine' and 'think'. ...*". For the first time arose the idea to break the rule of rigid procedures and algorithms unleashing the hidden power to identify "*invisible*" patterns and create associations of items. The initial understanding of AI was "the ability of computers to dynamically instruct themselves creating code". A.I. advances captured the interest of journalists being considered the seed of the "*Big Brother*" or the ignition of the progressive slavery of men ruled by machines. This vision generated the concern "*General artificial intelligence design and generative AI will improve itself to overcome human intelligence?*"⁵ Are we going to face what several times was depicted in the science fiction movies?

We don't know whether the concerns often associated with AI, considered a potential cyber-Leviathan dominating humanity thanks to its "*far superior intelligence*" (far superior to human intelligence), are due to the term that was long associated with the first studies and applications in this field. The term "*artificial intelligence*" likely sparked the awareness that there were two "*intelligences*," one human and one artificial, potentially competing to "*rule*" the world.

3.3 AI actually

The added value and results achieved thanks to artificial intelligence are not in question, just think about the use of artificial intelligence to identify hidden patterns in DNA or collect and summarize a huge number of documents and much more; we will look at artificial intelligence from a humanistic perspective, considering the medium and long-term impacts on society and the potential disadvantages or unwanted side effects⁶ with reference to human rights, security, ethics, social,

³ Alan Mathison Turing (1912-1950), British mathematician Alan Turing, c. 1930s. Turing did the earliest work on AI, and he introduced many of the central concepts of AI in a report entitled "Intelligent Machinery" (1948)

⁴ Alan M. Turing, Computing machinery and intelligence, Mind, 59 October, pp. 433-460, 1950. <https://academic.oup.com/mind/article/LIX/236/433/986238>

⁵ Science fiction movies already proposed similar scenarios e.g. Wargames (1983 American techno-thriller film directed by John Badham) or Eagle Eye (2008 American action-thriller film directed by D. J. Caruso)

⁶ Ronchi Alfredo M., (2021) – "From Ingsoc to Skynet it is not only science fiction: From novels and science fiction to quasi-reality" – Proceedings UNESCO IFAP conference in Khantchi Mansjisk

cultural, economic and environmental aspects. Is or will the sudden evolution or revolution of the cyber world, now driven by artificial intelligence and related technologies, be fully beneficial to humanity, or are there unforeseen and unwanted side effects? As an example, citizens consider Generative AI able to express “*creativity*” how can we ensure that its “creation” comply with ethical principles and will not generate harm?

A marketing master key: AI as an essential keyword for ensuring market success. The “*commercial*” power of “*AI-based*” tools and equipment is evident. Thanks to the blurred line between programmed logical behaviour and artificial intelligence, a significant portion of products and services are now “*AI-based*”. Consequently, it is important to establish guidelines that frame this sector. How can AI be defined? One definition is: “*AI is a system that uses technologies capable of making predictions, generating content, providing recommendations, or making decisions with varying degrees of autonomy.*”⁷ Another key characteristic of AI systems is their “*inference*” capability.

3.4 AI daily life invasion

Artificial intelligence will increasingly pervade applications and devices. On May 18, 2023, Open AI released a ChatGPT app on iOS; in June 2024, Sam Altman announced the integration of an AI assistant based on Open AI ChatGPT on iPhone; and in 2025, META launched AI on WhatsApp, providing most typical AI services. AI extensions are offered as a kind of bonus or add-on for everything from refrigerators and washing machines to internet service providers. The automotive industry is beginning to extend the use of AI beyond autonomous driving. Major tech companies like Google and Microsoft are upping their game. Anthropic⁸, Mistral⁹, and OpenAI continue their streak of success. This trend will soon expand, involving both everyday “tools” and high-end applications and services. Many services are already managed by artificial intelligence, and decisions, even critical ones, are assigned to artificial intelligence, often based on narrow artificial intelligence¹⁰. AI Large Language Models¹¹ are developing rapidly, offering a wide range of “*services*” even to unskilled citizens. These “*end users*” will accept the output of artificial intelligence primarily as an “*oracle*” with limited or no ability to analyse or criticize it. In addition to potential ethical conflicts, errors, and inconveniences, a potential medium-term effect could be the loss of the ability to perform similar tasks that were traditionally delegated to artificial intelligence. When dealing with artificial intelligence and content creation, one potential scenario is to address the exponential proliferation of documents due to this “*ghost authorship*” which will lead to new AI documents based on existing AI documents, likely diverging further from human creativity. How can we distinguish a human “*product*” from an artificial one? Should AI be considered a co-author? Some researchers are suggesting that governments issue regulations requiring the inclusion of an invisible watermark on all AI-generated output. Policymakers around the world are therefore considering how to design and implement watermarking techniques to ensure a trustworthy AI environment. China has already taken steps to ban AI-generated images without watermarks; the United States has already applied this option, at least for specific events requiring protection from AI-generated bias (such as general elections), developing effective content labelling and provenance mechanisms so that citizens can identify human- or AI-generated content. Once again, it is imperative to keep humans at the centre of the process and respect human rights and ethics for the benefit of citizens. As already emphasized, today, given current trends, ethics must always be the key reference point in the development, customization, and use of technologies.

⁷ As an example – definition due to the National Center for AI in Saudi Arabia

⁸ <https://www.anthropic.com>

⁹ <https://mistral.ai>

¹⁰ Narrow AI and General AI are one of the typical differences in AI domain – the first has a in depth but limited knowledge.

¹¹ LLM are advanced artificial intelligence (AI) programs trained on massive datasets to understand, generate, and process human language and other content.

3. Artificial Intelligence v/s Human Intelligence is this the challenge?

The recent polarization between the supremacy of human intelligence and the surpassing of human intelligence by AI leads us to consider some of the evolutionary stages of AI: from Narrow AI (NAI) to Expert Systems, Machine Learning, Deep Learning, Artificial Intelligence (AI), General AI, and Generative AI. All these steps, more or less in this order and in these terms, have extended the capabilities of these systems from rigid, almost algorithmic behaviours to a kind of "*freedom*" demonstrated by NAI, General AI, and, most evidently, Generative AI. Scientists and researchers envision reaching two further frontiers: the "*Human Brain*" model of functionality, aimed at recreating an ever-growing network of synapses, and the ultimate level, "*Self-Awareness*". This last level of evolution is probably the one that frees the machine from all dependence on humans and its "*architect*"¹². One of the best-known examples of self-awareness is probably represented by the scene in Stanley Kubrick's "*2001: A Space Odyssey*" in which Captain Dave Bowman begins to disconnect the HAL 9000 computer by removing its circuit boards. HAL 9000 demonstrates self-awareness, realizing that it is about to die. "*My mind is going... I can feel it*", "*I'm afraid. I'm afraid, Dave. Dave, my mind is going. I can feel it. I can feel it. I can feel it. I'm a... afraid*". This theoretically foreseeable step, like the previous one, the Human Brain, is not yet included among the achievable goals of the near future. These steps have represented the turning point, in several science fiction films, enabling the machines' rebellion against humans. The debate is still open and polarized, with some industry leaders clearly calling for AI regulation, especially to avoid a critical gap between predictable human behaviour and AI hallucinations.

4. AI biases and trust

Another of the most debated concerns is potential biases, such as gender, race, cultural identity, and privacy. Most of these systems rely on data, often large datasets, to be analysed as factors that determine the system's "*output*". The quality and characteristics of the dataset are key factors in eliminating or at least minimizing bias and increasing trust. Additional potential causes of bias and deviations may be rooted in the algorithms that execute the process. If we consider AI systems as black boxes that process input data, analysing a massive dataset to provide a result unsupported by an explanation of the process, how can we be sure that bias hasn't been involved in the process? How can we verify whether potential biases have influenced the system's output?

Of course, here we need to refer to the different learning models used in artificial intelligence: in "*unsupervised learning*" the system is fed data and finds patterns and predictions without any supervision; "*supervised learning*" uses labelled datasets that effectively "supervise" the process with correct input-output pairs; and in "*reinforcement learning*" an "*agent*" learns to make sequential decisions in a trial-and-error environment to maximize a cumulative reward signal. On the citizen side, the rapid implementation of AI raises potential ethical concerns [12 – Stuckelberger, 2018], as well as potential biases, deep misconceptions, and more: for example, will citizens resolve serious ethical dilemmas simply by referring to an AI proxy asking how to behave, and will they feel relieved of personal ethical analysis and related responsibilities? Furthermore, the evolution of such issues may change over time: initially, citizens will attribute a high level of trustworthiness to the system, but if some evidence discredits the system, citizens will start demanding explainability of the results. Explainability was a key requirement in the early applications of artificial intelligence in the 1980s; today, the quest for explainability has returned to research laboratories. The goal is to open the black box or make it transparent to end users. Furthermore, artificial intelligence, among its many uses, often supports decision-makers; decisions are typically influenced by our culture and traditions. Once our artificial intelligence platform is freed from any real or potential bias, how can it guarantee the "*cultural identity of artificial intelligence*"? Today, the main artificial intelligence platforms rely primarily on Western data; this can raise concerns that other cultural models are not adequately

¹² This term is chosen in the film "Matrix Revolution" to identify the manager of the virtual world.

represented in our artificial intelligence platforms. Should we create different AI platforms that represent different cultural models? In 2023, Jensen Huang, head of Nvidia, proposed that each country have its own AI system, trained on national data, aligned with national values and culture, built and hosted on local infrastructure. A similar proposal was supported by some UNESCO delegates at the UNESCO WSIS panel in 2024 and replicated in some AI for Good sessions in 2025.

5. Ethics and rules like Asimov's laws applied to AI

Ethics, in a very simple definition, is a branch of philosophy that studies human behaviour. The term "*ethics*" finds its root/etymology in the ancient Greek "*ἦθος*" (*ethos*), and refers to the characteristic spirit of a culture, era, or community, manifested in its beliefs and aspirations.

The term "*ethics*" is often associated with the term "*morality*," as in ethics as moral philosophy, the philosophical study of the concepts of moral right and wrong and moral good and evil. The discipline of ethics concerns the fundamental questions of practical decision-making, ultimate value, and the criteria by which human actions can be judged right or wrong. Philosophers have developed their approach to ethics as part of their theory since the earliest stages of thought.¹³

The term "*morality*" is often associated with religions, cultures, professions, or virtually any other group characterized by its own moral perspective (e.g., doctors, biologists, judges, engineers). This outlines the close relationship between ethics and groups or communities.

To properly consider ethics in the field of AI, in line with the above definition derived from *Ethos*, we must consider, in addition to some shared fundamental principles derived primarily from key human rights, several characteristics related to cultural models. This brings us back to the "*localization*" of "*intelligences*". Thus, the question "*Can we build an AI and align it with our values and ethics?*" involves two main aspects: the ability to integrate ethics into the AI system and, at the same time, integrate "*our*" values; localize, or, if you prefer, respect, the ethical values of the community. This directly involves applied ethics and, arguably, the choice of an ethical model, such as normative ethics?

6. Real time decisions and AI ethics

In recent times, attention to ethics has been rooted in the well-known example of self-driving cars and their legal consequences. However, thanks to the proliferation of AI-driven systems and devices, ethics has acquired a key role in systemic responsibility allocation models that ensure accountability without stifling innovation. The role of followers assigned to regulations is usually due to a desire not to influence or shape the evolution of science and technology.

One of the side effects of innovation, from breaking online news to the stock market, is the pursuit of real-time: reactions must be immediate. The initial trend in the transition from humans to AI systems, usually associated with "*black boxes*" considered human supervision unnecessary and even superfluous, as it created a significant delay compared to decisions and actions that AI could execute on the fly. This translates into entrusting critical decisions to automated decision-making software, with no room for human intervention and unpredictable ethical conflicts. As we all know, this approach has already caused some inconveniences and even disasters. The Tokyo Stock Exchange, the Boeing 373 Max, some self-driving systems, and so on. The unbridgeable gap between AI's real-time decisions and those evaluated by humans raises ethical, legal, and practical questions.

7. AI in jurisprudence

Jurisprudence is closely linked to ethics. Following the current trend of integrating AI into decision-making across a wide range of sectors, the legal system will soon face the problem of assigning liability when AI systems are involved in or cause harm. Taking the well-known car accident as an example, in addition to potential ethical and cultural differences (East vs. West: save the child, save

¹³ E.g. at the Roman age we can mention the treaty "De finibus bonorum et malorum (On the Supreme Good)" [9 – Cicero 45 B.C.].

the elderly), the analysis will take into account the design and performance of the hardware side (sensors, actuators, design, redundancy, etc.) and the logic side, seeking to understand the logical pattern followed by the system, usually without human supervision, and, last but not least, a mix of negative circumstances resulting from a negative combination of exceptions on both sides. All these aspects, not to mention the other vehicles involved in the case, environmental conditions, physical road conditions, etc. If we consider some cases in a more advanced field, such as aeronautics, it's clear that several additional parameters will make the assignment more difficult: regular updates, compliance with mandatory updates or notification forms, etc.

How will jurisprudence define a proper methodology to evaluate AI decision-making case? While a normal algorithmic decision-making system can be analysed, evaluated, or modified, the dynamic output of the AI system will make the case more complex. This also applies to tort-based approaches, which address the unintended behaviour of a decision-making system that, due to an unpredictable set of inputs, deviated from the correct course of action. Tort-based approaches involve using the tort law framework to assign responsibility for harm and provide remedies to victims, often focusing on corrective justice. In the case described above, we are potentially faced with a set of negative circumstances that, taken together, unpredictably caused a disaster. Again, we essentially return to the chain of fact-checking and likely seek to identify the source of the problem and assign responsibility. The use of algorithmic procedures in already digitalized work environments typically divides accountability and liability issues into two categories. Some operational areas typically submit the application's source code to the relevant authorities for review and archiving, while still assigning responsibility for it to the organization's internal manager. In this case, regardless of whether the source code is provided or not, liability falls on the person guaranteeing the results. In the event of damage, ordinary case law applies, with no specific guidance regarding the software, except for potential legal recourse against the software developer and loss of confidence in the product. This is typically the case, for example, with structural analysis or mechanical design tools. This also applies to algorithmic software: whether we add a little AI or rely entirely on AI systems, the approach could potentially differ. If the AI module provides output to a human supervisor, we'll likely revert to the previous "*algorithm-based*" approach, where responsibility falls on the human. If the AI module connects directly to the operational side, responsibility is likely attributed to the human in charge of the operation, but in both cases, there's no feedback to the technology. In both cases, the AI is not held accountable, so ideally, the same or similar damage can happen again. Of course, if the damage is made public and related information is shared, trust in the AI system will suffer, but is this enough? As with uncertain attribution of responsibility, should we mandate mandatory insurance for any potentially harmful AI system as partial compensation for the victims? In such a situation, how can insurance companies assess the risks and allocate the related policy costs?

Moving on to another sector, how can risk managers consider the role and behaviour of AI and Gen AI? Recently, thanks to the attractiveness of AI-based applications, a range of management and decision-making tasks are being delegated to AI systems, not always supervised by humans. This new approach makes risk assessment much more difficult and often requires multivariate analysis, as this specific aspect is usually not included in the scenario analysed by the intelligent application, which is often responsible for optimizing one or more resources. Some AI applications are tasked with optimizing project management plans, without providing explanations of the underlying logic or the specific aspect deemed in need of optimization. Risk managers receive the process output from a sort of black box and must analyse it to identify the potential risks associated with that specific configuration. This often leads to a "*snapshot*" of the process rather than analysing the full "*video*". Research laboratories are investing time and resources to "*open*" the black boxes and provide explanations for the results. There is a clear need to develop systemic models for allocating responsibility that ensure accountability without stifling innovation. As has already happened in similar situations, one of the first steps is to identify any potential relationship with traditional situations to link the specific case to traditional case law. One of the notable differences is the lack of

a predefined algorithmic procedure that can be analysed and modified. At first glance, it seems much more like a liability competition between humans and AI. Furthermore, there's a possibility that such cases could be handled directly by "*AI judges*" in the future, given that several AI systems already exist to support lawyers, starting with providing analysis of the enormous number of documents, rulings, and laws related to similar cases. Are there plans to use AI to resolve low-impact cases, as a concrete opportunity to address the problem of excessive liability in some courts?

8. Conclusions

Digital technology has traditionally been conceived to benefit society in various areas: health, work, safety, security, outcomes, and more. Over the past twenty years, some potential drawbacks have become evident; digital technology is sometimes trapping us; we've been confronted with the potential "*dual use*" of this friendly technology. Today, the rapid exploitation of AI and its pervasiveness in nearly every area of our daily lives raises several questions and concerns, including: Does AI always offer advantages or are there disadvantages? Will AI outcomes comply with the ethical principles shared by our community? Given AI's role as a decision-maker, how can we assign responsibility and liability in the event of harm? Is there a risk that AI intervention could lead to limitations on human rights or discrimination? This paper has highlighted some of the potential issues related to assigning responsibilities and obligations in the case of AI-driven and next-generation AI systems. Today, given current trends and the increasingly important role of digital technologies, ethics must always be the fundamental reference point in the development, customization, and use of technologies. It is essential to keep humans at the centre of the loop and respect human rights and ethics.

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