Opinion
Guest Voices



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Thomas Reese

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After I sent a Jesuit lawyer an analysis from the Brookings Institution on how rapid advances in artificial intelligence could revolutionize the legal profession, he got even by asking ChatGPT to write "a column on AI, written in the style of Thomas Reese, SJ."

I've appended it below, with mixed feelings: It is a good first draft, but thankfully my editor tells me I will not be replaced by an AI. Even if it does, there's an upside: The AI could continue cranking out my columns long after I am dead. I may lose my job, but I would be immortal.

Since I've been writing weekly columns for more than 20 years, the AI program, which draws from relevant writing already available on the internet, had lots of data to mine. Its analysis, too, is nuanced and raises important ethical issues.

Notably missing from Chat GPT's analysis, however, is any commentary from the Vatican and Pope Francis about AI, which I would have included.

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At a meeting in the Vatican in January, according to Catholic News Service, Francis told tech-industry leaders to "ensure that the discriminatory use of these instruments does not take root at the expense of the most fragile and excluded. It is not acceptable that the decision about someone's life and future be entrusted to an algorithm."

The pope hoped that the technology would be used "at the service of the common good of all and the care of the common home."

At the end of the conference, according to CNS, Catholic, Jewish and Muslim representatives signed a declaration calling on AI researchers to engage with ethicists and religious leaders to develop a framework for the ethical use of AI.

My generation needs to apologize to the class of 2022

They called for "the development of an artificial intelligence that serves every person and humanity as a whole; that respects the dignity of the human person, so that every individual can benefit from the advances of technology; and that does not have as its sole goal greater profit or the gradual replacement of people in the workplace."

Below is the column by ChatGPT in the style of Thomas Reese, SJ, unedited.

As a Jesuit priest, I have always believed that our human capacity for reason and thought is one of the greatest gifts that we have been given. In the last few decades, however, we have witnessed a new and powerful tool emerge: artificial intelligence (AI). While AI has undoubtedly brought about a host of benefits, it has also given rise to concerns about its impact on human dignity and autonomy.

On one hand, AI has enabled us to make tremendous strides in fields such as medicine, transportation, and communication. From self-driving cars to virtual assistants, the technology has made our lives easier and more efficient. AI has also helped us to better understand complex systems and to make more accurate

predictions about everything from the weather to financial markets.

However, as we embrace the benefits of AI, we must also be cautious about its potential negative consequences. One of the most pressing concerns is the impact of AI on human work and employment. As machines become increasingly capable of performing complex tasks, many jobs that were once done by humans are being automated. This could result in significant job losses and economic upheaval, particularly for those in low-skilled jobs.

Another concern is the potential loss of human autonomy and decision-making power. As AI becomes more advanced, it may become increasingly difficult for humans to understand and control its actions. This could result in a loss of accountability and responsibility, which could have serious ethical implications.

Change is not easy in the Catholic Church, whether Vatican II or Pope Francis

Moreover, we must also consider the potential impact of AI on human relationships and social structures. As machines become more adept at understanding human behavior and emotions, they may be able to replace human interactions in areas such as education and healthcare. This could lead to a loss of empathy and human connection, which are essential to our sense of well-being and fulfillment.

Given these concerns, it is clear that we must approach the development and deployment of AI with caution and prudence. We must ensure that we are using this technology to enhance, rather than replace, human abilities and capacities. We must also be vigilant in our efforts to ensure that AI is used in ways that are consistent with our values and principles.

In conclusion, while AI has the potential to bring about many benefits, we must approach it with care and caution. As we continue to develop this technology, we must be mindful of its impact on human dignity, autonomy, and relationships. By doing so, we can ensure that AI is used to serve humanity, rather than the other way around.

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