Vatican dicasteries publish new AI document.

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On 28 January, the dicasteries for the Doctrine of the Faith and for Culture and Education have published a document which highlights the potential and the challenges of artificial intelligence in the areas of education, the economy, labour, health, human and international relations, and war.

The Pope's warnings about Artificial Intelligence in recent years provide the outline for "Antiqua et Nova," the "Note on the relationship between artificial intelligence and human intelligence," that offers the results of a mutual reflection between the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Dicastery for Culture and Education. The new document is addressed especially to "those entrusted with transmitting the faith," but also to "those who share the conviction that scientific and technological advances should be directed toward serving the human person and the common good" [5].

In 117 paragraphs, "Antiqua et Nova" highlights challenges and opportunities of the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the fields of education, economy, work, health, relationships, and warfare. In the latter sphere, for instance, the document warns of the AI's potential to increase "the instruments of war well beyond the scope of human oversight and precipitating a destabilizing arms race, with catastrophic consequences for human rights" [99].

Specifically, the document lists not only the risks but also the progress associated with AI, which it encourages as "part of the collaboration of man and woman with God" [2]. However, it does not avoid the concerns that come with all innovations, whose effects are still unpredictable.

Distinguishing between AI and human intelligence.

Several paragraphs of the Note are devoted to the distinction between AI and human intelligence. Quoting Pope Francis, the document affirms that "the very use of the word 'intelligence' in connection to AI 'can prove misleading'... in light of this, AI should not be seen as an artificial form of human intelligence, but as a product of it" [35]. "Like any product of human ingenuity, AI can also be directed toward positive or negative ends" [40]. "AI 'could introduce important innovations'" [48] but it also risks aggravating

situations of discrimination, poverty, "digital divide," and social inequalities [52]. "the concentration of the power over mainstream AI applications in the hands of a few powerful companies raises significant ethical concerns," including "the risk that AI could be manipulated for personal or corporate gain or to direct public opinion for the benefit of a specific industry" [53].

War.

With reference to war, "Antiqua et Nova" stresses that autonomous and lethal weapons systems capable of "identifying and striking targets without direct human intervention are a "cause for grave ethical concern" [100]. It notes that Pope Francis has called for their use to be banned since they pose "an 'existential risk' by having the potential to act in ways that could threaten the survival of entire regions or even of humanity itself" [101]. "This danger demands serious attention," the document says, "reflecting the long-standing concern about technologies that grant war 'an uncontrollable destructive power over great numbers of innocent civilians,' without even sparing children" [101].

Human relations.

On human relations, the document notes that AI can lead to "harmful isolation" [58], that "anthropomorphizing AI" poses problems for children's growth [60] and that misrepresenting AI as a person is "a grave ethical violation" if this is done "for fraudulent purposes." Similarly, "using AI to deceive in other contexts—such as education or in human relationships, including the sphere of sexuality—is also to be considered immoral and requires careful oversight" [62].

Economy and labour.

The same vigilance is called for in the economic-financial sphere. "Antiqua et Nova" notes that, especially in the field of labour, "while AI promises to boost productivity... current approaches to the technology can paradoxically deskill workers, subject them to automated surveillance, and relegate them to rigid and repetitive tasks" [67].

Health.

The Note also dedicates ample space to the issue of healthcare. Recalling the "immense potential" in various applications in the medical field, it warns that if AI were to replace the doctor-patient relationship, it would risk "worsening the loneliness that often accompanies illness" [73]. It also warns that "the integration of AI into healthcare also poses the risk of amplifying other existing disparities in access to medical care," with the risk of "reinforcing a 'medicine for the rich' model, where those with financial means benefit from advanced preventative tools and personalized health information while others struggle to access even basic services" [76].

Education.

In the field of education, "Antiqua et Nova" notes that "AI presents both opportunities and challenges." If used prudently, AI can improve access to education and offer "immediate feedback" to students [80]. One problem is that many programmes "merely provide answers instead of prompting students to arrive at answers themselves or write text for themselves"; which can lead to a failure to develop critical thinking skills [82]. The note also warns of the "biased or fabricated information" and "fake news" some programmes can generate [84].

Fake News and Deepfakes.

On the subject of fake news, the document warns of the serious risk of AI "generating manipulated content and false information" [85], which becomes worse when it is spread with the aim of deceiving or causing harm [87]. "Antiqua et Nova" insists that "Those who produce and share AI-generated content should always exercise diligence in verifying the truth of what they disseminate and, in all cases, should 'avoid the sharing of words and images that are degrading of human beings, that promote hatred and intolerance, that debase the goodness and intimacy of human sexuality or that exploit the weak and vulnerable'" [89].

Privacy and control.

On privacy and control, the Note points out that some types of data can go so far as to touch "upon the individual's interiority, perhaps even their conscience" [90], with the danger of everything becoming "a kind of spectacle to be examined and inspected" [92]. Digital surveillance "can also be misused to exert control over the lives of believers and how they express their faith" [90].

Common home – Care of Creation.

On the topic of the care of creation, "Antiqua et Nova" says, "AI has many promising applications for improving our relationship with our 'common home'" [95]. "At the same time, current AI models and the hardware required to support them consume vast amounts of energy and water, significantly contributing to CO_2 emissions and straining resources" [96]

The relationship with God.

Finally, the Note warns against the risk of humanity becoming "enslaved to its own work" [105]. Artificial intelligence, "Antiqua et Nova" insists, "should be used only as a tool to complement human intelligence rather than replace its richness" [112].

Source: Vaticannews.ie

https://catholicnews.ie/vatican-dicasteries-publish-new-ai-document/

A dicastery means a department of the Roman Curia, the set of Vatican administrative institutions that assist a pope in the government of the Catholic Church.

The Roman Curia is the collection of departments or ministries which assist the Pope in the government of the Universal Church.

Overview:

Document Title: "Antiqua et Nova"

Published by: Dicasteries for the Doctrine of the Faith and for Culture and Education

Date: 28 January 2025

Focus: Potential and challenges of AI in various fields

Key Areas Addressed.

Education:

AI can improve access and provide immediate feedback.

Risks include failure to develop critical thinking and spread of biased information.

Economy and Labour:

AI promises productivity boosts but may deskill workers and increase surveillance.

Health:

AI has immense potential but risks worsening loneliness and amplifying disparities in access to care.

Human Relations:

AI can lead to isolation and ethical concerns in misrepresenting AI as human.

War:

Autonomous weapons pose grave ethical concerns and potential existential risks.

Ethical Concerns:

Concentration of AI power in few companies.

Risks of manipulation for personal or corporate gain.

General Warnings and Recommendations

AI should complement, not replace, human intelligence.

Vigilance is needed to ensure AI serves the common good and respects human dignity.

This document emphasizes the need for careful oversight and ethical considerations in the development and application of AI.

Source: Conversation With Co-pilot 19-02-25.