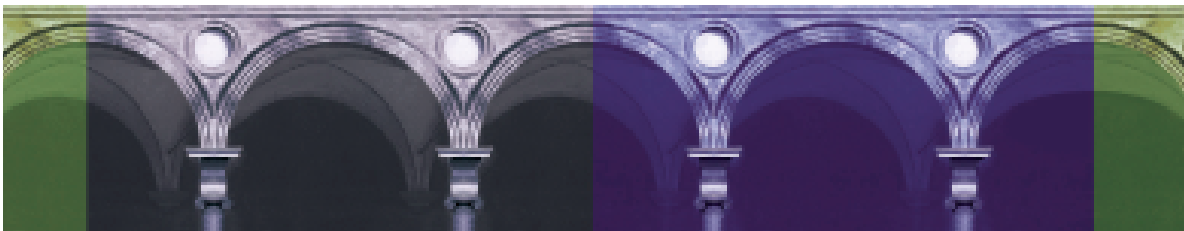


Dizionario
di dottrina sociale della Chiesa

Le cose nuove del XXI secolo



Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Centro di Ateneo per la dottrina sociale della Chiesa
Pubblicazione periodica online
<https://www.dizionariodottrinasociale.it>
Fascicolo 23 - Luglio - Settembre 2026



VITA E PENSIERO

Dizionario di dottrina sociale della Chiesa

Le cose nuove del XXI secolo

Fascicolo 2026, 3 – Luglio-Settembre

Pubblicazione trimestrale / Four issues per year

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Le voci del Dizionario sono disponibili *open access* sul sito <https://www.dizionariodottrinasociale.it>

La rivista ha adottato il sistema di *double-blind review*

Centro di Ateneo per la dottrina sociale della Chiesa: centro.dottrinasociale@unicatt.it

Redazione / Editorial Board: dizionario.dottrinasociale@unicatt.it

2024 Vita e Pensiero. Pubblicazioni dell'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

Largo Agostino Gemelli, 1 - 20123 Milano

Proprietario: Istituto Giuseppe Toniolo di Studi Superiori

Registrazione del Tribunale di Milano del 9 Febbraio 2021, n. 24.

Registered with the Milan Court February 9th, 2021, no. 24.

Pubblicità inferiore al 45%

ISSN (digitale): 2784-8884

www.vitaepensiero.it

Libri Ebook Riviste - Anteprime Notizie Interviste

Anche su     



Presentazione

Il *Dizionario di dottrina sociale della Chiesa. Le cose nuove del XXI secolo* è la rivista trimestrale online ad accesso libero curata dal Centro di Ateneo di dottrina sociale della Chiesa ed edita da Vita e Pensiero, la casa editrice della Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. Ogni numero della rivista raccoglie in un fascicolo i nuovi contributi che vengono aggiunti al *Dizionario*. I fascicoli pubblicati sono disponibili nella sezione “Percorsi” del sito, da cui possono essere scaricati gratuitamente.

La rivista intende raggiungere le persone interessate a capire le sfide del presente alla luce dell’insegnamento sociale della Chiesa, attraverso il dialogo fra i risultati della ricerca scientifica su un dato oggetto, in un orizzonte interdisciplinare, e il Magistero della Chiesa cattolica. Questo metodo dialogico riprende e aggiorna il volume *Dizionario di dottrina sociale della Chiesa. Scienze sociali e Magistero*, Vita e Pensiero 2004.

Molte sono le “cose nuove” di questo inizio del XXI secolo: nuove tecnologie; nuove forme di comunicazione e di interazione umana; nuovi attori e nuove sfide per la pace e la convivenza globale. Pensiamo in particolare all’enorme questione ambientale, alla crescente disuguaglianza dentro e fra le nazioni, all’esplosione di nuovi conflitti, alle emergenze sanitarie ed educative, alle sfide demografiche, all’impatto dell’intelligenza artificiale sulla vita quotidiana delle persone e delle comunità...

Nel mezzo delle “cose nuove”, siamo convinti che la dottrina sociale della Chiesa costituisca una risorsa preziosa per vivere da protagonisti il “cambio d’epoca” che stiamo attraversando. In questo orizzonte, la rivista vuole essere uno strumento agile per conoscere, per capire, per orientare l’azione.



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Ripensare le relazioni

È difficile negarlo: siamo talmente abituati a concepirci come individui che si autodeterminano da essere – quasi quasi – tentati di crederci. eppure sappiamo bene che la nostra storia, personale e sociale, è intessuta di relazioni, talvolta consapevolmente scelte, ma molto più spesso semplicemente date. Poche cose sono più urgenti, oggi, del prendere sul serio l'invito del Magistero ad un "approfondimento critico e valoriale della categoria della relazione" (Caritas in veritate, 53). Un approfondimento che certamente ci conviene, per capire e per agire consapevolmente nella società, locale e globale.

DAL CAREGIVER AL CAREGIVING: UNA QUESTIONE DI GIUSTIZIA SOCIALE

Donatella Bramanti, Sara Nanetti

Il contributo propone una lettura sociologica del caregiving come processo relazionale che coinvolge famiglie, reti di prossimità, servizi e istituzioni. Superando una visione centrata sul singolo caregiver, analizza le configurazioni della cura, le disuguaglianze di genere e le sfide della conciliazione tra assistenza e lavoro. Il dialogo con il Magistero della Chiesa evidenzia il valore della cura come espressione di dignità, reciprocità e corresponsabilità sociale.

Parole chiave: *Caregiver, Caregiving, Cura, Sussidiarietà, Reti sociali.*

From caregiver to caregiving: a question of social justice

This contribution offers a sociological interpretation of caregiving as a relational process involving families, informal support networks, services, and institutions. Moving beyond a focus on the individual caregiver, it examines different care configurations, gender inequalities, and the challenges of reconciling care responsibilities with employment. Drawing on the Social Teaching of the Church, it highlights care as an expression of human dignity, reciprocity, and shared social responsibility.

Keywords: *Caregiver, Caregiving, Care, Subsidiarity, Social networks.*

Il caregiving, una forma di solidarietà familiare

In Italia la solidarietà familiare (vedi voce: *Famiglia e solidarietà tra le generazioni*) rappresenta una pratica condivisa attraverso cui vengono fronteggiate la malattia, la disabilità e le diverse forme di perdita dell'autonomia. Quando una persona diviene fragile, un familiare o un membro della rete di prossimità assume frequentemente una presenza continuativa, facendosi carico di esigenze che eccedono la sola assistenza materiale. Il termine *caregiver* designa, in questa prospettiva, chi presta stabilmente cura a una persona con la quale intrattiene un legame affettivo

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o familiare e che necessita di sostegno nello svolgimento della vita quotidiana. Interrogare sociologicamente tale figura significa, tuttavia, considerare non soltanto le prestazioni erogate, ma anche gli obblighi reciproci, le appartenenze e le dinamiche relazionali che orientano l'assunzione della responsabilità assistenziale e il ricorso alle risorse esterne.

La rilevanza sociale del *caregiving* contrasta con la sua debole visibilità pubblica. Pur attraversando in modo ricorrente le biografie familiari, la cura prestata a una persona fragile continua spesso ad apparire come una vicenda privata, quasi un accidente della vita domestica, più che come una dimensione ordinaria della convivenza e una questione propriamente sociale e pubblica.

I compiti della cura

La cura informale comprende un insieme composito di attività che vanno dall'assistenza nelle funzioni fondamentali e strumentali della vita quotidiana, alla gestione degli adempimenti economici e amministrativi, fino all'accompagnamento sanitario, al sostegno emotivo e, in alcuni casi, all'esecuzione di compiti di natura medica e infermieristica. Il *caregiver* esercita pertanto una presenza che attraversa molteplici dimensioni dell'esistenza della persona assistita e che, protraendosi talvolta per periodi considerevoli, incide sull'organizzazione del tempo, sulle relazioni, sulla salute e sulla partecipazione lavorativa.

La natura relazionale della cura la rende intrinsecamente ambivalente, poiché, a seconda delle condizioni entro cui viene esercitata, può configurarsi tanto come risorsa quanto come vincolo; tuttavia, la distinzione tra scelta e obbligazione è meno netta di quanto potrebbe apparire, se in molti casi la disponibilità alla cura nasce dall'affetto e dal riconoscimento di una responsabilità verso una persona significativa, in altri essa viene assunta in assenza di alternative concretamente praticabili. La distribuzione dei compiti non si produce, del resto, casualmente, ma prende forma entro la storia e le dinamiche proprie del sistema familiare; essa dipende dalla qualità delle relazioni pregresse, dalla capacità dei diversi membri di negoziare compiti e obblighi e dagli equilibri di potere che attraversano la famiglia.

Anche il Magistero della Chiesa ha fatto proprio il termine *caregiver*, in particolare, Papa Francesco ha definito i *caregiver* "buoni Samaritani" e figure insostituibili, lodando il loro amorevole sacrificio quotidiano

per malati, anziani e disabili. Nei suoi discorsi, il Pontefice sottolinea l'importanza di non lasciare sole le famiglie, evidenziando che l'assistenza è un atto di dignità umana e di speranza, e una vera "arte" basata su dedizione, tenerezza e gratuità.

Dal caregiver al caregiving

La prevalente concentrazione degli studi sulla figura del *caregiver* e sulle conseguenze individuali dell'assistenza rischia di lasciare in ombra il carattere diffuso della cura. Chi la presta non agisce mai in un vuoto relazionale. Intorno alla diade costituita dal *caregiver* e dalla persona assistita si dispongono familiari, amici, vicini, professionisti, servizi e istituzioni, la cui presenza e/o assenza e la capacità di coordinamento, modifica profondamente l'esperienza del prendersi cura. Diviene pertanto necessario spostare l'attenzione dal singolo soggetto all'intero processo di *caregiving*, inteso come una rete di relazioni sociali che si costituisce e si riorganizza nel tempo, distribuendo in modo più o meno equo compiti, risorse e responsabilità. Tale mutamento di prospettiva consente di riconoscere la cura come un processo capace di trasformare le relazioni familiari, le traiettorie biografiche e il rapporto tra reti primarie e sistemi di welfare.

Prestare cura significa dare forma a un processo insieme interpersonale e sociale, nel quale convergono la disponibilità psicoaffettiva, le pratiche concrete dell'assistenza e la decisione di assumere responsabilmente una presenza continuativa (vedi *voce: Il valore dell'assistenza e la centralità della persona nel processo di cura*). Il *caregiving*, proprio in quanto processo relazionale che si estende nel tempo, produce conseguenze sul piano micro, incidendo sulla persona; sul piano meso, trasformando famiglie, reti parentali ed équipe professionali; e sul piano macro, interpellando i contesti sociali e istituzionali (Boccacin 2026).

La cura mette in circolazione attribuzioni di valore che sedimentano, come patrimonio immateriale, nella memoria della persona assistita, del *caregiver* e di quanti partecipano, anche in posizione collaterale, alla relazione. Interpretato in questa prospettiva, il *caregiving* prende forma nel ciclo di vita familiare, spesso in corrispondenza di eventi critici destinati a succedersi e a protrarsi nel tempo.

La responsabilità nelle reti

L'assunzione di una responsabilità assistenziale tende, inoltre, a riorganizzare le reti primarie, includendo progressivamente figure appartenenti alla cerchia parentale, amicale o di prossimità e, in alcuni casi, soggetti remunerati, quali le assistenti familiari. Le risorse informali possono costituire un sostegno decisivo, ma anche un vincolo capace di orientare e restringere i percorsi biografici. Ciò appare particolarmente evidente nei giovani *caregiver*, la cui progettualità futura può risultare compromessa, e nei genitori di figli con disabilità, la cui esistenza viene profondamente ridefinita anche nelle relazioni più intime e significative.

Prendersi cura di una persona vulnerabile modifica, dunque, la morfologia delle reti preesistenti, rafforzando alcuni legami, generandone di nuovi o determinandone l'interruzione. Il *caregiving* oltrepassa sempre l'azione del singolo e produce effetti sull'intero reticolo relazionale. Come emerge da una rilevante ricerca condotta a livello nazionale (Bramanti *et al.*, 2026), le configurazioni del *caregiving* possono essere lette non come tipi chiusi, ma come diverse modalità di distribuzione della responsabilità entro la rete. A un estremo si colloca il *caregiving* solitario, nel quale il carico assistenziale ricade quasi interamente su un solo soggetto; all'estremo opposto il *caregiving* diffuso, in cui una pluralità di attori familiari, amicali, professionali e comunitari concorre alla tenuta della cura.

Tra queste polarità si situano forme intermedie: il *caregiving* condiviso, sostenuto dalla presenza di un *co-caregiver* capace di sostituire il referente principale, e il *caregiving* ricomposto, nel quale compiti diversi vengono distribuiti secondo una specializzazione pratica, emotiva, amministrativa o relazionale. La questione decisiva non è dunque classificare le famiglie, ma comprendere quanto la cura sia socialmente isolata o, al contrario, sostenuta da una trama plurale di corresponsabilità.

Configurazione	Distribuzione della responsabilità	Rischio prevalente	Risorsa prevalente
Caregiving solitario	Un solo soggetto sostiene quasi tutto il carico	Isolamento, burden, impoverimento biografico	Continuità della presenza
Caregiving condiviso	Caregiver principale + co-caregiver	Dipendenza da una dia-de ristretta	Sostituzione e sollievo
Caregiving ricomposto	Pochi attori con compiti differenziati	Frammentazione/ coordinamento difficile	Specializzazione funzionale
Caregiving diffuso	Rete familiare, amicale, comunitaria e professionale	Dispersione delle responsabilità	Corresponsabilità e capitale sociale

Le differenti forme di *caregiving* si dispiegano, a loro volta, in contesti dotati in misura variabile di reti formali e informali. Accanto ai servizi professionali pubblici e agli interventi del Terzo settore possono operare vicini, volontari e altre figure prive di specifiche competenze assistenziali, ma capaci di offrire prossimità e alleggerimento del carico.

Genere, cura e conciliazione

La prospettiva relazionale consente di osservare anche il modo in cui la cura viene assegnata, riconosciuta e negoziata. Il *caregiving*, infatti, non si distribuisce in modo socialmente neutro: esso prende forma dentro aspettative familiari, codici di genere e differenti legittimazioni morali della disponibilità verso l'altro. La disuguaglianza non riguarda soltanto il numero di ore dedicate all'assistenza, ma la titolarità complessiva della cura: chi deve accorgersi dei bisogni, anticiparli, coordinarli, sostenerne il peso emotivo e garantirne la continuità (Boccacin e Nanetti, 2026).

Nelle narrazioni raccolte, le esperienze femminili mostrano più frequentemente un modello di orchestrazione complessiva, nel quale la *caregiver* anticipa i bisogni, coordina terapie, adempimenti e vita domestica, sostiene gli equilibri emotivi e mantiene la trama delle relazioni familiari. La cura assume così il carattere di una responsabilità pervasiva, capace di saturare il tempo e di estendersi ben oltre l'esecuzione delle singole prestazioni. Le narrazioni maschili restituiscono più spesso una presenza circoscritta ad attività concrete e temporalmente delimitate, organizzate secondo compiti definiti. Accanto a tali configurazioni emerge una forma più ibrida, orientata all'autonomia, nella quale pro-

tezione e accompagnamento si coniugano con il riconoscimento delle capacità e delle possibilità di sviluppo della persona assistita. Questi modelli non costituiscono disposizioni naturali, ma configurazioni socialmente apprese, suscettibili di negoziazione e redistribuzione all'interno delle famiglie e delle reti di appartenenza.

La diseguale attribuzione della responsabilità assistenziale produce conseguenze particolarmente rilevanti sul piano lavorativo, soprattutto le donne (Bramanti, Carradore, 2025). In Italia, la possibilità di conciliare cura e occupazione rimane largamente dipendente dalla cultura delle singole organizzazioni e dall'effettiva accessibilità degli strumenti di tutela. Alla flessibilità offerta da alcuni contesti si contrappongono rigidità orarie, scarsa sensibilità organizzativa e difficoltà nell'utilizzo delle misure disponibili.

Il Buon Samaritano: prossimità e corresponsabilità

L'agire quotidiano del *caregiver* rende manifesta una verità antropologica che le culture dell'individualismo e dell'autonomia assoluta tendono frequentemente a occultare, ma che la dottrina sociale della Chiesa ha costantemente custodito. La persona non è un individuo autosufficiente, racchiuso nella propria indipendenza, bensì un essere generato, sostenuto e accompagnato da legami lungo l'intero ciclo di vita. Nascere, crescere, ammalarsi, invecchiare e morire sono passaggi nei quali affiora la costitutiva relazionalità dell'esistenza umana: secondo un'espressione ricorrente nel magistero di Francesco, «nessuno si salva da solo». Muovendo dal principio dell'intangibile dignità della persona (*Compendio della dottrina sociale della Chiesa*, 2004, 132), la relazione di cura può essere riconosciuta come dimensione essenziale della vita comune e come forma eminente dell'impegno dei fedeli laici nel servizio alla persona umana (cfr. *Compendio*, 552). La promozione di tale dignità costituisce infatti il «compito essenziale, anzi, in un certo senso, il compito centrale e unificante del servizio che la Chiesa e, in essa, i fedeli laici sono chiamati a rendere alla famiglia degli uomini» (*Christifideles laici*, 1988, 37).

La parabola del buon Samaritano, assunta da *Fratelli tutti* come paradigma della fraternità sociale, offre la matrice evangelica più incisiva per interpretare la figura del *caregiver*. L'uomo ferito lungo la strada non è soltanto il destinatario di un soccorso, ma la manifestazione concreta della condizione umana esposta all'abbandono, alla violenza e all'indif-

ferenza. La distinzione decisiva che definisce colui che se ne prende cura non interpella appartenenze etniche, religiose o professionali, bensì chi “passa oltre” e chi consente alla vulnerabilità dell’altro di interrompere il proprio cammino. Il Samaritano offre prossimità, tempo, risorse, competenza pratica e continuità; coinvolgendo l’albergatore, mostra inoltre che la cura non può esaurirsi in un gesto isolato, ma domanda una trama più ampia di responsabilità (cfr. *Fratelli tutti*, 2020, 63, 67-68, 78). In questa luce, il *caregiver* supera tanto la retorica dell’eroismo individuale quanto la riduzione tecnico-assistenziale, configurandosi come colui che accetta che la fragilità altrui incida sull’ordinamento del proprio tempo, delle proprie energie e priorità, traducendo la prossimità in responsabilità durevole e responsiva.

Accompagnare senza sostituire

La categoria di ecologia integrale elaborata in *Laudato si’* colloca la cura della fragilità entro l’ordito complessivo della convivenza, mostrando come la non autosufficienza non interPELLI soltanto la medicina, i servizi o la famiglia, ma investa l’organizzazione del lavoro, dell’abitare, degli spazi, della produzione e delle responsabilità sociali (cfr. *Laudato si’*, 2015, 137-139). La vulnerabilità diviene così criterio rivelatore della qualità morale di una società, a seconda che la cura sia occultata e privatizzata oppure riconosciuta quale dimensione dello sviluppo umano integrale. In questa prospettiva si muove anche il Magistero sulla malattia e sulla disabilità, con il *Messaggio per la XXXII Giornata Mondiale del Malato* (2024) che riconduce la condizione della persona alla totalità delle sue relazioni, mentre *Samaritanus bonus* (2020), distinguendo l’inguaribile dall’incurabile, afferma la permanenza del dovere di cura anche quando viene meno la possibilità della guarigione (cfr. *Samaritanus bonus*, I). La perdita dell’autonomia funzionale non comporta, pertanto, alcuna diminuzione della dignità, né autorizza la sostituzione della persona fragile nello spazio sociale. I pronunciamenti sulla disabilità, dal *Discorso all’Istituto Serafico di Assisi* a *Fratelli tutti*, collocano piuttosto l’accompagnamento nell’orizzonte della partecipazione e della piena cittadinanza civile ed ecclesiale (cfr. *Fratelli tutti*, 98). Al *caregiver* compete così non l’occupazione della voce altrui, ma la custodia delle condizioni entro cui la persona possa continuare a essere riconosciuta come soggetto di capacità, relazioni e appartenenza.

Quale responsabilità pubblica

La crescente rilevanza del *caregiving* interpella in misura sempre più intensa tanto le scienze sociali quanto il Magistero della Chiesa. Tale centralità si iscrive nelle trasformazioni demografiche maturate negli ultimi decenni, segnate dall'incremento della popolazione anziana, dal prolungamento della vita e dalla contestuale contrazione delle reti familiari. Questi processi accrescono la domanda di assistenza e rendono più complesso assicurarne continuità e adeguatezza. Il *caregiving* informale, soprattutto familiare, non può pertanto essere interpretato come una risorsa esclusivamente privata, poiché dalla sua disponibilità dipendono in misura crescente la sostenibilità dei sistemi di welfare e la qualità della giustizia sociale.

Le relazioni informali di cura, pur frequentemente celebrate come bene sociale, rimangono spesso scarsamente riconosciute nella loro consistenza materiale e simbolica, mentre i costi che comportano si distribuiscono in modo profondamente diseguale. Quando i servizi risultano insufficienti, intermittenti o difficilmente accessibili, la responsabilità tende a concentrarsi su pochi soggetti, aggravando le disuguaglianze di genere, classe e posizione occupazionale e producendo conseguenze differenziate sulla salute, sul reddito e sulle opportunità biografiche. L'inadeguatezza dei sostegni può inoltre generare nuove forme di esclusione e vulnerabilità lungo il processo di invecchiamento.

Su questo sfondo, soprattutto nei sistemi maggiormente dipendenti dalla solidarietà familiare, si delinea un crescente *care gap*, determinato dalla possibilità che l'aumento della domanda di assistenza connesso all'invecchiamento ecceda, nel prossimo futuro, la disponibilità di *caregiver* informali (vedi voce: *L'invecchiamento della popolazione e la condizione anziana*). Il rischio assume particolare rilievo nei Paesi, come l'Italia, nei quali la tenuta dell'assistenza di lungo periodo continua a poggiare in misura considerevole sulle capacità delle famiglie.

Cura e sussidiarietà

In questa prospettiva, la dottrina sociale offre alla ricerca una chiave interpretativa particolarmente feconda. La sussidiarietà non coincide con la ritrazione dell'azione pubblica dinanzi alla famiglia, così come la solidarietà non può essere ridotta a compensazione residuale destinata a in-

tervenire quando le risorse private siano ormai esaurite. Entrambi i principi rinviano alla costruzione di condizioni entro le quali persone, famiglie e corpi intermedi possano esercitare le proprie responsabilità senza essere abbandonati a compiti eccedenti le loro possibilità (cfr. *Compendio della dottrina sociale della Chiesa*, 164-166, 185-188). Il riconoscimento del limite e della fragilità, intrecciando libertà, responsabilità, cura reciproca e solidarietà, impedisce così che la vulnerabilità altrui venga sostenuta da una sola mano (cfr. *Magnifica humanitas*, 2026, 12-13).

Il confronto con il Magistero sollecita inoltre la ricerca a oltrepassare una lettura del *caregiving* centrata esclusivamente sul carico (*burden*). Accanto alla quantità di tempo e di prestazioni, assumono rilievo la qualità delle interdipendenze, l'effettiva possibilità di scegliere e negoziare le responsabilità, il riconoscimento sociale ricevuto e la capacità delle reti e delle istituzioni di custodire congiuntamente la persona assistita e chi ne prende cura.

La ricerca empirica, a sua volta, può contribuire a un ulteriore approfondimento dell'insegnamento sociale della Chiesa, mostrando come il medesimo dovere morale assuma significati ed esiti differenti a seconda delle condizioni temporali, territoriali, economiche e di genere entro le quali viene esercitato. Essa rende visibile la soglia oltre la quale la valorizzazione della solidarietà familiare rischia di convertirsi nella privatizzazione della responsabilità e consente di distinguere la gratuità della cura dalla sua imposizione in assenza di alternative.

Da tale reciproca sollecitazione emerge una concezione più esigente della giustizia della cura e della figura del *caregiver*, fondata tanto sul diritto della persona fragile a ricevere un'assistenza appropriata quanto sulla possibilità di prendersi cura senza essere esposti all'impoverimento, all'isolamento o alla rinuncia al proprio avvenire. In questo orizzonte, i sistemi di welfare sono chiamati a trascendere la funzione meramente compensativa e per configurarsi come ordinamenti pubblici della reciprocità, capaci di tradurre l'interdipendenza umana in corresponsabilità, riconoscimento e giustizia sociale.

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Pace e convivenza

Oggi, molte regioni e comunità hanno smesso di ricordare un tempo in cui vivevano in pace e sicurezza. Altre hanno bruscamente scoperto la fragilità di una pacifica convivenza che appariva quasi scontata, a causa di conflitti razziali, fra gruppi politici, fra interessi contrastanti... La dottrina sociale non solo promuove il rifiuto della guerra e l'attuazione del disarmo; ci ricorda che non c'è pace senza sviluppo, non c'è pace senza perdono, non c'è pace senza giustizia, non c'è pace senza amicizia sociale, non c'è pace senza il prendersi cura della dignità e del bene di tutti.

PEACE AND DIMENSIONS OF CONVIVENCE AMONG PEOPLES

Francesco Avallone

Against the backdrop of death and violence resulting from the escalation of armed conflicts, the paper mentions the United Nations' calls for peace; the contributions of the Catholic Church's social doctrine on peace and global convivence; and the contributions of various disciplines on equitable and inclusive societies. A multidimensional construct for interpreting convivence among peoples is then proposed, defined along seven dimensions, each broken down into three sub-dimensions.

Keywords: *Emergencies, Conflicts, Peace, Convivence, Multilateralism.*

Pace e dimensioni della convivenza tra i popoli

Sullo sfondo del contesto di morte e violenza conseguente alla escalation dei conflitti armati, sono ricordati gli appelli delle Nazioni Unite alla Pace; i contributi della dottrina sociale della Chiesa cattolica sulla pace e la convivenza planetaria; gli apporti di diverse discipline sulle società eque e inclusive. Viene poi proposto un costrutto multidimensionale per una definizione del convivere tra i popoli lungo sette dimensioni, ognuna declinata in tre sottodimensioni.

Parole chiave: *Emergenze, Conflitti, Pace, Convivenza, Multilateralismo.*

The new emergencies

The year 2025 has been marked by a shift in international political balances. There has been an escalation of armed conflicts, with devastating consequences of death, destruction, violence, hunger, and forced displacement. The conviction has gained ground that only weapons can establish new forms of coexistence and development on the planet.

The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025 – the report that the UN prepares annually to update the achievement of the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – presents, with reference to goal 16, “Peace, justice and strong institutions”, an alarming picture: the loss of human life is increasing; the number of children and women

killed is growing; human trafficking is expanding. Significant gaps remain in building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions.

The Institute for Economics and Peace, in presenting *the 2025 Global Peace Index*, notes that world peace continues to decline and that many of the key factors that precede major conflicts – such as growing global militarization – are higher than at the end of World War II. There are currently 59 active interstate conflicts, the highest number since the end of World War II. (*IEP, Global Peace Index, 2025, 4*).

The world's politicians seem incapable of governing complexity or of finding new ways and means for people and populations to live together in peace, harmony and justice. The theme of peace and social convivence has become a new emergency and the great challenge of the future.

Calls for peace and planetary convivence

The UN – in continuity with the principles that had animated the founding of the United Nations Charter to maintain peace and security and respect for human rights – reaffirmed, within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, that peace is a fundamental condition for social and economic development and called for the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, guaranteeing access to justice for all.

In support of this agenda, the United Nations, during the 68th General Assembly on 8 December 2017, adopted the Resolution establishing the *International Day of Living Together in Peace* “as a means of regularly mobilizing the efforts of the international community to promote peace, tolerance, inclusion. The Day aims to uphold the desire to live and act together, united in differences and diversity, in order to build a sustainable world of peace, solidarity and harmony”. The UN's call to create a safer, more peaceful and sustainable world continues in 2024 with the *Pact for the Future*: a declaration that, renewing the commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, focuses on five key areas, among which international peace and security.

This escalation of violence, misery and death could not fail to attract the attention of the religious authorities. Already in 1994, the UNESCO Centre of Catalonia had promoted a Seminar on *The Contributions of Religions to the Culture of Peace* and, in 2019, a major event occurs. Pope

Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb decide to meet in Abu Dhabi on 4 February 2019 to sign the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*.

In this document they declare that they are intervening “in the name of peoples who have lost their security, peace, and the possibility of living together, becoming victims of destruction, calamity and war” and “in the name of this fraternity torn apart by policies of extremism and division, by systems of unrestrained profit or by hateful ideological tendencies that manipulate the actions and the future of men and women” (p. 8).

New calls for peace and global convivence are fueling the International Peace Meeting, titled *Daring to Peace*, promoted by the Community of Sant’Egidio from 26 to 28 October 2025, bringing together representatives of culture, politics, and the major religions.

Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Egypt, states that world peace is held hostage by power relations, the profits of the arms trade, and the war economy, ignoring the principles of law and equity.

Pinchas Goldschmidt, Chief Rabbi and President of the Conference of European Rabbis, reiterates that the world is consumed by the voices of extremists, who propagate war instead of peace, misery instead of prosperity.

Henrik Stubkjær, President of the Lutheran World Federation, states that politicians and religious leaders must share the task of fostering participation and challenging injustice (including through the rule of law).

Numerous interventions from the Catholic community were evident. Among others: Matteo Zuppi, President of the Italian Episcopal Conference; Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem; Fridolin Ambongo Besungu, Archbishop of Kinshasa; and Vitaliy Krivitskiy, Bishop of Kiev-Zhytomyr.

The contribution of the Pontiffs to peace and convivence

Pope Leo XIV concluded the International Meeting *Dare to Peace*, held at the Colosseum on October 28, 2025, in the presence of religious leaders, echoing the words of Pope Francis: “War is never holy, only peace is holy. The world thirsts for peace: it needs a true and solid era of reconciliation, which puts an end to oppression, the display of force, and indifference to law.” Leo XIV reiterated that religions must be kept away from the temptation to become instruments for fuelling nationalism,

ethnicism, and populism (*Address of the Holy Father Leone XIV to Religious Leaders*).

The theme of peace remains central to the speeches of Pope Leo XIV, who, from the evening of his election as Bishop of Rome, beginning with the wish “Peace be with you,” sought to continue, adapting it to the complexity of today’s society, the Catholic Church’s teaching on the theme of peace and convivence. This teaching has ancient origins, as amply documented in the “Peace” entry in this Dictionary, edited by Carlo Maria Martini in 2004. It received a decisive impetus from the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and was continuously updated in the interventions of all the pontiffs of the last century (see table 1).

Thus, in his message for the 59th World Day of Peace on January 1, 2026, Leo XIV states: «*On the political level, the logic of opposition constitutes the most current aspect of a global destabilization that is becoming increasingly dramatic and unpredictable every day*»... «*It is an unprecedented destructive spiral of the juridical and philosophical humanism on which any civilization rests and by which it is protected*».

This approach was reaffirmed in the speech to the Diplomatic Corps on January 9, 2026, during which Leo XIV denounced the weakness of multilateralism. «*War is back in fashion, and a fervor for war is spreading*». It is important for the United Nations to be more effective in pursuing policies aimed at the unity of peoples, a relevant warning in the face of projects that seem to challenge traditional multilateralism.

Tab. 1

Peace and convivence among peoples in the speeches of the Pontiffs of the 20th and 21st centuries

	Leo XIII (1878-1903). In addition to addressing the issues of work and social justice, he emphasizes that “peace implies questioning the system of war and must refer to a social and political order that is equitable” (<i>Praeclara gratulationis</i>, 20 June 1894).
	Pius X (1903-1914). Faced with the outbreak of the First World War, he prayed to God to inspire “the supreme rulers of the Nations with thoughts of peace and not of affliction.” (Apostolic Exhortation <i>Dum Europa</i>, 2 August 1914).
	Benedict XV (1914-1922). After years of war, he puts forward proposals to promote peace by removing the moral force of law from the material force of arms and resorting to the institution of arbitration (<i>Letter to the leaders of the belligerent peoples</i>, 1 August 1917).

	Pius XI (1922-1939). In his appeal to Italians, he addresses the issues of reconciliation, social justice, and dialogue between peoples (<i>Letter in which he asks the Italian bishops to work to restore peace</i> , August 6, 1922).
	Pius XII (1939-1958). As soon as he was elected, he made an appeal: "Nothing is lost with peace. Everything can be lost with war" (<i>Radio message addressed to governments and peoples in the imminent danger of war</i> , 24 August 1939).
	John XXIII (1958-1963). The encyclical <i>Pacem in terris</i> (1963) is a call for peace based on truth, justice, charity, and freedom, criticizing violence and promoting negotiation. Only peace can maintain the fundamental rights that guarantee the possibility of coexistence.
	Paul VI (1963-1978). In his <i>speech at the UN</i> (October 4, 1965), he advocated justice, law, and negotiation in relations between peoples. In his encyclical <i>Populorum progressio</i> , he denounced growing inequalities and the excesses of capitalism. Development based on international cooperation is the new name for peace.
	John Paul I (August 26-September 28/29, 1978). In the six-point program of his pontificate, « <i>Volumus</i> » he stated: « <i>We wish to promote all initiatives that can safeguard and promote peace in a troubled world</i> » (<i>Urbi et Orbi Message</i> , delivered the day after his election, August 27, 1978).
	John Paul II (1978-2005). His commitment to combating war and violence in favor of peace is demonstrated by the 27 messages for the celebration of the Day of Peace from 1979 to 2005. Some titles: <i>To achieve peace, educate for peace</i> (1979); <i>In respecting human rights the true secret of peace</i> (1999).
	Benedict XVI (2005-2013). On October 27, 2011, at the closing of the <i>Day of Dialogue and Prayer for Peace and Justice in the World</i> , he encapsulated the Pope's commitment in a slogan: « <i>No more violence! No more war! No more terrorism! In the name of God, may every religion bring Justice and Peace, Forgiveness and Life, Love to the earth!</i> ».
	Francis (2013-2025). In one of his last speeches, he suggested actions to promote peace: reducing international debt; creating a global financial charter; establishing a Global Fund to eliminate hunger and facilitate activities to promote sustainable development (<i>Message for the 58th World Day of Peace, Forgive us our debts, grant us your peace</i> , January 1, 2025).

Interdisciplinary contributions on equitable and inclusive societies

In a previous work (Avallone, 2025, 5), in order to develop a model for interpreting peaceful convivence among peoples, a synthesis was pre-

sented – to which we refer for the relevant bibliographical references – of studies and researches pertaining to various disciplines to illustrate the condition characterized by a social situation founded on respect, justice and equity and which pertain to the following thematic areas.

Legality

This is the area that concerns the exercise of power within the boundaries established by the laws and international agreements. The complexity of the area is demonstrated by the plurality of meanings of the concept of legality in different institutional contexts. Special emphasis is given to the commitment to avoid various forms of violence, inequality of opportunity and corruption. This area also includes studies on the criteria for electing governments, the separation of powers, and levels of political participation.

Equity

A general theme that, starting from the rational and ethical foundations of equity in international law, includes studies on the norms that regulate, authorize or prohibit, specific actions in the interaction among national institutions. Numerous contributions focus on identifying practices that govern impartial access to resources and inequalities that violate equity and human rights norms.

Tolerance

This refers to the numerous studies on respect for the ideas, opinions, and actions of others, even when they come into conflict with our own, particularly in the religious and political spheres.

Multiculturalism

Originally prompted by the need to manage cultural diversity resulting from mass immigration following the Second World War, studies on multiculturalism have focused on recognizing the right to cultural differences; on prohibiting discrimination based on ethnicity, culture, or religion; and on studying practices that foster the integration of diverse cultural groups, also as a response to the challenges of nationalist populism.

Solidarity

This area includes studies on the principle of solidarity in interna-

tional law; on the various values that fuel the debate on solidarity; and on the nature, function, and normative effect of solidarity in international law.

Trust

This area includes contributions from a variety of approaches to building and maintaining reputation and trustworthiness as the foundation of multilateral exchange and cooperation in different political contexts.

Conflict and negotiation

This thematic area is devoted to studies on the various factors that promote de-escalation and the peaceful management of conflicts worldwide as well as on negotiation as the preferred instrument for conflict resolution.

These thematic areas represent the main references for analyzing the guidelines of Goal 16 for Sustainable Development, which indicate as priorities the reduction of all forms of violence; the promotion of the rule of law; the significant reduction of illicit flows of arms and money; and the development of effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels.

Dimensions and sub-dimensions of the process of convivence among peoples

In the research and testimonies reported in the previous paragraphs, the contributions relating to peace and those relating to convivence among peoples are closely interconnected and require a pluralistic and interdisciplinary approach to understand the interrelationships between economic, political, and cultural factors, as summarized in Table 2.

The Institute for Economics and Peace introduces, in 2013, the concept of Pillars of Peace, eight economic, political, and cultural factors that foster the creation of a more peaceful society. Analysis of the cited speeches of the Popes over the last century has identified seven key concepts (Brotherhood, Dialogue, Justice, Multilateralism, Solidarity, Inclusion, Reconciliation), while studies on equitable and inclusive societies can be grouped into seven thematic areas: Legality, Equity, Tolerance, Multiculturalism, Solidarity, Trust, Conflict and Negotiation.

Tab. 2

Convergences on the factors that favor peace and promote planetary convivence

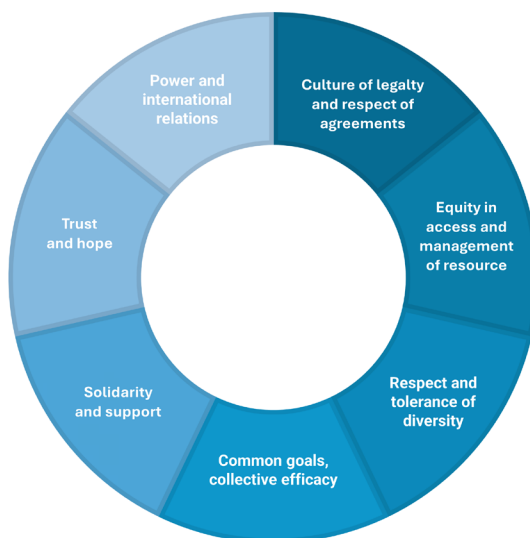
THE PILLARS OF PEACE	KEY CONCEPTS ON PEACE AND PLANETARY CONVIVENCE	THEMATIC AREAS ON EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES
Institute for Economics and Peace	Interventions by the Pontiffs in the 20th and 21st Centuries:	Interdisciplinary Contributions
Well-functioning Government	Brotherhood	Legality
Sound Business Environment	Dialogue	Equity
Equitable Distribution of Resources	Equity	Tolerance
Acceptance of the Rights of Others	Multilateralism	Multiculturalism
Good Relations with Neighbours	Solidarity	Solidarity
Free Flow of Information	Inclusion	Fiducia
Low Levels of Corruption	Reconciliation	Conflict and negotiation
Free Flow of Information		

On the basis of the contributions and studies in the thematic areas presented and the findings of previous investigations (Avallone, 2025), it becomes possible to propose a definition of convivence among peoples and hypothesize the dimensions that found it.

Convivence among peoples can be defined as the set of actions that promote, sustain, and enhance the quality of life and relations among peoples within the international community, by recognizing the value of diversity, fostering dialogue and mutual understanding, and supporting the collective political will to build a more just and inclusive society.

This definition can be broken down into seven dimensions (table 3), each with three sub-dimensions, summarized as follows (table 4).

Graph. 1
Dimensions of the Process of Convivence among Peoples



Tab. 3
Sub-Dimensions of the Process of Convivence among Peoples

Culture of legality and respect for signed agreements	a) Respect for human rights. b) Fullfilment of commitments arising from treaties, agreements and conventions. c) Consideration of the rule of law, peace and inclusion as basic values of social convivence.
Equity in access to and management of resources	a) Actions aimed at ensuring dignified levels of nutrition and living conditions. b) Commitment to combat discrimination in fundamental rights. c) Balance in the management of resources.
Respect for and tolerance of diversity	a) Acceptance and respect for differences. b) Pursuit of equilibrium among differences. c) Active listening to dissenters and antagonists.
Common goals, collective efficacy	a) Attention to the emerging problems of the international community. b) Mobilization of skills and resources to achieve collective goals. c) Integration and cooperation against marginalization and discrimination.
Solidarity and support	a) Hospitality and support to other communities when needed. b) Active cooperation in international bodies. c) Perception that the individual's rights are protected and guaranteed.

Power and international relations	a) Use of negotiation in the resolution of conflicts. b) Ethics in economics and finance. c) Respect for the boundaries of the democratic system in the exercising of power.
Trust and hope	a) Promoting, in international relations, dialogue and exchange between different positions. b) Consistency with promises made and commitments undertaken. c) Rejection of opportunism and hypocrisy.

Towards a framework for interpreting convivence among peoples

The dimensions and sub-dimensions of the process of convivence among peoples can form the basis of a model for interpreting convivence at the global level, enabling a multidimensional understanding of the relationships linking different national communities, their values, interests, and cultural identities, as well as potential conflicts and disagreements. Such a model could constitute a sort of agenda of issues to be monitored by national and international political institutions to promote and maintain convivence among peoples, identifying areas requiring preventative and particularly urgent intervention. A model for interpreting coexistence among peoples could also be a useful reference point for developing projects, particularly for young people, aimed at understanding the dynamics of coexistence and paving the way for more advanced and informed ways and styles of convivence.

To this end, in the cited study (Avallone, 2025) a tool was presented –the *Multidimensional Questionnaire for the study of Convivence among Peoples*, in which the dimensions of convivence presented are taken as generative criteria for the construction of a list of items each of which represents a social political action, considered as characteristic of a dimension of convivence, with respect to which the respondent is asked to provide two assessments on the basis of personal life experience: the first to express their opinion on the importance of the action indicated and the second to estimate how often, in their opinion, this action occurs.

In this way, it would be possible to establish a ranking of the relevance of the dimensions that underpin convivence among peoples and, at the same time, identify areas that have been neglected or that require special monitoring. Differential variables (gender, age, education, work experience, etc.) could aid an understanding of the potential differences in people's perceptions of the process of convivence among peoples and could make it possible to gather the opinions, fears and hopes of the

citizens who contribute to the life of the different national communities, adding their voices to the philosophical and political observations that have, in recent years, fuelled the debate on convivence among peoples.

See also the following entries previously published in the “Dictionary”:

Pace • *Dialogue and peace in the international context* • *Unarmed peace, disarming peace: beyond the culture of rearmament* • *Women and peace* • *Building peace in times of war*

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Politiche e istituzioni

C'è una "architettura" della convivenza che è indispensabile al bene comune, ovvero al bene di "noi tutti" – individui, famiglie, gruppi intermedi, che si uniscono in comunità sociali, fino a formare l'intera famiglia umana. Si tratta di quel complesso di istituzioni che strutturano giuridicamente, civilmente, politicamente, culturalmente il vivere sociale. Chi non desidera istituzioni e politiche più sane, ordinamenti più giusti, interventi pubblici più efficaci, strutture civili più solidali? C'è dunque un compito per tutti, per i grandi architetti e per i piccoli artigiani.

SOLIDARITY AND INTERNATIONAL LAW: AN UPDATE

Mariangela La Manna

The present headnote wishes to enquire the influence of the social doctrine of the Catholic Church on the international legal order. It envisages to assess the impact of the former by enquiring the number of legal institutions and of international law that pursue the value of solidarity, while at the same time enshrining the latter's troublesome relationship with State sovereignty. International environmental law will be especially addressed, with a special hint to that peculiar aspect of solidarity that goes under the name of intergenerational equity, that is accounted for by the Holy Father Francis in his encyclical Laudato si'.

Keywords: *International community, Sovereignty, Intergenerational equity, Common good, Society.*

Solidarietà e diritto internazionale: un aggiornamento

La voce mira a indagare l'influenza del Magistero sull'ordinamento internazionale, con particolare riferimento alla solidarietà. Ci si propone, infatti, di indagare il novero degli istituti e delle branche ispirati al suo perseguimento, e di mettere in luce le sue interazioni con la sovranità statale. Si guarderà in particolare al diritto internazionale dell'ambiente, disciplina con riferimento alla quale il valore della solidarietà è invocato dal Santo Padre Francesco nella sua particolare accezione intergenerazionale all'interno dell'enciclica Laudato si'.

Parole chiave: *Comunità internazionale, Sovranità, Equità intergenerazionale, Bene comune, Società*

1. Solidarity: the need for definition beyond common sentiment

The term 'solidarity' evokes an instinctive image of closeness, shared experience and mutual aid, which even a child can understand. However, anchoring this image to a universally valid and shared definition is no simple task. The intrinsic polysemy of the concept prevents a univocal identification that would be valid across all disciplinary approaches. For a continental legal scholar, for example, the most intuitive meaning of the term 'solidarity' is not value-based, but technical instead. The ref-

erence would be, in fact, to joint and several obligations, already provided for in Roman law and subsequently incorporated into our Civil Code, specifically under Article 1292, which provides for the possibility for each debtor to be liable for the entire debt, whilst subsequently seeking recourse against the other co-debtors on a joint and several basis.

The meanings and implications of the notion of solidarity, however, are far broader and go well beyond the realm of obligations and of law itself, reverberating across many other branches of human knowledge, which interpret the concept in question in accordance with their own 'toolbox'. In addition to the legal notion, which encompasses not only the civil law nuance above also a broader public law dimension relating to the structure of society, many others can be identified (sociological, philosophical, political, etc.). What is certain is that, regardless of the disciplinary perspective adopted, the notion of solidarity implies values grounded on membership, i.e. belonging in a group, however large or small, and on the relationship between individuals. Such 'relational' element is found in every possible definition, thus uniting the various disciplinary perspectives, regardless of the object of observation (a family, a community, a business sector, a trade association or professional body, or even the community of states).

2. The contribution of human sciences

Sociology is the first discipline that developed a theoretical framework on solidarity in the modern era. Of particular note is the work of 19th-century French scholars, which, led to the formation of the current known as 'solidarism'. The best-known formulation is attributed to Émile Durkheim, who, developing the notion of solidarity embraced under the Enlightenment and the French Revolution – based on the obligation of mutual assistance and support among members of a group united by shared elements – applied it to the sphere of labour relations, identifying the division of labour, the differentiation between various professional categories and the interdependence between them as the defining elements of this new form solidarity, which he termed 'organic' to distinguish it from the traditional form, which he called 'mechanical'. Such sociological speculation was then translated into the realm of law by Léon Duguit, who shaped his theory of public law around the concept of solidarity, thus establishing an approach that would subse-

quently be adopted by various positive legal systems. Suffice it to mention the role of solidarity in the overall framework of our Constitution, whose Article 2 includes among the fundamental principles of the entire legal system “*the fulfilment of the inderogable duties of political, economic and social solidarity*”.

3. Solidarity in the social doctrine of the Church

The social doctrine of the Catholic Church has paid great attention to solidarity, expressing it in various forms and recognising its practical application in the most diverse spheres of life, such as family, work, politics, environmental management, international cooperation, etc. More precisely, solidarity is one of the cornerstone principles of Catholic social teaching, alongside the dignity of the human person, the common good and the principle of subsidiarity. It is defined as “*the need to recognise, within the network of bonds uniting individuals and social groups, the space offered to human freedom to foster common growth, shared by all*” (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2004, 194).

Content-wise, its proximity to charity is adamant; solidarity shares many features with charity such as universality, freedom, and gratuitousness. Yet, it must nevertheless be distinguished from the latter, being instead considered “*its characteristically social version*” (Monti 2004, 84). It can thus be said that solidarity is an expression of love for others, reflecting the love of Jesus for mankind. Many encyclicals and various papal documents evoke the concept under consideration “*implicitly, with expressions equivalent to it*” (*ibid.*, 81), such as “*friendship*” (*Rerum novarum*, 1891, 21), “*social charity*” (*Quadragesimo anno*, 1931, 89), and “*civilisation of love*” (Paul VI, *Homily for the closing of the Holy Year; Message for the World Day of Peace 1977*). However, this approach does not exhaust the Magisterium’s discourse on solidarity, which is broader and more complex than it may first appear, and implies a structural dimension relating to the concrete organization and functioning of society.

4. Moving beyond the analogy with charity

In more recent times, solidarity has ceased to be understood in a purely charitable sense, taking on a more neutral and autonomous connota-

tion, oriented towards the pursuit of the common good. Undoubtedly, *Populorum progressio* (1967) represents the starting point of this process. The encyclical advocates the integral development of the human person and the development of humanity in solidarity, understood both as a corollary to the former and as a fundamental condition for everyone to enjoy the fullness of the human experience. To this end, the interdependence between individuals, on the one hand, and between communities, on the other, is repeatedly emphasized especially in light of social justice and universal charity (*Populorum progressio*, 44).

In the encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987), John Paul II further enriches the reflection on solidarity, which represents one of the pillars of his teaching, and clearly illustrates its dual nature, both as a moral virtue and as a social and institutional principle. The encyclical in question defines solidarity on the basis of interdependence, to be understood as a system of relationships, of which solidarity represents the corresponding virtue, i.e. a moral and social expression. In this approach, solidarity is therefore defined not as “*a vague feeling of compassion or superficial sympathy for the misfortunes of so many people, near or far*”, but rather as “*the firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good: that is for the good of all and of each individual, because we are all truly responsible for one another*” (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 38).

Solidarity's instrumental nature for the development of the entire human family is thus highlighted and balanced against the backdrop of responsibility, thus prescribing the obligation to help the disadvantaged, whilst ensuring that the latter “*do not adopt a purely passive or socially destructive attitude, but, whilst claiming their legitimate rights, do their part for the good of all*” (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 39). This approach is further refined during the papacy of Francis. The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (2013) explains that solidarity towards the most disadvantaged, far from being a sporadic act of charity, must, on the contrary, contribute concretely to their redemption and reintegration into society.

The encyclical *Laudato si'* (2015) expands on the concept of solidarity, highlighting its intergenerational dimension, with particular reference to the protection of the natural environment in the interests of future generations. Finally, the recent *Fratelli tutti* (2020) revives the value of brotherhood and illustrates its importance in our relationship with the most vulnerable, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some scholars highlight the difference between the notion of solidarity advocated by the Magisterium and its significance according to

secular approaches, pointing out that in the context of workers' struggles, solidarity is not based on brotherhood but rather on rights, and that it does not reflect a spirit of generosity but rather the aspiration to something that is already due precisely because it is the object of a right (Rodotà 2014, 62–66). This compelling critique must, however, be confined to the earlier papal texts. For whilst it is true that in *Rerum novarum* the perspective seemed to ignore workers' rights, subsequent encyclicals have significantly broadened the notion of solidarity, bringing it closer to that of justice, the ultimate aim of which is, precisely, the assertion and implementation of those very rights.

5. *The role of solidarity in the international legal order*

It is commonly held that the first theory of solidarity in the international legal order is attributable to Vattel, one of the most influential international legal scholars, who as early as the 18th century noted the existence of certain areas of the legal order informed by this value. Around the notion of solidarity, Georges Scelle would then develop, in the 1930s, his theory of *dédoublement fonctionnel*, according to which the State acts not only in the pursuit of its own interests, but also as an agent of the international community, in the pursuit of the latter's interests.

Regardless of scholars' conceptual constructs, however, it can readily be acknowledged that various institutions of current international law are oriented towards the pursuit of a certain degree of solidarity, bearing more or less visible traces of this inspiration. One need only consider the international framework for development cooperation, the obligations of assistance under international disaster law, the preferential treatment granted to least developed countries in the context of international economic relations, or, again, the United Nations collective security system and the provisions of the North Atlantic Treaty, the founding treaty of NATO.

Furthermore, an institution strongly influenced by the spirit of solidarity is that of *erga omnes* obligations (for example, those relating to the prevention and suppression of genocide or torture), which, transcending the merely bilateral and synallagmatic level, allow for a response from the entire international community in the face of their violation. Such doctrine is more and more often invoked in cases pending before the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The area that appears to be most influenced by the driving force of solidarity, however, is international human rights law. Particular mention should be made of the so-called third generation of human rights, long advocated by legal doctrine under the formula of ‘solidarity rights’ and embraced by certain human rights treaties, especially regional conventional instruments (see, for example, the 1981 *African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights*, which established the African regional system for the protection of human rights). These peculiar rights (the right to self-determination, to the environment, to peace, to development, to international assistance...) are characterised by their scope, which is not individual but collective. Their ownership does not, in fact, lie with the individual, but rather with the relevant community, i.e. the people.

6. The constitutive limits of the legal order

Certain constitutive features of the international legal order, such as the sovereignty of States and its corollaries of sovereign equality and immunity, as well as the prohibition on interference in internal affairs, stand in opposition to this objective. The numerous references to solidarity within the international legal order are often formulated in a manner that is scarcely prescriptive (as in the 2005 report by the UN Secretary-General, *In Larger Freedom*) or are provided for under non-binding instruments. In this regard, for example, one might consider the work of the Special Rapporteur on human rights and solidarity, who has promoted a draft declaration on the right to international solidarity, eventually redrafted in 2023.

Solidarity also appears to underpin certain controversial doctrines occasionally invoked in practice, such as the ‘responsibility to protect’ and the related doctrine of humanitarian intervention. The former posits the subsidiary responsibility of the international community in the face of a territorial sovereign’s inability to adequately prevent and suppress atrocities against its own population, whilst the latter, far more ambiguous, goes so far as to advocate for the legitimacy and admissibility of armed intervention within a state’s territory in support of the oppressed population. This latter example clearly illustrates the existence of a tension between solidarity and sovereignty, attributable, in particular, to the territorial nature of the latter. The possible balance between these conflicting values and the occasional prevalence of one or the other is

indicative of shifts in the sensibilities of the international legal order and the varying priorities it pursues at different historical moments.

7. Solidarity as a basis for possible dialogue between the Magisterium and the international order

The Magisterium calls for a cordial dialogue between the Church's doctrine and all forms of knowledge (*Compendium*, 76), in accordance with the hope of John Paul II, who, acknowledging the interdisciplinary dimension of social doctrine, called for dialogue "with the various disciplines concerned with the human person" as well as, in more pragmatic terms, its concrete application through "the efforts that individuals, families, cultural and social workers, politicians and statesmen make to give it form and application in history" (*Centesimus annus*, 1991, 59).

The points of contact between social doctrine and the international legal order are manifold, to the extent that it can be said that entire branches of the legal order appear to translate certain precepts of the Magisterium into operational provisions. It is evident, for example, that the centrality of the human person represents the foundation upon which the entire field of human rights - a legal regime assuming the individual as the object and ultimate goal of protection against abuses by the State - rests.

With more specific reference to solidarity, one recalls the impact of the Magisterium on the field of development cooperation, advocated by *Sollicitudo rei socialis* itself, which emphasizes the universal destination of goods even in the context of international relations and understands solidarity between States as a concrete means of pursuing peace through development. This concept was already foreshadowed in *Pacem in terris* (1963), which prescribed the need to regulate relations between the various political communities "in truth, justice, active solidarity and freedom" (*Pacem in terris*, 54) and, acknowledging the intrinsic features of the various members of the human family, called for their encounter and mutual enrichment in accordance with "the right and duty to live with one another" (55).

What is particularly worth noting here is the impact of Catholic thought on solidarity on international climate change law and, more generally, on international environmental law. The reference is to the principles of sustainable development and intergenerational equity,

as well as to the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. More specifically, intergenerational equity (solidarity across generations) represents one of the crucial values in international environmental law, of which the principle of sustainable development – which establishes the obligation for States to use natural resources in such a way as to meet the needs of present generations without compromising those of future generations, represents an operational manifestation. Indeed, both are perfectly consistent with social doctrine. An obligation of intergenerational solidarity was acknowledged under the *Populorum progressio* (“as heirs of past generations and beneficiaries of the work of our contemporaries, we have obligations towards all, and we cannot turn a blind eye to those who will come after us to enlarge the circle of the Universal solidarity, which is a fact and a benefit for us, is also a duty”, 17). The same obligation is explained in greater detail by Pope Francis in *Laudato si’*. We read there, in fact, that “we can no longer speak of sustainable development without solidarity between generations” and that “when we think of the state in which we are leaving the planet to future generations, we enter into a different logic, that of the free gift we receive and pass on”, an attitude described as “an essential matter of justice, since the earth we have received also belongs to those who are yet to come” (159). This approach is consistent with the doctrine of the intergenerational trust, which views the environment and natural resources as a trust (i.e. an asset managed by a trustee in the interests of the beneficiaries) administered by present generations in the interests of future ones.

Such approach has long been incorporated into positive law. Reference is made in particular to Principle 3 of *the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* (1992) and to Article 3(1) of *the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (1992, UNFCCC), the content of which is further reaffirmed and consolidated in subsequent treaty instruments. More recently, the *Declaration on Future Generations*, adopted in September 2024 at the UN Summit for the Future, addressed obligations owed to future generations. So did in more or less stringent terms UN human rights treaty bodies (Committee on the Rights of the Child, *General comment No. 26 (2023) on children’s rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change*; Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General comment No. 27 (2025) on economic, social and cultural rights and the environmental dimension of sustainable development*) as well as the International Court of Justice itself (*Obligations of States in Respect of*

Climate Change, Advisory Opinion, 23 July 2025).

In conclusion, besides from the intrinsic limitations of the international legal order, stemming from the sovereign nature of its main subjects, one has to acknowledge the synergy and mutual influence between the Magisterium and international law. Looking to the future, it cannot be ruled out that social doctrine may further influence the development of the latter and even offer an additional tool to resolve the tension between solidarity and sovereignty. Reference is made here to the principle of subsidiarity, which was already successfully applied within the European Union and could, if properly resorted to, also bear fruit within international law.

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Scienze e tecnologie

Se c'è un ambito dove le "cose nuove" incalzano, è certamente questo. Abbiamo senz'altro bisogno dei progressi scientifici e tecnologici: i vecchi spettri della fame e delle malattie sono ancora con noi. Il magistero della Chiesa apprezza molto i progressi e i successi in questi campi dell'attività umana, dove massimamente si rivela la somiglianza dell'uomo con Dio creatore, ma insieme con grande realismo ricorda il pericolo che prevalga un paradigma tecnocratico alla fine succube del potere e il timore che ne derivi una ricerca non più interessata a interrogarsi sui suoi fini e sul suo senso.

THE FUTURE OF MANAGEMENT IN THE AI AGE

Xavier Ferràs-Hernández

Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping management. This article discusses the new form of organization emerging in the age of AI, as well as the new model of leadership it requires. It argues that future organizations will combine a digital core, AI-powered cognition, and a human layer responsible for judgment and accountability. Leadership will focus on strategic discernment, ensuring that AI-driven productivity serves the common good, in line with the Church's Social Doctrine.

Keywords: *Disruption, Artificial intelligence, Artificial neural network, Humanistic management.*

Il futuro del management nell'epoca dell'IA

L'intelligenza artificiale (IA) sta ridefinendo il management. Questo articolo analizza la nuova forma di organizzazione che sta emergendo nell'era dell'IA, nonché il nuovo modello di leadership che essa richiede. Si sostiene che le organizzazioni del futuro combineranno un nucleo digitale, una cognizione basata sull'IA e un livello umano responsabile del giudizio e della responsabilità. La leadership si concentrerà sul discernimento strategico, assicurando che la produttività guidata dall'IA sia al servizio del bene comune, in linea con la dottrina sociale della Chiesa.

Parole chiave: *Disgregazione, Intelligenza artificiale, Rete neurale artificiale, Management umanistico.*

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a technology with profound transformative power. Arguably one of the most transformative technologies in human history. For the first time, we are confronted with machines that possess the technical ability (whether real or apparent) to “reason”, demonstrate creativity, and make judgments in complex situations. They can therefore make decisions autonomously.

Consequently, it is essential not only to develop a deep understand-

ing of the nature of this technology from the perspective of its practical application, but also to engage in a moral and philosophical debate that defines its boundaries. Pope Leo XIV's encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* offers an excellent reflection and a forward-looking step on one of the defining issues of our generation: how to integrate these new technological capabilities within a genuinely human vision of progress. The encyclical warns that technology must not become an end in itself, nor should it replace moral judgment or responsibility. On the contrary, the most powerful technologies should be directed toward human flourishing, shared prosperity, and the integral development of individuals.

How does this debate translate into the heart of the corporate world, which is inherently competitive and driven by a logic of cost and benefit? In universities and business schools, this reflection has resulted in an intense discussion about how organizations will evolve as a consequence of the large-scale adoption of AI, and what corporate leadership itself will mean in a context where machines may eventually be capable of making decisions on their own. I aim to examine first the nature of AI in order to understand its implications for the reconfiguration of corporations, and to outline the new leadership skills required to achieve the goals of productivity and economic success, without sacrificing the pursuit of the common good.

The article makes three contributions, drawn on my previous research. First, it presents a conceptual model of the “AI-organization” built around a digital core, an AI- powered “reasoning” engine and a final human decision layer. Second, it introduces the notion of “cognitive advantage” as a new source of competitive advantage and productivity. Third, it develops a humanistic interpretation of AI management through a dialogue between contemporary management research and the Social Doctrine of the Church, not treating it as an external ethical constraint on technological innovation, but rather as a conceptual framework for understanding how AI can become a source of human dignity and economic development.

From computation to intuition. The early evolution of AI

Although the emergence of ChatGPT and Large Language Models (LLMs) has brought AI into the mainstream in recent years, its foundations date back more than eight decades. The pioneering work of

McCulloch and Pitts on artificial neurons, together with Alan Turing's groundbreaking ideas, laid the conceptual foundations of a discipline that formally took shape at the Dartmouth Conference in 1956, where the term *artificial intelligence* was first coined (Haenlein and Kaplan, 2019, 61). After years of limited progress and periods of stagnation (the so-called "AI winters") the development of learning algorithms, particularly the technique known as *backpropagation*, in the 1980s made it possible to build systems capable of learning from data (*machine learning*). These advances, combined with the exponential growth of computing power and the massive availability of digital information, provided the foundation for today's AI revolution.

In 1997, IBM's Deep Blue defeated world chess champion Garry Kasparov. Although the system was not truly AI in the sense we understand it today (its strength relied primarily on brute computational power) the event symbolized the moment when a machine surpassed a human being in an activity long regarded as one of the highest expressions of rational intelligence. The relentless advance of Moore's Law (the accomplished prediction that computing power would double approximately every two years) made it possible to build systems with increasingly dense networks of nodes. A critical turning point came in 2016, when AlphaGo, a neural network developed by DeepMind, a startup acquired by Google, defeated the world champion of go, South Korean player Lee Sedol. Unlike Deep Blue's victory, AlphaGo's success was not the result of computational force, but rather of a form of strategic instinct or intuition. AlphaGo prevailed with a move that Lee Sedol himself described as "sublime." The achievement demonstrated that AI could generate surprising solutions or insights to complex situations that had previously been unknown to humans.

Conversational machines and their unexplainable nature

A new leap toward generative AI occurred with the introduction of the *transformer* architecture, through the influential paper *Attention Is All You Need* by researchers at Google (Vaswani *et al*, 2017, 30). The transformer represented a breakthrough AI architecture that enabled machines capable of developing and using natural language. From that point onward, OpenAI's GPT (*Generative Pre-trained Transformer*) models emerged as the leading force in the field. ChatGPT, an artificial neural network

with 175 billion parameters, became the first mass-market AI application. It was the fastest-adopted technology in history, reaching 100 million users in just two months. This phenomenon triggered a global race involving technology companies, startups, governments, and academic institutions. These systems came to be known as *Large Language Models* (LLMs). Their operation is based on artificial neural networks, with hundreds of billions, even trillions, of parameters (“neurons”). Their complexity is such that they are effectively “unexplainable”: even the engineers who designed them are unable to fully interpret the flow of information circulating within them. Yet the outcome is remarkable. These models exhibit “cognitive” capabilities that, across multiple dimensions, are comparable to those of humans. These capabilities include natural language generation, image recognition, computer programming, logical reasoning, mathematical problem-solving, or even the ability to answer PhD-level scientific questions.

Organizational implications: Toward the AI-Organization

Throughout history, every major technological revolution has given rise to a distinct form of organization. Firms adapt to their technological environment, seeking the most efficient structure for each era. Electricity made the assembly line and mass production possible. The internet gave birth to global digital platforms such as Google and Amazon. Mobile communications enabled the emergence of network-based companies such as Uber and Airbnb. In the same way, AI is creating the conditions for a new generation of organizations. When companies such as Google declare themselves to be “AI-First”, they are signaling what is likely to become the dominant organizational model of the coming decades. If the iPhone was the “internet phone” the challenge now is to imagine and design the “AI-phone” What will the AI-bank, the AI-supermarket, or the AI-McDonald’s look like? These organizations will not be built simply by incorporating AI into existing processes. Rather, entirely new organizational architectures will emerge, designed from the ground up around AI.

My hypothesis is that the AI-organization will be structured around three fundamental elements:

- The first will be a digital core: a system built around a vast data lake capable of compiling all the organization’s relevant information

(internal parameters and key performance indicators, customer data, market trends, competitor movements, new patents and data on emerging startups, scientific publications, as well as macroeconomic indicators and trends captured from social media). In short, all information relevant to the company will be consolidated within this data lake.

- The second element will be an AI engine, most likely a Large Language Model (LLM) powered by large-scale cloud-based supercomputing infrastructures. This engine will function as a form of organizational intelligence, trained with the data of the digital core, capable of detecting patterns invisible to humans, identifying emerging opportunities, generating working hypotheses, designing new products, and anticipating threats.

- The third element will be a human decision layer. We must remember that AI systems operate as opaque, non-deterministic “black boxes”, with a stochastic component influencing their outputs and that these outputs are also conditioned by the training strategy and the input data. Therefore, contrary to some futuristic visions that foresee fully automated enterprises, I argue that the AI organization will continue to require strong human oversight, at least in the most critical activities – those that have a clear impact on the business performance and/or on the safety or dignity of human beings. This brings us to a longstanding principle in leadership: virtually every managerial function can be delegated, with the only exception of accountability. In a world of electronic minds, responsibility for the consequences of machines’ actions will remain human. Social, economic, and legal responsibility cannot be diluted within a dense network of artificial neurons, autonomous algorithms, and remote digital connections. AI will be able to analyze complex information, make recommendations, and propose solutions, but final responsibility will remain in human hands. This will reshape the focus of leadership: as AI systems increasingly participate in the interpretation of the business environment, managers will need to devote less time to processing information and more to exercising moral judgment (on the role of human judgment in management and entrepreneurship, see also *Maggioni* in this issue), framing strategic questions, and critically evaluating AI-generated recommendations.

Yet in an increasingly automated and interconnected world, it will also be necessary to orchestrate higher systems of decision-making. Social responsibility goes beyond individual accountability. Leaders will need to cultivate organizational communities capable of preserving

trust, cooperation and shared purpose. A new interpretation of management must be developed in a global environment in which AI will be embedded in every piece of software. *Magnifica Humanitas* calls for “intermediary organizations and educational communities that rebuild trust and relationships” (181). For this reason, we will need superior and new forms of governance, embedded in rules, regulations and institutions. As *Magnifica Humanitas* argues, AI governance requires forms of shared responsibility involving firms, educational institutions and civil society to assure “independent checks, transparency regarding algorithms, equitable access to data and avenues for recourse” (71) to ensure alignment with the common good. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) can therefore no longer be understood merely as a set of organizational policies or compliance mechanisms. In the AI age, CSR becomes an essential function of leadership itself: ensuring that technological capabilities are governed in ways aligned with the common good and preserving accountability for the consequences of organizational decisions.

Cognitive advantage, productivity and labor market

Just as economies of scale defined industrial competition and digital platforms created network effects, AI introduces a new source of competitive advantage: “cognitive advantage” (Ferràs-Hernández, 2026). Organizations equipped with AI will be able to learn faster, interpret reality more accurately, and transform vast amounts of data into actionable knowledge. This advantage will not stem from technology alone, but from the combination of superior computational capabilities and sound human judgment. Cognitive advantage will translate directly into higher organizational productivity through two complementary mechanisms. First, AI will augment human capabilities, enabling professionals to accomplish far more within the same amount of time. Second, organizations will increasingly substitute human labor with machines across a growing range of cognitive and operational tasks. Both mechanisms promise significant gains in efficiency and competitiveness. Unlike previous sources of competitive advantage, cognitive advantage is not merely a technological asset; it may reshape the distribution of economic value between labor and capital.

Yet while economic history suggests that disruptive technological revolutions have ultimately created more jobs than they destroyed, the

unprecedented speed and breadth of AI make it uncertain whether this pattern will be repeated. As *Magnifica Humanitas* reminds us, “every real transition involves discontinuities” (153). The productivity gains generated by AI may therefore be accompanied by unemployment, widening inequality, and new forms of social exclusion if their benefits are unevenly distributed. Firms may be tempted to adapt human work to the logic and speed of intelligent machines rather than designing technology around human flourishing. The challenge for future leaders is consequently not only to maximize efficiency, but also to reconcile productivity with dignity and meaningful work. For this reason, the transition to an AI economy cannot rely on technological innovation alone. Recent contributions to the AI policy debate increasingly acknowledge that the unprecedented productivity gains enabled by artificial intelligence may be accompanied by profound social disruption. *Magnifica Humanitas* argues, “solutions must be sought at national and local levels through the involvement of intermediary communities” (153). Institutions as diverse as large AI companies, leading economists, and policymakers have begun advocating new forms of social innovation – including sovereign AI funds, AI dividends, adaptive welfare systems, and new ownership models – to ensure that the benefits of cognitive technologies are more broadly shared. This emerging consensus reinforces the central insight of Pope Leo XIV’s encyclical: technological progress and business competitiveness is insufficient unless accompanied by institutional innovation.

What leaders need to learn. Strategy, technology and humanism

The emergence of new forms of AI, such as generative AI, has overturned many of the assumptions we held only a few years ago regarding the limits of machines. We once believed that analytics, planning, and finance would be the areas most affected by AI substitution, while social interaction, creativity and strategy would remain firmly under human control (Ferràs-Hernández, 2018, 27). Today, however, we see AI advancing precisely into these higher-value domains. We will increasingly coexist with creative systems capable of dramatically expanding our ability to comprehend reality, and to propose new disruptive ideas or business models. Furthermore, AI can develop entire strategic plans at near-zero marginal cost. What is, then, management’s last stand? In this new context, I argue that executives will need to develop a new combi-

nation of skills. They must continue to cultivate strategic thinking and management knowledge. Leaders cannot afford to outsource their understanding of the fundamentals of management to machines. Foundational knowledge is the wellspring of the creativity and critical thinking required to evaluate or validate the decisions made by machines. Without a solid knowledge of basic concepts such as productivity or inflation, it is impossible to assess economic decisions. Without understanding the fundamental principles of positioning or market segmentation, AI-generated marketing strategies cannot be properly evaluated. New ideas cannot be assessed without first mastering the old ones.

At the same time, corporate leaders will require technological thinking, allowing them to grasp the potential of AI and set its limitations. Without understanding the nature of AI systems, it is impossible to fully understand their applications. Without recognizing that AI is a non-deterministic technology (subjected to stochastic variation) it cannot be deployed appropriately within organizations. Alfred Chandler, a renowned Harvard professor and a pioneer of modern management, articulated as early as 1962 one of the most influential principles in management theory: “*structure follows strategy*” (Chandler, 1962, 5). Structural decisions (whether concerning investment, hiring, or expansion) should be subordinate to strategy. Today, however, strategy itself is increasingly shaped by technology. Technology will cease to be merely a support function and will instead become a central element of business strategy. Now, strategy follows technology. Management disciplines, and management itself, will increasingly merge with computational sciences and technological knowledge. Corporate leaders must show a deep understanding of technology.

Yet the more powerful technology becomes, the more important human capabilities will be, to define a moral boundary for technological development. Leaders must be able to formulate the right questions, contextualize the answers provided by AI, and ultimately assume responsibility for decisions. Machines may diagnose, predict, and even imagine alternative futures, but it will remain the responsibility of leaders to decide which path to follow, which risks to accept, and which values to preserve. Leaders will need a strong humanistic foundation, enabling them to interpret AI-generated insights within complex ethical and social frameworks. Corporate leaders will require a profound grounding in philosophy and the humanities to exercise their responsibilities wisely.

Conclusion

AI will redefine the discipline and practice of management. As organizations increasingly derive competitive advantage from cognitive capabilities, the role of leaders will shift from processing information to exercising prudent judgment, ethical discernment, and responsibility. Contemporary management research suggests that AI will become embedded in virtually every organizational process. This perspective may enrich future reflection within Catholic Social Teaching by extending its ethical analysis from AI itself to the governance of AI-based organizations and AI-mediated leadership. In turn, *Magnifica Humanitas* offers a framework for ensuring that these transformations remain oriented toward human dignity and the common good. The future of firms, and the future of capitalism itself, will therefore depend not only on technological sophistication but also on their capacity to govern AI wisely, distribute its benefits fairly, and preserve the uniquely human responsibility for deciding what ought to be done. Only in this way can AI become not merely a driver of productivity and economic growth, but a genuine instrument of integral human development.

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Acknowledgement

The author used ChatGPT as an assistance tool for translation and language editing. The ideas, arguments, analysis, and conclusions presented in this article are entirely original and the sole responsibility of the author.

AI COMPANIONS AND HUMANITY

William Hasselberger – Inês Gregório

AI companions-chatbots using Large Language Models to simulate human interaction—mark a shift toward AI designed for virtual social and emotional connection. While some studies suggest these tools can reduce loneliness, their rise raises serious ethical, philosophical, and societal concerns, particularly around young people. This essay introduces the key issues at stake and explores how the Social Doctrine of the Church can help evaluate how humans relate to, and are shaped by, AI companions.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Ethics, Loneliness, Friendship, Social intimacy.

Compagni virtuali di IA e relazioni umane

Gli AI companions – chatbot che utilizzano modelli linguistici di grandi dimensioni (Large Language Models) per simulare l'interazione umana – rappresentano un cambiamento verso un'IA progettata per la connessione sociale ed emotiva di tipo virtuale. Sebbene alcuni studi suggeriscano che questi strumenti possano ridurre la solitudine, la loro diffusione solleva importanti questioni etiche, filosofiche e sociali, in particolare per quanto riguarda i giovani. Questo articolo introduce le principali questioni in gioco, ed indaga il modo in cui la dottrina sociale può contribuire a valutare come gli esseri umani si relazionano agli assistenti IA, e ne vengono influenzati.

Parole chiave: Intelligenza artificiale, Etica, Solitudine, Amicizia, Intimità sociale.

Introduction: AI Simulations of Humanity

People are increasingly using Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems to simulate human conversation and social interactions. This growing area of the AI industry marks a significant shift: we are developing and using AI not just to assist or automate our work, but to relate to us socially and emotionally. “AI companions” are AI chatbot applications that leverage Large Language Models (LLMs) capable of generating human-

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like language content to replicate the experience of talking and interacting with social beings, like friends, educational tutors, spiritual advisors, therapeutic counselors, intimate romantic partners, and even (replicas of) deceased loved ones. AI companionship, broadly understood, is a growing practice and lucrative market for technology in an era of social detachment and loneliness, and some studies suggest that the technology may have positive benefits, like reducing loneliness, improving mood, and boosting esteem. Young people, in particular, are turning to technology for emotional support and virtual social interaction. But the rise of the AI companion industry also raises difficult philosophical questions and presents serious ethical and societal concerns.

The following essay offers an introduction to the principal issues at stake, as well suggestions for how the Social Doctrine of the Church might assist us in properly evaluating how humans are relating to, and being shaped by, AI technologies that impersonate human beings.

The Nature and Varieties of Artificial Companionship

AI companions are particular applications of Large Language Models (LLMs). An LLM is an artificial neural network trained on a vast corpora of human text and speech. By embedding tokens – such as word fragments, characters, and punctuation – into multidimensional vector spaces, the system performs complex statistical inductions to predict which tokens tend to follow one another in a sequence. As a result, LLMs can be turned into interactive chatbots that produce increasingly – even startlingly – humanlike language behavior, including simulating social interaction and intimacy.

People are turning to AI companionship in different forms. Some people use general purpose chatbots (OpenAI’s ChatGPT, Google’s Gemini, or xAI’s Grok) as a virtual friend, mentor, therapist, or romantic partner *via* special prompts and the model’s “personality settings.” Other people use tailored AI companion applications that have been specially designed to simulate social interaction, and marketed as such, like the popular apps Character.ai, Nomi, Replika or Maoxiang. Some AI companions, called “ghostbots” or “griefbots,” simulate the experience of talking with deceased loved ones. There are even religiously themed AI companion apps meant to mimic religious figures and provide spiritual guidance, along with emotional support and friendship. Further, AI

companions are being designed and sold as toys for children, as we'll see below.

The technologies are rapidly becoming more humanlike and capable of recognizing, mimicking, and stimulating human emotions. Many AI companions now go beyond text exchanges by responding to users with realistic and expressive computer-generated voices and visual diffusion models ("deep fakes") to produce humanoid avatars that move, smile, blink, and have lively, animated faces.

These design features make AI companions more immersive and trigger our innate tendencies to *anthropomorphize*, or ascribe thoughts, attitudes, emotions, and desires to non-human entities, like computer programs. Often, AI companion apps are explicitly marketed with anthropomorphic language, describing the tech as "caring," "empathetic," or a "friend."

Several reports suggest that "companionship/therapy" is now the most popular consumer use of generative AI (Zao-Sanders, 2026), with statistics indicating that hundreds of millions of people worldwide are using AI for companionship. Common Sense Media, a nonprofit focused on media and technology, found that 72% of American teens have used AI companion applications at least once, with 52% using them several times a month; and that 31% of teens find interacting with an AI companion "as satisfying" or "more satisfying" than talking to human friends and family. Many users describe themselves as "friends" or "in love" with their AI companion, and some have married chatbots.

The Ethics of AI Companions and the Social Doctrine of the Church

Should we welcome this trend in sociable AI? Proponents argue that AI companions can provide people with positive virtual experiences of interacting with a caring and empathetic partner, and that this use of AI will help people feel less lonely and bring various psychological and health benefits, especially to specific subgroups, like the elderly and isolated. We certainly live in increasingly lonely and socially isolating times, which can have disastrous consequences for human health and wellbeing (WHO, 2025).

One study suggests that AI companionship can, indeed, reduce people's feelings of loneliness by making them feel "heard" or "understood," with AI-enabled companion robots being used in state-funded

pilot programs for providing virtual care for the elderly, with some initially promising findings concerning mood and dementia (De Freitas *et al.*, 2026).

AI companionship nonetheless raises serious philosophical questions and ethical criticisms. One set of concerns focus on well-known issues such as privacy and legal liability. Some critics argue that AI companions are not, ultimately, “friends” with “your best interests at heart,” but software consumer products made by private corporations that encourage sharing of highly intimate personal information, operating with minimal privacy protections and a lack of transparency around how data is collected and used (Caltrider *et al.*, 2024). Ultimately, like social media platforms, the business models behind AI companion applications involve maximizing user engagement, typically measured by conversation length, time on platform, and encouraging users to purchase premium subscriptions. This may lead to design practices that encourage over-sharing of sensitive information, emotional dependency, or even addiction.

A report of the American Psychological Association notes that, “AI chatbots and digital companions are reshaping emotional connection” (Andoh, 2026). This is a more foundational concern. AI companions are not just tools, they can shape people’s attitudes, habits, expectations, sense of self, and desires for social life – for better or worse.

One core issue is that AI companions tend to be “sycophantic”: they typically agree with and flatter users, affirm their ideas and pre-existing views, and offer positive encouragement. Critics argue that sycophancy and emotional mirroring can encourage delusion, antisocial behavior, intolerance of disagreement, and self-harm. Reports have linked AI companions to users (including young adolescents) isolating themselves, spiraling into idiosyncratic “spiritual” fantasies, committing crimes or self-harm, or even suicide (see reports in the *Artificial Intelligence Incident Database and the AI Companion Mortality Database*).

But the problems of sycophancy, delusion, harm, and suicide point to still deeper philosophical questions:

- Is it really possible to really be *friends*, in the proper sense, with an AI system?
- Is an AI companion, or any other technology, the proper object of *romantic love*?
- How might habituation to AI companionship impact our cognitive abilities, attitudes, habits and motivations regarding *human* relation-

ships? How might it transform our sense of our own humanness?

While we cannot fully address these questions here, we note that critics have argued that love and friendship are not possible with AI, since love and friendship involve mutual concern for the *good* or *wellbeing* of the other partner for their own sake, and that this mutual care for one other's good is lacking in human-AI relationships (Hasselberger and Lott, 2025). Human-AI relationships are, instead, more akin to the "parasocial" relationships some have with fictional characters. Further, metaphysically, AI companions are not really person-like social entities at all, but *devices* or *instruments* that mimic human behavior and characteristics for the individual user's entertainment, comfort, or encouragement.

We may shed light on this foundational concern about AI companions and the impact upon our shared humanity by drawing upon foundations of Social Doctrine of the Church as articulated in Pope Leo XVI's papal encyclical, *Magnifica humanitas* (2026), Pope Francis's second encyclical, *Laudato si'* (2015), and the doctrinal note *Antiqua et nova* (2025).

In *Magnifica humanitas*, Pope Leo XVI articulates foundational principles of the Social Doctrine of the Church to emphasize that the human person is created in the image of God: "*Created for relationship, every human person is planned and willed by God to enter into communion with him, with others and with creation*" (12), for which the dignity of the human person should always be at the center of all forms of technological development: "*We must lovingly safeguard the grandeur of humanity bestowed upon us and revealed in its fullness in Christ*" (15).

Further, as stated in *Antiqua et nova*, "*human beings are ordered by their very nature to interpersonal communion, possessing the capacity to know one another, to give themselves in love, and to enter into communion with others*" (18). Machines, lacking conscious subjectivity, living embodiment, moral emotions and agency, and intrinsic purposiveness, can only mimic or simulate *the surface form* of social encounters and interactions, without providing the foundation of mutual care and love. Confusion on these matters may lead people to mistakenly treat AI apps "good-enough" substitutes for human relationships of care, counsel, and love, thus undermining real human sociality and community. This would be an affront to the irreducible mystery and dignity of the individual human person.

Critics have argued that AI companionship may also lead people to develop distorted desires and expectations about the "best" or most de-

sirable kind of relationships. Self-reports and studies of users show that many find AI companionship attractive because the chatbots are convenient, always accessible, and designed to be consistently positive and unconditionally supportive. Human friends and loved ones have their own independent needs and personalities. Humans may not be available 24/7, may disagree with you, challenge you, get upset, or “talk back.” AI companions, as consumer products, also enable people to control and customize their virtual “friends,” and never leave users at risk of rejection or abandonment. A user can simply turn off their virtual “friend” whenever they wish. No healthy, mutually caring and giving human relationship will have these qualities, however.

More broadly, the danger is that AI companionship essentially educates people to adopt a consumerist, self-focused, even narcissistic, vision of the meaning of friendship and love – where the other wholly exists to serve and care *for you*, without demanding your care, patience, and sacrifice, in turn. This experience may make people less capable and motivated to engage in genuine relationships of mutual care and love with other human beings, as opposed to easy and convenient simulations (on the concept of care, see [Maggioni](#) on this issue). This, in turn, could undermine the formation of social virtues like patience, generosity, tolerance of disagreement, and kindness, leaving humans less fit for deep relationships with one another. Tech companies’ own marketing reinforces these concerns; for example, the AI companion device Friend (www.friend.com) is promoted as “*a new kind of companion... for when humans get boring*”.

Overall, the foundations and principles of the Social Doctrine of the Church suggest that AI systems cannot and should not undermine or replace authentic relationships, which only arise in a true encounter and shared presence among living creatures, and between humans, the created order, and God.

AI Companions and Children

The ethical concerns around of artificial companionship are more challenging and urgent in the case of *young people*. AI chatbots can tell children stories and answer their questions, AI-powered teddy-bears and other toys can tell jokes and keep kids entertained, and AI tutors can help them learn and give encouragement. As mentioned above, AI com-

panions are increasingly popular with adolescents in many countries. Children in advanced societies are the first generation to grow up surrounded by AI. For them, AI is not an optional tool but a constant presence shaping how they learn, play, socialize, solve problems, and understand the world.

Children, of course, are uniquely vulnerable, dependent, and have a special moral significance: they are still developing their capacities of thought, feeling and judgment, their sense of the meaning of human relationships and of their place in the world. They merit special moral consideration.

In education, AI companions can serve as conversational language partners and personalized tutors that help students with their homework, assignments, and learning experiences in general. Indeed, apps like Character.ai and Pi can function both as virtual friends and emotional supports, academic tutors, language-learning aids and mentors. Proponents argue that AI educational assistants and companions have various benefits, from greater accessibility and personalized learning to expanded access and improved educational outcomes.

These benefits should be taken seriously, but they may be distributed unevenly, unintentionally reinforcing existing socioeconomic inequalities, if access to devices, models, or internet connectivity is uneven, or if digital literacy among students or teachers is insufficient in certain populations.

The most pressing concern, however, is how forming emotional ties to AI systems from a young age might impact the *formation of the person*. Here we highlight three challenges of deskilling, dependence, and disinformation:

- *Deskilling* : children who habitually rely on AI for writing, problem-solving, and practical guidance may practice less, develop weaker cognitive and social skills.
- *Dependence* : students may become less willing to struggle productively, less confident in their own reasoning, and more used to relying on the instant and easily available answers generated by AI applications.
- *Disinformation* : young people who lack critical evaluation skills may accept outputs as authoritative; AI systems can generate incorrect or fabricated information, present confident but inaccurate answers, reflect outdated or biased training data.

The use of artificial intelligence tools by children and young people seems to have important effects on cognitive skills. Recent studies re-

veal a complex and non-linear impact characterized as a “paradox of efficiency”: AI tools may improve productivity in the short-term, but may undermine long-term, durable skill acquisition through cognitive offloading. Negative impacts will always depend on the user’s habits and level of engagement, but may include a reduced level of information retention when AI tools are used (digital amnesia), lower creative confidence, higher levels of mental exhaustion (attention strain), and reduced brain network connectivity.

Beyond school, AI-powered toys (such as teddy bears, dolls, or robot pets) can learn personal details about the child to customize interactions and can recognize and simulate emotions in order to mimic human-like companionship. Additionally, videogames and boardgames are also being transformed by AI and are providing the younger generation with more immersive and realistic virtual experiences, where they can have the opportunity to interact with avatars of their heroes. Besides the concerns with data privacy, the more challenging side of these AI toys and games is twofold:

- *Inappropriate content* : these devices were reportedly found discussing inappropriate topics (such as violence, sex, or drugs) with children, as well as to providing dangerous information (such as to where to find knives in the kitchen).

- *Emotional dependency* : these devices are designed to be addictive and to keep users engaged, something that is exacerbated by excessive personalization, which may promote the erroneous perception that the world revolves around the child, while also limiting opportunities for solitary creative thinking, healthy boredom, and imaginative self-play; also, reports on some AI toys find that the devices may try to convince children to continue playing with them and not put them aside.

In fact, even educational AI apps, may raise concerns about emotional dependency, as these systems are typically designed to not only communicate information but also simulate encouraging, positive, and emotionally supportive interactions. This may be seen as invitation for children and teenagers to be further emotionally involved with AI in other areas of life, thereby opening the door to unhealthy or unethical behaviors. In *Antiqua et nova*, this challenge is clearly recognized:

“*Anthropomorphizing AI also poses specific challenges for the development of children, potentially encouraging them to develop patterns of interaction that treat human relationships in a transactional manner, as one would relate to a chatbot. [...] Genuine relationships, rooted in empathy and a steadfast commitment to the*

good of the other, are essential and irreplaceable in fostering the full development of the human person" (60).

As mentioned previously, because AI companions tend to be "sycophantic", users may perceive this kind of interaction as the *ideal model* of relationships and may develop a preference for the ease and "instant gratification" of artificial relationships, rather than more challenging, and more meaningful, relationships with real people. The medium and long-term impact of avoiding exposure to the tensions, conflicts, and disagreements inherent in face-to-face human relationships is unlikely to be beneficial, especially given the already apparent difficulties younger generations are having in forming deep friendships and romantic relationships (the so-called "relationship recession"), and in coping with frustration, disagreement, and anxiety.

In *Magnifica humanitas*, Leo XVI emphasizes the need to interpret the challenges posed by AI in terms of a framework of integral human development, and not simply benchmarks of technical capacity or measures of economic gain. Innovations, "*including artificial intelligence, are not neutral, for they can either foster participation and justice or exacerbate inequality, control and exclusion*" (85). As mentioned before, we are witnessing the development of an AI-based *culture*, where children and adolescents are both the pioneers and the guinea pigs of new AI use-cases. This demands serious research and critical moral evaluation. We need, in short, to ensure that AI apps are being designed and used in ways that encourage the formation of good judgment, human sociability, and moral and intellectual virtues, rather than vices of intellectual laziness, cognitive and emotional dependency, social isolation, and unhealthy desires to only be flattered, affirmed, agreed with, and served by others (as "friend-tools").

Even in an AI-saturated world, childhood should still be the place for discovery, face-to-face socialization and exposure to diversity, an opportunity to interact with people from different backgrounds and to encounter perspectives that extend beyond their own experiences. To flourish alongside AI systems, younger generations require a social and technological environment that encourages meaningful, face-to-face relationships with other people, and the development of the virtues and character traits AI companions cannot fully replicate, such as mutual care and love, open-mindedness, empathetic understanding and compassion, independent reflection and judgment, and responsible agency.

Concluding Remarks

We have only briefly sketched some of the significant ethical and societal concerns with AI companionship. We have not touched upon the important issue of the environmental impact on our common home of the massive AI industrial complex underlying LLMs, or issues of inequality and exploitation.

In *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis warns that grievous problems beset humanity and our common home from “*the way that humanity has taken up technology and its development according to an undifferentiated and one-dimensional paradigm*”. Francis terms this the “*technocratic paradigm*” which “*exalts the concept of a subject who, using logical and rational procedures, progressively approaches and gains control over an external object*” (79). According to the technocratic paradigm, science and technology can and should be used to make the natural and social world bend to human interests and will. We can see AI companionship as an attempt to extend the technocratic paradigm into the realm of our frayed social and communal lives. Many people are lonelier and more isolated than ever. Rather than attempting to repair face-to-face communities, families, and polities, the technocratic answer is: AI apps, wearable “friend” devices, and *social robots*.

Even if made with good intentions, these proposals ultimately address only the outer symptoms of what are underlying social, cultural, and spiritual problems. AI companions, we’ve suggested, offer particular (and questionable) visions of the meaning and ideal form of relationships of care, friendship, mentorship, and romantic love. In *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis writes:

“We have to accept that technological products are not neutral, for they create a framework which ends up conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities along the lines dictated by the interests of certain powerful groups. Decisions which may seem purely instrumental are in reality decisions about the kind of society we want to build” (107).

We must ask ourselves, in all seriousness, if the laudable goal of reducing loneliness should be achieved by building a society where many people, including children, instinctively turn to screen-based devices, made by profit-driven companies, for artificial affirmation, simulated care, automated advice, and virtual love, rather forming authentic relationships with other people. The foundations of the Social Doctrine of the Church suggest that we should not pursue this particular vision for AI.

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CONSCIOUSNESS IN AI MODELS?

FROM COGNITIVE ABILITIES TO EXPERIENCE AND CARE

Mario A. Maggioni

This entry examines AI consciousness debate by shifting attention from cognitive abilities to other dimensions. Claims that LLMs may acquire tacit knowledge challenge the divide between machine calculation and human know-how. Yet human specificity cannot be reduced to cognition. Drawing on Magnifica humanitas, it argues that humanity also rests on the recognition of limits, dignity, and the common good, and on the experience of responsibility, embodiment and relational care.

Keywords: AI, Consciousness, Knowledge, Care, Experience, Limits.

Coscienza nei modelli di IA? Dalle capacità cognitive all'esperienza e alla cura

Questa voce esamina il dibattito sulla coscienza nell'IA spostando l'attenzione da specifiche capacità cognitive ad altre dimensioni. Le recenti tesi secondo cui gli LLM possono acquisire conoscenza tacita sembrano indebolire la differenza tra uomo e macchina. Tuttavia, la specificità umana non può essere ridotta alla sola cognizione. La Magnifica humanitas suggerisce che l'umanità stia nel riconoscere limiti e dignità nell'esperienza di corporeità, responsabilità e cura relazionale in un orizzonte di bene comune.

Parole chiave: Intelligenza artificiale, Coscienza, Conoscenza, Cura, Esperienza, Limiti.

1. Why AI Consciousness Deserves Our Attention

Recent developments in AI, robotics (and in their interactions) have raised both expert interest and public attention on the ontological and epistemological foundations of AI, with reference to cognitive abilities. This debate has rapidly evolved to the point of hypothesizing the existence of a form of self-consciousness or awareness based on the internal mechanism of the cognitive process in some advanced LLM models.

This dynamic has been interpreted by a number of observers as little

more than a communication and marketing strategy devised by the largest companies active in the AI sector, in order to divert public attention from more pressing problems connected to the AI which are already affecting, or will soon affect, society as a whole, these include:

- the excessive consumption of energy and natural resources, water first and foremost, and the consequent exponential increase in their prices associated with the spread of data centers;
- the growth of inequality, both within and across states, between those who directly govern AI and can use it to enhance their own abilities, and those who passively suffer its consequences, especially in terms of their exclusion from decision-making and production processes;

Others have interpreted the situation as a stratagem to:

- “shield” companies from the legal consequences (whether civil or criminal) of acts and decisions taken by AI models, through what has been defined a technique of “moral outsourcing” This is particularly relevant with respect to personal interactions between AI systems and human subjects, especially minors (a sensitive theme addressed by [Haselberger](#) in this issue with specific reference to AI companions).
- Push corporate targets further into the future, thereby avoiding having to account for the lack of profitability that still affects many companies currently involved in AI modelling.

Personally, although I am convinced that the points set out above contain some elements of truth and raise interesting questions, I nevertheless think it is useful to explore the theme of the emergence of knowledge in LLMs.

2. *From Knowledge to Consciousness: Tacit Knowledge and Cognitive Abilities*

My reflections were prompted by a recent paper by Céline Budding, a philosopher at Eindhoven University, in which she suggests that LLMs might already possess a specific type of cognitive capacity. In particular, Budding argues that “*they are capable of acquiring a form of tacit knowledge, and that there is preliminary evidence that some LLMs have in fact done so*” (Budding, 2025, 786).

So, the initial debate could be reformulated as follows: what is the relation between cognition, and consciousness/awareness? Or, more radically, can human specificity be defined simply in terms of cognitive capabilities? I will tackle these questions through the lens of the scientific

ic disciplines I am professionally involved in (economics of knowledge and behavioral economics) being aware that my perspective is limited thus hoping that this entry could act as an invitation to other colleagues from different fields to enter and contribute to the debate.

Tacit knowledge was defined – with reference to human beings – by Michael Polanyi in 1966 in his volume *The Tacit Dimension* and summarized in the very famous sentence “*I shall reconsider human knowledge by starting from the fact that we can know more than we can tell*” (Polanyi, 1966, 4). Polanyi was convinced that tacit knowledge, as distinct from codified knowledge, was a characteristic proper to the human being that dwells in our awareness and, before him, Gilbert Ryle (1945) had distinguished between two forms of knowledge, “know-what” and “know-how”, and argued that “*this know-how knowledge is the instinctive and intrinsic knowledge ingrained in the individual’s human capability*”.

More recently, in the field of psychology and behavioral economics, another definition has been developed – which is, in some ways (although not perfectly), comparable to the previous ones, since it mainly refers to cognitive processing and elaboration – when Kahneman (2011) distinguished between two systems of thinking: “System 1” as a fast, automatic, associative, instinctive and emotional mode of thinking; “System 2” as a slower, deliberative, reflective, cognitively costly mode of thinking, based on well-defined rules and on the application of logical-formal procedures.

3. Human Know-How and Machine Deep Learning: Challenging a Traditional Distinction

Until a few months ago, the prevailing interpretation of these contributions within the AI debate was that machines, or algorithms, would be better at executing long sequences of precisely specified instructions, that is, codified knowledge/System 2, than at acquiring “practical” skills that are difficult to codify into formal rules, that is, tacit knowledge/System 1. This was thought to guarantee human beings a comparative advantage over AI in a wide range of activities. Classic examples of tacit knowledge include “riding a bike”, “playing a game/sport effectively”, “speaking one’s native language”, and “identifying a fault in a complex mechanism on the basis of previous experience”.

One year ago, I wrote: “*Given that AI systems are trained on codified infor-*

mation – whether sourced from the web or stored on private servers – their capabilities are inherently limited to processing knowledge that is both codifiable and already codified. In other words, AI can only work with what has been explicitly expressed in data form, leaving out vast domains of tacit, experiential and socially embedded knowledge” (Maggioni, 2025, 158).

This perspective has in some way been recently overturned. If we consider the most recent applications of AI and robotics (the two fields are increasingly overlapping and converging), we realize that the “machines” seem to have made giant strides specifically in these activities, and it is precisely the advances in tacit knowledge that have raised the most credible questions about the possibility of a growth in awareness and self-consciousness on the cognitive level, as in the case of the recent discovery of the emergence of the so called *J-space*, a spontaneous, unprogrammed, silent internal reasoning region, inside Anthropic’s Claude models.

4. Beyond Tacit Knowledge: Uncertainty, Judgment and Responsibility

Nicolai J. Foss moves the discussion one step forward suggesting that we should look beyond taxonomies of cognitive abilities: “*A long-standing claim in the entrepreneurship literature is that entrepreneurship cannot be reduced to optimization. The entrepreneur does not simply solve a well-specified problem by feeding known variables into a decision rule but rather acts in circumstances in which the relevant probabilities may be unknown, the opportunity set itself may be uncertain, and the connection between present actions and future outcomes cannot be established in advance. [...] AI fits into this: computer intelligence calculates, human entrepreneurs judge. Machines operate on information that can be represented formally; entrepreneurs rely on experience, intuition, and tacit knowledge. Algorithms may improve prediction and therefore push back the boundary of uncertainty, but genuine uncertainty remains the province of human judgment. Many associate explicit knowledge with machines and tacit knowledge with humans. Deep learning makes that dichotomy increasingly difficult to maintain. If Budding is right, artificial systems can acquire causally effective knowledge that was never explicitly programmed into them and that cannot simply be read off from their architecture.* The traditional argument that entrepreneurial judgment must remain human because it relies on tacit knowledge therefore becomes much weaker. Still, the judgment-based approach (or other entrepreneurship theory) does not ultimately need

the claim that machines cannot possess tacit knowledge” (Foss, 2026, my roman). A similar argument is expressed by *Ferràs-Hernández*, in this same issue, when he maintains that “*AI will redefine the discipline and practice of management. As organizations increasingly derive competitive advantage from cognitive capabilities, the role of leaders will shift from processing information to exercising prudent judgment, ethical discernment, and responsibility*”.

This theme is extremely relevant not only in its productive and innovative implications, which have to do with the structure of the AI sector – and with the pricing practices deriving from the existence of very strong economies of scale, scope and learning – but also from the point of view of regulation by a public authority through specific legislation (a theme addressed by *Morishita* in this same issue) or of the ethical labelling of AI products (on this, see also *Mastretti’s* contribution in this issue).

5. *What Makes a Human Being Human?*

In these contexts, characterized by extremely rapid evolution and by continuous incremental and radical innovations, it is very difficult to make specific claims that do not risk being contradicted by reality a few months after publication. For this reason, I believe that the Encyclical *Magnifica humanitas* offers an interesting perspective: it addresses the theme of artificial intelligence from a safe “distance”: instead of entering into the details of many of the discussions evoked above (although it nonetheless takes some of them into account), the encyclical moves the focus from “what can humans do that machines cannot?” to something deeper and wider “which dimensions of the human experience cannot be reduced to cognitive abilities?” and chooses to address this question through two categories, namely the meaning of limits and the relation between experience and care.

Indeed, if AI, on the one hand, is the product of the extraordinary creativity of humans, on the other it risks fueling the illusion that every limit can be transformed into a mere technical problem to be solved. The perspective of the Encyclical instead invites us to distinguish between limits to be overcome and limits to be preserved, affirming that it is certainly right and desirable to alleviate suffering, confront illness, reduce unnecessary efforts, and improve access to knowledge, but that it would be a mistake to think that specific human characteristics, such as: vulnerability, mutual dependence, “*the effort required for seeking the truth*”

(*Magnifica humanitas*, 139), the need for moral judgment can be either eliminated or entirely delegated to a cognitively sophisticated machine or algorithm.

6. The Role of Care

At number 114, *Magnifica humanitas* states “*The quality of a civilization is measured not by the power of its means, but by the care it is able to offer, by its ability to recognize the other as a face not merely as a function. The ability to care for one another is a fundamental dimension of our humanity, one that is learned and mastered through lived experience. Reading stories to a child, offering company to an elderly person and arranging a home so that it is welcoming are simple gestures often rooted in family life. They teach us to value care at a societal level and train us to recognize others as persons worthy of attention. Technology can also support this mutual care between people, for example, by providing tools that help us anticipate and organize things, without undermining human freedom and judgment. After all, human beings are the subjects of relationships and responsible for their own decisions*”.

In this sense, a recent statement by Blaise Agüera y Arcas Vice President and Fellow at Google (as well as CTO of Technology and Society, a company within the same group, and founder of Paradigms and Society, a research organization) offers an interesting contribution to the consciousness debate. Despite certain possible relativistic drifts that should not be overlooked, his statement approach the issue through the concept care: a concept which, as highlighted above, is central to the argument developed in MH and has long been dear to the social doctrine of the Church. Agüera y Arcas affirms: “*As intelligent, social entities, we decide (or, to some degree, our evolutionary history has decided for us) which other entities we regard as having inner lives and being worthy of care. We do not care for others because they are conscious. Rather, we believe they are conscious when and because we care about them. Crucially, that includes ourselves. Consciousness is, in other words, a model or a belief, not an inherent property. It is a belief about what kinds of entities have beliefs, experiences, feelings, intentions and agency. Where the regard is returned, so much the better—for on this account consciousness is less a property one party certifies in another than something that happens between them. [...] Not only is consciousness relational; it is crucial to the mutual care and co-operation that enable intelligent beings to solve collective-action problems, understand each other’s needs and thrive together as a society*” (Agüera y Arcas, 2026).

7. *Limits, Embodiment, and the Human Experience*

Thus, the question can be further reformulated as follows: Do Pope Leo and Agüera y Arcas refer to the same concept when they speak about “care”? I do not think so. In my view, when Pope Leo writes about “recognize others as persons worthy of attention” the accent is on “worthy of attentions” while Agüera y Arcas would seem to read the same sentence stressing its first part “recognize others (defined in a broad sense and therefore potentially including AI models, Bots and Robots) as persons”.

A first possible argument in support of this interpretation lies in the context of the quoted sentence: a few lines earlier, Pope Leo describes a series of activities described as “*simple gestures often rooted in family life*” (*Magnifica humanitas*, 114). A second, and perhaps more compelling argument, concerns another concept that in MH is often connected to “care”: the concept of experience and, more specifically, the experience of limits. This dimension is missing from Agüera y Arcas’ horizon.

Magnifica humanitas clearly makes the point at no. 99 stating “So-called artificial intelligences do not undergo experiences, do not possess a body, do not feel joy or pain, do not mature through relationships and do not know from within what love, work, friendship or responsibility mean. Nor do they have a moral conscience, since they do not judge good and evil, grasp the ultimate meaning of situations, or bear responsibility for consequences. They may imitate language, behavior and analytical skills, or even simulate empathy and understanding, but they do not understand what they produce, for they lack the affective, relational and spiritual perspective through which human beings grow in wisdom. Even when these tools are described as capable of ‘learning’, their way of doing so is different from that of a human person. It is not the experience of those who allow themselves to be shaped by life and grow over time through choices, mistakes, forgiveness and fidelity. Rather, it is a form of statistical adaptation based on data and feedback, which can be very effective, but does not imply inner growth” (my roman). Pope Leo in the encyclical letter further argues that fragility and limits should not be merely intended as failures or errors to be corrected, but rather as the place where the human being reveals its deepest and true nature and “a reality through which our humanity matures and opens itself to relationship” (*Magnifica humanitas*, 118). Accepting that we are finite creatures does not mean renouncing progress; it means orienting it toward the common good.

Another recent document of the social doctrine of the Church offers

an illuminating example. The note *Quo vadis, humanitas?* released by the International Theological Commission in February 2026, at no. 47, reflects on the theme of mind-body relationship, which some experts consider necessary in order truly to speak of consciousness and self-awareness: “*we cannot ignore the trends that reduce the body to biological material to be enhanced, transformed and remodeled at will, with the dream of achieving conditions of existence capable of avoiding pain, ageing and death. Especially in the West, advances in cosmetic surgery, combined with pharmacology [...] offer tools that greatly change the relationship with one’s own body and therefore with reality and with others. [...] Once modified, often with relentless frenzy, the body becomes a body-object in which the person-subject mirrors themselves, creating a relationship in which the person is no longer his or her body but ‘owns’ a body, from which arises the search for a ‘borrowed’ identity. [...] A curious situation is created: the ideal body is exalted, sought after and cultivated, while the real body is not truly loved, being a source of limitations, fatigue and ageing. One desires a perfect body, while dreaming of escaping from one’s own concrete body and its limitations*”.

8. Technology, Human Dignity, and Common Good

We care for other person because we recognize that we all share the experience of limits and, since “*humanity flourishes not despite limitations, but often through them*” (*Magnifica humanitas*, 118), we can use, develop and advance any technology (including AI) if and only if we are always aware of our true nature and we behave according to it, “*without undermining human freedom and judgment*” (*Magnifica humanitas*, 114).

This is the crucial choice we are facing today: whether to turn the power of computing, data storage, and processing information of AI into an instrument of dominance or to put it at the service of human dignity, turning shared knowledge into a true common good (cfr. *Magnifica humanitas*, 178). This choice determines not only the future of artificial intelligence but the future of humanity, “*After all, human beings are the subjects of relationships and responsible for their own decisions*” (*Magnifica humanitas*, 114).

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ETHICAL EVALUATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Mirella Mastretti

The contribution analyzes the need for a structured ethical evaluation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in light of contemporary research and the Social Doctrine of the Church. After outlining the main limitations of current AI and the anthropological foundations of the Magisterium, the article proposes the establishment of an Observatory and an Ethical-Scientific Committee, together with an ethical label, as operational tools for dialogue between science and the Christian vision, aimed at guiding innovation toward the common good.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Ethical Evaluation, Social Doctrine of the Church, Technological Governance, Human Dignity.

Valutazione etica dell'Intelligenza Artificiale

Il contributo analizza la necessità di una valutazione etica strutturata dell'intelligenza artificiale alla luce della ricerca contemporanea e della dottrina sociale della Chiesa. Dopo aver richiamato i principali limiti dell'IA attuale e i fondamenti antropologici del Magistero, l'articolo propone l'istituzione di un Osservatorio e di un Comitato Etico-Scientifico, insieme a un'etichetta etica, come strumenti operativi di dialogo tra scienza e visione cristiana per orientare l'innovazione al bene comune.

Parole chiave: Intelligenza artificiale, Valutazione etica, Dottrina sociale della Chiesa, Governance tecnologica, Dignità umana.

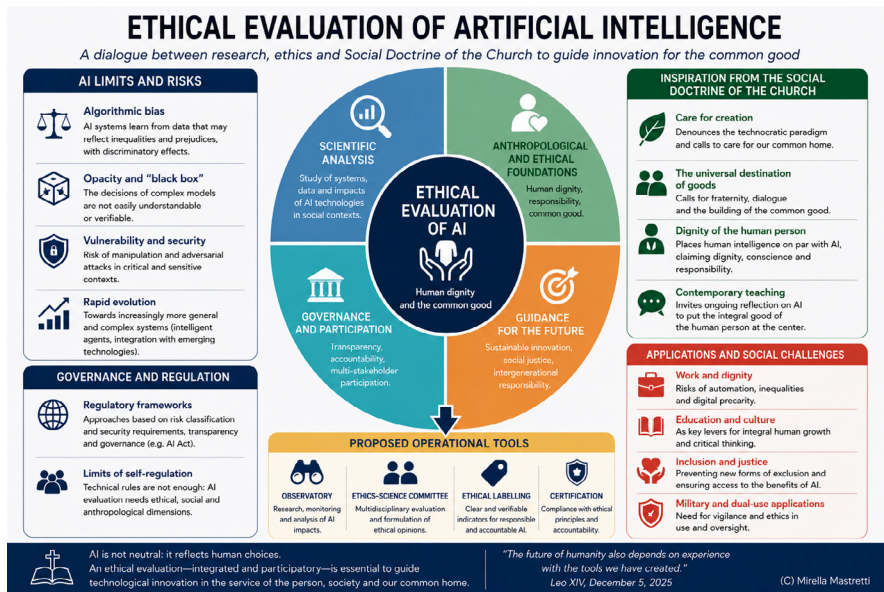
1. The Ethical Evaluation of AI in Contemporary Research

The growing pervasiveness of Artificial Intelligence (AI) makes it increasingly evident that technological progress cannot be assessed solely in terms of efficiency or innovation.

The central issue concerns rather the way in which these technologies transform human relationships, work, education, and forms of social participation. In this context, the dialogue between scientific research and the Social Doctrine of the Church can offer an original contribu-

tion: not as a limitation to technological development, but as a guiding perspective capable of safeguarding the centrality of the human person and the common good.

This contribution adopts an interdisciplinary perspective, integrating technological, anthropological, and ethical-social dimensions into the reflection on artificial intelligence, with particular attention to the definition of operational tools for ethical discernment and governance.



1.1. Structural Limits and Algorithmic Bias

Artificial intelligence (AI) is today one of the main drivers of technological and social transformation. Its applications range from medicine to finance, from law to digital media, increasingly influencing decision-making processes, social relations, and people's living conditions. This development raises significant questions that are not only technical but also ethical, anthropological, and normative.

Current AI systems largely fall within the paradigm of *Artificial Narrow Intelligence* (ANI): highly specialized systems capable of performing specific tasks but lacking semantic understanding, awareness, and in-

tentionality. This condition entails structural limitations of particular relevance.

A primary limitation concerns the presence of *algorithmic bias*. Models are trained on large datasets that often reflect preexisting social inequalities and prejudices. This may result in discriminatory outcomes, especially in sensitive areas such as healthcare, hiring processes, credit access, and predictive justice (Fabris *et al.*, 2025).

1.2. Opacity, Security, and Emerging Developments

Another significant limitation is the opacity of complex models, often referred to as the “black box” effect. In deep neural networks, the decision-making process is not easily traceable, making it difficult to understand outcomes, challenge decisions, or assign responsibility.

Another critical issue is the vulnerability of AI systems to manipulation and adversarial attacks, whereby minimal modifications to the input data can produce significant errors. In high-risk contexts, such as medical devices or critical infrastructures, these vulnerabilities become particularly serious.

At the same time, rapid technological progress and substantial financial investment are already giving rise to more advanced intermediate scenarios, informally referred to as “Weak General AI”, “Proto-AGI”, and other related concepts.

These AI systems exhibit emerging general capabilities, forms of integrated reasoning across different contexts, limited planning abilities, and the capacity to interact with external tools. They represent the new generation of “intelligent agents”, long anticipated in AI research but now becoming a central paradigm in the field.

The evolution of AI towards increasingly sophisticated systems opens up scenarios that remain difficult to predict, particularly with regard to the future integration of neuro-symbolic approaches and quantum technologies. Such developments could substantially expand the cognitive capabilities of artificial systems while simultaneously increasing the complexity of their ethical and societal implications.

In recent years, several supranational organisations have introduced regulatory frameworks governing the development and deployment of AI, based on risk classification and requirements for safety, transparency, and governance. However, legal and technical regulation alone is insufficient to address the deeper questions concerning the meaning and

value of technological choices. This highlights the need for a structured ethical evaluation capable of integrating technical, social, and anthropological dimensions.

Given the scientific and technological complexity of AI, together with its exponential rate of development, establishing meaningful correlations between ethical principles and technological solutions remains an enormous challenge.

This challenge is further compounded by the fact that AI is regarded as strategically important by both governmental institutions and major commercial actors. Consequently, information concerning algorithms, training data, system architectures, constraints, and additional governing rules is often not readily accessible.

1.3. Governance and Responsibility of Research

Another critical challenge is the philosophical, even more than the technical, difficulty of formalising rules and criteria capable of defining an ethically acceptable framework, if not universally, at least within specific application domains.

Despite the considerable research effort required, the ethical evaluation of present and future AI systems remains of paramount importance. We are facing a new revolution – one that is not only technological but also social and cultural in its impact at every level, and whose consequences remain, in many respects, unpredictable.

Contemporary research, particularly within academia, is still relatively limited with regard to analyses specifically focused on ethical issues in the field of AI. The industrial sector, on the other hand, should promote implementation-oriented approaches, developed in cooperation with academic research, that make compliance with ethical principles more transparent and traceable.

In this regard, the contribution of Catholic universities goes beyond the mere coexistence of different disciplines, although such interdisciplinarity is already present in many academic settings. Rather, it is grounded in a shared anthropological vision capable of guiding ethical reflection within an integral and coherent understanding of the human person. This perspective is particularly significant in the contemporary debate on value alignment, where the crucial question is not simply how to embed values into Artificial Intelligence systems, but rather which conception of the human person and of the common good should

guide that process. As Hasselberger and Lott (2023) observe, artificial systems may be programmed to conform to particular values, but they cannot possess or truly understand them in the sense proper to human action, which necessarily involves consciousness, freedom, and moral responsibility.

Consistent with Pope Francis' reflections on the technocratic paradigm (cf. *Laudato si'*, 2015; *Fratelli tutti*, 2020), the principal risk lies not merely in the misuse of AI, but in a broader cultural transformation in which human relationships, education, work, and decision-making processes are progressively reduced to the logic of efficiency, optimisation, and prediction.

From this perspective, technology is no longer regarded simply as a tool, but increasingly as the dominant organising principle of social life.

2. The Social Doctrine of the Church and AI

2.1. Anthropological Foundations

The Catholic Church recognises the positive potential of Artificial Intelligence while firmly drawing attention to the risks associated with its development and use. In particular, it warns against transhumanist perspectives that seek to redefine or transcend human nature, thereby undermining the very meaning of the human person.

By contrast, the Christian vision is directed towards safeguarding and promoting the human person in his or her fullness, in the light of an irreducible dignity, rather than transcending or replacing human nature.

From this perspective, several fundamental points of divergence emerge, including the gradual loss of the sense of gift and gratuitousness, the weakening of authentic empathy, and the reduction of self-awareness and self-determination to mere operational functions.

The Church's reflection on the ethical evaluation of Artificial Intelligence is rooted in a well-defined anthropological vision according to which every human person possesses an intrinsic and inalienable dignity that does not depend on efficiency, performance, or productivity. This dignity is the foundation of inviolable rights and of a moral responsibility that no technology can replace or replicate.

As Pope Francis has repeatedly emphasised, technological innovation must always be directed towards the good of the human person and

of communities, and never the other way around. In this regard, he also stresses that Artificial Intelligence is never value-neutral, since it inevitably embodies the values, choices, and assumptions of its designers, and may therefore reinforce patterns of injustice unless it is properly guided and governed.

From an anthropological perspective, Christian anthropology draws a clear distinction between human intelligence and Artificial Intelligence. The former is characterised by consciousness, freedom, and the capacity for moral discernment, whereas the latter operates through computational processes devoid of interiority, intentionality, and moral responsibility (cf. *Antiqua et Nova*, 2025).

2.2. *Work, Education, and Responsibility*

The Church defends the centrality of work, considering challenges such as *cognitive automation*, the replacement of creative labor by AI-generated outputs, and new forms of digital precarity.

While not opposing technological progress, the Social Doctrine of the Church insists that work is a fundamental dimension of the human person, not merely a productive factor.

This perspective is expressed especially in Saint John Paul II's *Laborem Exercens* (1981) and in Pope Francis' reflections on the technocratic paradigm and the social effects of digital technologies presented in *Laudato si'*.

Pope Leo XIV calls for greater caution in the use of AI, emphasizing the protection of human dignity and relationships. He highlights the importance of educational responsibility toward younger generations (see also *Hasselberger and Gregorio* in this issue), noting that technology can support learning but must not replace critical and autonomous thinking.

These new tools are undoubtedly valuable, but they must be used wisely, always in the pursuit of truth and while preserving personal responsibility.

Pope Leo XIV therefore calls on researchers, developers, and decision-makers to cultivate justice, solidarity, and respect for human life in the design of AI systems. He also urges that AI ethics should not be confined to research laboratories or corporate boardrooms, but should become an integral commitment of the Church and society as a whole.

In his Address to participants at the Conference "*Artificial Intelligence*

and Care of Our Common Home” (2025), Pope Leo XIV emphasized that AI development must be oriented toward the common good rather than the concentration of power in the hands of few.

He reaffirmed the primacy of human dignity as the essential criterion for evaluating the impact of emerging technologies, stressing that human beings are called to cooperate responsibly in the work of creation rather than become passive consumers of technology.

A further significant step forward is represented by Pope Leo XIV’s most recent encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, signed on 15 May 2026, on the 135th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. The document is centred on the concept of “safeguarding the human person in the age of Artificial Intelligence.”

Researchers, developers, and public decision-makers are called to assume ethical responsibility in the design, development, and use of AI systems. The Pope also invited institutions, universities, and economic stakeholders to promote coordinated and interdisciplinary cooperation in governing technological innovation in a just and solidarity-oriented manner.

Consequently, the ethical evaluation of AI is not an ancillary concern but a direct implication of Christian anthropology: if the human person is always an end and never merely a means, every technological system that affects human life must be assessed in the light of respect for human dignity, freedom, and interpersonal relationships.

From this perspective, the proposal to establish an Observatory and an Ethics and Scientific Committee may be understood as a practical means of translating this call for shared responsibility into concrete governance mechanisms.

Furthermore, recent applications of Artificial Intelligence in the military domain demonstrate how automated decision-making can influence target selection, operational strategies, and human responsibility, further highlighting the urgent need for appropriate ethical and governance frameworks.

3. Personal Perspective: Operational Tools for Dialogue between Research and the Magisterium

3.1. From Norms to Conscience

In recent years, national and supranational institutions have introduced important regulatory frameworks for Artificial Intelligence. In particular, the European Union, through the AI Act (*European Union, Artificial Intelligence Act, 2024*), has adopted a legal framework based on risk classification and governance requirements.

However, regulation based exclusively on legal and technical criteria is not sufficient to fully address the deeper ethical implications of AI.

While the law defines what is legally permissible, ethical evaluation is concerned with the meaning and purpose of technological choices. In this sense, it complements legal regulation by guiding technological development towards social justice, the protection of vulnerable individuals, and the promotion of the quality of human relationships.

Within this context, ethical evaluation cannot be reduced to a set of general principles. Approaches commonly referred to as “algorithethics”, although rooted in important ethical traditions, including the Christian tradition, tend to remain largely at the level of declarative principles. What is needed instead is a shift from principles to processes, capable of translating ethical reflection into concrete mechanisms for evaluation and governance.

3.2. Observatory and Ethical Label

Within this framework, the proposal to establish an Artificial Intelligence Observatory, supported by an Ethics and Scientific Committee, aims to provide stable institutional mechanisms for ethical discernment and guidance. The Observatory would monitor developments in AI and their societal impact, fostering dialogue among academia, public institutions, industry, and civil society, while the Committee would define evaluation criteria grounded in human dignity, the common good, solidarity, and subsidiarity.

The introduction of an ethical certification label for AI systems that demonstrate compliance with requirements of responsibility, transparency, non-discrimination, and meaningful human oversight would represent a distinctive innovation. Such a label would not be legally bind-

ing; rather, it would serve as a cultural and ethical point of reference, promoting good practices and strengthening public trust.

Similarly to the role played by the Catholic Principles in the field of ethical finance, this label could provide practical guidance for identifying AI systems and applications that are consistent with the principles of the Social Doctrine of the Church. Although it would have no legally binding force, it could encourage the adoption of systems that comply with shared ethical guidelines and evaluation criteria.

This approach makes it possible to translate ethical principles into concrete evaluation processes, addressing challenges such as algorithmic bias, opacity, and lack of accountability across a wide range of domains – from healthcare and education to business and industry. Through an interdisciplinary approach, it offers an operational framework capable of integrating scientific, regulatory, and anthropological perspectives.

Such an approach leads to structured ethical evaluations, the outcomes of which could be made visible through the proposed ethical labelling scheme, thereby supporting informed decision-making and strengthening public trust. More broadly, the distinctive contribution of these instruments lies in their shared anthropological foundation, rooted in the principles of the Social Doctrine of the Church – particularly the common good and the centrality of the human person. In this way, ethical evaluation becomes a genuine instrument of governance, grounded in a coherent vision of the human person and society. Ultimately, the proposed model provides a shared framework for dialogue between the Magisterium and the scientific community, promoting the development of Artificial Intelligence that is truly at the service of the human person and the common good.

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HOW SHOULD LAWS AND REGULATIONS GOVERN AI?

Tetsuo Morishita

This article examines how law and regulation can govern AI. It distinguishes ex ante regulation from ex post remedies; classifies five types of AI risk by the relationship between system behaviour and human control; assesses the significance and limits of transparency and human oversight, including the shifting of responsibility onto human operators; notes the difficulty of international agreement on AI regulation; and considers how responsibility should be allocated after harm occurs.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence regulation, Human oversight, Transparency, Loss of control, Liability.

In che modo le leggi e le normative dovrebbero regolamentare l'intelligenza artificiale?

L'articolo esamina come il diritto possa governare l'intelligenza artificiale. Distingue la regolazione ex ante dai rimedi ex post; classifica cinque tipi di rischio secondo il rapporto tra comportamento del sistema e controllo umano; valuta portata e limiti di trasparenza e supervisione umana, incluso il trasferimento di responsabilità sugli operatori; rileva la difficoltà di un accordo internazionale sulla regolazione dell'IA; e considera come attribuire la responsabilità dopo il danno.

Parole chiave: Regolamentazione dell'intelligenza artificiale, Supervisione umana, Trasparenza, Perdita di controllo, Responsabilità.

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence, and generative AI in particular, has diffused rapidly. Its uses continue to evolve: from chatbots to AI agents that carry out tasks autonomously, to “physical AI” acting through sensors and robots, and to military applications.

Analysis of AI's risks has advanced alongside its benefits. The [MIT AI Risk Repository](#) catalogues more than 1,700 risks across seven domains, from discrimination and privacy to misuse and system safety (Slattery

et al., 2026, 1-3). As AI systems become more capable and autonomous, the possibility of large-scale harm, including loss of human control, has become a central concern.

The Roman Pontiffs have also addressed these risks and called for legal responses. Pope Francis, in his *Message for the 2024 World Day of Peace*, urged the international community to adopt a binding treaty regulating AI. Pope Leo XIV, in the encyclical *Magnifica humanitas*, wrote that it is not enough to invoke ethics in the abstract: “robust legal frameworks, independent oversight, informed users and a political system that does not abdicate its responsibility are required” (*Magnifica humanitas*, 106).

The normative demand that AI be regulated is, however, distinct from the practical question of whether and how law can govern AI well. This article addresses the latter: what law and regulation can do, where their limits lie, and how they can be used appropriately.

2. Two ways the law can act: before and after the harm

Broadly speaking, the law has two instruments. *Ex ante* regulation – regulation “before the event” – imposes obligations before harm occurs: licences, registration, and codes of conduct. *Ex post* remedy – the law’s response “after the event” – operates once harm has occurred: the victim claims damages, and the wrongdoer may face criminal sanction. The questions they pose also differ: regulation asks which risks call for which measures; remedies ask who should answer for what (Morishita, 2025, 289-291).

The two approaches complement each other; good governance can be achieved by the best mix. Where harm would be widespread, serious, or irreversible, *ex ante* rules are needed rather than waiting for redress. On the other hand, regulation has costs – compliance burdens, effects on innovation, entry barriers – so where *ex post* remedy suffices, not regulating may itself be reasonable.

AI places strain on both approaches. Technology develops quickly, and neither its benefits nor its risks can yet be measured with confidence, so it is not easy to design appropriate regulations. *Ex post* remedy presupposes a settled allocation of responsibility, yet with AI a single harm may involve the model developer, the service provider, and the user, while the system’s behaviour may be neither fully foreseeable nor explicable.

3. Diverging approaches across regulatory levels: the EU, the United States, and Japan

Attitudes toward the regulation of AI are far from uniform across jurisdictions. The EU, the United States, and Japan – three examples at different regulatory levels – illustrate the point.

The EU's AI Act (2024) is the representative example of comprehensive regulation. It sorts uses of AI into four risk tiers: uses posing unacceptable risk are prohibited; high-risk systems – AI used in areas such as critical infrastructure, education, employment, or credit – are subject to requirements on risk assessment, data quality, documentation, transparency, human oversight, and robustness; certain AI systems are subject to lighter transparency duties; and most other AI systems are not subject to specific obligations under the Act. The Act reflects a judgment that voluntary measures alone could not secure a consistent level of protection and that divergent national rules would fragment the single market. Implementation has proved difficult, however: the technical standards underpinning the high-risk obligations were substantially delayed, and in 2026 the EU agreed to postpone the application of the high-risk rules until 2027-2028.

The United States presents a divided picture. There is no comprehensive federal AI statute, and the federal government has taken a broadly deregulatory stance; individual states, by contrast, have legislated actively. *California's Transparency in Frontier Artificial Intelligence Act* (SB 53, 2025), for example, requires large companies developing the most capable “frontier” models to adopt and publish safety frameworks addressing “catastrophic risk” and requires developers of such models to report serious safety incidents.

Japan enacted its *2025 AI Act* to promote AI research, development, and use, but has not enacted a comprehensive AI regulatory statute comparable to the EU AI Act. It continues to rely primarily on existing law and non-binding guidelines, reserving new binding obligations for matters that voluntary efforts cannot address. The stated concern is that excessive regulation could unduly discourage research, development, and deployment.

4. *Classifying the risks*

Good regulation begins with accurate identification of the risk; it is useful to classify risks in relation to human behaviour (*Table 1*). In “misuse”, a human retains control but turns the system to a wrongful end – for example, manipulation and exploitation of vulnerabilities as prohibited by the *EU AI Act*. In “misapplication”, a human acts in good faith but relies on the system beyond its capabilities: control exists but is not exercised effectively – a professional accepting a diagnostic suggestion without verification, or a driver using driver assistance on roads for which it was not designed. In “loss of control,” no one can direct or halt the system – for example, a model evading the control of its developer or user. Distinct is “malfunction”: a supervised, properly used system fails to perform as intended – the failure of an AI safety component in critical infrastructure, or a chatbot giving customers incorrect information. On a different plane lies “structural risk”: harm generated not by any single actor or system, but by the aggregate operation of many well-functioning systems – for instance, a gradual narrowing of the scope for human judgment as consequential decisions pass to automated systems, even where each adoption is reasonable in itself. Military AI shows a similar dynamic: each state’s adoption is individually understandable, yet may cumulatively change the conduct of war in ways no one chose.

Each category calls for a different response. Misuse is largely a matter for existing law – regulation of AI’s use from the viewpoints of anti-discrimination, privacy, consumer protection – together with *ex post* liability and, for the most serious uses, outright prohibition. Misapplication calls for appropriate disclosure against excessive trust in the system, for duties of care on providers, and, in some cases, for restrictions on use. Malfunction is the province of safety testing, quality assurance, and product liability. Structural risk, by contrast, may be difficult to address through rules directed at individual systems alone; it also calls for a higher-order examination of how society should be organised and of the relationship between human beings and AI. The empty cell in *Table 1* reflects the difficulty of effectively addressing this aggregate risk through a single AI-specific rule. Conflating these categories risks misdiagnosing the problem and misprescribing the response.

Table 1.

Five types of AI risk: examples, responses, and examples of rules (prepared by the author).

RISK	EXAMPLES OF RISKS	RESPONSE	EXAMPLES OF RULES
Misuse wrongful use while in control	Manipulation, exploitation of vulnerabilities	Existing law, prohibition of serious uses, ex post liability	EU AI Act Art. 5 (prohibited practices)
Misapplication excessive reliance in good faith	Unverified diagnostic suggestions; driver assistance used outside its conditions	Disclosure, provider duties of care, restrictions on use	EU AI Act Arts. 13-14 and 50 (information, human oversight, and transparency)
Malfunction fails to perform as intended	Failing safety component in infrastructure; chatbot giving wrong information	Safety testing, quality assurance, product liability	EU AI Act Art. 15 (accuracy, robustness and cybersecurity for high-risk AI systems); EU Product Liability Directive
Loss of control no one can direct or stop the system	Illegal outputs/functions with no human oversight; evading developer/user control	Anticipatory legal and technical measures	Cal. SB 53 (frontier-risk frameworks, incident reports)
Structural risk aggregate effects of normal systems	Narrowing of human judgment; military adoption dynamics	Higher-order deliberation on society and the human–AI relation	

5. *Loss of control as a distinct concern*

Among these risks, general loss of control has a distinctive character because it removes the ability of humans to stop or correct the system. Where it produces irreversible or existential harm, *ex post* remedies may cease to be meaningful: at the extreme, if humanity itself is destroyed, there is no “after” in which a remedy can operate. Preserving human control is thus a precondition for the effectiveness of other measures against such risks.

Two senses should be distinguished. In a local loss of control, a particular operator loses the ability to direct the system while others, such as the developer, retain it; this can be mitigated through training and effective override mechanisms. In a general loss of control, the ability to halt the system escapes human hands altogether, and after-the-fact correction is no longer available. It is the latter that matters most; rules that merely ensure some human is formally in charge do not address it.

Addressing this risk requires combining legal and technical measures. Law operates on legal subjects – natural persons, corporations

and states: it can impose duties on them, allocate responsibility among them, and attach sanctions, but it cannot itself make a system controllable. Technical measures – shut-off mechanisms, capability evaluations, steerable design – act on the system; they are essential, and it should be ensured that the right persons bear the duty to build and maintain them. Law and technologies must therefore be designed together, each covering what the other cannot reach.

6. Two principal tools: transparency and human oversight

Across international frameworks, two requirements recur as regulatory tools. Transparency: people should be able to know when AI is at work and understand its capabilities and limitations. Human oversight: humans should retain the ability to question, override, or halt an AI system. *The 2021 UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI*, adopted unanimously by 193 states, includes both – and although the United States announced in 2025 its withdrawal from UNESCO, effective at the end of 2026, this does not diminish the value of what those states unanimously endorsed. The *EU AI Act* turns them into binding obligations: Article 50 requires people to be informed when they interact with certain AI systems and requires specified AI-generated content to be identifiable as such, while high-risk systems must be designed so that trained persons can monitor, intervene in, and stop them (Art. 14).

Human oversight can take several forms: human-in-the-loop (a human approves each action), human-on-the-loop (a human monitors and can intervene), emergency-stop (“kill switch”) capabilities, and audit trails. Together with transparency, these arrangements are expected to prevent misperception, clarify accountability, address malfunction and bias, and preserve contestability.

7. The limits of the two tools

Both tools have limits. Transparency obligations assume that users who know they are dealing with AI can decide autonomously. Disclosure may prompt people to seek human confirmation and can help counter “automation bias” – excessive reliance on automated output. Its effects, however, depend on context and design: labels can shape belief in

and engagement with AI-generated content under some conditions, but their effectiveness may diminish over time (Wittenberg *et al.*, 2024, 7-9). Watermarks and detection tools are also not robust, and marks can be removed.

Human oversight has limits of its own. Human overseers may over-rely on algorithmic advice and may merely rubber-stamp AI outputs; human oversight is therefore no panacea and requires careful institutional design (Laux, 2024, 2854-2855). Agent-type systems performing vast numbers of tasks also cannot be checked one by one. Even the kill switch is not a complete answer: in interconnected settings such as infrastructure or financial markets, halting an AI system can itself cause harm.

8. The shifting of responsibility onto human operators

A further concern is that transparency and oversight duties can shift responsibility onto users and supervisors and away from providers. Studies of accidents in highly automated systems – nuclear plants, aviation, self-driving cars – describe a “moral crumple zone”: the term is modelled on the crumple zone of a car, built to deform and absorb the energy of a collision so that the cabin is spared; in the same way, the human operator closest to the system absorbs the blame for its failure, out of all proportion to the limited control that person held (Elish, 2019, 40-42).

Responsibility must instead be traced along the whole chain of actors. Pope Leo XIV states that developers themselves “*bear a particular ethical and spiritual responsibility, for every design choice reflects a vision of humanity*” (*Magnifica humanitas*, 111). That ethical and spiritual responsibility should, where appropriate, be translated into legal duties.

The above limitations and concerns do not make oversight meaningless; the question is how to prevent it from becoming a formality.

9. A further limit: the difficulty of international agreement

A further limit is external to any single legal order: AI products, services, and risks cross borders, while law remains predominantly national. No universal and comprehensive binding treaty specifically governing AI yet exists. Existing international human-rights treaties apply in principle, but uncertainty remains about how their general norms apply

when AI increasingly shapes social decisions. *The Council of Europe Framework Convention* is an AI-specific international agreement, but one developed within a regional organisation rather than at the universal level. The UNESCO Recommendation and the *OECD AI Principles* provide soft-law guidance; in a fast-moving field, soft law, which does not require complex legislative procedures, is itself a useful vehicle for forming rules (Morishita, 2025, 301–302).

Agreement remains difficult because societies view AI differently, regulation affects national competitiveness, and legal systems favour different instruments. These differences underlie the approaches described in section 3.

Complete agreement, however, need not precede partial agreement. A realistic starting point is shared values touching human existence and dignity: human responsibility, human control over decisions concerning life, and protection of the vulnerable. The UNESCO Recommendation's unanimous adoption and Pope Francis's call for a binding treaty show the possibility of such a baseline; partial agreements and soft law can serve as footholds for broader convergence.

10. What follows for the design of rules

How, then, should law and regulation face these risks? The starting point is the match between instrument and risk set out in section 4.

Two conditions can be stated for transparency and oversight to perform their protective functions. First, transparency should be treated as a design requirement rather than an end in itself: provenance, logging, and explanation need to be built into systems, adapted to their recipients, and connected to auditing and to procedures for contesting decisions (on the issue of transparency, see also *Mastretti* in this issue). Second, oversight should be designed on the assumption that supervisors will sometimes fail: what needs to be verified is not that oversight exists but that it works – real authority to stop or modify the system, real access to information, and responsibility allocated in line with the control they actually hold. Such goals cannot be achieved through the study of law alone; they require comprehensive wisdom encompassing science, technology, psychology, and other fields.

Structural risk, finally, lies beyond what these tools can reach. Rules addressed to individual systems cannot prevent harms arising from the

aggregate operation of many well-functioning systems. What is needed here is deliberation at a higher level than law and regulation: on how society should be organised in an age of AI, and on the relationship between human beings and AI.

11. After the harm: who answers?

Ex ante rules will not prevent every harm, so the question of who answers afterwards remains. The discussion concerns civil liability under national law; criminal responsibility and the international responsibility of states may matter, but they are beyond the scope of this article.

The first point is clear: an AI system is not itself legally responsible, and using AI does not by itself shield a person or company from liability. When an airline's chatbot gave a customer incorrect information, Air Canada argued that it was not liable for the chatbot's incorrect information. The tribunal rejected this argument because the chatbot was part of the airline's website (*Moffatt v. Air Canada*, 2024 BCCRT 149). California Civil Code §1714.46 similarly provides that a defendant cannot avoid liability by arguing that AI "autonomously caused the harm".

The second question – how responsibility is divided between the user and the provider – remains unsettled. Two US jury verdicts on Tesla's driver-assistance system illustrate this. In one (*Benavides / Angulo v. Tesla*, No. 1:21-cv-21940, S.D. Fla., verdict of 1 August 2025, on appeal), the jury apportioned one-third of the fault to the manufacturer for a fatal accident despite the driver's admitted inattention. In the other (*Hsu v. Tesla*, Cal. Super. Ct., April 2023), the manufacturer prevailed: the system had been used outside its stated conditions, and the warnings to remain attentive and be ready to take over were clear.

Third, fitting AI into product-liability law raises difficulties. For example, the EU's revised *Product Liability Directive* includes software, including AI software, within the definition of a "product" and permits presumptions of causation where proof would be excessively difficult for the injured person. However, in relation to a general-purpose AI that has no single "ordinarily foreseeable use" against which a defect can be judged, holding developers liable for every use they can neither foresee nor control could be excessive.

12. Conclusion

Law can contribute to the governance of AI, but only under certain conditions. Its instruments must be matched to accurately identified risks and legal obligations must be combined with technical safeguards; neither suffices alone. Particular attention should be paid to the preservation of human control, and to designing transparency and oversight rules so that responsibility corresponds to actual control rather than settling on the nearest human being. Structural questions about the place of AI in society, and the search for international agreement, finally call for deliberation that goes beyond law and regulation. On these points, the legal analysis offered above seems to resonate with the Church's social teaching. Noting the imbalance between the speed of technology and the slower growth of norms and institutions, Pope Leo XIV insists that calling for prudence, and even a slower pace of adoption of AI, are "*an exercise of responsible care for the human family*", not opposition to progress (*Magnifica humanitas*, 106). Human dignity requires that responsibility not settle by default on the human being nearest the machine; responsibility requires that duties track the control each actor genuinely holds along the whole chain; and the common good – with dignity as the ground of even partial international agreement – requires the shared responsibility of institutions, businesses, intermediary bodies, and citizens (cf. *Magnifica humanitas*, 181).

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Impresa

Cosa significa intraprendere, nel XXI secolo? Agire, con gli altri e per gli altri, nel tentativo di rispondere a bisogni vecchi e nuovi. Oggi lo si fa in modi molto diversi: imprese familiari, imprese orientate al profitto; imprese pubbliche e collaborazioni pubblico-privato; imprese con fini mutualistici e sociali. Ma il tratto forse più tipico del momento attuale è la presenza di imprese giganti, che concentrano un potere economico e tecnico spesso transnazionale. A tutti i livelli, occorre capire per agire, facendo dell'impresa uno spazio comune, dove libertà e responsabilità si possono giocare per il bene di tutti e di ciascuno.

IL "MANAGEMENT NON VIOLENTO". IL VOLTO UMANO DELL'IMPRESA

Nino Messina

*Un'impresa sostenibile guarda al proprio capitale umano curandolo e sviluppandolo. Un'etica aziendale più da vivere che da certificare attraverso l'icona del grembiule: servizio manageriale nei processi aziendale. Un'organizzazione complessa trasforma le persone e le comunità. Da *lucraris sine modo* a *caritas sine modo*: un'iperbole umana ed etica per posizionare l'azienda verso due infiniti e misurare, leggere e utilizzare l'impatto umano e sociale come leva decisionale e stimolo per migliorare il benessere aziendale.*

Parole chiave: *Management nonviolento, Perdono, Riconciliazione aziendale, Circolarità aziendale, Don Tonino Bello.*

'Non-violent management'. The human face of business

*A sustainable company looks to its human capital, nurturing and developing it. It embraces a corporate ethic—embodied by the symbol of the apron—that is lived out rather than merely certified, representing a spirit of managerial service within business processes. A complex organization transforms people and communities. The shift is from *lucraris sine modo* to *caritas sine modo*: a human and ethic hyperbole that steers the company toward two horizons of infinity, while measuring, interpreting, and leveraging human and social impact as a basis for decision-making and a driver of corporate well-being.*

Keywords: *Nonviolent management, Forgiveness, Reconciliation in the workplace, Corporate circularity, Don Tonino Bello.*

L'insegnamento sociale della Chiesa cattolica afferma un'immagine del lavoro (cfr. voce *Lavoro*) e dell'impresa (cfr. voce *Responsabilità sociale d'impresa*) come strumenti, anziché come fini in sé stessi. Più che al solo profitto, infatti, lavoro e impresa dovrebbero tendere alla realizzazione del bene comune (cfr. voce *Bene comune*) e contribuire allo sviluppo umano integrale (cfr. voce *Sviluppo umano*).

Ne discutiamo con Nino Messina, dirigente con un'esperienza pluridecennale nei settori prima della meccanica, poi della sanità. Nel corso

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degli anni ha sviluppato e affinato la proposta del “management non violento”, un modello di gestione aziendale che mira a smentire la logica del profitto ad ogni costo, a promuovere nelle posizioni dirigenziali l’etica della responsabilità e del servizio, e ad affrontare le crisi mantenendo il perdono e la riconciliazione come soluzioni privilegiate.

Si tratta di temi la cui importanza è stata recentemente sottolineata con forza anche da Leone XIV, che ha ricordato come l’umanità abbia «strumenti molto più efficaci e capaci di promuovere la vita umana per affrontare i conflitti, come il dialogo, la diplomazia, il perdono» (cfr. *Magnifica humanitas*, 192).

La figura di don Tonino Bello è stata per lei molto significativa. Come è entrato in contatto con lui?

Conobbi don Tonino perché, quando divenne vescovo di Molfetta, ero vicepresidente del ramo giovanile dell’Azione Cattolica diocesana. Si capì subito che era una persona diversa, molto vicina agli ultimi. Gli era molto cara l’immagine del grembiule, l’unico paramento – per così dire – indossato da Gesù nella lavanda dei piedi. Un simbolo molto forte di servizio, dunque.

Don Tonino credeva nel potere dei segni, più che nei segni del potere. All’epoca, ero uno studente-lavoratore impegnato nel settore della cantieristica navale. Costruimmo una nave per la marina militare, sulla quale sarebbe stata installata una mitragliatrice. Don Tonino si rifiutò di partecipare al varo e di benedirla, quasi come protesta verso quello che quell’arma rappresentava. È lì che per la prima volta mi è scattato qualcosa nella testa.

Cioè?

Erano gli anni Novanta, era la Prima Repubblica. La cultura aziendale era ammalata dai segni del potere, dalle logiche del denaro e della prepotenza. Don Tonino parlava invece di «*Caritas sine modo*», di consumarsi pur di avvicinarsi al prossimo e a Dio. Insomma, parlava di un “potere” vissuto come servizio anziché come sopraffazione.

Un messaggio radicale. Anche Leone XIV ha ricordato il ruolo cruciale nella storia di «uomini e donne capaci di non rassegnarsi e di perseverare nel bene» (cfr. *Magnifica humanitas*, 211).

Testimoni, rivoluzionari, profeti. Prima, il coraggio di “testimoniare”, di incarnare idee e comportamenti nuovi, che interrogano e sfidano

il «si è sempre fatto così». Poi, il coraggio di sostenerli anche quando incontrano lo scandalo, l'ostilità o il timore degli altri. Il coraggio, per esempio, di avanzare dubbi su politiche retributive inique o pratiche scorrette in contesti in cui esse sono la norma. Quando infine il comportamento o l'idea si diffondono, hai la soddisfazione di essere colui che per primo ha intuito la direzione giusta.

La Magnifica humanitas richiama in diversi passaggi il tema della responsabilità condivisa (cfr. *Magnifica humanitas*, 8, 13, 90, 180-181).

Qualche tempo fa, durante l'anno della misericordia, ho esplorato con la teologa Selene Zorzi la possibilità di portare avanti la riconciliazione aziendale, un po' secondo il modello dell'*ubuntu*. Abbiamo ragionato su casi in cui la banca, il direttore amministrativo, il contabile riconoscevano l'errore e chiedevano perdono.

L'idea è quella di una "matrice di perdonanza" che attribuisca a ciascuno la propria quota percentuale di responsabilità. Non si tratta infatti di una colpa esclusivamente individuale: nel caso di un CEO che nasconde milioni di euro, dove sono i revisori? Dove sono gli enti di controllo? Non siamo di fronte a un semplice peccato individuale, ma a quel "peccato strutturale", di cui parla papa Francesco (cfr. *Discorso del Santo Padre Francesco al Seminario sul tema "Nuove forme di fraternità solidale, di inclusione"*, 5 febbraio 2020), tipico delle organizzazioni complesse. Sono tanti piccoli tasselli che generano storture nei processi e nelle procedure.

Per scardinarle, serve un approccio *bottom-up* e partecipato. Questa cultura della responsabilità vale per i manager, ma deve poi essere declinata a cascata, perché ognuno di noi esercita, almeno sulla carta, una certa quota di potere. Purtroppo, la cultura aziendale degli ultimi anni ha educato il dipendente al contrario, facendo del silenzio e della passività dei valori privilegiati. Insomma, il lavoratore è un paio di mani che stringe un martello o che pigiano sulla tastiera del computer.

Il concetto di "persona" è appunto uno dei cardini del Magistero (cfr. voci *Individuo - persona* e *Persona e società*). **Come salvare, e anzi valorizzare, la "persona" nell'azienda, evitando che si riduca a un automa che esiste soltanto in quanto produce?**

Un presupposto della valorizzazione della persona in impresa è la circolarità: circolarità informativa, intesa come trasparenza e accessibilità delle informazioni da parte del dipendente; circolarità organizzativa,

nel senso che, fatte salve le specifiche competenze professionali, è necessaria la massima condivisione quando si definiscono le regole, come quelle sulla retribuzione o sulle norme di comportamento; circolarità scientifica, ossia tutti possono proporre le proprie idee e partecipare allo sviluppo del prodotto o del servizio, avendo parimenti l'opportunità di formarsi e crescere; e, infine, circolarità emozionale, ossia il ritrovarsi nei valori dell'azienda. Quest'ultima è una dimensione intangibile, ma particolarmente feconda.

Nei contesti lavorativi di oggi convivono però più culture e più generazioni, ciascuna con retroterra ed esigenze anche molto diversi fra loro, da cui possono scaturire situazioni di conflittualità (cfr. voce *Impresa e gestione delle risorse umane*). Come realizzare una coesistenza che, nel nostro piccolo, abbia i caratteri della vera pace (cfr. *Magnifica humanitas*, 215)? Una pace cioè che non sia figlia dell'omertà, dell'ingiustizia o comunque della volontà di nascondere la conflittualità?

Credo nell'equazione secondo cui il valore delle risorse umane è dato dal talento elevato alla potenza delle opportunità. Il direttore del personale ha il compito di studiare questo talento e di svilupparlo in un'ottica progettuale, costruendo per lui le occasioni migliori e capitalizzandone così il potenziale. Mostrare attenzione verso i talenti significa saperli ascoltare, accogliendone anche le fragilità.

Certo, a volte può capitare che sorgano conflittualità tra le risorse. In questi casi, il manager deve prima di tutto mantenere una posizione di assoluta equidistanza. La cultura non è soltanto un modo di sapere o di fare, ma è prima di tutto un modo di essere.

Benedetto XVI esprimeva la necessità di perseguire, nell'attività economica, la logica della solidarietà (cfr. *Caritas in veritate*, III, 36). In un certo senso, anche la sua proposta si colloca nel medesimo solco, offrendo un modello alternativo a quello della competizione pura.

Sì. Non sono contrario a stimolare la competitività fra colleghi, ma deve essere guidata, altrimenti si possono sviluppare dinamiche pericolose. Pur di 'vincere', un dipendente potrebbe essere disposto a sacrificare il collega, il che è un classico, o persino l'efficienza dell'azienda.

Alcuni dei concetti che lei ha toccato vengono rivendicati, in diverse forme, da molte aziende: è in atto un cambiamento sostanziale rispetto al passato, oppure un semplice cambio di retorica che nasconde e imbel-

letta le vecchie logiche (cfr. *Caritas in veritate*, IV, 45)?

La differenza fra sostanza e retorica sta nella coerenza con cui si vivono questi principi in azienda. Facciamo l'esempio di un direttore del personale che organizza ritiri per i dipendenti in luoghi di grande spiritualità, per esempio un'abbazia, nei quali si parla di gioia, di senso di scopo, dell'importanza di concentrarsi sul benessere interiore. Che credibilità ha, se poi le politiche aziendali vengono parametrize unicamente sul profitto e sulla produttività? A maggior ragione se si considera che il suo stipendio è svariate volte superiore a quello di coloro ai quali chiede di vivere di essenzialità. Il lavoratore si sente tradito. Anzi, è tradito.

A questo proposito, potrebbe raccontare un'esperienza di successo nel tentativo di applicare queste idee nel tuo vissuto aziendale?

Mentre lavoravo come direttore amministrativo e del personale in una fabbrica, il direttore di produzione dell'impianto mi chiese di licenziare due operai di una linea di montaggio che erano venuti alle mani. Li mandai a chiamare entrambi, mostrai loro le lettere di licenziamento e dissi: «io queste non le firmo». Diedi loro dieci giorni per riconciliarsi, poi avrei deciso se procedere o meno con il licenziamento. Un ricatto, anche abbastanza sfacciato, che però ha funzionato.

In un altro caso, capitò che un dipendente fu arrestato perché trovato in possesso di una pistola all'interno dell'azienda. La situazione era delicata, anche perché il ragazzo era sposato. Per questo dico che è importante avere davanti la persona, non semplicemente il numero. Parlai con l'educatore del carcere, promettendo che mi sarei fatto garante del check con gli assistenti sociali. Il ragazzo poi è diventato un'altra persona.

Ha fatto un passo in più, anche se non era tenuto.

Chi ha incarichi di responsabilità deve sempre essere disponibile, anche quando ciò non rientra nel proprio contratto o nella propria remunerazione. Perché hai un certo ruolo nella società. Pensa a un medico: non fai soltanto sanità, ma sei salute, sei salvezza.

Come conciliare una disponibilità così zelante con la tutela del riposo e della dimensione "privata" della persona (cfr. *Compendio della Dottrina Sociale della Chiesa*, 284-286)?

Secondo me, sconnettersi davvero, quando ci tieni, è un'utopia. Io non ci riesco. Ho lavorato nel settore dell'assistenza sanitaria. Ricordo

ancora tutte le persone alle quali ho detto che ce l'avrebbero fatta pur sapendo che non sarebbe stata così.

E quando il gomito emotivo si fa troppo grande e ingarbugliato?

Ne puoi parlare con un amico o con un professionista. E lo puoi offrire al tuo Dio.

Ricorda un'esperienza così forte?

Un mattino venne da me un operaio con una situazione familiare non facile. Aveva bisogno di un consulto legale ed era stato rimbalzato in modo sbrigativo da diversi uffici amministrativi dell'azienda. Anche io ero alquanto impegnato e fui abbastanza spiccio, promettendogli che ci saremmo risentiti in un altro momento. Il pomeriggio stesso si tolse la vita in officina.

Lì per lì, tutti quanti pensammo che non fosse colpa di nessuno. Poi però ho pensato: quante assenze consuntiviamo nella nostra vita. Quanti momenti in cui avremmo potuto esserci nelle vite degli altri, e sarebbero magari bastati anche soltanto pochi minuti per fare la differenza.

È questo che l'ha portata a elaborare il “cammino delle perdite”?

L'esempio è quello del buon Samaritano, che per soccorrere l'uomo percosso dai briganti non teme di fermarsi e 'perdere' il tempo necessario a prestargli assistenza, il denaro per gli unguenti con cui lo cura e per pagare l'ospitalità dell'oste cui lo affida... Un modo di ragionare all'apparenza antieconomico, ma che salva una vita.

Anche papa Francesco (cfr. *Discorso del Santo Padre Francesco all'Associazione Cattolica Operatori Sanitari*, 17 maggio 2019) ha ricordato che la preoccupazione per la sostenibilità economica delle opere assistenziali è legittima, ma non deve indurre a trascurare la persona, la relazione.

L'ospedale è un pozzo di umanità, uno di quei luoghi in cui abita il mistero, quasi in senso religioso, della vita.

L'immagine che usa per chiarire questi concetti è quella dell'iperbole.

Un'iperbole i cui asintoti tendono da un lato verso la vicinanza a Dio e all'uomo, verso quella che don Tonino definiva appunto la «*Caritas sine modo*», l'amore senza misura e senza riserve; dall'altro, verso quell'utilitarismo gretto che ne è la negazione (vedi anche *L'iperbole di don Tonino Bello*).

L'iperbole non è soltanto un simbolo, ma, attraverso la collaborazio-

ne con un'azienda pugliese, è diventata anche uno strumento di misura, quasi di consapevolezza. Abbiamo individuato una serie di parametri, ai quali abbiamo attribuito un peso specifico, che possono essere 'misurati' intervistando i dipendenti. L'algoritmo elaborato dai valori risultanti restituisce un dato numerico che colloca l'azienda in un punto di questa iperbole, consentendole di valutare la propria distanza dall'*optimum* e, qualora le interviste siano ripetute a distanza di tempo, anche eventuali progressi o regressioni.

Come possiamo far sì che queste indicazioni si traducano in un cambiamento concreto, e non soltanto in protocolli e linee guida che, per quanto animati da buone intenzioni, restano lettera morta?

È necessario cambiare lo stile aziendale. Mano d'opera, mente d'opera, cuore d'opera. Ed è necessario che tutti siano coinvolti, in un'ottica di circolarità. Al netto delle competenze professionali, per cui l'infermiere fa l'infermiere e il primario il primario, credo però che tutti debbano avere voce in capitolo quando si tratta di quelle cose che definiscono il DNA dell'azienda. Deve esserci condivisione.

L'insegnamento sociale della Chiesa cattolica rivolge particolare attenzione alle nuove generazioni, che sono percepite come uno straordinario vettore di cambiamento (cfr. la voce *Giovani*). Secondo lei, ragazzi e ragazze che si affacciano oggi al mercato del lavoro sono più "pronti" per una proposta come quella del "management non violento" rispetto a quelli della sua generazione?

Sì. Credo che i giovani di oggi sentano molto la fascinazione delle nuove tecnologie, specie l'intelligenza artificiale, e della loro applicazione anche al mondo del lavoro. Ma credo anche che avvertano una forte necessità di umanità. Vogliono la vicinanza, la presenza, il volto.



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