

## *Editorial*

### **Challenges of Formation in the Era of AI**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a dynamic tapestry woven with the threads of present applications and ambitious future aspirations. Though this transformative technology prompts excitement by reshaping our lives, work, and societal constructs, it must be dealt with careful consideration. Currently, the realm of AI is dominated by Narrow AI, also known as weak AI. These systems excel in specific tasks, showcasing remarkable capabilities within predefined domains. Machine learning empowers them to learn from data and make predictions, enriching our daily experiences. From virtual assistants seamlessly integrating into our digital lives to language translation services bridging communication gaps and recommendation algorithms personalizing online encounters, Narrow AI's influence is undeniable. However, the philosophical and psychological debate around AI faces an “epistemological and methodological crisis” inherited from psychology's dualist ontology, rooted in the mind-body separation and the dominance of rationalism and objectivism (El Maouch & Jin, 2022).

AI can be seen as a field using psychological knowledge to conduct thought experiments and create artifacts that test and potentially reproduce aspects of the mind and behavior (El Maouch & Jin, 2022; Dennett, 2017). This goes beyond simply understanding the mind; it implies actively influencing it. The aspirational goal of Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) seeks to equip machines with human-like cognitive abilities. However, pursuing AGI raises profound ethical questions about the societal impact of creating machines that may rival or surpass human intelligence. Further speculation around Artificial General Superintelligence (AGSI), where AI exceeds human capabilities across all domains, highlights the necessity of careful

consideration and responsible development as we navigate the future of this transformative technology.

In the contemporary business landscape, AI is a transformative tool, enhancing innovation, efficiency, and decision-making processes. Companies leverage AI for personalised recommendations, predictive analytics, and strategic advancements. However, even as we acknowledge the potential of AI, it is essential to address ethical concerns such as bias in algorithms, data privacy, and transparency in decision-making.

While the future holds potential challenges and uncertainties, the present state of AI is marked by its positive impact on innovation and business. It is crucial to balance harnessing AI's benefits and addressing ethical considerations as we navigate the evolving technological landscape. As stewards of this transformative technology, responsible development and deployment are paramount.

### **The Transformative Potential of AGI: A Look Across Sectors**

The potential arrival of AGI brings with it different promises across various sectors. In healthcare, AGI could revolutionise medicine through personalised care, accelerated research, and democratised access to healthcare. AI enhances diagnostic accuracy, personalises treatment, and streamlines workflows in healthcare. However, ethical considerations surrounding data privacy and ensuring human well-being remain unanswered.

Similarly, the education sector could witness profound transformations with AGI. Customised education, simulated learning experiences, and global access to cutting-edge learning tools could become a reality. Virtual assistants like Siri and Alexa offer limited voice commands and basic tasks like personal assistants. Future with AGI could revolutionise personal assistants through expert multitasking, proactive support, situational adaptation, relationship building, hyper-personalization, and augmented cognition. The present AI automates analytical tasks like hiring and employee records. Future with AGI customised coaching, optimal team composition, morale building, conflict resolution, career advising, and wellness support could transform HR. Yet, the role of human interaction and potential over-reliance on AI necessitates careful consideration.

A historical crisis in psychology was first identified by Vygotsky, where the “crisis” is referred to as the unresolved fundamental questions about the mind and how it works (Vygotsky, 1997). There would be a need to revisit Vygotsky’s work on cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) and utilizing dialectical logic might offer solutions to this ongoing debate in AI research.

### **AI and the Church: A Journey of Coexistence and Adaptation**

The Church, too, will likely be impacted in various ways with the arrival of AI. This journey has the potential to be one of both coexistence and adaptation. While AI cannot replace the irreplaceable role of human formators in the Church, it can potentially serve as a valuable tool to supplement and enhance the formation process for formees. Here are some potential points of impact:

**Enhanced Outreach and Engagement.** AI-powered tools could personalise outreach efforts, analyse demographics and needs, and offer resources tailored to specific populations. Chatbots could answer basic questions, schedule appointments, and connect individuals with relevant ministries or support groups. AI can assist with sermon preparation by analysing scripture and generating sermon outlines, freeing clergy to focus on the spiritual message. AI-powered tools can personalise worship experiences by generating devotional content, translating hymns, and creating visually engaging presentations.

AI-powered language tutors can provide personalized instruction and practice opportunities, assisting formees in mastering languages relevant to their future ministry. This can enhance their ability to connect with diverse communities and bridge cultural divides. However, formators must ensure that AI-based language learning fosters genuine cultural understanding and sensitivity, which goes beyond mere fluency.

**Increased Accessibility.** AI-powered translation services could bridge language barriers, allowing the Church to connect with a broader audience and share its message globally. Additionally, AI tools could assist with creating content in various formats, making it accessible to individuals with disabilities or learning differences.

**Streamlined Administration and Operations.** AI could automate administrative tasks like scheduling, record-keeping, and financial management, freeing up human resources to focus on core ministerial duties and community engagement. It can automate repetitive administrative tasks, such as scheduling, recordkeeping, and financial

management, allowing clergy and volunteers to dedicate more time to pastoral care and community outreach. AI-powered analytics can provide valuable insights into church activities and membership trends, allowing for data-driven decision-making and resource allocation.

**Personalised Spiritual Guidance.** While AI cannot replace the human element of spiritual guidance, it could potentially offer personalised reflections, prayers, or educational resources based on individual needs and preferences. It can create individualised learning modules based on each formee's strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles. These modules can adapt to the formee's progress, offering focused support and ensuring a deeper understanding of complex theological concepts. However, it is crucial to remember that AI-generated content should complement, not replace, the personalised guidance and mentorship offered by experienced formators.

**Ethical Considerations and the Human Touch.** It is crucial to emphasise that AI should not replace human interaction within the Church. The core values of compassion, empathy, and spiritual guidance are best delivered through personal connections. The Church must ensure that AI tools are used ethically, responsibly, and transparently while safeguarding human dignity and the centrality of personal relationships within the faith community.

AI can be used to generate case studies and present ethical dilemmas, prompting critical reflection and stimulating discussions on the application of faith principles in contemporary situations. However, formators must carefully curate AI-generated content to ensure it aligns with Church teachings and fosters a nuanced understanding of ethical complexities.

### **Challenges and Considerations**

AI has reproduced and brought into sharper focus philosophical and psychological problems, stemming from the recurring pattern in the evolution of scientific ideas as they seek to explain phenomena (see Vygotsky, 1997). Since AI and psychology share a common subject matter, progress in AI requires not only collaboration across these disciplines and philosophy (as is commonly suggested), but also a critical examination of these longstanding debates as they relate to AI's current challenges (El Maouch & Jin, 2022). The journey with AI is thus a collective endeavor, and its responsible development also impacts potential applications and challenges within the context of the

Church. Being aware of these challenges would be the first step towards overcoming them efficiently. Data privacy, bias in algorithms, and replacing human interaction with technology are essential and relevant human concerns. Often, the question of whether the interface would replace millions of jobs, leading to humans losing their livelihood, is the major drawback of AI. In addition to this, over-reliance on AI could hinder the development of essential human skills and interpersonal connections within the Church community.

Youths accustomed to the immediate gratification and personalised recommendations offered by AI algorithms might struggle with the slower pace, self-discipline, and deeper reflection required for spiritual formation. Formators must be mindful of these potential challenges and employ strategies to foster critical thinking, independent judgment, and a deeper appreciation for the human connection underpinning authentic spiritual growth.

### **Conclusion: A Collective Journey Towards a Brighter Future**

The journey with AI is not a solitary one but a collective endeavour. As we explore the potential of AI, mindful navigation of its capabilities and ethical implications is crucial. AI presents both opportunities and challenges for formation in the Church. By ensuring responsible development and deployment, we can shape a future where AI aligns with our collective goals for progress and equity, paving the way for a brighter tomorrow. As a central pillar of many communities, the Church has a unique opportunity. By utilizing AI thoughtfully and ethically, formators can enhance the learning experience for future religious and priests while remaining mindful of the irreplaceable role of human guidance and the importance of fostering genuine human connection in the formation process.

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