

## WHAT IS RENAISSANCE?

**Thank you for this question, and cordial greetings to all those present and to those who, in various capacities, participate in the activities of the Institute of Bioethics of the Pontifical Catholic University of Buenos Aires. The question - what is Renaissance? - allows me to retrace what has been done so far: Renaissance is a journey that aims to respond to one of the most current and urgent needs of our society, which is to design technologies that are at the service of man, and that put every individual, especially the most vulnerable ones, at the center of every technological project.**

**Our Holy Father Francis, your fellow countryman, often says that we are living in a time of epochal change. These words of His perfectly define what is happening.**

We have witnessed the digital transformation of technologies; the production of huge amounts of data; and ever-increasing computing power. Thanks to this, the so-called "spring of artificial intelligence" began, which now populates everyone's life.

All of this can produce countless benefits for humanity, but let us not forget: there are also dangers and gray areas if these same technologies are used thoughtlessly.

The goodness and harmfulness of these extraordinary tools that are the result of human ingenuity depend on a number of factors, chief among them our use of them.

We are aware of the current complexity - and further complicating the situation there came the pandemic, from which the whole world is struggling to emerge. In the Covid era, each of us has become a little more digital and a little less human. Deprived of the ability to physically relate to other individuals, we have interacted through technological means, thus giving away an immense amount of data (on our actions, emails, calls, smart working) to those who can use it to simulate, predict, guide and influence our behavior.

In this process of constant transformation, there is one technology that stands out from the rest for its pervasiveness and possible impact: artificial intelligence.

Most of humanity does not know how it works: yet it affects industry, health care, education, nutrition, security and many other spheres of daily life. In short, it is everywhere; and thanks to its ever-increasing power it has taken center stage and its importance is likely to grow more and more in the coming years.

This is the point: Renaissance is the project we carry out to demand that technology, and artificial intelligence in particular, be developed while respecting the freedom and dignity of each individual and the entire human family.

On February 28, 2020, the Rome Call for AI Ethics was first signed in Rome, a document which conveys our message: these technologies should not simply be tools capable of performing specific functions more quickly and more efficiently. These technologies have changed our way of being in the world and our way of perceiving reality and ourselves, and they have posed radical questions about human identity.

We advocate for humanization of technology.

We promote algor-ethics, which is the ethics of artificial intelligence, as opposed to algocracy, which is the power of algorithms.

The relevance and timeliness of our call are also shown by the participation of the first signatories: Brad Smith, president of Microsoft; John Kelly III, president of IBM; Qu Dong-Yu, director general of FAO; and our Italian Minister for Technological Innovation. Many other signatories followed their lead.

In April last year, Pope Francis confirmed his interest in this field of study by establishing the Renaissance Foundation: a non-profit organization whose purpose is to disseminate the Rome Call and to promote an anthropological and ethical reflection on artificial

intelligence and new technologies among people like you – well-qualified for their scientific, ecclesial, cultural, entrepreneurial and professional commitment in society. We have a website, called *romecall.org*, where individuals and institutions can sign our call and support our work.

Our hope and our goal is that the voice of those calling for a new humanism, where the human person is at the center of our concerns, will be louder and louder: only then can we direct the transformation process now under way for the good of all.

## WHAT IS THE MORAL PERSPECTIVE OF THIS COALITION CALLING FOR AN AI FOR THE COMMON GOOD?

As we all know, as I mentioned earlier in the words of the Holy Father, humanity is undergoing a time of radical transformation. This is not the first time in human history: this time, however, we are confronted with unprecedented speed and pervasiveness. All of this affects not only the life of individuals, but of society as a whole.

Let us think of what they call emerging and converging technologies, which allow us to alter the molecular basis of the human body, for example. Such technologies lead us to question the very concept of life, and the possibility of transforming and modifying it. In the face of all this, we cannot remain silent and passively watch what happens.

As a first thing, I believe that it is important to prevent governments or businesses from having all the decision-making power to create technologies for mere profit, which offend human freedom and dignity.

The only way to uphold these values is to give a key role to ethics, which must be present in the entire process from the design to the implementation of a new technology. We cannot leave the responsibility for deciding on the proper use of a certain technology to the end user alone: experience has taught us that talking about ethical principles *faits accomplis* is basically useless.

We need to remember this: words like dignity, justice, subsidiarity and solidarity - the principles underlying the social doctrine of the Catholic Church - must never be forgotten. Ethics must accompany the entire cycle of technology design and production, right from the moment of choosing which projects to invest in.

We must never forget that behind a word like "profiling" are real people, not mathematical models.

Let us think of the great current ethical and legal debate about facial recognition: behind every piece of data is a face – a precious, unique, and sacred face.

We must never forget that collecting sensitive data in health care, and using it, means knowing unique stories of unique people marked by suffering.

These are just two examples, there are a thousand more: but they serve to remind us that our ethical responsibility is inescapable.

## HOW DO YOU ENVISION THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ROME CALL IN LATIN AMERICA?

We all know that there still exist macro-regions on a geopolitical level - but nowadays, when it comes to digital technologies and artificial intelligence, we have to think of our planet as one family.

Holy Father Francis has reiterated this so many times: ours is a "common home", inhabited by a "human family", and we should all strongly demand human-centered technology together.

Talking about technology today means accepting that there are no boundaries in this area: having a global vision, acting all together, is the only way to achieve an outcome that applies to every human being, especially the weakest and most vulnerable.

Our call is not addressed only to the Western world or to wealthier countries; nor even to Catholics alone.

Our call expresses a fundamental need: that of respecting the rights of the individual.

Let us look at the Rome Call through its six ethical principles for artificial intelligence: 1) transparency, because AI systems must be understandable to all; 2) inclusion, because these systems must not discriminate against anyone because every human being has equal dignity; 3) accountability, because there must always be someone who takes responsibility for what a machine does; 4) impartiality, because AI systems must not follow or create biases; 5) reliability, because AI must be reliable; 6) security and privacy, because these systems must be secure and respect the privacy of users.

My hope and my wish is that Latin America can welcome with open arms this call, and make it its own: because never before has it been more important than today to feel part of the same human family.