Biblical Guidelines for Understanding and Using Artificial Intelligence (AI)[1]

The AI & Quantum Innovation Lab at Concordia University Wisconsin (CUW) exists to advance the mission of the university, whose essence is to help students develop in mind, body, and spirit for service to Christ in the Church and the world. As an institution of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS), CUW strives to abide by God's Word and subscribes to the Lutheran Confessions as a true and faithful exposition of that Word. The following document provides some biblical guidelines for understanding and using AI that are in agreement with the doctrine and practice of the LCMS and that govern the work of the AI & Quantum Innovation Lab at CUW.

The uniqueness of the human being

The most profound definition of what it is to be man, male and female, is the one the Triune God provided at creation: "'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness….' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:26–27). The many ways in which man, male and female, are like God include having eternal existence, a spiritual dimension, the moral capacity to discern right from wrong, loving relationships with God and other people, intelligence, and the power to participate in creative activities such as procreating children and understanding new meanings. AI is an example of the creative activity of man and can be a very useful tool, but it can never take the place of its creative authors, since it has none of the above-mentioned likenesses of God. Therefore, AI interfaces that seek to mimic human conversation and companionship should be warily approached. They offer no real communion with another person. No one is listening. No one cares. As a tool of man, AI will always fall short of the unique relationship that exists between human beings made in the image of God.

Humanity's stewardship of creation

The Bible also teaches that God created humanity to be stewards of his creation (Genesis 1:28–30; 2:15). This stewardship is an extension of God's own stewardship and should therefore be carried out with great reverence and deference.   Whether natural resources or manmade inventions, humanity has been tasked to tend to the things of creation such that they promote the common good and glorify God. As an invention of humanity, AI should be used to contribute to human flourishing, in keeping with mankind's stewardship of the natural world and in a way that glorifies God as the giver of all things. The enormous amount of physical resources it takes to operate AI—power, land, water, computer parts—should be continually scrutinized to determine how best to steward God's good gifts of creation.

Love of God and neighbor

Jesus explicitly says that the two greatest commandments are to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind," and to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37–39). In light of this, Christians must always strive to use AI in a way that manifests a love of God and neighbor, while at the same time be alert to ways that AI interferes with loving God and neighbor. They must routinely ask: Is this use of AI leading me closer to Christ and his kingdom, or further away? We should also be on guard against creating a world in which using AI is essential to getting by. Such an approach diminishes those neighbors of ours who don't have access to AI or who wish to live without it.

Spiritual discernment

The apostle Paul admonishes us to "test everything; hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). He similarly states that "all things are lawful, but not all things are helpful" (1 Corinthians 10:23). While AI can offer many benefits across various sectors (e.g., data analysis, enhanced cybersecurity, language translation, medical advancement, etc.), as a tool of humanity, it also has significant limitations. AI can promote human welfare, but it can also be used to dehumanize. It can be truthful, but also inaccurate or biased. AI relies on algorithms to sift through data, and each algorithm is a confession about the way that the world truly is, and how it works. The responses it produces are not neutral, but reflect priorities of the creators of the algorithms. It is thus clearly possible to have AI systems which more clearly, and less clearly, reflect the world God has made. In light of this, Christians should strive to use AI in ways that are true and helpful, while guarding against the use of AI that is done in service to error and sin.

By Concordia University Wisconsin's Department of Theology

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[1] AI is the development of computer systems that can perform tasks typically requiring human intelligence, such as learning from data, recognizing patterns, making decisions, solving problems, and understanding language. These systems use algorithms and computational methods to process information and generate responses or actions that appear intelligent, though they operate through programmed instructions and statistical processes rather than consciousness or understanding in the human sense.