Essays

Artificial Intelligence and the Semantics of Change: Narratives, Languages and Values

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ABSTRACT: The paper proposes a reflection on the topic of Artificial Intelligence from the perspective of analytical legal philosophy, which uses linguistic analysis to clarify meanings of concepts deployed in three different, albeit interrelated, languages: institutional and political languages, legal language, and ordinary language. It is indeed through these three linguistic vectors that deep transformations of society are narrated. These narratives and their languages shape how societal changes are collectively and individually perceived and experienced. Control over languages and concepts is therefore important to guide these transformations in line with the fundamental rights framework as will be argued in this paper.

KEYWORDS: semantics; analytical philosophy; AI; narratives; anthropomorphism

1. Introduction and methodology

In this paper I would like to propose a reflection on the topic of Artificial Intelligence (AI) from the perspective of the analytical legal philosophy, which uses linguistic analysis to clarify meanings of concepts with the aim of making language, in particular legal language, appropriate for its purposes in each historical moment for the needs of a given community. The main goal of this paper is indeed to highlight how language and the narratives grounded in specific selected concepts can shape in a subtle and ideological way different, albeit interrelated contexts, in particular civil society, institutions, and law.

The focus of this analysis is on concepts deployed in three different, albeit interrelated, languages:[1] institutional and political languages, legal language, and ordinary language. It is indeed through these

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[1] According to Norberto Bobbio, legal philosophy should start from the legal experience to provide tools of analysis of legal concepts and of the distinctive characteristics of law from other normative systems, see N. BOBBIO, *Natura e funzione della filosofia del diritto*, in N. BOBBIO (ed.), *Giusnaturalismo e Positivismo Giuridico*, Milan, 1965, 37-51. Analysis of concepts intersecting different languages has been at the centre of Herbert Hart's reflection on law, H.L.A. HART, *The Concept of Law*, New York, 1961. See also P. TIEDEMANN, *Philosophical foundations of human rights*, Cham, 2023.

three linguistic vectors that deep transformations of society are narrated in the Information Society (IS). The choice of this linguistic and conceptual analysis is justified by the transformative and shaping role that narratives play through their languages in framing the common human understanding of a given phenomenon.

Put it differently, narratives and their languages shape how societal changes are collectively and individually perceived and experienced. And both the perception and the experience impact the modulation and timing of the process of acceptance, adaptation, and normalization of the phenomenon driving the changes of our time. Thus, the language, in which a narrative is grounded, is a powerful tool that needs to be carefully managed if transparency in communication, especially at the institutional level, is considered a value to pursue.

The relevance of such an attentive attitude becomes evident when we consider the common reaction of the public generally provoked by deep transformations of society: a mixed reaction, which tends to be polarized between demonization and uncritical enthusiasm. None of these reactions permits dialogue and understanding based on reason, knowledge, and facts, because they are too emotionally charged.

Instead, to exercise control over the deep transformative forces of our time we need to act and react based on knowledge and understanding of facts, and to argue for or against these changes based on rational arguments. This means being aware that the phenomenon we face and discuss is socially situated, and therefore the key to its understanding is how it is defined in that social context.

For this reason, control over narratives and their languages is of the utmost importance to avoid or at least limit misunderstanding, miscalculation, and mistakes. What does it mean to exercise control over language in this article? It means that those in charge of promoting the *human-centric vision of AI*, which characterizes the European Union approach, integrate control over the selection process of the key concepts that build the structure of that vision in the early stages of the elaboration of institutional normative documents (both soft law and hard law). In doing so, they grant that linguistic consistency is maintained throughout the process of the strategy's elaboration both within any single normative document (intra-documental linguistic and conceptual consistency) but also among the various institutional documents (extra-documental linguistic and conceptual consistency) that tackle the topic from different perspectives, though being part of the same value-laden vision. Thus, the goal is to grant consistency in the linguistic interrelatedness of strategic documents based on the inter-definability of some primitive concepts. This linguistic consistency is the basis for achieving normative consistency[2] as much as possible. Indeed, one basic challenge while preparing an institutional strategic plan on a specific issue is to carefully select the key notions that build the conceptual frame in which different documents pertaining to that strategy are combined. The more complex the strategy is higher is the risk that conceptual and normative consistency[3] is not maintained, with relevant implications for its effectiveness and trustworthiness.

[2] L. FERRAJOLI, *Dei diritti e delle garanzie. Conversazione con Mauro Barberis,* Bologna, 2013, 22. The author underlines that "normativity is the stronger and binding the more unambiguous and rigorous is the normative language", the original sentence is "La normatività è tanto più forte e vincolante quanto più univoco e rigoroso è il linguaggio normativo".

[3] Conceptual consistency is not to be confused with precision. Indeed, whereas consistency is an essential value for any system that wants to convey a specific message, precision is a relative value whose pursuit needs a case-by-case evaluation.

This problem may be due to different factors, but linguistic indeterminacy and vagueness, especially when they are unintentional, are relevant causal determinants of it. Linguistic control as described begins with soft law documents elaborated to facilitate the consensus on legally binding rules that may follow. For this reason, the language adopted in soft law documents, such as ethical guidelines, should undergo deep scrutiny to eliminate or drastically limit ambiguous and vague concepts borrowed from the ordinary language, if not properly redefined. These soft law documents usually represent a first step in the drafting of legally binding rules. And these rules need to be based on conceptual clarity and logical rigor in order to avoid creative or arbitrary interpretations that may result in inconsistencies with norms and with fundamental constitutional principles.

In this sense, the linguistic consistency, which is useful to maintain conceptual and normative consistency, is a value to be preserved in the construction of the EU vision on technological development, so that EU citizens, as final users of the AI technology, have clear reference points for their choices and can understand the value-laden EU approach. Indeed, among the many threats related to the AI development, some are realistic, and others derive from a distorted perception. This gap between realistic and unrealistic threats prominently depends on the mainstream narrative around AI, which has its roots in the past century: both in science fiction and in the same notion of AI.[4]

In what follows, I will identify some criticalities concerning the mainstream narrative around AI, that is, when AI is the *object of narration*. However, as we are faced with a peculiar technology that unlike traditional technologies is also able to generate its own narratives (generative AI), to manipulate languages, and consequently to shape perceptions and experiences of users, I will also discuss AI as a *narrator agent*.

This double face of AI (object and subject of narration) renders this technology uniquely pervasive to the extent that it can be classified as a new *formant* of human existence along with traditional ones, such as religion, culture, science, etc.[5]

This unprecedented scenario needs to be investigated with regards to its new and unforeseeable outcomes on human existence within what I suggest terming the *semantics of change*.[6]

2. Narratives in the Information Society

Before dealing with the twofold nature of the narratives concerning AI, let us characterize them and put them in context. In the current model of society (IS), information is the raw material around which human activities and their organization are structured. This information is assembled within narratives around different topics that accompany societal changes brought about by AI.

[4] As is well known, the notion was coined during the Dartmouth Summer Project on Artificial Intelligence in 1956.

[5] On this point see S. JASANOFF *et al*., *CRISPR Democracy. Gene Editing and the Need for Inclusive Deliberation,* in *Issues in Science and Technology*, 32, 1, 2015, 25-32, where the authors observe that "Science and technology not only improve lives but shape our expectations, and eventually our experiences, of how lives ought to be lived".

[6] This notion is part of the title of my book on this topic: S. SALARDI, *Intelligenza Artificiale e Semantica del Cambiamento: Una Lettura Critica*, Torino, 2023, in which the reader can find more detailed reflections on this topic. The expression *semantics of change* refers to the influence that a skilful use of language through specific operations on the meaning of its socially and culturally situated concepts can exert on societal transformations.

These narratives are of two kinds: descriptive and prescriptive-normative. Descriptive narratives describe typologies of AI, the state of the art of the technological developments, what are possible applications, and how they function. These narratives primarily aim to inform the public. Descriptive narratives may be semantically neutral or use terms and notions with a persuasive connotation, as in advertising, for instance. Unlike descriptive narratives, prescriptive-normative narratives are never semantically neutral. They are axiologically grounded and are used to convey a position, create or affirm legitimacy, or justify a means to an end. Through these narratives, particular policies and their directions are prioritized and justified.

The linguistic vectors of these narratives are different, albeit intertwined: ordinary language, institutional-political languages,[7] and legal language.

The link between these vectors is represented by a taxonomy of concepts which can be ubiquitously deployed in the three languages. They are concepts of the ordinary language, borrowed from legal language as well as from the institutional-political one.[8] As these notions are part of the ordinary language's vocabulary, they carry different layers of meaning, 'socially determined' vagueness,[9] ambiguity, and indeterminacy,[10] which are all features of ordinary language. These constitutive aspects of the ordinary language are not critical *per se.* Rather, they become problematic if transposed into technical and artificial languages without mechanisms in place to limit or eliminate them in order to allow these languages to achieve their goals. Legal language has, for instance, the main aim to provide legal certainty and to be a guidance for behaviours consistent with shared values. If notions deployed in this language are too emotionally exposed or too indeterminate to be reframed by means of re-definitions, this will impact the legal effectiveness of rules and the ability of the law to guide behaviours.[11]

In other words, linguistic control over key concepts borrowed from ordinary language plays an important role in limiting the ideological instrumentalization of that narrative, for instance at the legal

[7] Although there are differences in the institutional language (*eurojargon*) and in the political one, they often overlap, and therefore, for the purposes of this article, they will not be distinguished.

[8] Some examples are responsibility, autonomy, (un)predictability, etc.

[9] Vagueness is a characteristic of meaning and is a matter of degree referring to all notions, including notions of artificial languages. However, in some cases we should ask whether the problem we are facing is vagueness as just described or whether we are dealing with a meaning of a notion that we do not consider aligned with the system of values in which the notion is deployed. Some notions are vague because they express a value judgment whose application requirements are not even partially determinable unless reference is made to variable judgment parameters and to the changing typologies of social morality and customs. C. LUZZATI, *La vaghezza delle norme. Un'analisi del linguaggio giuridico*, Milano, 1990.

[10] When discussing linguistic problems, it is important to maintain the distinction between indeterminacy and vagueness. The first notion may include vagueness, but it is broader and refers not just to situations where it is unclear whether the word can be used or not (penumbral zone or fringe), which are usually defined with the term vagueness, instead it may refer to cases that are not determined at all. See P. VAN INWAGEN, *Indeterminacy and Vagueness: Logic and Metaphysics*, in *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 1, 2, 2009, 1-19.

[11] As was clearly explained, "the question of semantic rigor of legal language is prodromic to the upholding of the rule of law and of democracy", L. FERRAJOLI, *Dei diritti e delle garanzie,* cit., 22. The original sentence is "La questione del rigore semantico del linguaggio legale è dunque pregiudiziale alla stessa tenuta dello Stato di diritto e della democrazia".

level, and represents also a propaedeutic operation to examine how dominant narratives emerge and to unveil underpinning power relationships.
In the next paragraph, I will discuss AI as object of narration and highlight how a specific dominant narrative around AI has been reiterated over time, and why this is a matter of concern in legal terms.

2.1. AI as object of narration

Since its birth in 1956,[12] AI has been at the centre of science fiction and literature that have contributed to shaping the mainstream narrative on AI. This narrative is basically built upon a *dialectic of opposites*[13] without synthesis of reconciliation, which aims to define artificial intelligence *per relationem* with human intelligence.[14] The immediate result of such a comparative contrast is to highlight the extraordinary abilities of AI to the detriment of the natural limits of humans. Consequently, this narrative is trapped in emotionally charged modalities of presentation of AI versus humans, which do not allow rational approaches to the discussion around this topic. In this scenario, the engaged race between AI and humans always results in the AI's victory over humans.
The limits of this narrative and of the AI notion itself have been institutionally recognized in 2019, when the *High-Level Expert Group on AI* clearly acknowledged the importance of redefining AI following a semantically neutral approach. The Group proposed an AI definition useful to "avoid misunderstandings, to achieve a shared common knowledge of AI that can be fruitfully used also by non-AI experts, and to provide useful details that can be used in the discussion on both the AI ethics guidelines and the AI policies recommendation".[15]
This has been an important linguistic operation of clarification and re-definition, able to emancipate the concept of AI from ideologically connoted meanings as well as from historically rooted hypostatizations.
The same operation has, however, not been conducted consistently in the process of developing the European strategic approach to AI, which is based on building an *ecosystem of trust*[16] for a human-centric AI. As a matter of fact, other notions deployed in the mainstream narrative and in the institutional-political language, as well as in the legal language, have not been deeply scrutinized, thereby failing to prevent ideological stances that defend a reductionist view of humans in their relationship with AI.
In what follows, I will focus on three of the key notions ubiquitously deployed in the three above-mentioned languages. The skilful use of these notions has ideologically shaped the mainstream narrative

[12] The notion AI has been coined during the Dartmouth College Project on Artificial Intelligence. Propaedeutic to the elaboration of this notion were previous scientific studies such as Alan Turing's essay on *Computing Machinery and Intelligence* published in *Mind,* LIX, 236, 1950, 433-460.
[13] S. SALARDI, *Intelligenza Artificiale e Semantica del Cambiamento: Una Lettura Critica*, cit.
[14] The title of the book by L. ALEXANDRE, *La guerra delle intelligenze. Intelligenza artificiale contro intelligenza umana,* Torino, 2018, is very telling in this sense.
[15] High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence, *A Definition of AI: Main Capabilities and Disciplines,* Brussels, European Commission, 2019, 1. The definition proposed explains that "AI refers to systems that display intelligent behaviour by analysing their environment and taking actions – with some degree of autonomy – to achieve specific goals" and by AI system is intended "any AI-based component, software and/or hardware. Indeed, usually AI systems are embedded as components of larger systems, rather than stand-alone systems", 86-87.
[16] European Commission, *White Paper on Artificial Intelligence – A European Approach to Excellence and Trust*, COM(2020) 65 final, 2020, 9.

of the past decades in the European context, influencing also the institutional decision-making process, as we will see in what follows.

The notions are revolution, personhood, and trust.[17]

Let us begin with *revolution*. This is the notion around which changes brought about by AI have been long narrated through media and literature. This is a very critical concept, as it has stratified different layers of meanings, and when it is used without redefinition, it can serve different and contradicting purposes.

What does it mean that AI is revolutionary? The first meaning that is evoked by this notion is its *strongest meaning*, the one that refers to a radical change of paradigm, where the traditional epistemological schemes are completely overruled, as was the case with the scientific revolution.

When this notion is used to describe deep societal transformations like those brought about by AI, the strong meaning is the first that usually comes into the mind of laymen. This fact is not *per se* positive or negative. It is the *ex post* axiological evaluation of this use that may reveal a problematic hidden aim in the communication process, that is, that the senders use the word without defining it to make clear what they mean with the term, and in doing so, they do not put the receiver in the position to critically approach the societal changes being discussed. Indeed, in this scenario, the receivers are the passive recipients in a communication process following a one-way direction with a predefined purpose. When this communication strategy is adopted by governing institutions in democratic contexts framed by fundamental rights, it may be the indicator that the pressure of private actors or lobbies on the decision-making of those institutions is strong and is exerted to divert the legislation process in order to safeguard private interests.

In fact, when the sender uses the concept of revolution without re-definition, she evokes the strong meaning that influences the public perception of the phenomenon in a very specific way. What is surreptitiously suggested is that this phenomenon has not been planned and governed, therefore it is largely inevitable.[18] Following this semantic strategy allows the feeding of deterministic views of technology, which can ideologically shape the relationship between society, individuals, and technology[19] in two related ways. On the one side, it is maintained that technology autonomously shapes and guides society and cultural values. On the other side, technology is assumed to be neutral about the context in which it is developed, and therefore it predetermines the inevitable societal path.

However, the history of AI leads us to a different conclusion than the one referred to with the strong meaning of revolution. From the very beginning, the AI development has followed a precise direction, guided by private and rich stakeholders through the past century. It is a revolution, but in *a weakest sense*, as synonymous of transformative innovation. To highlight this weak nuance in the meaning of the notion revolution unveils that the AI innovation is a process that has been planned and governed, and therefore it is still governable in its further evolution. It is a matter of political and societal will to define

[17] I have analysed further concepts of the conceptual taxonomy building the mainstream narrative and impacting institutions and law in the book *Intelligenza Artificiale e Semantica del Cambiamento: Una Lettura Critica*, cit.

[18] S. ZUBOFF, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, New York City, 2019.

[19] R.R. KLINE, *Technological Determinism, in International Encyclopaedia of the Social & Behavioural Sciences (Second edition)*, Amsterdam, 2015, 109-112.

the directions of this evolution, whether it should lead to *algorithmic governmentality*[20] or remain under the control of politics, law, and social norms. This conclusion is of the utmost importance when one discusses the role of the law in defining the limits of this transformative innovation and in providing rules for tech-companies which possess both the economic and technological power, which in turn defines timing and characteristics of this innovation through the mainstream narrative.

If revolution is the key concept around which changes brought about by the advent of AI have been narrated so far, the concept of *personhood* is the pivot around which the anthropomorphising process took place.[21] This process started with the same notion of AI and has been strengthened through science fiction and literature, and this process can now be fulfilled and even legitimized through the legal language and its categories.

Personhood is indeed a central notion in modern constitutionalism, as it refers to the holder of human rights, and it is also the basic value standard for dignity.[22] Starting from 2017, an institutional and legal discussion in the European Union has begun with focus on expanding human rights protection to non-human subjects, such as autonomous, self-learning, and unpredictable robots.[23] This discussion has been strongly affected by the absolutizing and objectivistic hypostatization of AI in the ordinary language that the notion of legal personhood could have contributed to enhancing and enforcing. Indeed, recognition of legal personhood to AI has both a high symbolic relevance and a value-laden dimension. As a matter of fact, human rights are the bridge between ethics and law. They represent the legal device useful to frame the impact of technology on human existence by providing a process of agenda setting of priorities, sphere of influence, and responsibility that puts the person at the centre with her needs and expectations. Being a person in legal terms means to be a rights-holder deserving respect for their dignity. In other words, to be legally qualified as a person gives a trump card, as it allows to be included in policies granting the distribution of benefits. Recognition of legal personhood to AI systems or robots is therefore a very delicate question as it can both strengthen and even legitimize the tendency to anthropomorphism. This notion refers to the attribution of human qualities, traits, emotions or intentions to non-human entities. Anthropomorphism is a natural tendency of humans in their relationship to non-human entities, and its degree during interaction with robots or AI systems vary depending on many factors.[24] Despite being part of the normal interactions that humans develop with non-human entities, the negative implications of such phenomenon may be very serious and are

[20] A. ROUVROY, T. BERNS, L. CAREY-LIBBRECHT, *Algorithmic governmentability and prospects of emancipation*, in *Réseaux*, 177, 2013, 163-196.

[21] This process aims to attribute human-like characteristics and abilities to non-human entities.

[22] On the principle of dignity as the basis for human rights see P. TIEDEMANN, *Philosophical foundations of human rights*, cit.

[23] In the European Union, the proposal to recognize *e-personality* to robots went in this direction. Although the intent was to use this category in legal-technical terms, the notion was trapped into a wider discussion about the constitutional value of this category. See the European Parliament Resolution of 16 February 2017 with recommendations to the Commission on Civil Law Rules on Robotics, www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2017-0051_EN.html (last visited 10/02/2026).

[24] R. KÜHNE, J. PETER, C. DE JONG, A. BARCO, *How does Children's Anthropomorphism of a Social Robot Develop Over Time? A Six-Wave Panel Study*, in *International Journal of Social Robotics*, 16, 2024, 1665-1679.

known as *dishonest anthropomorphism*.[25] To contrast such negative side effects of human tendency to anthropomorphize AI, control over the use of language in media as well as in technical fields such as the law can avoid confusion between the phenomenon of anthropomorphism (descriptive level) and its legitimization through the *performative* language of the law (normative level).

This control has neither been constant nor consistent in the EU implementation of legal norms concerning AI. The evidence of this observation comes from the analysis of another concept building the conceptual taxonomy of the AI debate and being a relevant factor in the anthropomorphising tendency: trust.

The EU institutional-political narrative frames the relationship between users and AI products within an *ecosystem of trust*, based on a *trustworthy* AI. The first comprehensive document on this topic is the 2019 *Ethics Guidelines for a Trustworthy AI*. In the guidelines' glossary a justification is given for deploying the notion of trust: "While 'Trust' is usually not a property ascribed to machines, this document aims to stress the importance of being able to trust not only in the fact that AI systems are legally compliant, ethically adherent and robust, but also that such trust can be ascribed to all people and processes involved in the AI system's life cycle".[26]

The proposed definition of the notion of trust indirectly assumes that trust is a property that can be ascribed or not ascribed to certain types of entities. However, trust is neither a property of an entity (human or not human) nor is it the relationship itself. Rather, it is a property of that relationship.

This means that, for a relationship to be considered trustworthy, certain conditions must be met, conditions that pertain to the relationship itself, not to the entities involved. Reciprocity is one of this basic features. Reciprocity does not *per se* require an affective bond (a feeling of liking for a person) between the entities that are part of the trustworthy relationship. Indeed, a trustworthy relationship can be developed between an expert such as a physician or a lawyer, and a patient or a client. In these cases, the key element of reciprocity is the competence of the expert and the positively expected outcomes of that competence on the patient's or client's conditions. As these expert profiles are the facework of the system in which they work, they also represent a key to trust those systems, for instance, the healthcare system or the judicial system. How can we translate this scenario into the discussion on AI? What does it mean to ascribe trust to *all people and processes involved in the AI system's life cycle*? Who are the facework of the AI systems? Producers, programmers, tech-companies, or who?

What kind of relationship can the user build with them? Are these stakeholders available for a face-to-face exchange with the final user? Is this exchange not only practically impossible but also conceptually nonsensical? Is it, therefore, appropriate to term it a *trustworthy relationship*?

Concerns about this notion had already arisen by Thomas Metzinger, who was a member of the group of experts who elaborated the *Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI.* He observed that "Artificial Intelligence

[25] B. LEONG, E. SELINGER, *Robot Eyes Wide Shut: Understanding Dishonest Anthropomorphism*, In *Proceedings of the Association for Computing Machinery's Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency,* 2019, 299-308.

[26] High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence, *Ethics Guidelines for a Trustworthy AI,* 2019, 40, op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d3988569-0434-11ea-8c1f-01aa75ed71a1 (last visited 10/02/2026).

cannot be trustworthy. The Trustworthy AI story is a marketing narrative invented by industry, a bedtime story for tomorrow's customers".[27]

Despite these concerns, the expression has been deployed in normative documents building the AI vision in the European context, even when the more neutral synonym is contextually deployed.[28]

In light of the previous considerations, we can affirm that control over selection of notions and (re)definition of concepts has not followed a consistent path in building the political and legal strategies regarding AI in Europe. Despite positive results in this context, such as the effort to be the pioneer in AI regulation worldwide, the inconsistency in institutional and legal language, caused by the absence of consistent control over the key concepts of the institutional narrative, can result in at least two different problems: on the one side, further feeding dishonest anthropomorphism, and on the other side, undermining trust in the EU human-centric protection system.

In sum, both the institutional-political language and the legal language are strongly, albeit often inadvertently, affected by the absolutizing and objectivistic hypostatizations of AI. This is not limited to the general public discussion on AI, but it also impacts the narrative around data, which are the constitutive elements of AI functioning.

In the mainstream narrative, data are often presented through an *objectivistic rhetoric*.[29]

According to this rhetoric, data have a pre-social origin, where subjectivity is present only in the phase of analysis and interpretation and not in the process of collection, or even completely ruled out. Following this representation, what is suggested is that AI is able to give objective, definitive, and complete answers on what constitutes reality and its components. However, this cannot be true, not least because data used by algorithms are not representative of the present situation, as they have been collected in a given moment of the past and are in constant need of being updated. How frequently and carefully data are updated is a key to understand what portion of the assumed reality is represented at a given point in time by data elaborated by AI and to acknowledge how faithful to reality that representation is. And this operation remains quite obscure for most of the end users, even for those who work in technical contexts, such as, for instance, medicine or scientific research, where the availability of updated datasets is of the utmost importance.

2.2. AI as a narrator agent

The traditional way of narrating advances in the technological field is no longer the unique context to investigate in order to discuss the *semantics of change.* Indeed, AI being an object of narration is only half the story.

Unlike traditional technologies, AI is very peculiar, and its development in the field of generative AI makes it a uniquely disruptive kind of technology. Not only is it pervasive, but it can answer questions in a human-like way and generate its own content for a variety of texts matching thousands of millions of

[27] T. METZINGER, *Ethics washing made in Europe,* in *Tagesspiegel*, April 8th, 2019.

[28] Let us take the example of the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law. Art. 12 titles *Reliability*, but in the text of the article *trust* is the notion deployed.

[29] D. BALAZKA, D. RODIGHIERO, *Big Data and the Little Big Bang: An Epistemological (R)evolution,* in *Frontiers in Big Data,* 3, 31*,* 2020, 1-10.

information on which it is trained. We have therefore reached a point in the technological evolution where traditional control over languages and narratives is no longer enough. We face an unprecedented challenge whose contours are far from being clearly delineated.

What is sure is that language(s) is the key to societal transformations, but the exclusive generator of these languages is no longer the human being.

As the Secretary-General of the United Nations has remarked in his speech during the *Security Council meeting on AI and the maintenance of international peace and security*, held in New York on December 2024, threats to peace and security derive also by the ability of AI of creating "highly realistic content that can spread instantly across online platforms – manipulating opinion, threating information integrity and making truth indistinguishable from outright lies. Deep fakes could trigger diplomatic crises, incite unrest and undermine the very foundations of societies".[30]

The envisioned problems concern all the fields in which generative AI can be used. The same Secretary-General of the United Nations noted on May 3, 2025 during the World Press Freedom Day,[31] that if we assume that freedom for people depends on freedom of the press "[…] Artificial intelligence can support freedom of expression – or stifle it. Biased algorithms, outright lies, and hate speech are landmines on the information superhighway. Accurate, verifiable, fact-based information is the best tool to defuse them. […] AI must be shaped in a way that is consistent with human rights and puts facts first".

We can extend these considerations to include all contexts in which generative AI is applicable. Another example of a context in which generative AI should be carefully monitored when generating texts is the context of health and medicine. As the publication titled *Generative Artificial Intelligence in Health and Medicine* by the National Academy of Medicine reports "[…] applications of GenAI in health and biomedicine raise unique risks. These include information inaccuracy relevant to medical decision making due to so-called hallucinations or confabulations; inequitable access, utility, and applicability of LLMs in lower resourced environments; and the perpetuation of biases present in training data or introduced by AI engineers".[32] These problems arise from algorithmic brittleness that may arise "from an algorithm's inability to effectively generalize across datasets or adapt to environmental changes".[33]

These technical problems can have a severe ethical and practical impact on the physician-patient relationship as incorrect information may lead to serious negative outcomes in at least two ways. On the one side, incorrect information may lead to incorrect diagnosis, which will impact patient's health. This is a practical as well as an ethical issue. On the other side, incorrect information generated by AI may have the paradoxical consequence of undermining the trust on which the physician-patient relationship is based. Therefore, AI may be the causal determinant in undermining trust between humans.

In light of the observations expressed so far, it emerges that the problems caused by AI as narrator agent may be very complex and difficult to manage as they concern both empirical aspects (for instance, wrong diagnosis and impacts on patient's health), ethical aspects (autonomy and consent), and

[30] www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2024-12-19/secretary-generals-remarks-the-security-council-artificial-intelligence-bilingual-delivered (last visited 10/02/2026).

[31] www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2025-05-03/secretary-generals-message-world-press-freedom-day-scroll-down-for-french-version (last visited 10/02/2026).

[32] National Academy of Medicine, *Generative Artificial Intelligence in Health and Medicine. Opportunities and Responsibilities for Transformative Innovation*, 2025, 1.

[33] Ivi, 13.

relational ones (for instance, the trust on which a relationship is based). To grant an effective control over the linguistic texture, the sources on which AI is trained should indeed be so in depth scrutinized that the operation would result in a huge effort – according to some, a disproportionate effort – compared with the positive results that can be achieved and the huge financial gain that companies can obtain in the short-term. In this context, linguistic control may be the indispensable foundation upon which the human-centric vision depends; but that does not stop those having financial and economic interests trying to dispense with it.

3. Linguistic consistency as a value in the European legal framework: some inconclusive remarks

Despite the complexity and the difficulties of a serious engagement in control over consistency of language both when AI is an object of narration or when it is a narrator agent, the pursue of this control must not be labelled as a futile, terminological dispute. On the contrary, this kind of control over linguistic consistency is a precondition assumed within the legal framework based on fundamental rights to grant respect for and protection of those rights. These value-laden framework can properly work and protect individuals from technological threats if axiological antinomies are under control or at least if there are effective self-healing mechanisms to solve them. As axiological antinomies may arise from linguistic inconsistencies between the assumed definition of a principle and its incoherent transposition into technical norms due to unintentionally or intentionally hidden vagueness, ambiguity, and indeterminacy of key concepts, it goes without saying that not healing these antinomies has interrelated side effects: on the one side, the persistence of axiological antinomies undermine the ability of fundamental rights to maintain the human-centric vision in guiding technological advances, and, on the other side, their presence causes the unwanted result of leaving the control of technological development in the hands of technology (technology as a regulating agent). [34]

All the critical aspects mentioned so far allow to conclude that constant reflection on language, its concepts, its different contexts of use (technical, political, legal, ordinary) is of paramount importance if the institutionally declared goal is to fulfil the human centric vision.

In this sense, control over language through the different tools we have at our disposal is a precondition to restore language "as a good means of expression, communication and guidance, good not in terms of internal criteria of its functioning, but good for humans with their current attitudes, needs, projects in the circumstances and situations in which they find themselves".[35] In order to achieve this objective, the inclusion of legal analytical philosophers, who are expert in linguistic analysis, in the expert groups which elaborate guidelines and regulations at the institutional level, could be an added value to the exchange of ideas, in order to make the language of the different, albeit interrelated, institutional

[34] S. SALARDI, *Tecnologie per l'etica del futuro o etica per le tecnologie del futuro?*, in *Humanidades & Technologia Em Revista*, 40, 1, 2023, 5-17.

[35] U. SCARPELLI, *Filosofia analitica, norme e valori,* Milano, 1962, 17. The translation is made by the author of this article. The original excerpt is the following "[…] il linguaggio è tornato a essere, per l'espressione, la comunicazione e l'orientamento un buon mezzo: buono secondo i criteri interni al linguaggio, buono per l'uomo con i suoi attuali atteggiamenti, bisogni e progetti, nelle circostanze in cui ora si trova".

documents dealing with AI compliant with the ethical vision that the European institutions promise to promote. But the inclusion of such experts should be provided also when designing generative AI tools.
The importance of the contribution of the analytical linguistic philosophy was deftly clarified by Uberto Scarpelli some decades ago. He was reflecting on science, but I think that his considerations are still valuable and can be extended beyond science to include the current technological development. Therefore, I conclude my reflection with his words:

> the conceptual framework offered by the analytic philosophy to arrange our ideas and guide our behaviours is the most adequate for the current society, in which the horizon of science is constantly widening, and the explicit or implicit values promoted by science appear stronger and more extended. Indeed, legal analytical philosophy with its general focus on determining and clarifying language reestablishes consistency between attitudes in the scientific field and in the other disciplinary contexts, limiting the paradox of those that in science accept and follow the values of understanding, coherency, and control and outside science yield to the temptation of opposites values.[36]

[36] U. SCARPELLI, *Filosofia analitica, norme e valori*, cit., 33. The proposed translation is made by the author of this article. The original excerpt is the following "[…] il telaio concettuale fornito dalla filosofia analitica per il riordinamento delle nostre idee e dei nostri atteggiamenti sia il più appropriato alla civiltà del nostro tempo, in cui fra i vari orizzonti sempre più si allarga e domina quello della scienza e i valori espliciti o impliciti nella scienza appariscono più saldi ed estesi. La filosofia analitica, infatti, con il suo lavoro di generale determinazione e chiarificazione del linguaggio ristabilisce una coerenza fra gli atteggiamenti nel campo della scienza e gli atteggiamenti negli altri campi, contro il paradosso di chi accetta e persegue i valori della comprensione, della coerenza e del controllo e fuori dalla scienza cede a valori opposti".