Ad lectores

The Franciscan tradition—likewise, the long history of our own Faculty of Philosophy—is particularly distinguished by its openness: an attitude that reveals an outlook, and a method of inquiry, profoundly attuned to the human, to the human's questioning and self-questioning, and to the human's continually renewed self-invention. This attention to the human becomes most evident where humanity is "on the frontier," where the menace of disorientation is felt most strongly, but so also is the promise of possibility.

In this sense, the task of a Faculty of Philosophy is that of creating the space needed for a living discourse to arise—one that, nourished by the traditions, may offer tools for reading, interpreting, and inhabiting our own time. This is what the great Franciscan Masters teach us: they were able to open new paths in thought and in action, formulating original perspectives ever attentive to the concreteness of life.

To be sure, technical computational systems are among the most urgent issues, with which it is the responsibility of the University to engage at this present time. Their nature, together with their close connection to the capitalist-consumerist paradigm, is facilitating a capillary diffusion that is profoundly transforming many aspects of our lives: from the world of production and the market, to socio-political dynamics, and is even touching the very experience of being human.

These systems—or, as one now says for convenience but not only for that, artificial intelligences—exert a remarkable "performative" force. They are capable of shaping processes of individuation that influence the way we know, the way we relate to one another, live together, and even the way we understand ourselves. Wherefore it is by no means an exaggeration to think that we find ourselves at a decisive turning point in the becoming of humanity and of the planet—often forgotten, yet always involved in the development of computational technologies.

Hence the need, within the Faculty of Philosophy, to create a space dedicated to research and teaching—one capable of bringing different forms of knowledge and expertise into dialogue, in order to help us truly understand this 'our time.' This was precisely the intention when,

in 2023, the *Advanced Diploma in Ethics and Artificial Intelligence* was established.

These two terms are deliberately kept facing one another in the title, and yet conjoined by the "and" to make them continually address one another in a dialogue that may never be said to have exhausted its possibilities and that must continually be relaunched and rebuilt. That "and" prevents the 'question' of artificial intelligence from being reduced to a mere adjunct of ethics; it keeps the subject from being flattened into a funnel of current events, as though it were just a problem to be observed, analysed, and solved quickly, as if it were only a cumbersome technical knot.

At the same time, that "and" acknowledges and strengthens the status of ethics as a form of thought that dialogues with its own time, without being thereby crushed or else, determined by passing fashions or ephemeral protocols. To speak instead of an "ethics of artificial intelligence" would risk suggesting that ethics is a sort of device capable—almost automatically—of resolving every issue raised by the human or of regulating a practice that is still uncertain and unprecedented.

The dialogue between ethics and artificial intelligence therefore seeks above all to emphasize the urgency of putting thinking and critical reflection once more at the centre, as constitutive elements of the University as a "place" that takes up the responsibility of caring for the human and for our common home.

The contributions gathered in these pages aim above all to foster an authentic meeting in thought, giving space to what Martin Heidegger calls "meditative thinking" (*das besinnliche Denken*): a way of thinking that seeks the meaning of things, that asks deep questions, instead of mere problem-solving or else, finding quick, functional solutions, as happens in what he terms "calculating thinking" (*das rechnende Denken*).

Stéphane Oppes