

A comment to the “[Draft Ethics guidelines for trustworthy AI](#)”
Associazione Italiana per l’Intelligenza Artificiale
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We would like to introduce some general issues that might be relevant to understand the impact of Artificial Intelligence and to direct it for humanity’s well-being.

We would like to underscore one point: it is hard to speak about ethics of Artificial Intelligence without considering and analyzing the context in which humankind is living today.

Let us observe some of the current difficulties in many aspects of the human living system:

1. democracy crisis
2. inequality growth
3. ecological crisis
4. economic crisis

Why?

The Economist Intelligent Unit claims people disillusion about formal politics all over the world (<http://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>). Something has to change and progress in AI can be a very important vehicle in this evolution. Clearly AI might be also a dangerous vehicle for people control, influence and repression, from here some of the many worries in the current debate.

Furthermore, inequality is growing. In particular inequality inside countries. Credit Suisse 2017 reported that “The globe’s richest 1% own half the world’s wealth, according to a new report highlighting the growing gap between the super-rich and everyone else”.

It is inevitable to generate some key questions: What do we aim at by using AI? What are our goals? It seems quite difficult to speak about Ethics of AI without defining the goals we have.

Many researchers from different disciplines claim that we have to change our economic model and our relationship with the Environment. For example, the growth of GDP can no longer be the only index of success for a country.

Today, most countries in the world trust in market economy. In this kind of economy, profit and GDP are the main indicators for well-being, while production costs are the only measure of cost. Are we going to measure the good and bad of AI using the same reference system?

Artificial Intelligence is a very powerful tool (or, to be more precise, a set of very powerful tools) and many of us believe it will transform our society in a deep way. It is very likely that, analogously to other powerful tools, AI will contribute to achieve our wishes. Thus, it is very important to express good wishes, otherwise we will observe dystopian effects.

According to our view, Artificial Intelligence can be, for example, a powerful tool for improving our measure of well-being (<http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/>), better than GDP, for analysing costs of goods and services (mainly in terms of environmental impact) and for improving and optimizing the production with the goal of minimizing, or better reaching zero impact on the Environment.

“Anyone who believes in indefinite growth in anything physical, on a physically finite planet, is either mad or an economist.” — Kenneth Boulding

In traditional economy, capital and work are scarce resources while natural resources have no limit.

If we begin to consider that reality we live in, this is more like a spacecraft, and we have to change dramatically our vision. As an example:

1. we have to use natural resources in a cyclic way (without waste and with respect for the Environment)
2. we need to change our concept of growth: growth of well-being, not growth of expenses.

In our vision of the world, without such a shift of perspective Artificial Intelligence may encounter problems in claiming ethically acceptable effects.

Trying to synthesize the essence of our contribution: we suggest to integrate in the concept of AI Ethics a non-traditional analysis of the socio-economic context in which AI is applied. Indeed from the awareness of such context we may better discriminated the good and the bad of AI effects and also define in a crisp way where the ethical borders are that AI researchers and practitioners should respect in their approach to AI advancements.