

# AFRICA IN THE AGE OF AI: A PHILOSOPHICAL INQUEST INTO THE FUTURE OF TECHNOLOGY AND HUMAN DIGNITY

Bernadette Chidiebere Uozie  
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies,  
Tansian University, Umunya  
+234 803 779 0735  
[uzoziechidiebere@gmail.com](mailto:uzoziechidiebere@gmail.com)

Vincent Gerald Onwudinjo  
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies,  
Tansian University, Umunya  
+2348100663655  
[Vincentgerald58@gmail.com](mailto:Vincentgerald58@gmail.com)

## Abstract

*This paper investigates the knotty interplay between artificial intelligence (AI) and human dignity within the African context, framing the discussion through philosophical optics. As AI technologies gain traction across the globe, Africa stands at a critical juncture—poised to either harness these innovations for socio-economic transformation or become further marginalized by digital colonialism. Employing the philosophical methods of analysis and hermeneutics, the study seeks to interrogate how African philosophical traditions, including communitarian ethics and the concept of Ubuntu, can inform a more humane and culturally rooted approach to AI development, employment and deployment with the view of creating a balancing and to correct the anomaly that the human person can create something more intelligent than himself. The study seeks to project AI as a Machine Assistant (MA), aiding human efforts and not as a replacement of human intelligence/ingenuity, but rather a result of it. It critically explores the ethical challenges and opportunities that AI offers, particularly as it pertains to autonomy, privacy, labour and sociopolitical equity. Finally, the paper argues for a future in which technology serves not only as a tool for progress but also as a means of preserving and enhancing human dignity in Africa. This vision requires both a re-imagination of global AI*

*narratives and a commitment to inclusive, ethical innovation rooted in African values and experience.*

**Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Africa, Human Intelligence, Technology, Future, Ethics, Human Dignity**

## 1. Introduction

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) marks a crucial moment in human history. As machines develop the capacity to learn, adapt, and make decisions, societies around the globe are confronted with the ethical, cultural, and economic implications of this technology. In Africa, a continent shaped by historical colonial exploitation and a quest for technological independence, the advancement of AI offers both significant opportunities and serious threats. The chief concern goes beyond mere technological access; it touches on the matter of human dignity in an increasingly digital landscape.

Although AI is lauded for its potential to revolutionize fields like agriculture, healthcare, governance, and education, it also risks intensifying social inequalities, job displacement, and the imposition of foreign ideologies. This is particularly concerning in regions where poor infrastructure and weak regulatory frameworks leave communities vulnerable to exploitation through opaque algorithms, surveillance, and data colonialism. Thus, Africa's engagement with AI extends beyond technical matters to encompass deep philosophical questions.

Human dignity holds a central place in African philosophical traditions, encapsulated by communal values such as Ubuntu and Igwebuike, which emphasize interconnectedness and shared humanity. In contrast, many leading AI models are grounded in Western individualism and rationalism, focusing on efficiency, control, and profit. As AI increasingly influences decisions in education, justice, healthcare, and finance, crucial inquiries arise: Can African communities harness AI in ways that uphold and enhance human dignity? Or will these technologies continue to reinforce marginalization and dehumanization?

This paper explores these inquiries through a philosophical lens examining AI's impact on human dignity in Africa. Utilizing an interdisciplinary approach, it incorporates African philosophy,

technology ethics, and political economy. The central argument posits that Africa's engagement with AI should be anchored in its philosophical traditions and ethical frameworks to ensure technology serves humanity rather than undermines it. By scrutinizing the historical and technological context, the philosophical foundations of dignity, pertinent case studies, and ethical principles, this study aims to clarify how Africa can achieve a dignified digital transformation. It asserts that for AI to truly benefit African societies, it must be democratized, adapted to local contexts, and focused on human values that recognize the intrinsic worth of each individual.

## **2. Historical and Technological Context**

Africa's connection to technology has historically been influenced by both creativity and external control. Contrary to the perception of the continent as technologically “underdeveloped,” Africa possesses a rich and vibrant history of scientific advancements, ranging from ancient metallurgy in the Great Lakes area to sophisticated architectural achievements in Nubia and Timbuktu.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, colonialism interrupted the technological developments of indigenous cultures by imposing external knowledge systems and fostering dependencies that continue into the digital era.<sup>2</sup>

Since gaining independence, African countries have implemented different approaches to align themselves with global technological progress, frequently influenced by international organisations. For example, the structural adjustment programs of the 1980s and 1990s led to reductions in public funding for science and technology, reinforcing Africa's marginal role in the global knowledge economy.<sup>3</sup> The emergence of the internet in the late 1990s and early 2000s brought new opportunities. As mobile technologies advanced beyond conventional infrastructure, African nations started to take control in defining their digital futures.

Currently, AI is becoming the next wave of technological advancement, and Africa is actively participating rather than just being a bystander. Numerous AI research laboratories have been set up in various African nations, with Google's AI research center in Ghana highlighting the increasing interest in the region's talent and markets. In the healthcare

sector, AI is utilized for diagnostic imaging and monitoring diseases, while in agriculture, it helps forecast crop yields and identify pest issues.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, governments are implementing AI in initiatives like digital identity programs, smart city projects, and predictive policing, albeit with significant ethical concerns.

However, the continent encounters considerable obstacles. There remains a digital divide that extends beyond internet access to include issues related to data availability, computational power, and AI knowledge. The majority of AI models used in Africa are developed using data from the Global North, leading to cultural and contextual biases.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the absence of strong regulatory structures puts communities at risk of data misuse and surveillance, frequently by foreign companies that operate with minimal accountability.

This uneven technological environment highlights deeper global inequalities. Data from Africa is often taken without permission or remuneration, representing a new type of "data colonialism" that shifts local value to technology companies in Silicon Valley or China.<sup>7</sup> This trend reflects historical patterns of resource exploitation and labor abuse. Consequently, Africa's relationship with AI goes beyond mere access or capability; it encompasses a broader struggle involving knowledge systems, power dynamics, and respect. When African leaders endeavor to establish technology hubs, they frequently adopt models inspired by the Global North rather than drawing from African creativity. An example of this is Governor Chukwuma Soludo of Anambra State, who is attempting to replicate the Silicon Valley approach.

In this manner, any examination of AI in Africa needs to be rooted in historical perspectives. It is insufficient to merely evaluate how the continent utilizes AI; we must consider who holds the power over this technology, what values it embodies, and how it affects the lives and dignity of African individuals. Only by addressing these questions can we truly delve into the philosophical consequences of AI for Africa's future.

### **3. Philosophical Foundations: Human Dignity and Technology**

Central to the ethical discussion surrounding artificial intelligence is the concept of human dignity, which is both a deeply significant and debated

idea. In the African perspective, dignity transcends a simple individual right; it represents a communal and relational reality rooted in experiences of belonging and recognition. This understanding is encapsulated in the Southern African philosophy of Ubuntu, which asserts that "a person is a person through other persons."<sup>8</sup> Unlike Western liberalism, which prioritizes individual autonomy as the source of dignity, African philosophical traditions focus on interdependence, social harmony, and moral responsibility.<sup>9</sup>

Within the Ubuntu framework, human dignity is rooted in mutual support, acknowledgment, and engagement in the moral community. This perspective critiques technological systems, like AI, which tend to reduce individuals to mere data points, frequently devoid of context, history, or relational connections.<sup>10</sup> When AI systems base decisions related to education, creditworthiness, or criminality on algorithmic assessments, they run the risk of reducing individuals to mere behavioral patterns or risk categories. This simplification conflicts with the African perspective of personhood, which views it as dynamic, sacred, and inherently social.

Additionally, African philosophers like Kwame Gyekye, Ifeanyi Menkiti, and Mogobe Ramose contend that dignity is both an inherent quality and one that is attained through moral growth and contributions to the community.<sup>11</sup> From this perspective, technology should not only avoid causing harm to individuals, but also empower them to thrive in their communities. Thus, the ethical evaluation of AI is not based on its efficiency, but rather on its ability to maintain and strengthen the moral foundation of society.

In contrast to prevailing Western AI ethics frameworks that primarily emphasize individual consent, privacy, and risk management—important aspects but insufficient for capturing the communal and existential facets of dignity in African philosophy—Western approaches tend to be procedural and legalistic, stemming from Enlightenment rationalism and liberal contract theory. In contrast, African ethics focus on normative principles and virtues, prioritizing justice, harmony, and the welfare of the community.<sup>12</sup>

This philosophical difference extends beyond theoretical discussions; it has significant consequences for the design, implementation, and governance of AI systems in Africa. For instance, an AI system that enhances efficiency at the cost of community connections—such as automating social services without any human involvement—could be viewed as fundamentally disrespectful. Likewise, a surveillance system that values state authority over community consent would contradict Ubuntu's ethical principles, even if it aligns with national laws. Thus, as Africa navigates the realm of AI, it should do so by developing its own ethical frameworks rather than passively adopting those from other cultures. African philosophical traditions provide valuable insights for envisioning dignified futures in our digital society—futures where technology enhances life instead of abstracting it; where data represents communities rather than mere consumption; and where all forms of intelligence, artificial or otherwise, always prioritize humanity.

#### **4. AI's Potential in Africa: Promise and Peril**

Artificial Intelligence is rapidly emerging as a powerful driver of change in Africa, capable of speeding up development, broadening access to services, and tackling persistent socio-economic issues. Authorities, entrepreneurs, and civil society are investigating the use of machine learning, data analytics, and robotics in sectors like agriculture, healthcare, education, and governance. However, these technologies also pose serious risks, such as worsening inequality, reinforcing algorithmic bias, and enabling surveillance, which jeopardize the core African principle of human dignity.

On a positive note, AI is enhancing agricultural efficiency through the provision of real-time weather predictions, detection of crop diseases, and implementation of precision farming methods.<sup>13</sup> In nations such as Kenya and Nigeria, AI-based platforms provide small-scale farmers with information on market prices, mobile loans, and agricultural guidance, which improves food security and strengthens economic stability.<sup>14</sup> In the healthcare field, AI technologies aid in identifying diseases like tuberculosis and cervical cancer, facilitating early diagnosis and

treatment in areas that lack adequate resources.<sup>15</sup> These advancements showcase the freeing possibilities of AI when focused on promoting the welfare of the community.

AI provides solutions for educational inequities. In areas facing a lack of teachers, AI-driven tutoring applications are being tested to facilitate personalized learning in native languages.<sup>16</sup> In governance, platforms that utilize data are instrumental in overseeing election procedures, identifying fraudulent activities, and enhancing the delivery of public services. Additionally, AI can promote increased transparency and citizen engagement, which are essential elements of a respectful political environment.

Nonetheless, these opportunities are accompanied by significant risks. A major issue is algorithmic bias. Many AI systems implemented in Africa are built on datasets from the Global North, leading to a frequent misrepresentation of African circumstances.<sup>17</sup> This may result in incorrect diagnoses in the medical field, biased credit assessments, and unjust monitoring, all of which violate people's dignity and rights. Additionally, due to the lack of transparency in these systems, individuals have limited options for addressing the harm caused by AI-based decisions.

The economic consequences are concerning as well. While AI presents new avenues for digital entrepreneurship, it poses a risk to employment due to automation, especially in industries like manufacturing, transportation, and customer service. In a region where youth unemployment is significantly elevated, the loss of jobs without sufficient reskilling initiatives could worsen poverty and lead to increased social unrest.<sup>18</sup> Lack of equal access to digital resources and skills training could increase the divide between urban elites and rural communities in relation to AI.

Of utmost concern, governments throughout Africa are implementing AI-driven surveillance systems claiming they are necessary for national security and public safety. These systems, typically provided by Chinese or Western technology firms, encompass facial recognition cameras, predictive policing tools, and biometric identification programs.<sup>19</sup>

Although, they claim to be efficient, these systems frequently function with little oversight, undermining civil liberties and facilitating authoritarian rule. The implementation of these technologies without public discussion or ethical protections highlights a techno-authoritarian inclination that contradicts Ubuntu and other African principles emphasizing communal agreement and participatory governance.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, the dual characteristics of AI in Africa—its ability to empower as well as to exert control—require a thoughtful ethical and philosophical examination. As African philosopher Paulin Hountondji highlights, technology should be critically examined and adapted rather than accepted without question.<sup>21</sup> The task at hand goes beyond simply aligning with global AI trends; it involves creating a vision for artificial intelligence that is rooted in context, guided by ethical considerations, and focused on promoting human dignity. Achieving this necessitates a deliberate reevaluation of the goals, design, and oversight of AI technologies throughout the continent.

## 5. Critical Case Studies

To grasp the impact of AI on the African continent and its implications for human dignity, it's crucial to look beyond theoretical discussions and investigate actual applications. These case studies showcase the potential benefits and risks of AI systems in Africa, providing clear examples of how technology can either support or undermine human dignity based on its design, implementation, and regulation.

### 5.1 AI in African Healthcare: Ghana and Kenya

The healthcare sector in Africa shows significant potential for AI implementation. In Ghana, the use of AI for diagnosing breast cancer via image recognition has enhanced early detection rates in rural medical facilities.<sup>22</sup> IBM's Watson for Oncology was tested in collaboration with the Ministry of Health to assist local physicians by offering treatment suggestions grounded in global data. Although this initiative improved diagnostic capabilities in underserved regions, critics voiced worries about cultural disconnects and the lack of transparency in AI recommendations, which complicated local healthcare providers' ability to trust or question the outputs generated by the machine.<sup>23</sup>

In Kenya, the company Zipline employs AI and drones to transport blood and medical supplies to isolated regions. The AI technology optimizes delivery paths in real time, helping to lower maternal mortality rates by ensuring quick access to emergency resources. This illustrates how AI can uphold human dignity by preserving life, alleviating suffering, and strengthening local healthcare systems. Nonetheless, similar to various technology-based solutions in Africa, these systems are controlled by foreign companies, which raises issues about long-term reliance and the ownership of health data.<sup>24</sup>

### **5.2 Surveillance and Biometric Technology: Uganda and Zimbabwe**

Although, AI has the potential to improve public service delivery, it can also serve as an instrument of government control. In Uganda, it has been reported that the Chinese firm Huawei assisted the government in deploying facial recognition technology to identify and apprehend political demonstrators.<sup>25</sup> The implementation of AI for surveillance took place without public input or transparency, breaching rights to privacy and freedom of assembly. Instead of promoting dignity, these systems bolster authoritarianism and exacerbate the power disparity between the government and its citizens.

Zimbabwe offers a comparable situation with its national biometric voter registration system, which was established with help from international technology companies. Although the system aims to promote electoral transparency, concerns about voter manipulation and disenfranchisement have arisen due to inadequate data protection laws and the unclear handling of voter information.<sup>26</sup> These instances underscore the risks of using AI in governance without the necessary democratic protections in place. When AI serves as a tool of coercion instead of empowerment, it jeopardizes the right to human dignity, which encompasses political agency and the freedom from fear.

### **5.3 FinTech and Digital Credit: Nigeria**

In Nigeria, mobile lending platforms such as "Branch, FairMoney, and Carbon" have utilized AI-driven financial technologies to enhance access to credit.<sup>27</sup> These platforms utilize machine learning algorithms to assess creditworthiness by analyzing smartphone data such as text messages, call logs, and app usage, thereby bypassing traditional credit scoring

techniques. This method has enhanced financial access for those previously excluded by conventional banking systems. However, it raises important ethical issues related to consent, data privacy, and the fairness of the algorithms used.

A lot of users do not realize how their data is gathered and utilized, and failing to repay loans can result in harsh debt collection methods, such as public humiliation on social media.<sup>28</sup> This not only infringes on personal dignity but also reflects a troubling commodification of personal data. Furthermore, the lack of financial literacy and regulatory oversight makes users vulnerable to exploitation. While FinTech innovations may be economically empowering, they can simultaneously reinforce predatory practices if not carefully regulated.<sup>29</sup>

These case studies highlight a diverse range of AI experiences in Africa, spanning from enhancing dignity to undermining it. They show that the ethical implications of AI are influenced not just by the technology but also by contextual factors, governance, values, and intentions. To ensure that AI positively impacts Africa, it should be accountable to the communities it serves, integrated with local values, and open to democratic oversight.

## **6. AI Governance and Ethics in the African Context**

The governance of artificial intelligence in Africa is an evolving area characterized by a mixture of national policies, regional initiatives, and external influences. As AI technologies increasingly permeate various aspects of life—such as healthcare, surveillance, finance, and education—the need for effective, contextually relevant ethical frameworks and regulatory measures becomes more pressing. The implications extend beyond the operational aspects of AI to encompass the dignity and rights of African citizens.

### **6.1 National and Regional Policy Efforts**

Many African nations are starting to develop their own national AI strategies. For example, Rwanda has incorporated AI into its broader digital transformation goals and has set up the Centre for the Fourth

Industrial Revolution in collaboration with the World Economic Forum.<sup>30</sup> In a similar vein, Kenya and South Africa have established national task forces and pilot programs to investigate the effects of AI on employment, infrastructure, and society.<sup>31</sup> However, these policies tend to rely significantly on frameworks created in the Global North, lacking adequate adjustments to fit local philosophical, cultural, and economic contexts.

The African Union (AU) acknowledges the significance of coordination across the continent, especially in relation to data governance. Its Data Policy Framework and Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020–2030) highlight the importance of sovereignty, inclusivity, and innovation.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, the implementation is inconsistent because of differences in infrastructure, skill levels, and political commitment. Additionally, regional collaboration is frequently obstructed by national priorities, limitations in funding, and reliance on external factors.

## 6.2 The Role of International Influence

Foreign tech companies, especially from the U.S. and China, significantly influence the development of AI in Africa. They frequently supply the necessary infrastructure, software, and technical education for AI initiatives. Although this assistance can boost innovation, it may also threaten Africa's independence by facilitating data extraction, creating dependence on foreign expertise, or enforcing foreign ethical standards.<sup>33</sup> China's impact is particularly evident in the spread of AI-driven surveillance systems that are being distributed as part of the Belt and Road Initiative.<sup>34</sup>

U.S. companies currently lead in cloud computing and data analytics, frequently utilizing African markets to pilot new products with minimal regulation. This global competition for digital power highlights the need for greater African control over AI governance, emphasizing the importance of creating local frameworks that are aligned with regional values and human rights principles.

## 6.3 Ethical Frameworks and Cultural Relevance

The majority of current AI ethics frameworks, including those from the OECD, UNESCO, and the EU, focus on principles like transparency,

accountability, and fairness. Although these principles are significant, they may not adequately capture the philosophical foundations of Africa, including concepts such as Ubuntu, Ujamaa, and relational personhood.<sup>35</sup> For instance, Western ethics tend to prioritize individual privacy, while African traditions may place greater emphasis on communal well-being, consent, and restorative justice.<sup>36</sup>

There is an increasing demand for Afrocentric AI ethics, which focus on incorporating African perspectives and principles. Academics such as Abeba Birhane and William Ndeda emphasize the importance of ethical frameworks that align with Africa's social and cultural contexts, prioritizing aspects like community-based decision-making, contextual awareness, and shared moral responsibilities.<sup>37</sup> This method critiques technocratic governance frameworks that consider ethics merely as a series of items to be checked off instead of as a dynamic and dialogical process.

#### **6.4 Toward Participatory and Inclusive AI Governance**

Governance of ethical AI in Africa should be characterized by participation, inclusivity, and transparency. This means engaging a diverse group of stakeholders—including policymakers, technologists, civil society representatives, traditional leaders, and communities impacted by AI—in the development and regulation of AI systems. Establishing mechanisms for community feedback, addressing grievances, and conducting public consultations is crucial to prevent AI from reinforcing elite interests or worsening social inequalities.

Moreover, legal frameworks need to adapt to safeguard data rights, mitigate algorithmic harm, and support digital sovereignty. Pan-African legal instruments, like the Malabo Convention on Cybersecurity and Personal Data Protection, provide a foundational starting point, but they require broad ratification and effective implementation.<sup>38</sup> National parliaments and courts should also be involved in examining the effects of AI on human rights and dignity.

In the end, governance should extend beyond mere policies to foster an ethical culture that recognizes technology as a moral entity infused with values and influence, rather than a neutral instrument. Therefore, AI

governance in Africa involves more than just risk management; it is about crafting futures where technology upholds human dignity, is rooted in African perspectives, and aims for the well-being of all.

## **7. Reclaiming African Futures: Toward Dignity-Centered AI**

The issue is no longer if Africa will embrace artificial intelligence, but how it will proceed and who will reap the benefits. As the continent faces the challenges of the digital era, it needs to take a proactive and principled stance on AI—one that is influenced by its own philosophical, cultural, and socio-political contexts rather than simply responding to global trends. This involves shaping technological advancements in a manner that respects and preserves human dignity.

### **7.1 The Imperative of Ethical Sovereignty**

Ethical sovereignty encompasses the capacity of African societies to establish the moral principles that direct their use of technology. Instead of depending only on external AI ethics frameworks, it is essential for African scholars, organizations, and communities to collaboratively develop ethical perspectives that represent the diverse traditions of the continent.<sup>39</sup> This involves promoting indigenous philosophies like Ubuntu, which emphasizes community care and moral interconnectedness. In this perspective, dignity is viewed not as a mere abstract right but as a relational value—something that is cultivated, developed, and exchanged. An AI approach focused on dignity urges African institutions to move away from technological determinism—the belief that innovation inherently brings progress—and instead to consider more profound inquiries: What type of progress? For whom is it intended? What are the associated costs?<sup>40</sup> These questions create space for critical reflection and allow for the shaping of technology in ways that prioritize justice, equity, and human flourishing.

### **7.2 Data Justice and Digital Self-Determination**

A key component of reclaiming the future of AI in Africa is the issue of data justice. Since AI systems depend largely on data, controlling data equates to having power, knowledge, and representation.<sup>41</sup> However, in numerous African settings, data gathering and processing are largely controlled by foreign companies that take value without contributing back to local communities. This situation perpetuates colonial

exploitation patterns, a phenomenon referred to by some as "digital extractivism."<sup>42</sup> An AI focused on dignity should prioritize digital self-determination, which empowers communities to manage their own data in accordance with their local norms, values, and goals.<sup>43</sup> This involves ensuring that informed consent is obtained, allowing communities to manage their own data systems, and providing the option to withdraw from exploitative practices. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of Afrocentric data ethics—principles shaped by Africa's distinct cultural and historical experiences of oppression, resistance, and resilience.

### **7.3 Education, Capacity Building, and Indigenous Innovation**

In order for Africa to take a proactive role in the AI revolution, it is essential to invest in education and develop local skills. This investment should encompass not only STEM education but also the incorporation of philosophy, ethics, and indigenous knowledge systems into AI programmes. The progression of technology should be influenced by individuals who are knowledgeable in both machine learning and ethical considerations—those who can design algorithms and evaluate their societal effects. Furthermore, African governments and institutions should support indigenous innovation—grassroots, locally driven technological solutions that emerge from communities, not just from Silicon Valley-inspired hubs.<sup>44</sup> A dignity-centered approach values not only high-tech invention but also low-tech resilience, social innovation, and traditional knowledge adapted to new contexts. This counters the narrative that African contributions to technology must mimic Western models to be legitimate.<sup>45</sup>

### **7.4 Building a Shared Ethical Vision**

Ultimately, reclaiming the futures of Africa calls for the establishment of a common ethical vision that goes beyond national boundaries and upholds the shared dignity of the continent. This necessitates inclusive conversations involving elders and youth, technologists and philosophers, as well as policymakers and grassroots organizations. Additionally, it demands creativity—the capacity to envision futures in which technology enhances human connections instead of undermining them, and where both natural and artificial intelligence serve life rather than profit.<sup>46</sup>

Collaboration across Africa is crucial to achieving this vision. Organizations such as the African Union, ECOWAS, and SADC should spearhead the development of ethical guidelines, harmonize policies, and stand against outside influences that threaten Africa's independence..<sup>47</sup> Civil society should also be strengthened to keep governments and corporations accountable, ensuring that AI benefits the public.

As Africa seeks to reclaim its technological future, it should not just adjust to the AI era; it needs to shape it according to its own standards, utilizing its own perspectives, and serving its own communities. This represents a crucial philosophical and political challenge of our era: to create a future in which technology proudly reflects African identity rather than being an external force imposed from outside..<sup>48</sup>

## **8. Conclusion and Philosophical Reflections**

As Africa enters the era of artificial intelligence, the challenges it encounters go beyond technology and delve into philosophy. The continent finds itself at a pivotal point where the advancements of the Fourth Industrial Revolution could either exacerbate longstanding injustices or be harnessed for empowerment and growth. This research contends that adopting a dignity-focused perspective on AI is both an ethical imperative and aligns with African values and goals.

Artificial intelligence prompts societies to envision the future, but these visions are inherently influenced by values. In many prevailing narratives, AI is portrayed as a catalyst for efficiency, automation, and productivity. However, as we have observed, such values can often undermine human dignity, particularly for marginalized groups. In Africa, where the legacies of colonization, inequality, and dependency are still prevalent, the future cannot be seen as a blank slate. Instead, it should be a domain of ethical struggle, remembrance, and renewal.

The key philosophical inquiry is not whether AI will influence Africa's future, but rather how that future can be crafted to enhance life, uphold community, and recognize the inherent worth of every individual. This encapsulates the challenge of *phronesis*—practical wisdom—merging moral insight with contextual understanding..<sup>49</sup>

Artificial intelligence encourages societies to imagine their futures, but these visions are shaped by underlying values. In many dominant narratives, AI is seen as a driver of efficiency, automation, and productivity. However, we have seen that such values can often compromise human dignity, especially for marginalized populations. In Africa, where the impacts of colonization, inequality, and dependence remain significant, the future cannot be viewed as a blank canvas. Instead, it should serve as a space for ethical reflection, remembrance, and rejuvenation. The essential philosophical question is not whether AI will shape Africa's future, but how that future can be intentionally designed to improve lives, strengthen communities, and acknowledge the intrinsic value of each person. This represents the challenge of *phronesis*—practical wisdom that combines moral understanding with situational awareness.<sup>50</sup> They emphasize that intelligence is not solely about computation but also about relationships; that innovation should benefit the entire community rather than just a privileged few; and that dignity is something to be practiced, not merely owned.

Additionally, these philosophies critique the reductionist reasoning often found in discussions about AI. By emphasizing relationships, African ethics contest the fragmented perspective of individual identity, presenting a more integrated view of personhood that is fundamentally social, spiritual, and ecological.<sup>51</sup> These insights are crucial for creating an AI that is not just intelligent, but also wise.

Philosophy should not stay purely theoretical; it needs to be applied in policies, educational frameworks, technological development, and institutional responsibilities. Africa should prioritize critical digital literacy, promote Afrocentric AI research, and enable civil society to influence the ethical guidelines of innovation. As technology increasingly engages with personal lives—anticipating behaviors, mediating relationships, and making decisions for individuals—it is crucial for those impacted by these technologies to have a role in shaping them.

The practice of dignity-focused AI also involves challenging narratives of technological inevitability. Africans are not mere spectators of global

innovation; they are innovators, evaluators, and stewards of their own technological destinies.<sup>52</sup> Local innovation, community-driven data management, and collaborative ethics provide avenues for regaining control and empowerment.

At its essence, the future of AI in Africa revolves around the concept of “telos”—the purpose of AI. What role does AI play, and who has the authority to determine that? If AI is intended to enhance human well-being, its value should be assessed not just by processing speed or the number of tasks it automates, but by its ability to enrich our understanding of meaning, justice, and compassion.

African philosophical traditions emphasize that dignity cannot be bestowed by machines, nor should it be viewed as a mere product to be developed. Rather, dignity is experienced, shared, and safeguarded through interpersonal relationships, ethical obligations, and social frameworks. Thus, the future of AI poses a fundamentally human question. The objective is not just to create intelligent machines, but to foster wise societies. This is Africa's call to the global community: to develop AI that honors our history, comprehends our current state, and envisions, with both humility and hope, a collaborative future ahead.

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