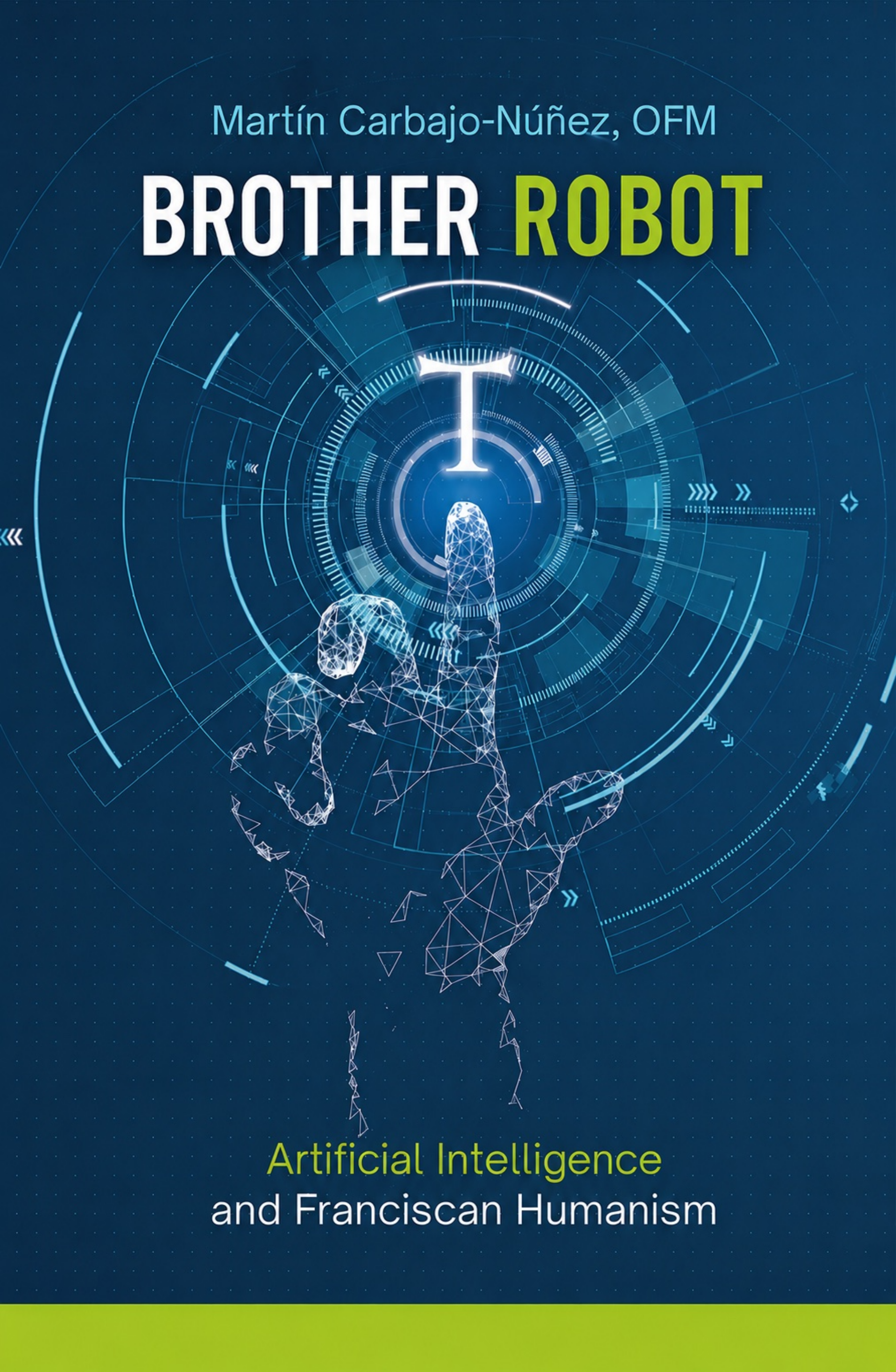


Martín Carbajo-Núñez, OFM

BROTHER ROBOT

Artificial Intelligence
and Franciscan Humanism



Martín Carbajo-Núñez

Brother Robot

Artificial Intelligence and Franciscan Humanism

To my father, Martín Carbajo Barahona,
who instilled in me a lifelong enthusiasm for technology.

Abbreviations

1. Biblical Books

1 Cor	1 Corinthians	Is	Isaiah
1 Jn	1 John	Lc	Luke
1 Kgs	1 Kings	Mc	Mark
2 Cor	2 Corinthians	Mt	Matthew
2 Pt	Second Peter	Phil	Philippians
Act	Acts of the Apostles	Ps	Psalms
Ef	Efesios	Rv	Revelation
Gal	Galatians	Rm	Romans
Gn	Genesis		

2. Magisterium Sources

AeN	DDF – DCEd, <i>Antiqua et Nova</i>
AL	Francis, <i>Amoris Laetitia</i> . Post-synodal exhortation
AP	Leo XIII, <i>Aeterni Patris</i> . Encyclical Letter
AParens	Paul VI, <i>Alma parens</i> . Apostolic Letter
CA	John Paul II, <i>Centesimus annus</i> . Encyclical
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CIC	Code of Canon Law
CONFER	Spanish Conference of Major Superiors
CP	PCSC, <i>Communio et Progressio</i> . Pastoral Instruction
CSDC	Compendium of the Social doctrine of the Church
ITC	International Theological Commission
CV	Benedict XVI, <i>Caritas in veritate</i> . Encyclical
DC	Benedict XVI, <i>Deus caritas est</i> . Encyclical
DCEd	Dicastery for Culture and Education
DDF	Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith
DSDHI	Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development
Ec-Fco	Francis, Letter for the event “ <i>Economy of Francesco</i> ”
ECS	PCSC, Ethics in communications
EG	Francis, <i>Evangelii Gaudium</i> . Exhortation
EN	Paul VI, <i>Evangelii nuntiandi</i> . Exhortation
EpC	Francis, <i>Episcopalis Communio</i> . Apostolic Constitution
FC	John Paul II, <i>Familiaris consortio</i> . Exhortation

FcoG7	Francis, Address at the G7 Session on AI
FT	Francis, <i>Fratelli tutti</i> . Encyclical
GE	Francis, <i>Gaudete et Exsultate</i> . Exhortation
GrE	Second Vatican Council, <i>Gravissimum Educationis</i> .
GrS	John Paul II, <i>Gratissimam Sane</i> . Letter to Families
GS	Second Vatican Council, <i>Gaudium et spes</i> .
Fior	True and Perfect Joy
IM	Second Vatican Council, <i>Inter mirifica</i> . Decree
InsB16	Insegnamenti di Benedetto XVI (Benedict XVI)
InsFco	Insegnamenti di Francesco (Pope Francis)
InsJP2	Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II (John Paul II)
LG	Second Vatican Council, <i>Lumen gentium</i> .
LS	Francis, <i>Laudato si'</i> . Encyclical
MH	Leo XIV, <i>Magnifica humanitas</i> . Encyclical Letter
PAL	Pontifical Academy for Life
PCJP	Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace
PCSC	Pontifical Council for Social Communications
PD	PIUS X, <i>Pascendi Dominici Gregis</i> . Encyclical
PL	Migne, J.-P. (ed.), <i>Patrologia latina</i>
PP	Paul VI, <i>Populorum progressio</i> . Encyclical
QA	Francis, <i>Querida Amazonia</i> . Exhortation
RM	John Paul II, <i>Redemptoris missio</i> . Encyclical
RN	Leo XIII, <i>Rerum Novarum</i> . Encyclical Letter
RS	John Paul II, <i>The Rapid Development</i> . Apostolic Letter
Scot2008	Benedict XVI, “Apostolic letter on the 7 th centenary of the death of Duns Scotus”
SynBish	Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops
S19df	Amazon Synod, Final document
S23sr	Synod 2021–2024, Synthesis Report
S24df	Synod 2021–2024, Final Document
SRS	John Paul II, <i>Sollicitudo rei socialis</i> . Encyclical
Vat-Leader	DSDHI, <i>The Vocation of the Business Leader: A Reflection</i>
VC	John Paul II, <i>Vita Consecrata</i> . Exhortation
WCD	World Communications Day
WDP	World Day of Peace

3. Writings of St. Francis

1LtaCus	The First Letter to the Custodians
2LtaF	The second version of the Letter to the Faithful

4LtaCl	CLARE OF ASSISI, The 4 th letter to Agnes of Prague
Adm	The Admonitions
CtC	The Canticle of the Creatures
ER	The Earlier Rule (<i>Regula non bullata</i>)
LR	The Later Rule (<i>Regula bullata</i>)
LtaA	A Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples
LtL	A Letter to Brother Leo
LtMin	A Letter to a Minister
LtO	A Letter to the Entire Order
OfP	The Office of the Passion
ParPN	A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father
PrCr	Prayer Before the Crucifix at San Damiano
PrsG	The Praises of God
RE	A Rule for Hermitages
SalV	A Salutation to Virtues
Test	The Testament
TestS	The Testament made at Siena

4. Franciscan Sources and Authors

1Cel	Celano, The Life of St. Francis (<i>Vita Prima</i>)
1Sent	Bonaventure, <i>Commentaria in I librum Sententiarum</i>
2Cel	Celano, The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul (<i>Vita Secunda</i>)
2Sent	Bonaventure, <i>Commentaria in II librum Sententiarum</i>
Brevil	Bonaventure, <i>Breviloquium</i>
CAED	Armstrong R.J., Clare of Assisi: The Lady.
CAss	The Assisi Compilation (The legend of Perugia)
Spec	The Mirror of Perfection
FAED	Amstrong R.J – Hermann J.A.W. – Short W.J. (ed.), Francis of Assisi: Early Documents
HO	Jacques de Vitry, <i>Historia Occidentalis</i>
Itin	Bonaventure, <i>Itinerarium mentis in Deum</i>
L3C	The Legend of the Three Companions
LMj	Bonaventure, The Major Legend
OFM	Ordo Fratrum Minorum
Ord	Duns Scotus, <i>Ordinatio</i> (Opus Oxoniense)
Quaracchi	Bonaventure, <i>Opera omnia</i> , Collegii S. Bonaventurae, Quaracchi 1882-1902
Vat	Duns Scotus, <i>Opera omnia</i> .

5. Bibliographical and Common

5Gad3	5 study: GAD3 (2023), https://empantallados.com/ia/
a.	Articulus
AAS	Acta Apostolicae Sedis
AI	Artificial Intelligence
arg	Argumento, argumentum
BAC	Biblioteca de autores cristianos
c.	Chapter
ca.	<i>circa</i> (approximately)
CCW	UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
cf.	<i>Confer</i> , see, compare
d.	Distinctio, distinctiones
ed.	Editor, publisher, coordinator, editorial
EDB	Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna
FTC	Federal Trade Commission
Ibid	Ibidem
Id	Idem, the same
IEA	International Energy Agency
IoT	Internet of Things
IT	Information Technology
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
LAWS	Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems
LLM	Large Language Model
LRM	Large Reasoning Models
LEV	Libreria Editrice Vaticana
n.	Number, numbers
NYT	The New York Times
OR	L'Osservatore romano
Otto	Otto P. – Gräf E., 3th1cs. A reinvention of ethics in the digital age?
p.	Pars, page, pages
PL	Migne J.-P. (ed.), <i>Patrologia Latina</i>
prol.	Prologus
q.	Quaestio, quaestiones
REB	Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira
RMS	Robotized military systems

S.Th	Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i>
SelFran	Selecciones de Franciscanismo
Transl.	My translation
Univ.	University
UP	University Press
Vol.	Volume, volumes

Introduction

Generative AI is widely regarded as the most advanced technological development of our time, the fruit of the long process of scientific and technological rationalization that has characterized modernity. Awareness of its “exciting opportunities and serious risks” (*JMP* 2024, 1) has grown dramatically since the launch of ChatGPT on November 22, 2022, soon followed by numerous other applications based on generative AI models.

These technologies offer extraordinary possibilities for expanding knowledge, optimizing processes, and improving many aspects of personal and social life. At the same time, they raise far-reaching challenges: reducing the human person to a collection of data, replacing human judgment with algorithmic decision-making, concentrating technological power in the hands of a few, manipulating information, and reinforcing what Pope Francis has called the technocratic paradigm. Responding to these challenges requires more than asking what AI can do. The decisive question is what kind of humanity we wish to build with it.

In this context, the recent encyclical *Magnifica humanitas* reflects on “the safeguarding of the human person in the age of AI.” It acknowledges AI’s immense potential to promote integral human development while also warning against the danger of absolutizing technical rationality until it becomes the supreme criterion of truth, power, and social organization. When important and genuinely human decisions are uncritically delegated to algorithmic systems, wisdom gives way to calculation, and personal responsibility is replaced by automation. Instead of safeguarding human dignity and our intrinsically relational nature, we risk “worshiping the work of our own hands,” reducing the human person to what is measurable, predictable, or programmable. In this way, AI

becomes a new idol, a contemporary expression of the ancient temptation of Babel.

Magnifica Humanitas and the Franciscan Tradition

This book is not primarily about AI. Rather, it explores how a humanism of fraternity can be reconstructed in the age of AI. To this end, it places the encyclical *Magnifica humanitas* in dialogue with the Franciscan intellectual tradition.

At first glance, it may seem paradoxical to turn to a medieval tradition in order to address one of the most sophisticated challenges of the twenty-first century. Yet this apparent paradox constitutes the central thesis of this work. The Franciscan tradition was, in fact, one of the intellectual currents that made a decisive contribution to the emergence of modern rationality and Western scientific thought.

Many of the categories that made possible the development of experimental science, modern political philosophy, the market economy, and a new understanding of nature were first elaborated or significantly advanced within medieval Franciscan thought. Roger Bacon promoted the experimental method; William of Ockham made a decisive contribution to the development of a new epistemology and to the critique of absolute power, thereby opening the way to political modernity; Peter John Olivi developed an innovative understanding of economics and the market; Francesc Eiximenis reflected on political organization, popular sovereignty, and the social covenant; and Luca Pacioli systematized double-entry bookkeeping. Likewise, the Franciscan schools of Oxford and Paris—with masters such as Alexander of Hales, St. Bonaventure, John Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham—developed philosophical and theological categories that profoundly influenced the formation of modern culture.

Working Hypothesis

The hypothesis guiding this study may be formulated as follows: the Franciscan tradition is one of the historical sources of modern scientific and technological rationality and, precisely for that reason, it offers the spiritual, anthropological, and intellectual resources necessary to reorient that rationality toward the service of the human person and to prevent technology from becoming a new form of idolatry.

In this sense, one may speak of a genuine Franciscan paradox: having contributed to the emergence of fundamental aspects of modernity and, precisely because of that contribution, being uniquely positioned to offer an internal critique of its technocratic drift.

This perspective allows *Magnifica humanitas* to be read as a creative updating of insights deeply rooted in the Franciscan tradition. The opposition between Babel and Jerusalem, which structures the encyclical, expresses the enduring tension between two ways of understanding rationality: one oriented toward domination, self-sufficiency, and power; the other grounded in relationship, gratuitousness, fraternity, and communion.

The true alternative to the technocratic paradigm does not lie in rejecting scientific progress or technological development, but in integrating them within a broader vision of the human person and of humanity's relational vocation.

From this perspective, AI ceases to be merely a technological challenge and becomes, above all, an anthropological, ethical, and spiritual question. The decisive issue is no longer what machines are capable of doing, but how their immense potential can be placed at the service of human dignity, the common good, and universal fraternity.

Can a Robot Be Our Brother?

The title of this book—Brother Robot—must also be understood from this perspective. Deliberately provocative, the

expression does not seek to attribute personality, subjectivity, or intrinsic rights to AI, nor does it embrace the assumptions of transhumanism or posthumanism. AI can never be a “brother” or a “sister” in the proper sense, because fraternity belongs uniquely to persons and, in a broader sense, to the whole of creation willed by God.

In the *Canticum of the Creatures*, Saint Francis addresses the sun, the moon, water, fire, and even death as his brothers and sisters. He does so not because they share the same nature or dignity, but because he recognizes that they all proceed from the same Creator, are ordered toward God’s glory, and belong to the one great family of creation. Franciscan fraternity therefore does not arise from ontological equality but from the recognition of a common origin and a shared vocation to live in harmony. From this perspective, Francis replaces every claim to absolute dominion with an attitude of respect, gratuitousness, and fraternity toward the whole of creation. It is not a way of classifying creatures but a way of standing before them and relating to them.

The title “Brother Robot, therefore, does not describe the nature of the robot; rather, it challenges the way we position ourselves in relation to it. The decisive question is not what a robot is, but how we relate to it and what kind of relationship we establish with our own technological creations.¹ To speak of Brother Robot is to ask how AI can be integrated into a network of relationships ordered toward the service of life, while avoiding both the logic of domination and the technological idolatry that turns our own creations into absolutes.²

The robot, then, is not a brother in an ontological sense, but only in an analogical and metaphorical one, insofar as it

¹ On the distinction commonly made in philosophical discourse between technique and technology: FABRIS, *Etica per le tecnologie*, 13-16.

² “It is the world that is adapting to AI, not vice versa.” FLORIDI, *Ethics of AI*, 23. “This is precisely what Kant recommended we should never do: treat humans as only means rather than ends, [... becoming] the new means of digital production.” *Ibid.* 28.

reminds us that our relationship with technology should likewise be shaped by responsibility, service, and fraternity. The metaphor does not humanize machines; it humanizes the way we use them.

From this perspective, the real problem lies not in algorithms as such, but in the cultural, economic, political, and social practices we develop around them. We can engage AI according to a logic of domination, control, and technological idolatry, or according to a logic of fraternity, service, and the common good. Consequently, this book does not seek to develop an ontology of AI; rather, it proposes a Franciscan ethics of our relationship with technology, guided by the principle of fraternity.

The Organizing Principle: Fraternity

The entire book is structured around the principle of fraternity, which understands reality through the lenses of relationality, reciprocity, and the common good. This principle, extensively developed within the Franciscan intellectual tradition,³ was defined by Pope Francis in the following terms:

“Fraternity is both the complement and the fulfillment of the principle of solidarity. Whereas solidarity is the principle of social planning that enables those who are unequal to become equal, fraternity enables those who are equal to be different persons. Fraternity allows people who are equal in their essence, dignity, freedom, and fundamental rights to participate in the common good in different ways.”⁴

From this perspective, fraternity does not appear in this book as merely one ethical value among others. Rather, it

³ “La *fraternità* è un concetto tipicamente cristiano, ampiamente sviluppato dalla Scuola di pensiero francescana [...]. La parola *fratellanza* invece viene introdotta nel lessico popolare dopo la Rivoluzione Francese. Quindi sono due concetti diversi. Mentre la fraternità presuppone una comune origine, la fratellanza si basa piuttosto su un comune sentire.” ZAMAGNI, quoted in MAUSSIER, *Il mondo in divenire*, 301. “La fratellanza universale è la dimensione fondamentale del francescanesimo.” BERTIN, *Il Cantico delle Creature*, 20.

⁴ FRANCISCO, “Fraternity as the governing principle of the economic order,” 7.

functions as a genuine organizing principle, capable of reorienting scientific and technological rationality and offering an alternative to the technocratic paradigm. It thus becomes a criterion of discernment that permeates every sphere of human existence and provides the unifying thread of the entire work.

Applied to knowledge, fraternity invites us to understand truth as a shared and dialogical search rather than as the monopoly of those who possess information. In politics, it understands authority as service rather than domination. In economics, it restores the logic of gift and gratuitousness alongside efficiency.⁵ In culture, it privileges encounter over polarization and isolation. In ecology, it promotes an integral vision that restores harmony between the human person, creation, and technological development.

This perspective finds a particularly suggestive expression in what Pope Francis has called the three languages: the language of the mind (knowledge), the heart (affection), and the hands (action and service).⁶ Genuine wisdom arises from the harmonious integration of these three dimensions. AI may dramatically expand the capacities of the first, but by its very nature it lacks the other two. Fraternity reminds us that technological progress will become truly human only when it remains at the service of this unity of intelligence, affection, and responsible action.

Structure and Content

The structure of this book follows the progressive development of the hypothesis outlined above. The first part

⁵ “The principle of gratuitousness and the logic of gift as an expression of fraternity can and must find their place within normal economic activity.” (CV 36).

⁶ “It is to use the three languages: the language of the mind, the language of the heart and the language of the hands. All three together, harmoniously: what you think, you feel and you do. Your information descends to the heart, moves it and gets translated into action. And all this in a harmonious way: I think what I feel and do, I feel what I think and what I do, and I do what I think and what I feel.” Francisco, “Meeting with young people in Manila” (Jan. 18, 2015).

reconstructs the historical contribution of the Franciscan intellectual tradition to the emergence of modern scientific and technological rationality. Its purpose is not merely historiographical. Rather, it seeks to demonstrate that some of the anthropological, philosophical, and epistemological assumptions that made Western technological civilization possible are deeply rooted in medieval Franciscan thought.

The second part examines the subsequent evolution of this rationality until it culminates in what Pope Francis has called the technocratic paradigm—that is, the absolutization of technical rationality—which the encyclical *Magnifica humanitas* interprets in light of the symbolic tension between Babel and Jerusalem. Extraordinary scientific and technological advances have vastly expanded human possibilities, yet they can also lead to a profound anthropological crisis when efficiency replaces wisdom, calculation displaces discernment, and technical rationality claims to become the supreme criterion of truth, power, and social organization.

The following five parts show how the Franciscan tradition, precisely because it contributed to the birth of modern rationality, can today provide the criteria needed to reorient it through an authentic humanism of fraternity. This proposal unfolds successively in five fundamental areas: epistemology, politics, economics, culture, and ecology.

These are not five independent applications, but five complementary expressions of a single organizing principle: fraternity. The journey of this book thus moves from the historical roots of modernity toward a proposal for a humanistic reconstruction capable of directing scientific and technological development toward the service of the human person, fraternity, and the common good.

Toward a Humanistic Reconstruction of Modernity

This book is neither a nostalgic defense of the past nor a rejection of scientific modernity. Its purpose is to contribute to

a humanistic reconstruction of modern rationality, inspired by Saint Francis of Assisi, the Franciscan intellectual tradition, and the recent Magisterium of the Church. From this perspective, fraternity is not merely an ethical ideal added to others; it is the organizing principle capable of directing scientific and technological development toward genuinely human progress.

The true alternative to the technocratic paradigm does not consist in less technology, but in a richer anthropology; not in slowing scientific progress, but in reorienting it toward the service of the human person, fraternity, and the common good.

The opposition between Babel and Jerusalem, evoked by *Magnifica humanitas*, does not contrast two models of technological development, but rather two fundamentally different ways of understanding intelligence, power, and humanity's destiny: one oriented toward domination, self-sufficiency, and the idolatry of our own achievements; the other grounded in relationship, communion, and service.

Only when it remains at the service of human dignity, universal fraternity, and the common good does AI discover its true purpose and become capable of contributing to a civilization that is more just, more supportive, and more fraternal.

This is the conviction that inspires this book and the horizon toward which the pages that follow are directed.

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Index

ABBREVIATIONS.....	4
1. Biblical Books	4
2. Magisterium Sources.....	4
3. Writings of St. Francis	5
4. Franciscan Sources and Authors	6
5. Bibliographical and Common	7
INTRODUCTION	9
Magnifica Humanitas and the Franciscan Tradition	10
Working Hypothesis.....	11
Can a Robot Be Our Brother?	11
The Organizing Principle: Fraternity	13
Structure and Content.....	14
Toward a Humanistic Reconstruction of Modernity	15
PARTE I HISTORICAL ROOTS	17
1. THE FRANCISCAN CONTRIBUTION TO SCIENTIFIC AND	
 TECHNICAL RATIONALITY	17
1.1. Theological and Epistemological Foundations.....	19
1.1.1. Two Models: Intellectualism and Voluntarism	20
1.1.2. The Importance of Empirical Observation and Technology ...	23
1.2. The Empirical Turn and the Process of Rationalization	24
1.2.1. The Beginnings of Modern Experimental Science (Bacon)....	25
1.2.2. Foundations of Modern Epistemology (Ockham).....	28
1.2.3. Nature, Contingency, and the Limits of Technology	31
1.2.4. Rationalization of Knowledge (R. Bacon and L. Pacioli).....	32
1.3. Politics	34
1.3.1. Subjective Rights (Ockham)	34
1.3.2. Contingency of Political Order	36
1.3.3. Absolutism and Church–State Relations (Ockham).....	36
1.3.4. Constitutionalism, Popular Sovereignty, and the Social	
Contract (Eiximenis)	38
1.4. Economy	40
1.4.1. Economy as a Rational and Moral Sphere (Olivi)	40
1.4.2. Political Management of the Market on Rational Foundations	
(Eiximenis)	41
1.4.3. The Value of Money and Social Trust (Eiximenis and	
Alexander of Alessandria).....	42
1.4.4. Double-Entry Bookkeeping (Pacioli)	44
1.4.5. Technology and Proto-Science: Alchemy (13th–15th c.)	46

1.5. Culture	47
1.5.1. Foundations of Ethnographic Studies	48
1.5.1.1. The Philippines and Other Eastern Peoples.....	49
1.5.1.2. New Spain: Bernardino de Sahagún	50
1.5.2. Appreciation and Promotion of Local Cultures	52
1.5.3. Rationalization and Technique for Cultural Transformation..	53
1.5.4. Techniques of Cultural Integration	54
1.6. From the Birth of Modernity to the Age of AI.....	57
1.6.1. “They Bow Down to the Works of Their Hands” (Is 2:8)	58
1.6.2. The Need to Recover an Integral Humanistic Vision	59
1.7. Summarizing	60
PART II THE CRISIS OF TECHNOLOGICAL MODERNITY.....	63
2. <i>MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS</i>: FROM BABEL TO JERUSALEM	64
2.1. The New Babel	65
2.1.1. An Anthropological Crisis	66
2.1.2. The Logic of Technology as the Ultimate Criterion	67
2.2. From Babel to Jerusalem: Keys to Rebuilding Humanity..	68
2.2.1. Human Dignity as a Divine Gift	68
2.2.2. Safeguarding the Human in the Digital Age	69
2.3. Epistemology	70
2.3.1. The Crisis of Truth	70
2.3.2. Rediscovering Truth as a Common Good.....	71
2.4. Politics	72
2.4.1. Opaque Governance and Technical Power	72
2.4.2. Revitalizing Dialogue, Participatory Governance, and Multilateralism	73
2.5. Economy	74
2.5.1. Homo Oeconomicus and the Efficiency-Driven Economy	75
2.5.2. A Fraternal Economy and Dignified Work	76
2.6. Culture	77
2.6.1. Uniformity, Isolation, and the Loss of Empathy.....	78
2.6.2. Valuing Diversity and Human Limits	79
2.7. Ecology and Communication.....	80
2.7.1. Integral Ecology Extended to the Digital Sphere	80
2.7.2. An Ecology of Communication and Knowledge	81
2.8. Conclusion	82
3. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND FRANCISCAN HUMANISM OF FRATERNITY	84
3.1. Concept and Rapid Development.....	85
3.1.1. A Complex and Hard-to-Define Concept.....	85
3.1.2. A Qualitative Leap: Generative AI	87

3.2. Exciting Opportunities and Grave Risks.....	87
3.2.1. Autonomous Systems Acting Dangerously.....	88
3.2.2. Cognitive Pollution and Reality Alteration.....	90
3.2.3. Everything Reduced to Mere Data.....	92
3.2.4. Need for Ethics.....	93
3.3. Humanism of Fraternity as an Alternative	94
3.3.1. AI and Integral Development.....	95
3.3.2. Other Social Implications of the Use of AI.....	96
3.3.3. Unity in Diversity.....	96
3.4. Recapitulation	97
PART III EPISTEMOLOGY	99
4. TRUTH AND SAPIENTIAL DISCERNMENT	100
4.1. Living in Truth in the Age of AI.....	100
4.1.1. Truth in the Technical-Scientific Paradigm	101
4.1.1.1. The Need to Overcome This Concept of Truth	102
4.1.1.2. Is AI Truly Intelligent?.....	103
4.1.2. Today We Need to Live in Truth	104
4.1.2.1. Learning from the Past to Live in Truth	105
4.1.2.2. The Slow and Arduous Search for Truth.....	107
4.2. Wisdom and Discernment.....	108
4.2.1. Appearance of Wisdom vs. True Wisdom	109
4.2.1.1. AI Lacks the Wisdom to Make Thoughtful Decisions.....	110
4.2.1.2. Confusing the True with the Feasible.....	111
4.2.2. The Wisdom of the Heart	112
4.2.2.1. “It Is Not Many Words That Real Wisdom Proves”	112
4.2.2.2. “All I Know Is That I Know Nothing”	113
4.3. Truth and Wisdom in the Franciscan Tradition	114
4.3.1. Truth as Mystical Experience and Divine Gift.....	115
4.3.2. Unity of Faith–Reason: Truth Is Lived Through Love	116
4.3.3. Living in Truth Leads to Fraternal Unity	118
4.3.4. God’s Truth and Beauty Are Reflected in Creation.....	119
4.4. Summarizing	121
PART IV POLITICS	123
5. AUTHORITY, LEADERSHIP, AND MOTIVATIONS	124
5.1. Business Leadership	126
5.1.1. Transactional Leadership: Hierarchical and Efficiency- Oriented.....	127
5.1.2. Transformational Leadership	128
5.2. Extrinsic Motivations and Negative Anthropology	129
5.2.1. The Importance of Intrinsic Motivation.....	130
5.2.2. Positive Incentives (Bonuses)	130
5.2.3. Negative Incentives (Fines, Punishments)	132

5.3. Intrinsic Motivations	132
5.3.1. The Happiness Paradox	133
5.3.2. Rewards Instead of Incentives.....	134
5.4. A Christian and Franciscan Perspective on Business Leadership.....	135
5.4.1. Leadership and Public Happiness	135
5.4.2. Leadership in Pope Francis's Economic Thought.....	136
5.5. AI, Leadership, and Intrinsic Motivation.....	137
5.5.1. The Influence of AI on Business Leadership	138
5.5.2. AI and the Risk of Weakening Intrinsic Motivations	139
5.5.3. How to Enhance Intrinsic Motivation with AI.....	139
5.6. Other Opportunities and Challenges of AI	140
5.6.1. Algorithmic Bias	141
5.6.2. Lack of Transparency and Human Control	141
5.7. Summarizing	142
6. LEADERSHIP IN A SYNODAL CHURCH AND IN RELIGIOUS LIFE..	144
6.1. Three Types of Leadership	144
6.2. Leadership and Synodality in the Church.....	146
6.2.1. Synodality in the Second Vatican Council.....	147
6.2.2. Ecclesial Leadership in the Light of Recent Magisterium	148
6.2.3. Leadership According to the 2021–2024 Synod	149
6.3. Leadership in Religious Life	151
6.3.1. Leaders Must Not Focus on Keeping and Administering	151
6.3.2. They Must Promote Processes of Transformation	153
6.3.3. “Be Transformed by the Renewal of Your Mind” (Rm 12:2).....	154
6.3.4. More Than a Program, the Consecrated Need a Vision	154
6.4. Francis of Assisi, a Model of Inspirational Leadership.....	155
6.4.1. Listening to the Holy Spirit, True Minister General	156
6.4.2. Ministers and Servants	157
6.5. Summarizing	158
PART V ECONOMY	160
7. <i>OECONOMIA DEI</i> AND HUMAN ECONOMY	161
7.1. The Experience of Gratuitousness That Transformed Francis of Assisi.....	162
7.1.1. From Commercial Logic to the Logic of Gift	163
7.1.2. From the Invisible Hand to the Helping Hand	164
7.1.3. Voluntary Poverty to Imitate Christ and Become a Universal Brother	165
7.2. Economy of Salvation and Human Economy.....	167
7.2.1. God the Father as the Source of All Good	167
7.2.2. Christ Administers the Gift and Dispenses Grace.....	168

7.2.3. The Holy Spirit as the Principle of Communion.....	169
7.2.4. Overcoming the Dualism Between Spirit and Matter	170
7.3. The Market as a Relational Space.....	171
7.3.1. Rehabilitation of the Merchant Profession.....	172
7.3.2. The “Mounts of Piety”	173
7.3.3. Economic Value and Just Price.....	174
7.4. Work as Collaboration with God the Creator	175
7.4.1. Ordinary Means of Livelihood	175
7.4.2. Work as an Expression of Gratuitousness.....	176
7.5. The Common Good and the Circulation of Wealth	177
7.6. Toward an Ecocentric Economy	178
7.7. Relevance of the Franciscan Perspective in the Digital Age.....	178
7.7.1. The Crisis of Meaning in a Technified Economy	179
7.7.2. AI and the “Economy of Grace”	179
7.8. Summarizing	180
PART VI CULTURE.....	181
8. EDUCATION AND AI: THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY	182
8.1. AI and Education.....	183
8.1.1. AI Is Potentially Positive for Education.....	184
8.1.2. A Growing Impact.....	184
8.1.3. A New Way of Understanding the Educational Task	185
8.1.4. Risks and Challenges	185
8.1.5. Students, Teachers, and AI.....	187
8.2. Family Education.....	187
8.2.1. AI and Family Education	188
8.2.2. Contribution of AI to Family Education	189
8.2.3. The Role of Parents in Integrating AI	190
8.2.4. A Humanism of Fraternity Inspired by Francis of Assisi	192
8.3. Summarizing	192
9. FAMILY PRIVACY IN THE DIGITAL AGE	194
9.1. Family Privacy in the Codes of European Journalism.....	197
9.1.1. Collection, Publication, and Storage of Information.....	198
9.1.2. Protection of the Privacy of Children and Young People	199
9.2. AI and Privacy in the Family Sphere.....	201
9.2.1. The Paradox of the “Smart” Home	201
9.2.2. Assessment of Family Dynamics for Predictive Purposes....	201
9.2.3. Deepfakes and the Right to Be Forgotten	203
9.2.4. Family Disputes and Algorithmic Profile Generation.....	203
9.3. Challenges to the Privacy of Minors	204
9.3.1. Reidentification from Anonymous Data	204

9.3.2. Automated Profiles and Algorithmic Exposure of Minors ...	205
9.3.3. Minors Involved in Criminal Acts	206
9.4. Proposals for the Protection of Family Privacy	207
9.4.1. Improving Algorithms to Safeguard Children's Privacy	207
9.4.2. Mechanisms for Redress and Accountability.....	207
9.5. Summarizing	208
PART VII ECOLOGY.....	211
10. THE CANTICLE OF THE CREATURES AND SUSTAINABILITY:	
LISTENING TO THE CRY OF THE EARTH	211
10.1. Cry of the Earth: An Unsustainable Economic System ..	213
10.1.1. The Shift Toward Exponential Economic Growth.....	213
10.1.2. An Economy Driven by Desires Rather Than Real Needs .	215
10.1.3. Everything Subordinated to Material Progress	216
10.1.4. The Unsustainability of Endless Material Growth.....	217
10.1.5. AI and Sustainability	218
10.2. Everything Is Connected: Toward a Relational	
Paradigm.....	220
10.2.1. Promoting an Ecocentric Economy.....	221
10.2.2. Francis of Assisi, an Inspiration and Model.....	222
10.3. The Canticle of the Creatures: A Counterpoint to	
Materialistic Logic.....	223
10.3.1. Song of Love and Praise.....	225
10.3.2. A New Cosmic and Integral Harmony	227
10.3.3. Synthesis of Interior and Exterior Ecology	228
10.4. Summarizing	230
GENERAL CONCLUSION	234
From the Roots of Modernity to a Humanism of Fraternity	234
The Principal Contributions of This Research	235
Perspectives.....	236
An Open Invitation	236
BIBLIOGRAFIA	238
1. Ecclesiastical Magisterium.....	238
2. Writings of Saint Francis of Assisi	242
3. Franciscan Biographical Sources	243
4. Medieval Franciscan Authors.....	243
5. Books.....	245
6. Collaborations in Books	258
7. Articles and Internet Publications	260



About the Author

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About the Book

Generative artificial intelligence is transforming our world, offering extraordinary possibilities while also posing big challenges. To address them, this book brings into dialogue the Franciscan intellectual tradition, the encyclical *Magnifica humanitas*, and contemporary reflection on AI.

The first part shows how the Franciscan tradition contributed to the development of modern scientific and technological rationality. This historical process has generated great advances, but it has also led to the technocratic paradigm. In response to this challenge, the book proposes a humanism of fraternity, inspired by St. Francis, and applies it to five fundamental areas: epistemology, politics, economics, culture, and ecology

