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From Sacred Doctrine to Algorithmic Authority: Power, Knowledge, and Ethics in the Age of Ai

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Abstract

The nature of knowledge has undergone dramatic transformations in society across the ages. In the premodern periods, knowledge was dominated by the Catholic Church, which was the only epistemological authority in terms of knowledge and morality. However, with the scientific revolution, knowledge was transferred to science, which became the new beacon in terms of knowledge and objectivity in society.

In today's information technology age, there has arisen a new kind of power: the power of artificial intelligence and algorithms in general. These days, AI-programmed networks not only determine what we read, think, and hold dear but even mold our social behavior and public opinion in general to suit their own needs and requirements. The question arises: Are we in the process of activating a new kind of epistemic power in the modern world? Can technology follow in the tradition of the Church and science but exercise control over human action in general? The most pertinent question would be: Can AI follow ethics, or only mimic them as designed by flawed human programmers in AI technology in general?

The current paper explores the historical trajectory of power from religious to scientific rationality, and most recently to algorithmic governance. The current paper adopts a sociological and ethics-driven lens to examine the implications of AI on knowledge, power, and ethics in contemporary society. The current paper suggests that in the absence of ethics in AI, one would witness the attainment of invisibility in governance in place of religious dogma and ideologies in contemporary society.

Keywords: Algorithmic Power, Ai Ethics, Knowledge Authority, Modern Society, Sociological Change