

MA CONNEXION...LIBRE No 2

Hello, dear friends,

I need your advice. For my 85th birthday, I've been offered a replacement brain. I find it tempting because mine is starting to soften... but I have my doubts. Should I accept it? Could it be a poisoned gift?

Let me explain where I'm at with my thinking. First, where I'm coming from. That will give you an idea and you can let me know what you think if you feel like it.

Okay! In 2016, I was in Kenya, and everyone was telling me I needed a smartphone. I was hesitant, you know. A smartphone is tempting, but deep down I was afraid it would be smarter than me. Then I thought I could get the upper hand, but 10 years later, I'm not sure I've succeeded!



So you can see where I'm going with this. Artificial intelligence, or AI as we call it, poses the same challenge for me. The same problem of conscience, basically. And I'm not the only one asking myself this question. Listen to Joshua Bengio, our leading Canadian AI expert, and you'll get an idea. He, at least, has serious questions about generative AI, i.e., AI that goes beyond what its "master" asks of it.



“Install me now to use me as a backup brain.” That's the ad for an AI app that made me hesitate. That made me jump. That made me say, *“NO, I'm not installing you. You're going to be smarter than me. And I can't handle that! Not yet, anyway. When my 'backup brain' goes haywire, who's going to stop it?”*

To continue my reflection, I am reading a Vatican publication on the subject. Indeed, the Catholic Church,

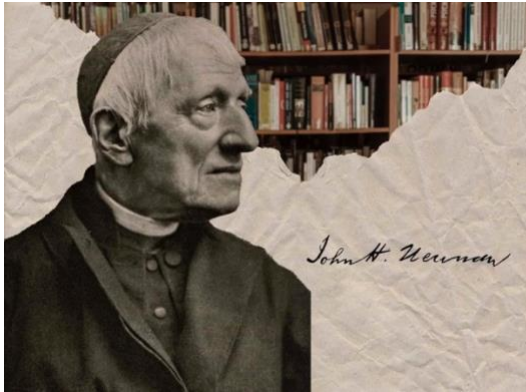
in “Antiqua et nova,” seems to understand me when it wonders whether generative AI is a superintelligence capable of surpassing human intellectual capacities. No, it answers, intelligence does not merely accumulate and sort data, it seeks truth, discerns good, contemplates beauty. For the moment, therefore (you may have other opinions), AI is “a tool and not a person.” Nor is it a spare brain. I plan to use it, but I will try to remain in control. Will I succeed? I'm not sure.

In any case, when it comes to my faith and spiritual life, I don't think I will be asking AI any questions. I say to myself: “Artificial intelligence, yes, but intelligent religion too.” So who can I turn to? I will ask my questions to the man whom Pope Leo has just proclaimed a Doctor of the Church, John Henry Newman. You don't know him? Neither do I, but I have two or three references that encourage me to get to know him. And to consult him. Not about AI, of course (he's too old!), but yes, about intelligent religion.

First, I have a distant memory of Newman, when our theology professor mentioned him in connection with the development of dogma in the Church. For Newman, this notion of dogma was important. It was not fixed but perfectible. Quite the opposite of dogmatism, in fact.

Newman, whose journey had taken him from Anglicanism to Catholicism, was asked to propose a toast to the Pope (it should be noted that he lived

in the 19th century, a time of inflated papal infallibility). Newman replied (check my reference on AI): "Of course, I will drink to the Pope's health. But first to conscience! Then to the Pope!"



In all conscience, therefore, I will take him as my spiritual guide for the Lenten journey that is beginning. I am not afraid that he would be rigorist, for he said: "Only those who have begun by fasting can truly feast. " This leads me to wish you a joyful Easter feast, an intelligent religion... and, if you're willing to take the risk, the support of a smartphone and artificial intelligence!

And don't forget to share your views on these topics or on the offer I've received for a replacement brain

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