A Confucian Response to *Magnifica Humanitas*: Safeguarding Humanity in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

儒家对《伟大的人性》的回应：在人工智能时代守护人性

Shoujin Zhou & Stephan Rothlin 周守晋，罗世范*

Abstract

Pope Leo XIV's 2026 encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* offers a profound diagnosis of the existential risks posed by Artificial Intelligence (AI), calling for a return to "Integral Humanism." This paper responds to the Pontiff's appeal by articulating a Confucian response. We argue that Confucianism does not merely echo the Encyclical's concerns but offers a distinct metaphysical and ethical framework to address the "technocratic paradigm." By reinterpreting the relationship between *Ren* (benevolence) and *Zhi* (wisdom), and proposing a governance model based on the "Common Good" (*Gong Shan*) and "Harmony" (*He*), this paper suggests that Confucian wisdom can help "disarm" the algorithms and ensure AI serves the flourishing of the human family.

摘要

教宗良十四世2026年发布的通谕《伟大的人性》对人工智能带来的生存风险做出了深刻诊断，呼吁回归“整体人文主义”。本文响应教宗的呼吁，提出一种儒家式的回应。我们认为，儒家思想不仅呼应了通谕所关切的问题，更提供了一套独特的形而上学伦理框架，以应对“技术官僚范式”。通过重新诠释“仁”(benevolence)-“智”(wisdom)关系，提出一种基于“共善”(common good)与“和谐”(harmony)的治理模式。本文指出，儒家智慧能够帮助化解算法的潜在威胁，确保人工智能真正服务于人类大家庭的繁荣与发展。

* 周守晋，北京大学。
Shoujin Zhou , Peking University
* 罗世范，澳门圣若瑟大学。
Stephan Rothlin , University of Saint Joseph, Macau

1. Introduction:
The New Rerum Novarum for the Digital Age

In 2026, Pope Leo XIV promulgated the Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas*, a document widely regarded as the *Rerum Novarum* of the digital age. Just as Leo XIII addressed the exploitation of the Industrial Revolution, Leo XIV addresses the "new things" (*res novae*) of the algorithmic era. The Encyclical warns that without a moral compass, AI risks becoming a "Tower of Babel"—a monument to human pride that leads to confusion and dehumanization (Leo XIV, 2026, n. 7).

The core thesis of *Magnifica Humanitas* is that technology must remain subordinate to the "grandeur of the human person" (Leo XIV, 2026, n. 90). The Pope proposes "Integral Humanism" as the antidote to the "technocratic paradigm," urging a shift from efficiency to solidarity, from data extraction to the common good.

This paper accepts the Pope's invitation to dialogue. We posit that Confucianism, with its millennia of reflection on the relationship between humanity (*Ren*) and technology/culture (*Wen*), offers a robust philosophical partner in this endeavor. We aim to move beyond a superficial comparison to a deep structural resonance, demonstrating how Confucian ethics can operationalize the Pope's vision of a "Civilization of Love" in the context of AI governance.

1. 引言：
数字时代的《新事通谕》

2026年，教宗良十四世颁布通谕《伟大的人性》，被广泛视为数字时代的《新事通谕》（译者：《新事通谕》是教宗良十三世于1891年发表的划时代通谕）。教宗良十三世针对的是工业革命时代的剥削现象，良十四世则聚焦于算法时代的"新事物"（res novae）。通谕警告，若缺乏道德指引，人工智能可能沦为"巴别塔"——一座象征人类傲慢并最终导致混乱与非人化的"丰碑"。（良十四世通谕第7号，下文简称通谕，括注号数）

通谕的核心论点是：技术必须始终服务于"人的崇高尊严"（通谕90）。教宗提出用"整体人文主义"作为对抗"技术官僚范式"的解药，敦促人们从追求效率转向倡导团结互助，从数据攫取转向关注共同福祉。

本文响应教宗的对话邀请。我们认为，儒家思想历经千年对人伦（仁）与技术/文化（文）关系的深刻反思，为这一场精神拯救提供了坚实的思想依据。我们的目标是超越表面的比较，深入探寻深层的结构共鸣，论证儒家伦理如何在人工智能治理的背景下，将教宗所构想的"爱的文明"愿景转化为可操作的具体实践。

2. The Fourfold Crisis: A Confucian Diagnosis

Magnifica Humanitas diagnoses four specific crises embedded in the rise of AI: human dignity, social justice, truth, and ecology. A Confucian reading deepens this diagnosis by locating the root cause in the separation of "The Way" (*Dao*) from technical skill.

2.1 The Crisis of Dignity: From "Relational Self" to Data Point

The Encyclical laments that AI reduces individuals to data points, simulating empathy without moral conscience (Leo XIV, 2026, n. 1). This aligns with the Confucian fear of becoming a "vessel" (*Qi*)—a mere tool—rather than a "Noble Person" (*Junzi*).

In Confucian anthropology, the self is not an isolated atom but a "relational node." As the *Analects* states, "To be human (*Ren*) is to love others" (12.22). Dignity arises from our capacity to cultivate relationships. AI, when it replaces human interaction with algorithmic mediation, attacks the very root of Confucian personhood. It creates a "disembodied" existence that contradicts the Confucian insistence that moral cultivation (*Xiushen*) must happen through concrete, embodied rituals (*Li*) in the real world.

2.2 Social Justice: The Confucian Critique of "Data Colonialism"

Leo XIV condemns "data colonialism," where tech giants exploit the vulnerable (Leo XIV, 2026, n. 5). This resonates with the Mencian critique of rulers who "lead beasts to devour men" by prioritizing profit over people's livelihood (Mencius, 1A:4).

2. 四重危机：一种儒家诊断

《伟大的人性》诊断了人工智能崛起过程中潜藏的四种危机：人类尊严、社会正义、真相与生态危机。在儒家视角看来，这一诊断可以归结为"道"与"技"的分离。

2.1 尊严危机：从"关系自我"到数据点

《通谕》痛惜人工智能将个体降格为数据点，模拟共情却无道德良知（通谕1）。这与儒家所担忧的人"沦为器"——即仅仅成为一种工具——而非"君子"的境况不谋而合。

在儒家的人类观中，自我并非孤立的原子，而是一个"关系节点"。正如《论语》所言："仁者爱人"（12.22）人的尊严源于我们培育关系的能力。当人工智能以算法中介取代人类互动时，它实际上触及了儒家人格的根本。这种替代制造了一种"去身体化"的存在状态，与儒家坚持的道德修养（修身）必须经由现实世界中具体的、具身化的礼仪（礼）来实现这一理念相悖。

2.2 社会正义：儒家对"数据殖民主义"的批判

《通谕》谴责"数据殖民主义"——即科技巨头对弱势群体的剥削（通谕5）。这一观点与孟子对统治者的批判不谋而合——那些统治者为了追求利益而置百姓生计于不顾，无异于"率兽食人"（孟子·梁惠王上）。

The Confucian response to Magnifica Humanitas is one of profound agreement and active cooperation. We agree that the "technocratic paradigm" is a new Tower of Babel. We agree that "Integral Humanism" is the only path forward.

儒家对《伟大的人性》的回应，是深切的认同与积极的合作。我们认同"技术官僚范式"是一座新的巴别塔，我们认同"整体人文主义"是唯一的出路。

Confucianism argues that the economy must be embedded in ethics. The *Great Learning* teaches that a state should not prioritize wealth but should prioritize righteousness (*Yi*). "If the ruler sets his heart on benevolence, the people will respond with benevolence" (Mencius, 1A:1). The current AI model, which extracts value from the many to enrich the few, violates the Confucian principle of "sharing wealth with the people" (*Yu Min Tong Zhi*).

2.3 Truth and the "Rectification of Names"

The Encyclical warns of deepfakes and the erosion of truth (Leo XIV, 2026, n. 132). Confucianism addresses this through the doctrine of the "Rectification of Names" (*Zheng Ming*). Confucius argued, "If names are not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things" (*Analects*, 13.3).

In the age of AI, "names" (labels, data categories, algorithmic identities) are often distorted. When an algorithm labels a human being as a "risk factor" or a "consumer profile" rather than a person, it violates *Zheng Ming*. A Confucian response demands that AI systems be designed to reflect the reality of human dignity, not to obscure it for the sake of manipulation.

儒家主张，经济必须植根于伦理。《大学》教导说，治理国家不应以财利为先，而应以义为先。"君仁莫不仁，君义莫不义，君正莫不正"（孟子·离娄上）。当下的人工智能模式从多数人身上攫取价值以肥少数人，违背了儒家"与民同之(利)"的原则。

2.3 真相与"正名"

《通谕》警告了深度伪造技术对真相的侵蚀(通谕132)。儒家思想则通过"正名"学说来应对这一问题。孔子指出："名不正，则言不顺；言不顺，则事不成。"(论语·子路)

在人工智能时代，"名称"（标签、数据类别、算法身份）往往被扭曲。当算法将人类个体标记为"风险因素"或"消费者画像"，而非作为具体的人时，便违背了正名的主张。儒家的回应要求，人工智能系统的设计应反映人的尊严这一现实，而非为了操控目的将其掩盖。

2.4 Ecology: The Unity of Heaven and Humanity

Finally, the Pope highlights the material cost of the digital world (Leo XIV, 2026, n. 101). This echoes the Confucian concept of the "Unity of Heaven and Humanity" (*Tian Ren He Yi*). In this view, humanity is not the conqueror of nature but its partner. The massive energy consumption of data centers represents a failure of "filial piety" toward the cosmos, disrupting the harmony that sustains life.

3. The Confucian Response: Re-grounding AI in Virtue

To answer the Pope's call for "Integral Humanism," we propose a Confucian framework centered on the dynamic balance between *Ren* (Benevolence) and *Zhi* (Wisdom/Technical Intelligence).

3.1 The "Ren-Zhi" Dialectic: Subordinating Instrumental Reason

A central theme in *Magnifica Humanitas* is the danger of intelligence without wisdom. The Encyclical notes that "intelligence, when absolutized, overshadows... affection, the will, commitment and relationships" (Leo XIV, 2026, n. 113).

Confucianism provides the precise vocabulary for this distinction. *Zhi* (often translated as wisdom, but here implying technical or cognitive intelligence) is the capacity to know and to act efficiently. *Ren* is the moral heart, the feeling of care for others.

Confucius warned: "If a man has wisdom (*Zhi*) sufficient to attain a goal, but lacks benevolence (*Ren*) to hold onto it, he will lose it" (*Analects*, 15.34).

2.4 生态：天人合一

最后，教宗高度强调了数字世界的物质代价(通谕101)。这与儒家“天人合一”的理念遥相呼应。在儒家观念中，人类并非自然的征服者，而是自然的伙伴。数据中心的巨大能源消耗，反映了对宇宙自然缺乏应有的感恩、敬畏与回馈，破坏了维系生命的和谐秩序。

3. 儒家的回应：为人工智能重建德性根基

为响应教宗关于“整体人文主义”的呼吁，我们提出一种以仁(仁爱)与智(智慧/技术智能)之间动态平衡为核心的儒家框架。

3.1 “仁—智”辩证：让工具理性从属于道德(价值)理性

《伟大的人性》的核心主题之一，是警惕“有智能而无智慧”的危险。通谕指出：“一旦智能被绝对化，它会遮蔽……情感、意志、承诺与关系。”（通谕113）

儒家思想为这种区分提供了精准的概念框架。“智”(此处指技术或认知上的聪慧)是指知悉并高效行动的能力；“仁”则是道德之心，即关怀他人的情感。

孔子告诫：“如果一个人拥有足以达成目标的‘智’，却缺乏仁爱来坚守它，他终将失去这个目标。”(《论语·卫灵公》)

By integrating the Confucian virtues of Ren (Benevolence), Yi (Righteousness), and Li (Propriety) into the governance of AI, we can help "disarm" the algorithm.

将儒学的仁、义、礼融入人工智能的治理，我们便能助力“解除算法的武装”。

- Zhi without Ren: This is the "barbaric growth" of AI—highly efficient but morally blind. It leads to the "Tower of Babel," where technical capability outpaces moral maturity.
- Ren without Zhi: This is impotent moralizing. We need the technical capacity (*Zhi*) to solve problems like disease and poverty.

The Synthesis: The Confucian response is that AI represents the ultimate extension of *Zhi*. To safeguard humanity, we must ensure that *Ren* acts as the "steering wheel" for the "engine" of AI. This aligns perfectly with the Pope's assertion that "human intelligence... must guide technical innovations" (Leo XIV, 2026, n. 97).

3.2 Defining the Confucian "Common Good" (*Gong Shan*)

The Encyclical places the "Common Good" at the center of AI governance (Leo XIV, 2026, n. 59). In Confucianism, the Common Good is not merely the sum of individual preferences (utilitarianism) but an organic state of "Great Harmony" (*Datong*).

- 无仁之智：这将导致人工智能的“野蛮生长”——高效但却“不讲武德”，从而导致“巴别塔”的出现，即技术能力把道德的成熟远远甩在身后。
- 有仁而无智：这是空洞的道德说教。我们需要“智”（技术能力）来解决诸如疾病、贫困等问题。

综合来看，儒家的回应是：人工智能是“智”的终极延伸。为守护人类福祉，我们必须确保“仁”成为人工智能这台“引擎”的“方向盘”。这一点与教宗的论断不谋而合：“人类智慧……必须引领技术创新”（通谕97）。

3.2 确定儒家“共善”观

通谕将“共善”（common good）置于人工智能治理的中心地位（通谕59）。在儒家思想中，“共善”并非仅仅是个人偏好的简单相加（功利主义），而是一种“大同”的有机状态。

We define the Confucian Common Good through a tripartite structure:

1. The Commonality of Virtue: Goodness is inherently relational. As Mencius argued, one cannot be truly virtuous in isolation. The "good" of an AI system must be measured by how it improves the moral quality of relationships (e.g., between doctor and patient, teacher and student), not just by speed or profit.
2. The Commonality of Well-being: The *Book of Rites* describes the Datong society: "The way is practiced, and the world is shared by all... The aged find their end, the strong their use, and the young their growth" (*Liji*, Liyun). This is a direct parallel to the Pope's vision of an economy that "values dignity" (Leo XIV, 2026, n. 157).
3. The Transformation from Virtue to Well-being: In Confucian thought, moral order leads to material flourishing. If AI is governed by *Ren* (benevolence), the result will naturally be *Datong* (universal well-being).

3.3 "Disarming" the Algorithm through *Li* (Ritual/Propriety)

The Pope calls for "disarming" AI to free it from the mentality of armed competition (Leo XIV, 2026, n. 110). Confucianism offers *Li* (Ritual/Propriety) as the mechanism for this disarmament.

Li is often misunderstood as mere ceremony. In reality, *Li* is the "grammar of social interaction" that prevents conflict. It creates "temporal autonomy"—spaces of rest and reverence (like the Sabbath) where the logic of efficiency is suspended.

我们通过下面的三元结构来界定儒家的共善思想：

1. 德性的共善：善的本质是关系性的。正如孟子所言，人不可能在孤立状态中真正实现德性。人工智能系统的"善"，必须以其能否提升人际关系中的道德品质（如医患关系、师生关系）来衡量，而不是仅仅以速度或利益为标准。
2. 福祉的共善：《礼记》中描述了大同社会："大道之行也，天下为公……使老有所终，壮有所用，幼有所长。"（礼运）这与教宗所倡导的"以尊严为价值尺度"的经济愿景直接呼应。（通谕157）
3. 从德性善向福祉善的转化：在儒家思想中，道德秩序引领物质繁荣。如果人工智能以仁（仁爱）为准则，其结果自然会是大同（普遍福祉）。

3.3 通过礼"解除"算法的武装

教宗呼吁"解除"人工智能武装，使其摆脱你死我活的残酷竞争思维模式（通谕110）。儒家思想则以"礼"作为实现"解除武装"的机制。

礼常常被误解为单纯的仪式。实际上，礼是社会交往的基本准则及其体现的过程性，它能避免冲突，营造出一种"时间上的自主性"——即修养身心与保持虔敬的内在空间（如安息日），在这些空间里，效率的逻辑得以暂时搁置。

- Application to AI: We need "Digital *Li*." These are protocols and norms that prioritize human dignity over algorithmic optimization. For example, a "Right to Disconnect" is a form of *Li* that protects the family from the intrusion of work algorithms. *Li* acts as a "firewall" against the "tyranny of real-time," preserving the silence necessary for the "rectification of the heart" (*Zheng Xin*).

4. Toward a "Civilization of Love": A Five-Tier Governance Framework

To move from theory to practice, we propose a Confucian-inspired governance framework that operationalizes the principles of *Magnifica Humanitas*.

- 应用于人工智能：我们需要一种“数字礼”。这是一种以人类尊严优先于算法最大化的准则与规范。例如，“断联权”便是“礼”的一种体现，它能保护家庭免受工作算法的侵扰。“礼”犹如一道“防火墙”，抵御着“实时(在线)的暴政”，从而守护“正心”(正心诚意)所必需的内在宁静。

4. 走向“爱的文明”：五级治理框架

为了将理论付诸实践，我们提出了一种以儒家思想为灵感的治理框架，旨在将《伟大的人性》所提出的原则加以具体化和可操作化。

Governance Level	Confucian Principle	Application to AI Governance
1. Ontological	Tian Ren He Yi (Unity of Heaven & Humanity)	AI development must respect ecological limits. Algorithms should be "green by design," minimizing energy consumption to honour the "common home."
2. Political	Min Ben (People as the Root)	Data governance must be democratic. Data is a "common good" (Leo XIV, 2026, n. 67), not private property. Platforms must serve the people, not the reverse.
3. Social	He Er Bu Tong (Harmony in Diversity)	Algorithms must not create echo chambers. They should be designed to expose users to diverse viewpoints, fostering the Confucian ideal of "harmonizing without conforming."
4. Corporate	Yi Sheng Li (Righteousness Generates Profit)	Businesses must adopt "Confucian Entrepreneurship." Profit is valid only if it contributes to social stability. AI companies must be audited not just on financials, but on their "Social Virtue."
5. Personal	Shu (Reciprocity/Empathy)	The "Golden Rule" applied to code. "Do not impose on users what you would not want for yourself." This counters the "attention economy" that exploits human weakness.

治理层级	儒家原则	治理应用
1. 本体论	天人合一	AI 的发展必须尊重生态边界，算法应当遵循“绿色设计原则”，最大限度降低能耗，以守护我们共同的家园。
2. 政治	以民为本	数据治理必须民主化。数据具有“共善”属性(通谕 67)，绝非私有财产。平台必须服务于人民，而非相反。
3. 社会	和而不同	算法不能制造信息茧房，设计应使用户接触多元观点，贯彻儒家“和而不同”的思想理念。
4. 企业	义利相济	企业应践行儒家企业家精神。唯有促进社会稳定的利润方为正当。AI 企业不仅要接受财务审计，还应接受社会道德审计。
5. 个人	忠恕之道	算法代码应遵循“黄金法则”：己所不欲，勿施于人(用户)，自觉抵制利用人性弱点的“注意力经济”。

4.1 The Role of the “Junzi” (Noble Person) in Tech

The Encyclical calls for leaders with moral courage. Confucianism emphasizes the role of the *Junzi* (Noble Person). In the tech industry, this means cultivating “Tech-JUNZI”—engineers and executives who view their work as a moral vocation, not just a job. They are the ones who will “rebuild the walls of Jerusalem” (Leo XIV, 2026, n. 8) by coding ethical constraints into the very architecture of AI.

4.2 Education: The Root of the Solution

Both the Pope and Confucius agree that the solution lies in education. *Magnifica Humanitas* calls for an “educational alliance” (Leo XIV, 2026, n. 139). Confucianism adds that this education must be holistic—cultivating the “Six Arts” (ritual, music, archery, charioteering, calligraphy, mathematics).

Modern AI education should not just teach coding (Mathematics) but must heavily emphasize Ethics and Philosophy (Ritual/Music). We need to produce “whole persons” who can judge whether an algorithm is *beautiful* (good for society) as well as *efficient*.

4.1“君子”在科技中的角色

通谕呼吁领导者具备道德勇气。儒家思想尤为强调“君子”的作用。在科技行业，这意味着要培养“科技君子”——即将自身工作视为道德使命而非仅仅是一份职业的工程师与管理者。正是他们，通过将伦理约束融入人工智能的底层架构，来“重建耶路撒冷的城墙”(通谕8，译者注：“重建耶路撒冷的城墙”典故出自《尼希米记》(圣经-旧约)，在通谕中与象征人类傲慢的″巴别塔″相对，喻指以谦卑与道德勇气重建伦理秩序)。

4.2 教育：解决方案的根源

教宗与孔子一致认为，出路在于教育。《伟大的人性》呼吁建立“教育联盟”(通谕139)。儒家则进一步指出，这种教育必须是整全的——即涵养“六艺”(礼、乐、射、御、书、数)。

现代AI教育不应仅教授编程(“数”)，还必须高度重视伦理与哲学(“礼”“乐”)。我们需要培养的是“全人”——既能判断算法是否高效，也能判断其是否美好(即是否有益于社会)。

5. Conclusion: Rebuilding Jerusalem Together

Pope Leo XIV ends his Encyclical with the image of Nehemiah rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, stone by stone (Leo XIV, 2026, n. 241). This is a call to action.

The Confucian response to *Magnifica Humanitas* is one of profound agreement and active cooperation. We agree that the "technocratic paradigm" is a new Tower of Babel. We agree that "Integral Humanism" is the only path forward.

By integrating the Confucian virtues of *Ren* (Benevolence), *Yi* (Righteousness), and *Li* (Propriety) into the governance of AI, we can help "disarm" the algorithm. We can ensure that the "Common Good" is not just a slogan, but a structural reality of the digital age.

As the *Book of Changes (I Ching)* says, "The great man is he who advances with the times, but whose virtue remains constant." Let us advance with the times of AI, but let us hold fast to the constant virtue of our shared humanity. In doing so, we answer the Pope's call to build a civilization where technology serves the "Civilization of Love," ensuring that in the age of the machine, the human heart remains the master of its destiny.

5. 结论：携手重建耶路撒冷

教宗良十四世以尼希米一砖一石重建耶路撒冷城墙的意象作结（通谕241），这是行动的号召。儒家对《伟大的人性》的回应，是深切的认同与积极合作；我们认同“技术官僚范式”是一座新的巴别塔，我们认同“整体人文主义”是唯一的前行之路。

通过将儒家的仁、义、礼美德融入人工智能治理，能够助益于化解算法的潜在风险，能够确保“共善”不仅仅是一句口号，而是数字时代的一种结构性现实。

正如《易经》所言，伟大的人能因时而进，而其德行恒常（乾・文言）。让我们紧跟人工智能的时代潮流，同时坚守人类共有的永恒美德。唯有如此，我们才能呼应教宗的号召，共同建设一个科技服务于“爱的文明”的新世界，确保在机器时代，人类的心灵始终掌握自身命运的主宰权。

References 参考资料

- Ames, R. T., & Rosemont, H. (1998). *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation.* Ballantine Books.
- Chan, W. T. (1963). *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton University Press.
- Lau, D. C. (1979). *Confucius: The Analects (Lun Yü)*. Penguin Classics.
- Leo XIII. (1891). *Rerum Novarum*. Vatican Press.
- Leo XIV. (2026). *Magnifica Humanitas*. Vatican Press.
- Legge, J. (1885). *The Li Ki (Book of Rites)*. Clarendon Press.
- Mencius. (n.d.). *The Works of Mencius*. (J. Legge, Trans.).
- Wilhelm, R., & Baynes, C. F. (1950). *The I Ching, or Book of Changes*. Princeton University Press.
- Yao, X. (2000). *An Introduction to Confucianism*. Cambridge University Press.