



Indigenous ethics and artificial intelligence

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Abstract

This article examines Indigenous ethics of reciprocity as a normative and epistemological framework that challenges Western linear conceptions of time, economy, and social relations. Drawing from Marcel Mauss's theory of the gift and Andean traditions, reciprocity is conceived not as mere exchange but as a vital principle of survival that structures human, communal, and cosmic relations. The acts of giving, receiving, and returning are understood as sacred obligations that guarantee continuity, balance, and mutual recognition across generations. Andean temporality, cyclical and rooted in natural and agricultural rhythms, situates reciprocity beyond economic utility and embeds it within cultural and cosmological orders. Historical encounters, such as colonial Christianity, illustrate the adaptive and inclusive nature of reciprocity, which facilitated intercultural coexistence and survival. Within this horizon, wealth is defined as relational abundance, measured by kinship networks and the capacity to fulfill communal obligations. Practices such as *ayni* (reciprocal labor), *minka* (collective work), and *randi-randi* (generalized reciprocity) embody this ethical system. Reciprocity thus emerges as both epistemology and moral system: a categorical imperative that governs enduring relations among humans, nature, and the cosmos. Returning a gift is not optional but a universal moral principle grounded in respect for Indigenous law, often misunderstood within Western frameworks. Despite growing critiques of Artificial Intelligence, non-Western epistemologies remain excluded. AI redefines truth as technical construction, suppressing subjectivity, dissent, and plurality, while fostering algorithmic obedience that undermines political imagination. The ethics of reciprocity offers a counterpoint, demanding the recovery of relational responsibility as a moral and political principle to guide the development of more just, situated, and human technologies.

Keywords Indigenous ethics · Reciprocity · Artificial intelligence

1 Introduction

Stochastic generative Artificial Intelligence systems such as ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, Grok, Deepseek and others have emerged in contemporary digital environments as innovative solutions. These solutions are based on linguistic models trained from large amounts of data. From a philosophical point of view, artificial intelligence does not incorporate ethical principles from the outset but claims to be built according to a functional logic oriented towards

efficiency, textual coherence and predictability of responses ('principles' shared by all other Artificial Intelligences mentioned above). However, the discourses of the companies creating and promoting these technologies encourage their alignment with values such as equity, inclusion and respect for diversity. This creates ambiguity between what is the technical structure of an artificial intelligence system and the normative aspirations of its creators.

On the other hand, we address indigenous ethics, which indicates how one should live and relate in a community setting as seen from the realm of moral philosophy. This contrasts with a stochastic system such as those of artificial intelligence, which describes how events might occur based on probabilities, without apparent value judgements and within the realm of science. Indigenous ethics can be explicitly understood as a normative framework rooted in reciprocity, community solidarity, and balance with nature and the cosmos. It is not an abstract philosophical category

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but a lived moral horizon that exists in the daily practices of Indigenous peoples of the Andes and other regions. It is embodied in traditions such as *ayni* (reciprocal labor exchange), *minka* (collective work for the community), and *randi-randi* (generalized reciprocity), and it is grounded in the Andean principle of *sumak kawsay* or *buen vivir* (good living). This framework conceives of wealth not merely as material possession but as relational richness based on kinship and community bonds, where abundance arises only when what exists is shared. Thus, Indigenous ethics is in concrete historical and cultural practices, not in speculative philosophy alone.

This indigenous worldview, based on reciprocity, has not been considered in these debates about Artificial Intelligence principles, even though this ethic can offer a deeply relational understanding of the world in which we live and relate. In contrast to the Kantian moral rationalism or technical utilitarianism that underpins much algorithmic design, reciprocity implies an ethic of mutual care, symmetry in human and non-human relations, and structural interdependence between individuals, community and nature. This approach is not based on efficiency or profit maximisation, but on balance, collective memory and the search for a good life (*sumak kawsay*).

If we look at these two visions, as authors such as Éric Sadin have already warned, artificial intelligence tends to redefine the notion of truth in terms of technical-computational parameters that reduce human experience to a probabilistic calculation. The result of this separation is a form of radical anti-humanism in which technological systems not only supplement human decision-making, but replace it, thus reconfiguring human autonomy. Artificial intelligence, in our view, becomes an algorithmic authority that imposes its own criteria on reality without taking into account alternative forms of knowledge and intensifying a potential colonising power. This would ratify what Miguel Abensour maintains, where he expresses that politics is diluted when freedom and disobedience are replaced by the algorithmic management of behaviour.

Despite the contributions of authors such as Tsamados on fairness, transparency and algorithmic traceability, the possibility of integrating ethical frameworks such as reciprocity remains unaddressed. It is therefore essential to explore the ambiguity of the current ethical and epistemic status of artificial intelligence, particularly regarding its ontological foundations and the exclusion of non-Western worldviews. This leads us to believe that ethical ambiguity in non-explicit Artificial Intelligence algorithms tends to produce unjust outcomes that may amplify existing inequalities, disproportionately affecting vulnerable or historically marginalised communities, such as indigenous peoples.

This article therefore proposes to rethink the ethical foundations of artificial intelligences from an intercultural perspective that recognises and values the philosophy of reciprocity as a critical alternative. It proposes to rethink the continued delegation of moral judgement to automated systems characterised by limited traceability. It proposes to advocate the recovery of the principle of relational responsibility as the basis for a truly inclusive, context-aware and human-centred technological future.

2 Indigenous worldview and reciprocity

The use value of goods/objects that are part of reciprocity generates—according to Marcel Mauss [8]—a network of relationships articulated among individuals based on three premises: i) a gift given vs. a gift received, obligatorily, as a vehicle of interrelation, ii) a normative framework that regulates this exchange, establishes certain limits, and adjusts a sort of behavioral balance—symmetry—an agreement between equals, and an “eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth” in terms of punishment/sanction/vengeance; and iii) the strength of the community as a way of generating prohibitions and prescriptions. A friendship would be built on reciprocity from a Western point of view, yet the act of exchanging a gift implies not only the pleasure of giving and receiving—as seen in Europe—but survival itself from the Indigenous worldview.

The Indigenous worldview assumes living toward the future without ceasing to look at the past, always looking back—a kind of nostalgia. The future is what cannot be seen; it means living with memory, constructing becoming. It is not a race, not a competition, not the dilemma of an economic decision. It is dedicating time to tranquility, stillness, good living, nature, technology, and compassion—without ceasing to be attractive—in which nostalgia conveys the need to understand and express that “...unhappiness functions as a stimulant for consumption: buying is a suspension of anguish, an antidote to loneliness...” Berardi [3].

As a result of the conquest, Indigenous peoples hid their own cults behind Christian traditions. The *huaca* (divinity) does not need to justify its existence nor reject that of Jesus Christ or the Catholic God. In the encounter with the Spaniards, one observes a trait inherent to reciprocity: inclusivity by the Indigenous toward the Spanish, as a sort of need for balance. This is not pure romanticism or indigenism, but rather a recognition of Indigenous reciprocity and the need for a forced intercultural dialogue.

Thus, attributing an ethical qualification to science and technology—even as “good” or “neutral”—would be understandable within the spirit of whiteness, as referenced by Echeverría [4], fitting perfectly within the Protestant ethic.

However, it would be naïve to categorize it as a global, uniform, unanimous explanation of science as good-neutral if there persists the Western cultural preconception of being the sole culture with the virtue of managing it—this time to the detriment of “pariah” or “impure” cultures, inappropriate of a janissary.

An analysis from a cultural worldview could begin by understanding how the West itself may be interculturalized—decolonized—or how one might “re-extirpate idolatries” or “de-philosophize philosophy,” beyond valuing theory or technique as overlapping concepts.

Time in Andean philosophy, for instance, is not conceived as linear but cyclical, based on the rhythms of nature—such as seasons, moon phases, or agricultural cycles. This perception of time is also connected with the idea that past events can repeat or be revived in the present, and that life is a continuous cycle of death and rebirth.

From an educational perspective that acknowledges a multicultural society—civilization vs. barbarism for the Enlightenment—and multilingual reality, the goal goes beyond knowing the ancestral values of Indigenous peoples and later Western science. Regardless of whether the process, from a Western worldview, seems lengthy, from an Indigenous worldview, history unfolds roughly like this:



In the graph above,¹ the x-axis represents the factor of time in the Andean cosmos, and the y-axis the factor of (+) good living / (–) bad living. Each circular wave reflects a period of approximately 500 years. From the perspective of Indigenous peoples, the year 1492 marked the end of a state of good living, while 1992 signified the end of that cycle and the return to good living (sumak kawsay in Kichwa as a horizon of meaning). The cycle repeats. Meanwhile, the Kichwa translation of “bad living” is *mana allin kawsay*.²

¹ Chart prepared from the class notes of the course Epistemology of the Social Sciences. Professor: Nelson Reascos Vallejo. Sociology and International Relations Program. Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador. 1996–1997.

² “Sin embargo, no hay nada evidente en afirmar que los indígenas tienen filosofía y, para muchos filósofos, la idea de una filosofía indígena o de un pensamiento filosófico indígena no se puede realmente defender. Primero, Walter J. Ong en su estudio sobre la escritura y la oralidad afirma que la filosofía depende de la escritura y que “logic itself emerges from the technology of writing” (Ong 172). Esta afirmación, que encontramos muy drástica, quisiera decir que los indígenas no tienen filosofía, ni siquiera una lógica propia, porque no tengan escrituras fonográficas.” in Beauclair, N. (2006).

In contrast, for Estermann [6], Andean philosophy is understood as *Pachasophy*—objectified, reified knowledge. In relation to the

Epistemologically, this is also a joyful proposal, insofar as it is intercultural, because it invites us to interrelate with “the other.” It advocates for intercultural coexistence based on joy and mutual benefit, rather than a mere coexistence tolerated or imposed by fear and force. It emphasizes that a truly harmonious society cannot be based on creating internal borders—such as streets, neighborhoods, or zones that separate people. Instead, global peace depends on reciprocity and the integration of peoples, fostering positive development for all.

It must be understood as joyful—without simulations or hesitations—in this permanent conflict where new singularities emerge (Baudrillard 2000), in a dispute that is not new in Europe and America. And it is not new because history repeats itself, history retracts with atypical irrationalities typical of an epochal change. Conservatism refuses—explicitly and directly—to yield, since it learned, saw, and felt that an alternative and viable mode of development was possible (Latin America, 2005–2015). Today, it will likely radicalize its stance in the face of any potential praise of disobedience, extending its reflection on submission to authority as an instrument of barbarism in contemporary conflicts. This manifests, equally in a singular way, as

helplessness of Indigenous philosophical thought, it is relevant to recall the writings of Ginés de Sepúlveda [7].... “Y cuando llegaba a morir el padre, todo su patrimonio, si el rey no determinaba otra cosa, pasaba entero al hijo mayor, por lo cual era preciso que muchos pereziesen de hambre ó se vieses forzados á una servidumbre todavía más dura, puesto que acudían á los reyezuelos y les pedían un campo con la condición no sólo de pagar un canon anual, sino de obligarse ellos mismos al trabajo de esclavos cuando fuera preciso. Y si este modo de república servil y bárbara no hubiese sido acomodado á su índole y naturaleza, fácil les hubiera sido, no siendo la monarquía hereditaria, aprovechar la muerte de un rey para obtener un estado más libre y más favorable á sus intereses, y al dejar de hacerlo, bien declaraban con esto haber nacido para la servidumbre y no para la vida civil y liberal. Por tanto si quieres reducirlos, no digo á nuestra dominación, sino á una servidumbre un poco más blanda, no les ha de ser muy gravoso el mudar de señores, y en vez de los que tenían, bárbaros, impíos é inhumanos, aceptar á los cristianos, cultivadores de las virtudes humanas y de la verdadera religión. Tales son en suma la índole y costumbres de estos hombrecillos tan bárbaros, incultos é inhumanos, y sabemos que así eran antes de la venida de los españoles; y eso que todavía no hemos hablado de su impia religión y de los nefandos sacrificios en que veneran como Dios al demonio, á quien no creían tributar ofrenda mejor que corazones humanos...” Ginés de Sepúlveda [7], pp.: 315 “...Reduciendo, pues, á breve suma toda la doctrina que has expuesto, cuatro son las causas en que fundas la justicia de la guerra hecha por los españoles á los bárbaros. La primera es que siendo por naturaleza siervos los hombres bárbaros, incultos é inhumanos, se niegan á admitir la dominación de los que son más prudentes, poderosos y perfectos que ellos; dominación que les traería grandísimas utilidades, siendo además cosa justa, por derecho natural, que la materia obedezca á la forma, el cuerpo al alma, el apetito á la razón, los brutos al hombre, la mujer al marido, los hijos al padre, lo imperfecto á lo perfecto, lo peor á lo mejor, para bien universal de todas las cosas. Este es el orden natural que la ley divina y eterna manda observar siempre...” Ginés de Sepúlveda [7], pp.:349.

the unmasking of conservative right-wing groups, increasingly expressed openly in their reactionary and dogmatic pathology, suffering and displaying a highly aggressive and primitively novel racism Reascos [10].

Hence, as a first step, it requires placing oneself in the position of “the other”: if I give, I must receive—something religion does not allow, since it only imposes through faith per se.

A rich or apu is understood as a person considered wealthy by their community—not only those who possess material wealth but also those with an extensive kinship network—compadrazgo ties—upon which they can rely.

A man with material wealth but lacking the necessary relatives to carry out civic and ritual obligations is wakcha, poor or orphan (Isbell, B. 1972, in Mayer, E. 1974).

Benjamin Orlove identifies three particularly relevant forms of reciprocity in rural Andean areas, occurring among people of all ages—even the elderly—mainly: i) Ayni; ii) Minka; and iii) Generalized Reciprocity (Randi–Randi).

For wealth to flourish, for abundance to exist, in the Indigenous worldview, what exists must be shared. If there is giving and receiving, the circulation of wealth produces abundance—today.

In short, reciprocity is a relationship of permanent mutual help among individuals, with nature, and with the cosmos. And the ethics of reciprocity would be the set of rules that govern these relationships of permanent mutual help among individuals, with nature, and with the cosmos.

Kant's moral philosophy (1781) focuses on reason and duty, not on the consequences of actions. One of the key concepts of Kantian ethics is that of the “good will”, which acts out of duty and not out of personal inclination or interest.

Kantian ethics is thus a universalist ethics that does not depend on circumstances or individual interests. For Kant, morality is a matter of principle and duty, not of expediency or the calculation of consequences; in this sense, it is disinterested.

The good will acts out of duty, i.e. out of respect for the moral law, and not out of personal inclination or interest. Kant distinguishes between acting ‘according to duty’ and acting ‘out of duty’. To act according to duty is to act according to the moral law, but out of selfish or self-interested motives.

To act out of duty is to act out of respect for the moral law, regardless of personal consequences or benefits. Only actions done out of duty have moral value. Actions done out of inclination or self-interest may be morally neutral or even bad, even if their consequences are good. Thus, stochastic versions of artificial intelligence are presented as self-interested.

However, reciprocity is not barter; it is not exchange. Michaux [9] argues that reciprocity is a relation in which a third party appears after the giving and receiving, which is the reproduction of the gift/giving.

Reciprocity is a sphere parallel to the market, alternative or outside of capital, complementary and interdependent, spontaneous, yet a kind of dynamic that goes beyond experience. It is symbolic because it transcends a simple buying and selling transaction or a simple exchange and therefore transcends economic relations.

According to Marcel Mauss [8], the use value of the goods or objects that are part of reciprocity generates a network of relationships that are articulated with individuals based on three premises: i) a gift given vs. a gift obligatorily received as a vehicle of interrelation, ii) a set of norms that regulate this exchange and establish certain limits and adjust a kind of behavioural balance—symmetry—treatment between equals, and a law of talion in terms of punishment, sanction, revenge; and, iii) the force of the community as a way of generating prohibitions and prescriptions.

This condition is fulfilled from Polynesia to the Latin American Andes. A relationship of friendship would be built based on reciprocity, as seen from the West, but the act of exchanging a gift implies not only the pleasure of exchanging something, as seen from Europe, but also survival itself, from the indigenous worldview.

Indigenous ethics are made more complex by orality as a quality of the indigenous worldview, communication is agrapha (without graphics) so the written verbal tradition is inherited from the West—see Beauclair [2] (2006)—, with the limitation that, as regards the use of language, it is an analysis from the signifier of the signifier of the meaning, hence it must be conceived as a further and therefore riskier view. And it is riskier because the indigenous proposal—original peoples—ancestral peoples—assumes, as a maxim, the protection of life, which for the West today could well be the highest value of democracy, the truth.

The Andean indigenous worldview (sumak kawsay), for example, assumes living toward the future without ceasing to look to the past. In this sense, what we know of artificial intelligence is the same, without ceasing to reflect on the past, it offers the notion of technical innovation, with a look back. The indigenous Andean cosmovision as a kind of nostalgia for the past—the future is what cannot be seen, it is living with memory, building the future—which is not a race, not a competition, not the dilemma of an economic decision; Yes, it is dedicating time to tranquility, to stillness, to the good life, to nature, to technology and to compassion, also, while not ceasing to be attractive, in that it is transmitted from nostalgia the need to understand and transmit that “...unhappiness works as a stimulant of consumption:

buying is a suspension of anguish, an antidote to loneliness..." Berardi [3]: 25.

The indigenous cosmovision is timeless, not because it does not change, on the contrary, but because it remains current with its unique characteristics. Time and space dissolve into themselves, just as the past, present, and future are in consonance with the same space. *"What the Inca receives is not economically equivalent to what he gives, but it is symbolic. To understand how reciprocity is distorted and how it is used as a mechanism for mobilizing labor and for political domination by the State, it is necessary to remember that the Inca Empire was formed through military conquests... This situation was violently altered by the Conquest... With the disappearance of the Inca State, state redistribution was eliminated, reciprocity was replaced by the colonial exploitation of the Indians..."* Alberti & Mayer [1], pp.19.

As a result of the conquest, the indigenous people hid their own cults behind Christian traditions; the huaca (divinity) does not have to justify its existence or reject that of Jesus Christ or the Catholic God. In the encounter with the Spanish, one notices a characteristic of reciprocity: the inclusiveness of the indigenous people toward the Spanish, as a kind of need for balance. This is not romanticism or pure indigenism, but rather the recognition of indigenous reciprocity and the need for a (forced) intercultural dialogue.

Thus, giving an ethical qualification to science-technology even as "good" or "neutral" would be very understandable from the spirit of whiteness to which Echeverría, [5] refers, and that discourse fits perfectly into the Protestant ethic; however, it would be foolish to categorize it as a global -uniform- and -unanimous- explanation from modernity to science as good-neutral if there is a cultural preconception of the West as the owner of that capacity of being a unique culture with the virtue of managing it, to the detriment, this time, of pariah or non-pure cultures, unbecoming of a Janissary. It therefore requires, as a first step, putting oneself in the place of "the other," and if I contribute, I must receive, something that religion and technology do nothing but impose by faith or dogma, per se. Analysis from a cultural worldview could begin by understanding how the West can be interculturalized—decolonized, or re-extirpated from idolatry, or dephilosophized—beyond valuing theory or technology as superimposed concepts.

In this sense, reciprocity can well be conceived from the West as a progressive proposal, although a very insufficient one for defining it. The state must be conceived—tipipakuy (the central activity of the corn harvest), allapakuy (harvest assistance), and rutupakuy (peeling the harvest)—with traditional norms that regulate the redistribution and flow of surpluses, from those with excess to those who suffer scarcity—asymmetric reciprocity.

Reciprocity, ultimately, is a relationship of permanent mutual aid between individuals, with nature and the cosmos... and the ethics of reciprocity would be the set of rules that govern these relationships of permanent mutual aid between individuals, with nature and the cosmos.

It refers not only to a way of life or a communal morality, but to a comprehensive epistemology that challenges dominant logics in the organization of knowledge, power, and technology. To better understand this statement, it is necessary to unpack its depth in contrast to Western normative ethics which, although universal in their intention, are culturally partial in their construction.

Whereas Kantian ethics is based on the categorical imperative and the rational autonomy of the individual subject, Indigenous ethics is built on a network of bonds, duties, and collective affections. Instead of abstract moral duty, the Indigenous worldview understands right action as that which maintains balance with others, with the community, with ancestors, with the land, with animals, and with the cosmos. This relational dimension completely transforms the foundations of moral judgment.

Reciprocity is not a mere economic practice or contractual exchange. It is a living, symbolic, and integral practice. It does not respond to the logic of equivalence or efficiency, but to the logic of connection, care, and continuity. Thus, giving, receiving, and returning are not isolated moments of a transaction, but sacred acts that generate and sustain community. Every object, every act, every word imbued with reciprocity carries a history, a memory, and an implicit commitment.

From this perspective, reciprocity is not a means to an end, but an end. It is not negotiated to maximize personal benefit, but to preserve the balance of collective life. This principle is deeply rooted in multiple practices of Indigenous peoples, from *minga* and *ayni* systems to communal festivals and planting rituals. Even traditional Indigenous political structures, such as *cabildos* or rotating systems of authority, are shaped by the principle of reciprocity as a normative and ethical order.

Reciprocity is not a passive category. It demands memory, responsibility, and recognition. It is not only about giving, but about knowing when, how, to whom, and why one gives. This knowledge is mediated by orality, shared experience, stories, and the marks that history leaves on the collective body. Unlike the Western social contract, which presumes isolated individuals who cede rights to form a state, in Indigenous worldviews individuals are already interconnected before any agreement. They are part of a fabric that precedes and transcends them.

Reciprocity is neither linear nor symmetrical, and that is what makes it more complex. A return may be deferred in time, or it may not be expected from the same subject

but rather inscribed in a broader circuit of cosmic retributions. Therefore, reducing reciprocity to a bartering logic or instrumental equivalence is a conceptual impoverishment.

This spiritual and symbolic dimension of reciprocity is central to understanding why Indigenous ethics cannot be easily translated into the normative languages of Western bioethics or corporate “Artificial Intelligence ethics” frameworks. The tools we use to regulate artificial intelligence—such as principles of non-maleficence, justice, transparency, or explainability—are not sufficient on their own to capture the richness of community-based ethical systems grounded in reciprocity. It is not just about what Artificial Intelligence does, but about how it relates to the world, from what epistemic place it was created, and whom it serves.

At this point, Boaventura de Sousa Santos’s critique of the epistemologies of the South is relevant: it is not enough to include Indigenous values as decorative appendices in technological systems designed from Western logics. It is necessary to dismantle knowledge hierarchies and open space for a true dialogue of knowledges. This involves rethinking from the ground up the design, governance, and ethical evaluation of artificial intelligence.

Artificial Intelligence inspired by the Indigenous worldview could not function on the logic of algorithmic neutrality or the paradigm of efficiency. It would have to incorporate the notion of relationality, understand data as living stories that require care, and recognize the cultural contexts in which they are embedded. It should incorporate community validation criteria, not just technical performance metrics. It should ensure that benefits are shared, that the social fabric is not broken, and that territories and languages are not violated.

The ethics of reciprocity also calls into question data extractivism. Just as colonialism plundered territories and bodies, Artificial Intelligence can become a new mechanism of cognitive and cultural dispossession if it extracts data without consent, without giving back value, and without respecting contexts. From the Indigenous perspective, data are not neutral resources but fragments of life, part of the living fabric of knowledge. Their treatment requires community protocols, Indigenous forms of governance, and above all, an orientation toward *buen vivir* (good living), not profit.

Reciprocity can also offer an alternative to the meritocratic individualism that underpins many Artificial Intelligence proposals. Instead of evaluating merit in isolation, as a personal capacity, one could think in terms of contribution to collective balance and community well-being. An Artificial Intelligence that promotes reciprocity would not classify people by productivity metrics, but would help redistribute opportunities, recognize non-hegemonic knowledge, and strengthen interdependent bonds.

Reciprocity also implies a different temporality. While technical progress is usually conceived as continuous acceleration toward the future, Indigenous ethics incorporates the past as a guide. *Sumak kawsay* [46; 59] teaches that a just future cannot be built without memory, without healing the wounds of the past. Therefore, a truly reciprocal Artificial Intelligence would have to integrate a critical memory, a historical awareness of its social, cultural, and ecological impact.

From this perspective, Artificial Intelligence is not just a technical tool, but a moral and political actor. It is not a neutral agent, but an expression of the values, priorities, and worldviews of those who design it. That is why opening Artificial Intelligence to the Indigenous worldview is not a folkloric gesture, but an urgent ethical and political necessity.

By integrating the principle of reciprocity into the debate on artificial intelligence, the possibility emerges for a humbler, more just, and more connected technology—one that resonates with multiple forms of life. It is not about adapting Artificial Intelligence to communities, but about co-creating technologies from within the territories, with their times, languages, and knowledge. It is not about “including” reciprocity as just another variable, but about letting it reorganize the very foundations of technical thought.

Ultimately, reciprocity does not refer to an idealized past, but to an ethical horizon from which to rethink our technological present. It is an invitation to decentralize our gaze, to decolonize artificial intelligence, and to rebuild our relationships with knowledge, power, and life.

3 Artificial intelligence and what should be

The development of artificial intelligence systems such as ChatGPT, Copilot, Deepseek, Gemini, Grok do not address ethical precepts from human logic in their initial programming. Their development is basically focused on technical and methodological aspects related to natural language processing and text generation. Its neural network-based design initially relies on large datasets and machine learning techniques to generate coherent and relevant answers from user input (prompt).

Why then does the analysis of these artificial intelligence systems focus on what should be fostering a fairer and more inclusive society? Why is it claimed that their programming is based on the premise that all people deserve equality and respect?

Well, although these ethical precepts are affirmed, from a technical point of view ethics is not addressed in the initial programming and it is accepted that ethics is not an intrinsic characteristic of the model itself, it is a characteristic of

human beings, so there is a clear ambiguity between what it is and what it should be in the imagination of its creators.

From this perspective, there are currently no indigenous worldview-based ethical approaches to the artificial intelligence systems that have emerged and are likely to continue to emerge and grow. In all these artificial intelligence systems, an ethical approach is presented from the perspective of Timnit Gebru on such issues as transparency of algorithms, fairness in automated decision making, privacy of data and accountability of the actors involved. However, none of these authors have addressed ethical precepts from a particular indigenous worldview.

Timnit Gebru (2021: 4) in 'Datasheets for Datasets' addresses a central fact in relation to this work: "The main aim of his research is to encourage careful reflection on the process of creating, distributing and maintaining a dataset, including the underlying assumptions, potential risks or harms and implications of its use. Dataset creators need to be sufficiently informed so that they can select datasets appropriate to their chosen tasks and avoid unintentional misuse".

This reaffirms the fact that the inability to contextualise a fact means that Artificial Intelligence systems such as chatGPT, Copilot, Gemini or Deepseek may result in inappropriate responses, and the responses generated may be inconsistent, irrelevant or even incorrect.

Truth is no longer a philosophical quest or a social agreement, but a technical construct; it would be like a technological tautology. Artificial intelligence systems are imposing a quantitative and computational logic that redefines reality according to its own parameters? This could lead to a loss of human autonomy, as decisions and judgments are delegated to machines operating under predefined and opaque criteria?

If we think about this search for truth, we can say that artificial intelligence dehumanizes truth by eliminating the subjectivity, intuition and ethics inherent to the human condition. Truth becomes a product of mathematical calculations, removed from the complexity and richness of human experience. This represents a radical anti-humanism, where technology not only complements the human being, but supplants and redefines it.

Thus, truth in the age of artificial intelligence is linked to the power of the large technology corporations that control the algorithms and data. These big giants could define what is "true" or "false" according to their interests and this undoubtedly represents serious risks to democracy and freedom that we as humans know.

By delegating truth to algorithms, humans lose the ability to question, reflect and decide, which undermines the individual and collective autonomy of our race. Algorithms tend to standardize reality, ignoring the diversity of human

perspectives and experiences. This leads to a reductionist worldview. Algorithmic truth can be manipulated to serve interests, whether political, economic or social, and again, this threatens transparency and fairness.

Algorithms tend to standardize reality, ignoring the diversity of human perspectives and experiences. This leads to a reductionist worldview. Algorithmic truth can be manipulated to serve interests, whether political, economic or social, and again, this threatens transparency and fairness.

Truth in the age of artificial intelligence is no longer a universal or absolute concept, but a technical and commodified construct (Sadin, É.). This represents a profound challenge for humanity, especially in relation to the "Gramscian consensus," as it calls into question our ability to understand and make sense of the world autonomously and critically.

Our questioning of what artificial intelligence should be raises not only a technical or academic problem, but a profoundly philosophical and political issue. The dissociation between the development of artificial intelligence and its ethical orientation reveals a structural gap: while technological progress advances at great speed, critical reflection on its ends, limits and consequences barely manages to keep pace with it. This gap is not accidental, but symptomatic of a productivist and technocratic logic that dominates today's digital innovation. In this context, asking what artificial intelligence should be implies breaking with the passive acceptance of what it is, to open up the horizon of what is possible, desirable and just.

Since their development, artificial intelligence models such as ChatGPT, Copilot and Gemini have been trained to produce coherent, useful and syntactically correct texts. However, the lack of an explicit design ethic—and particularly a plural, situated and contextualized ethic, limits their ability to respond adequately to the complexity of the real world. The fact that these systems claim to "respect human dignity" or "promote inclusion" does not derive from a deep ethical understanding, but rather from a superficial adaptation to the prevailing values of contemporary Western rule, such as the "Artificial Intelligence ethics" approach promoted by large corporations or elite academic centers.

Since its use is booming and more users are joining, the "duty" of artificial intelligence cannot be reduced to error avoidance or enforcement. It must be approached as a profound reorientation of the technical paradigm. Otherwise, we run the risk of consolidating a technology that reproduces and reinforces the epistemic and social injustices of the present.

If we bring indigenous cosmovisions back to the table, they do not conceive knowledge as an accumulation of data, but as a form of relationship, care and reciprocity. In these frameworks, intelligence is not measured by the ability to solve abstract problems or simulate human language, but by

the ability to live in balance with others -human and non-human-, with the environment and with collective history. Incorporating these values would mean radically rethinking the design of artificial intelligence systems: from the data sets used to the decisions about which tasks to automate, how to evaluate the results, and who has the right to define the success of a system.

A self-respecting artificial intelligence system can no longer ignore the voices and knowledge that have historically been silenced. As Boaventura de Sousa Santos points out, modern abysmal thinking has divided the world between the visible and the invisible, between the valid and the discarded. In this division, indigenous, peasant, Afro-descendant, popular and community knowledge has been systematically excluded from the circuits of scientific and technological production. Reversing this logic requires more than symbolic measures of “inclusion”: it requires decolonizing the very foundations of technical knowledge.

From this perspective, what artificial intelligence should be is to endow it with a relational ethic, centered not only on distributive justice or individual privacy, but also on respect for interdependent relationships between communities, languages, territories and ways of life. This means that ethical design cannot be universalistic and decontextualized but must be open to a plurality of ethical matrices, some of which challenge the most basic assumptions of modern technical rationalism.

In its current state, artificial intelligence functions as a system of power, controlled by a few transnational corporations. Its development responds to extractivist logics, not only of data, but also of energy, human labor and natural resources. This situation reinforces global asymmetries and generates new forms of digital colonialism. In view of this, to ask what artificial intelligence should be is also to ask for whom it is designed, who controls it and whom it serves.

A truly emancipatory “must-have” for artificial intelligence therefore involves imagining systems that focus not on maximizing profits or perfectly simulating human intelligence, but on strengthening collective capabilities, protecting the common good and promoting global cognitive justice. This requires alliances between technical communities and social movements, between artificial intelligence experts and guardians of ancestral knowledge, between programmers and human rights advocates.

It is not about idealizing indigenous worldviews or instrumentalizing them as “decorative values”. It is about recognizing that they contain complete and deeply articulated epistemologies that can offer fundamental keys to imagine another technological future. A future that does not merely reproduce current hierarchies, but one that contributes to overcoming them.

Ultimately, the ideal state of artificial intelligence requires a cultural transformation. A truly ethical artificial intelligence cannot emerge solely from technical adjustments, legal frameworks or corporate declarations. It requires political will and radical imagination capable of questioning the ends of technological development, redistributing epistemic power and opening space for other ways of understanding and inhabiting the world.

Only in this way will it be possible to overcome the current ethical ambiguity of models and move towards systems that not only work but also matter, actively contributing to the construction of a more just, plural and humane society.

This cultural transformation cannot be separated from a deep critique of the mechanisms of algorithmic governance and the role that states, universities, and international organizations must assume in the face of the rapid advancement of these systems. It is not enough to generate reactive regulatory frameworks or to establish abstract ethical principles; it is necessary to build participatory and plural mechanisms that allow peoples and communities to influence the design, evaluation, and control of the technologies that affect their present and future. A truly democratic approach requires that decisions about the development of artificial intelligence not be monopolized by corporate interests nor determined solely by criteria of innovation or economic competitiveness.

Moreover, it is urgent to rethink the material infrastructures of artificial intelligence. Much of its development depends on networks of mineral extraction, intensive energy consumption, and precarious labor supply chains in the global South. This material dimension, often rendered invisible, reinforces historical patterns of exploitation and dependency, which contrast with the narratives that present artificial intelligence as an “immaterial” or “neutral” technology. Thus, what should be a tool for the common good risks becoming a machine that reproduces structural injustices.

In this context, the incorporation of principles of environmental and climate justice into the debates on artificial intelligence becomes unavoidable. The ethics of the “ought” cannot be separated from an ecological responsibility that considers the impact of these systems on territories, bodies, and ecosystems. Indigenous worldviews, as relational and holistic visions of the world, offer a theoretical and practical foundation to imagine technologies that do not operate against nature, but in communion with it.

Ultimately, what artificial intelligence should be is a collective project, situated, open to constant ethical deliberation and to the recognition of humanity’s epistemic diversity. It is not merely about making machines “fairer,” but about asking whether we are willing to transform the social, political, and cultural conditions that make their existence

possible—and at the same time problematic. Only through this openness to other ways of knowing, other narratives of development, and other human aspirations will a truly transformative artificial intelligence be possible—one that not only reflects who we are, but also who we might become in a horizon of justice, dignity, and planetary reciprocity.

4 The political philosophy of artificial intelligence: from voluntary servitude to algorithmic obedience

Considering Étienne De La Boétie's discourse on voluntary servitude and Miguel Abensour's radical rethinking of political emancipation, Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents itself not only as a technological artifact, but as a contemporary device of passive consent.

Today, Artificial Intelligence reinforces the very structures of voluntary servitude that La Boétie denounced: not through visible tyranny, but through automation, hyper-efficiency, and the algorithmic orchestration of human behavior.

As Miguel Abensour suggests, true politics is not synonymous with governance, but with the emergence of freedom and disobedience. However, Artificial Intelligence risks submerging politics under layers of predictive control and behavioral management. The citizen is increasingly being redefined—not as an agent of transformation—but as a "generator of indications" (prompts), a passive user who delegates critical decisions to technological systems governed by opaque hierarchies. Reciprocity, for its part, is visible, tangible, and makes relationships transparent.

In this context, Tsamados et al. [11] categorize unfair *outcomes resulting* from the application of algorithms that can perpetuate or amplify existing inequalities, negatively affecting certain groups, in this case the indigenous groups; and the difficulty of *traceability* as the problem in tracking how an algorithm arrives at a specific decision, complicating accountability.

This shift represents a profound ontological reorganization: from the human being as a subject capable of rebelling and acting ethically, to the human being as a spectator and consumer of algorithmically mediated realities. The utopian horizon of disobedience, once an act of radical imagination, feels increasingly distant.

Artificial Intelligence thus functions as a new "sovereign power": not through repression, but through optimization. It captures attention, predicts desire, and anticipates dissent. Its apparent neutrality is a mask, its ubiquity, a new form of colonization. The more it is entrusted with the mediation of truth, the less room there is for dissent, plurality, or error—essential elements for a democratic and emancipatory life.

The challenge, then, is not only to regulate Artificial Intelligence, but to resist the ontological reduction it imposes. Reclaiming the political means to say no—reintroducing disobedience as an ethical act and the utopia of reciprocity as a political necessity in the age of algorithmic reason.

In the age of artificial intelligence, human beings are increasingly reduced to the role of spectator and generator of prompts. They are no longer the sovereign agent of action and transformation, but rather an interface operator—someone who interacts with knowledge systems through preconfigured channels, ceding their capacity for rebellion, critique, and disruption to a technological hierarchy governed by algorithmic logic.

This evolution marks a profound ontological shift. Where the subject was once conceived as capable of saying "no," of initiating disobedience as an ethical affirmation, the new subject is managed by predictive systems that anticipate desires, simulate choices, and neutralize dissent through convenience. What Étienne de La Boétie called "voluntary servitude" has now been automated and aestheticized.

Artificial intelligence becomes the new sovereign, not through direct oppression, but through seductive governance. It organizes the real, filters the knowable -black box-, and presents the acceptable. And in doing so, it encourages a silent form of submission: not forced but welcomed.

Reclaiming the political right now means recovering the capacity to resist through thought—reintroducing doubt, rupture, and dissent into a system that optimizes for conformity. It is no longer just about what Artificial Intelligence can do, but about what we have stopped doing because Artificial Intelligence does it for us. In this sense, the rebellion must be about making our relationship with Artificial Intelligence transparent, as a requirement for the act of giving back.

The expression "voluntary servitude," introduced by Étienne de La Boétie in the sixteenth century, describes a form of domination that is not sustained by force, but by the passive consent of the dominated. Today, in the context of artificial intelligence, that servitude no longer needs to be voluntary: it has been automated, aestheticized, and gamified. Submission occurs without the need for explicit coercion, thanks to the seduction of friendly interfaces, personalized recommendations, and the efficiency of invisible algorithms that organize our preferences, actions, and ways of thinking.

Algorithmic obedience is not merely programmed obedience, but a form of contemporary subjectivation. It is the production of a subject who internalizes the rules of code as if they were their own, who assumes algorithmic suggestions as autonomous decisions, and who actively participates in their own subordination by optimizing their actions in accordance with the predictive models that govern their

digital environment. This subject is no longer the citizen who questions power, but the user who responds to prompts with enthusiasm, who delegates critical judgment, and confuses automation with rationality.

This new form of obedience redefines the political. Where politics once implied conflict, deliberation, and the possibility of interrupting the order, today algorithmic logic seeks to erase dissent through hyper-personalization, content filtering, and behavioral prediction. The dissident subject does not disappear due to censorship, but through algorithmic irrelevance: they simply stop being displayed, made visible, or indexed. The feed excludes them, and the system ignores them.

This invisibilization is not a technical flaw, but a form of power. A power that does not repress but optimizes; that does not impose but seduces; that does not punish but arranges. It is what Byung-Chul Han has described as “the psych politics of positivity,” where devices no longer imposed from outside but adhere to subjectivity as a desire for performance, control, and self-exposure.

In this scenario, politics is deactivated in the name of efficiency. The utopia of radical democracy—where dissent, error, and plurality were considered virtues—is subordinated to algorithmic governance, which interprets deviation as noise and difference as a statistical threat. In this way, a new regime of truth is consolidated, not as social consensus or rational deliberation, but as a technical product of probabilistic calculation.

This regime is based on a weak ontology of the subject: the individual is no longer conceived as capable of autonomy, but as a managed, predictable, and adaptable entity. The human becomes functional to the needs of the system, not to their own emancipation. They are allowed to desire, but not to decide; to interact, but not to transform. Even creativity is modeled as algorithmic combinatorics, measured by the ability to generate original outputs within pre-designed frameworks.

Algorithmic obedience also erodes the public sphere. To the extent that each user lives in their own content bubble—curated and selected by recommendation systems—the possibility of building a shared world is weakened. Public deliberation becomes a sequence of parallel monologues, and dissent, far from being a democratic engine, is perceived as unwanted disruption. In this way, Artificial Intelligence not only organizes information, but reconfigures the very conditions of political experience.

In this context, reclaiming disobedience becomes a radical act. To disobey is not merely to reject a norm, but to resist the automation of subjectivity. It implies reintroducing contingency, error, unpredictability, and conflict as constitutive elements of political life. It is to recover the capacity to say

“no” even when everything seems functional, operational, and efficient.

This is why criticism of artificial intelligence cannot be reduced to complaints about bias or technical flaws. A political and ontological analysis is needed—one that interrogates the forms of life that Artificial Intelligence produces and reproduces. What kind of subject do recommendation systems construct? What forms of authority do predictive algorithms consolidate? What worlds are excluded every time a model optimizes our choices?

Here, the concept of reciprocity may offer a philosophical and political alternative. Unlike the unidirectional logic of algorithms—which classify, predict, and order without dialogue—reciprocity demands relationship, response, and responsibility. It is not just about giving and receiving, but recognizing the other as a valid interlocutor, as an alterity that calls us to respond. In this sense, thinking about Artificial Intelligence through reciprocity means repoliticizing technology, restoring its ethical and relational dimension.

An artificial intelligence oriented by reciprocity would not be a tool of obedience, but a critical mediation: a technology in the service of dialogue, transparency, and disagreement. It would require real traceability mechanisms, collective participation in its design, and above all, an ethics of opacity: the right of subjects not to be entirely predictable, to escape calculation, to maintain their mystery.

In this sense, the true rebellion against algorithmic obedience does not lie in destroying technology, but in rebuilding it from other principles. It is not about returning to a past without Artificial Intelligence, but about moving toward a future in which the technical does not replace the political but strengthens it. A future where error is not automatically corrected but listened to; where dissent is not silenced by filters but amplified through debate.

The political subject of the Artificial Intelligence era must reclaim their voice, their body, and their right to uncertainty. They must learn again to think, to feel, and to act without preconfigured instructions. Only then will it be possible to break the logic of algorithmic obedience and recover politics as a space of collective creation, radical imagination, and shared transformation.

5 Conclusions and future work

This research has shown that the ethics of reciprocity inherent to Indigenous peoples is not merely a cultural alternative to Western ethical frameworks, but a political and epistemological horizon from which to radically rethink the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI). In contrast to a technical paradigm that privileges efficiency, predictability, and the neutralization of dissent, the Indigenous worldview

proposes a relational, situated ethic oriented toward care, memory, and balance. Current Artificial Intelligence, operating as algorithmic authority and redefining truth through computational parameters, tends to reproduce inequalities, erase non-hegemonic knowledge, and consolidate contemporary forms of voluntary servitude.

Artificial intelligence is not merely reshaping technological landscapes—it is redefining the very fabric of truth. As algorithms become arbiters of what is deemed valid or correct, human autonomy, ethical reflection, and plural interpretations of reality are at risk of being supplanted by opaque, data-driven systems. The transformation of truth into a technical construct controlled by corporate interests represents a profound threat to democratic values and social justice. In response, it is imperative to reclaim the human capacity to question, interpret, and decide, resisting the reduction of truth to computational outputs devoid of ethical depth or cultural nuance.

The Indigenous worldview offers a powerful ethical alternative to dominant Western paradigms, one grounded in relationality, community, and the sacredness of reciprocity. Unlike universalist moral theories such as Kantian ethics, Indigenous ethics is embedded in lived experience, ancestral memory, and the interconnectedness of life. Incorporating this perspective into the development of artificial intelligence demands not token inclusion, but a radical reimagining of how technologies are designed, governed, and evaluated. Only by embracing reciprocity as a foundational principle can AI become a tool for justice, care, and collective well-being rather than a vehicle of extractivism and epistemic inequality. To directly address the central editorial question—what is Indigenous ethics and where is it found?—Indigenous ethics is the lived expression of reciprocity as a principle of permanent mutual aid between people, nature, and the cosmos. It is found in the collective practices of Andean and other Indigenous communities: in *ayni*, *minka*, and *randi-randi* systems of cooperation; in communal festivals, planting rituals, and rotating governance structures; and in the relational concept of wealth as kinship rather than accumulation. It is not an abstract construct but a concrete ethical order that emerges from community life, oral traditions, and ancestral memory. This makes it both a philosophy and a practice—a source from which artificial intelligence can be reimagined in relational, intercultural, and pluriversal terms.

From this perspective, incorporating the ethics of reciprocity is not a symbolic or decorative gesture, but an ethical and political urgency. Reciprocity, as a relational and collective principle, offers a key to challenge the regime of algorithmic truth, reintroduce shared responsibility, and resist technological depoliticization. To imagine truly humane, just, and plural Artificial Intelligence, we must not

only adjust algorithms but decolonize the very foundations of technical knowledge.

Future research directions includes develop methodological and technical frameworks that integrate reciprocity as a structural principle in the design, training, and evaluation of Artificial Intelligence systems, through community ethical protocols and culturally situated validation criteria; investigate participatory and intercultural governance models that include Indigenous voices in Artificial Intelligence decision-making processes, from public policy development to algorithm auditing in local contexts; explore how Indigenous epistemologies can redefine the notion of “truth” in algorithmic systems, paving the way for pluriversal models that acknowledge multiple legitimate forms of knowledge; and, critically compare the principles of reciprocity-based ethics with dominant “ethical Artificial Intelligence” proposals promoted by tech corporations and international regulatory frameworks, highlighting their biases, limitations, and exclusions.

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