

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE DIGNITY OF THE JUDICIARY

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Abstract: How should we understand the effects of artificial intelligence (AI) on our dignity? There is a growing body of literature on this question, along with significant public discussion (Le Moli, 2022; Rueda et al., 2025; Vidlička et al., 2020). In recent decades, philosophical and legal debates have tended to connect dignity with the intrinsic value of each human person, and this conception has underpinned modern conceptions of human rights (McCrudden, 2008; Rosen, 2012; Waldron et al., 2015). However, in the pre-modern context, the term ‘dignity’ did not refer to the intrinsic value of human persons but was instead linked to ideas of social standing, honor, and even a person’s place in the cosmos and relationship to the divine (McCrudden, 2008; Rosen, 2012; Waldron et al., 2015). What we could call extrinsic kinds of dignity are precisely where AI is likely to have a significant impact. This is partly due to the ways in which artificially intelligent artifacts may replace us in performing tasks that have traditionally defined valued roles and conferred respect, social standing, or status. So far, ethics has taken some tentative steps to distinguish between intrinsic dignity and social dignity (Felber et al., 2022; Jacobson, 2009; Killmister, 2017; Pirson et al., 2023). We argue that the concept of intrinsic dignity is orthogonal to our reflection on the social impact of specific technologies. In doing so, we do not intend to deny humans their intrinsic dignity, nor do we deny its importance in moral reasoning. Rather, we focus here on the social and relational aspects of dignity. To understand how technology can concretely affect social dignity, we consider the example of judicial dignity and explain how AI affects the dignity of officeholders. While this article focuses on judicial contexts, AI will have significant impacts on the status of a broad range of professions, such as teaching, medicine, and law. While we aim to think carefully about the specific changes AI will bring to the dignity of the judiciary, the paper also articulates a view of social dignity that we believe has implications for how we think about the value of institutional and professional roles more broadly.

Keywords: Judicial Dignity, Artificial Intelligence, Social Dignity, Epistemic Authority

1. Introduction:

How should we understand the effects of artificial intelligence (AI) on our dignity? There is a growing body of literature on this question, along with significant public discussion (Le Moli, 2022; Rueda et al., 2025; Vidlička et al., 2020). In recent decades, philosophical and legal debates have tended to connect dignity with the intrinsic value of each human person, and this conception has underpinned modern conceptions of human rights (McCrudden, 2008; Rosen, 2012; Waldron et al., 2015). However, in the pre-modern context, the term ‘dignity’ did not refer to the intrinsic value of human persons but was instead linked to ideas of social standing, honor, and even a person’s place in the cosmos and relationship to the divine (McCrudden, 2008; Rosen, 2012; Waldron et al., 2015). What we could call extrinsic kinds of dignity are precisely where AI is likely to have a significant impact. This is partly due to the ways in which artificially intelligent artifacts may replace us in performing tasks that have traditionally defined valued roles and conferred respect, social standing, or status. So far, ethics has taken some tentative steps to distinguish between intrinsic dignity and social dignity (Felber et al., 2022; Jacobson, 2009; Killmister, 2017; Pirson et al., 2023). We argue that the concept of intrinsic dignity is orthogonal to our reflection on the social impact of specific technologies. In doing so, we do not intend to deny humans their intrinsic dignity, nor do we deny its importance in moral reasoning. Rather, we focus here on the social and relational aspects of dignity. To understand how technology can concretely affect social dignity, we consider the example of judicial dignity and explain how AI affects the dignity of officeholders. While this article focuses on judicial contexts, AI will have significant impacts on the status of a broad range of professions, such as teaching, medicine, and law. While we aim to think carefully about the specific changes AI will bring to the dignity of the judiciary, the paper also articulates a view of social dignity that we believe has implications for how we think about the value of institutional and professional roles more broadly.

In the near future, judges are likely to be equipped with AI assistants capable of sifting through mountains of legal documents and extracting relevant precedents and legal principles with efficiency that surpasses that of any human clerk. This could lead to faster resolution of cases and a more consistent application of the law, ensuring that similar cases are treated alike. Moreover, AI systems could serve as a safeguard against human fallibility, mitigating the influence of cognitive biases that can impede rational decision-making. By offering data-driven analysis, these systems could help judges make more impartial decisions, thereby making them better judges. In complex cases, AI-enabled systems can serve as powerful tools for comprehension. They could provide concise summaries, highlight crucial evidence, and even suggest alternative legal interpretations that might otherwise be overlooked. This deeper understanding could lead to more informed and nuanced judgments. Furthermore, AI-powered tools have the potential to democratize access to justice by providing legal information and guidance to those who lack the resources for legal representation. These tools promise to drastically reduce the time and cost associated with legal processes. It is difficult to imagine not using such technologies in a judicial context. As AI becomes more deeply integrated into judicial decision-making, the judiciary’s role will inevitably change. The dignity of the judiciary is a critical component of the set of norms and institutions that underpin respected and effective legal systems in contemporary liberal democratic societies.

While judges, in virtue of being human, possess intrinsic human dignity, the dignity associated with their judicial office constitutes a distinct conceptual category. The first is inalienable; the second depends on contingent factors related to their role and social position. This latter form of dignity is subject to its own distinctive set of constitutive condi-

tions and possesses distinctive kinds of vulnerability. Notably, the dignity of the judiciary is susceptible to diminishment. Judges can be more or less dignified over time or in different cultural contexts. By contrast, the intrinsic dignity of human beings cannot be diminished. It can, of course, be disrespected or violated in various ways, but if we accept that human beings possess an intrinsic dignity, it does not make sense to say that people differ in their degree of dignity. In this paper, we examine the constitution, rights, entitlements, and duties of non-intrinsic forms of dignity, as well as the mechanisms by which they can be undermined.

Our argument unfolds as follows. First, it distinguishes between intrinsic human dignity and non-intrinsic or social dignity, arguing that concerns about AI's impact on dignity primarily concern the latter. Intrinsic dignity, understood as the inherent value of every human, is considered inviolable and largely unaffected by technological change. In contrast, social dignity is tied to social standing, roles, and the respect afforded to individuals based on their functions within a community or institution. The paper contends that AI's growing deployment, particularly in professional contexts, has the potential to diminish social dignity by altering the value of certain roles and skills, thereby challenging established norms of respect and status. Unlike intrinsic dignity, this form of dignity is subject to historical change and can be enhanced or diminished, making it a crucial lens for analyzing the societal effects of technology. The paper explores the concept of "dignity of the office," exemplified by the judiciary, to further examine how AI can affect the social standing of professionals.

Second, the paper examines how the integration of AI into the judiciary, while offering benefits such as efficiency and reduced bias, poses significant threats to judicial dignity. It highlights concerns, including the erosion of critical thinking through cognitive offloading (Dergaa et al., 2024; Gerlich, 2025), the opacity of algorithmic decision-making, and the potential for AI to anchor judicial decisions to specific philosophies. The paper argues that judges' social dignity is deeply intertwined with their role as epistemic gatekeepers and reason-givers. When AI systems become opaque or reduce the need for judges to provide clear rationales for their decisions, the perceived legitimacy of legal processes and the dignity of the judiciary are undermined. To mitigate these risks, the paper advocates transparent, explainable AI system design and comprehensive AI literacy training for judges. In addition, we argue for an approach to AI integration centered on reason-giving, in which AI would ideally augment, rather than replace, human judgment and responsibility. Ultimately, the paper asserts that maintaining judicial dignity requires a sustained commitment to human oversight, ethical conduct, and the preservation of the judiciary's reason-giving or justificatory function. We emphasize that the potential benefits of AI should not come at the cost of undermining the foundational values of the legal system and the social infrastructure it represents.

2. Non-intrinsic forms of dignity

We are already beginning to sense that the ubiquitous deployment of AI in our personal and work lives might lead to a less dignified state for people. We can ask, for example, whether our dignity is diminished or enhanced by various uses of AI, and whether these changes are morally good, bad, or neutral. From the outset, it is helpful to reflect critically on what dignity means in these questions.

In the ethics of AI, for example, Shannon Vallor has argued that robotics and AI will diminish the dignity of vulnerable people and their caregivers (Vallor, 2011a). On this view, living less dignified lives means that, as a result of the use of emerging technologies such as carebots, some human persons will be served by machines rather than cared for by human

persons, and that this circumstance will not honor their intrinsic human dignity. In these cases, the core idea is that we have intrinsic dignity, and it is blameworthy not to recognize it or to act in ways that seem to deny it. While this intrinsic human dignity itself will not be affected by the way we are treated, the kinds of tasks we perform, or the ways in which we interact with one another, it does seem as though the landscape of what we honor and who and what we treat in a dignified manner does undergo historical change. Our sense of who is valued or degraded by technological developments involves a range of considerations. It is easiest to think in terms of just or unjust harm, but this is not precisely what we are concerned about: the dignified treatment of another person. Our treatment of the bodies of the anonymous dead, for example, involves considerations that are independent of harms to the person.

As a conceptual matter, intrinsic dignity is inviolable, despite changing extrinsic circumstances. From the perspective of intrinsic dignity, we can treat one another in ways that fail to recognize it. If we assign older or infirm people to facilities where they are cared for by artificially intelligent robots, we arguably fail to honor their dignity, even if doing so increases their material comfort. The wrongness of actions like this (if they are wrong) lies in our failure to recognize the intrinsic dignity of the human person.

Apart from intrinsic dignity, there is another sense in which our dignity is affected by the introduction of AI, a matter warranting exploration. Consider how these technologies will change the way certain roles and types of expertise or skill are valued. Here, for example, the concept of social dignity can help us organize our thoughts (Killmister, 2020). One reason to shift attention to social dignity is that it allows for changing levels of dignity rather than assuming a single inviolable form that persists through changes in a person's circumstances. Social dignity is subject to change, and these changes can be evaluated. There are reasons why it is sometimes acceptable, and perhaps even praiseworthy, to violate the dignity of an elected official. It might also be a positive development if the dignity of some social roles declines. Although not as varied as the traditional concept of human dignity, relational or social dignity can be understood in various ways. For Killmister (2017, 2020), social dignity involves an agent's ability to observe the standards imposed upon her qua member of a given community. Whereas in the case of personal dignity, we were concerned with an agent's ability to live up to the high standards she set for herself, here we are concerned with the standards adopted by a community or society. In short, the concept of social dignity amounts to "being subject to standards the violation of which the community takes to be shameful" (pg. 2074). Similarly, Bayefsky discusses what she calls "relational dignity." Relational dignity, according to Bayefsky, "revolves around protection of the social self." Further, and crucially, the social element of relational dignity involves preserving and maintaining conditions that enable "certain forms of social interaction." Finally, these social interactions include occasions to respect status, avoid domination, and demonstrate control over one's public image or self-presentation.

Our thinking here is influenced in part by Alasdair MacIntyre, who famously criticized the modern concept of intrinsic human dignity as puzzling and possibly dangerous. He believes this contemporary understanding, prevalent since World War II and reflected in documents like the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, lacks a firm foundation and offers little practical guidance on how to treat others, especially in difficult cases such as torturers or criminals. Instead, MacIntyre contrasts this modern view with a Thomistic understanding of *dignitas*. In this older conception, human dignity is not inherent in the sense of being an unchangeable possession but derives from the human *telos* or end. According to Christian tradition, our purpose is to know and love God. Our dignity, therefore, is rooted in our nature as rational agents capable of pursuing this highest end (McCrudden,

2022). MacIntyre's Thomistic conception of human dignity offers an example of how we might think about varying levels of dignity. We fulfill our capacity to know and love God to varying degrees. We have a minimal degree of dignity insofar as we have the capacity, but the dignity a human person might have depends on their relationship to God.

For example, when we consider what is sometimes called “the dignity of the office” in contexts such as the judiciary or elected positions in representative democracies, this dignity is not an intrinsic feature of the office holder. Rather, the office holder is due this special dignified treatment in virtue of serving in the role. Moreover, the role itself has dignity only insofar as the particular social conventions and institutional arrangements are in place. While the social standing associated with the role and the dignified treatment demanded of those in it are shaped by social and institutional factors, violating the dignity of the office may still be genuinely blameworthy. Many important questions, especially in the study of the social effects of technology, involve this kind of extrinsically constituted form of dignity. Our examination of the dignity of the judiciary aims to unpack the core ways in which a judge's relational and social dignity can be enhanced or diminished by the integration of AI into judicial processes.

MacIntyre's alternative focuses on the theologically conceived purpose of human life and will therefore prove unpersuasive in atheistic philosophical debates. However, the model of dignity as framed by human telos or ends can serve as a framework for considering the effects of AI on dignity. Note that if we are interested in understanding whether AI will have a detrimental or enhancing effect on dignity, rather than in whether it will cause us to honor or fail to honor intrinsic dignity, we are already assuming an extrinsic conception of dignity. Even if one recognizes an intrinsic dignity we have in virtue of simply being human persons, this kind of dignity is untouched and ultimately orthogonal to any concerns about AI. Rather, contemporary concerns are more closely related to social standing, respect, and status. Killmister's concept of social dignity has already developed this distinction between intrinsic human dignity and the kinds of dignity that we are appropriately ascribed in virtue of successfully fulfilling social roles of various kinds (Killmister, 2020).

3. Dignity of the Judicial Office

The “dignity of the office” is often invoked as a bulwark against perceived threats to the judiciary's standing or as a standard for judicial conduct. Yet despite its common usage, the notion remains highly ambiguous. A central challenge is distinguishing it meaningfully from the broader, more widely discussed concept of intrinsic human dignity. As we saw in the previous section, intrinsic human dignity is largely orthogonal to questions about the influence of technology on society. Because the concept of intrinsic dignity is sometimes conflated with questions about the dignity of the office, there remains a persistent philosophical puzzle about how judicial dignity, if it is indeed a robust and meaningful attribute of the judicial office, can be “tarnished”—either by the disrespectful actions of external actors, by the misbehavior of judges themselves, or by the changing technological environment surrounding the judiciary. As mentioned previously, an extrinsic conception of social dignity offers concrete insights and practical guidance here. The lack of a fully developed and convincing philosophical analysis of office-specific dignity in the literature has made it difficult to understand how technological developments, particularly AI, are changing the social standing of the judiciary.

An important aspect of the judiciary's dignified status includes the following: (1) their epistemic and professional development; (2) the social role of the office; and (3) the authority that comes with the role itself. While judges, like all human persons, possess dignity in

virtue of their humanity, they are also endowed with a distinct kind of dignity given the role they occupy, their abilities as a judge, or the perception that they have been a good judge. A good judge, for example, is characterized by being fair and unbiased in their deliberations. As discussed in detail above, the special kind of dignity possessed by a judge is relational rather than an intrinsic feature of the person who happens to be a judge.

The specific judicial norms that govern the judicial community, while powerful, require further development to account for the embodied and contextual nature of judicial authority. In the community of judges, as Killmister notes, there are norms governing how they ought to dress and how they treat their staff, lawyers, and clients. Contrary to the Roman conception of *dignitas*, in which dignity is ascribed to an office or institution, we contend that it is properly attributable only to persons. Although holding a particular office may enhance or diminish the dignity of its holder, it is ultimately the individual's conduct that sustains or erodes that status. Furthermore, the dignity associated with a particular role does not necessarily follow the individual after their tenure ends. In this sense, any dignity owed to a person occupying a role in the judiciary, or any such dignified role (e.g., the presidency, diplomacy, professorship, etc.), is contextual.

The contextual nature of judicial dignity can be illustrated through a concrete example. As with any profession, there are rules of decorum and rituals that define the judicial context. To illustrate, consider the following scenario. Cynthia is an appellate judge walking to her favorite lunch destination. While on this walk, a random person spits near Cynthia's feet. To be clear, the spitter is unaware that Cynthia is an appellate judge. In this respect, Cynthia's social dignity has been violated, given the communal norm against spitting on others, but not her status as a judge. Because the spitter had no knowledge of Cynthia's status and Cynthia was outside the usual judicial context (not wearing her robes, outside her office and the courtroom, etc.), we cannot say that her status as a judge was in any way lowered.

This example underscores that judicial dignity is contextual: it depends on institutional markers, public recognition, and the ceremonial trappings of office. Although Cynthia's human and social dignity were violated, her judicial dignity remains intact because the context did not require her to act as a judge. More broadly, judicial dignity requires not only recognition within the judicial community but also responsiveness to wider societal expectations. Upholding these standards fosters public trust and links the judiciary's dignity to broader social epistemic goods.

It is also important to distinguish between the social dignity inherent in the judicial role and the personal dignity of the individual who holds that office. The former is tied to the position itself, while the latter is earned through personal conduct, sound judgment, and adherence to ethical standards. The social dignity of a position stems from the vital function it serves in society. Charged with interpreting and applying the law, judges are entrusted with resolving disputes, protecting rights, and ultimately upholding justice. This role carries inherent gravitas, demanding respect and decorum from the judge and those who appear before them. Society expects judges to embody fairness, impartiality, and wisdom, qualities that contribute to the perceived dignity of the judicial office. This expectation is codified in formal codes of conduct, such as the United States Code of Conduct for judges mentioned above. This formal acknowledgment underscores the importance of maintaining social dignity within the judicial system and recognizes its crucial role in fostering public trust and confidence in the administration of justice. In more stable times, judicial decisions are also regarded as the final word on a controversial matter.

The distinction between the social dignity of the role and the dignity of the individual is perhaps most evident when judges fall short of the ethical standards expected of them. Instances of judicial misconduct or abuse of power not only erode public trust in the judi-

ciary but also tarnish the dignity of the office. Such actions demonstrate a failure to uphold the personal dignity expected of a judge, even as the individual continues to occupy a role imbued with social dignity. This underscores the crucial point that the social dignity of the role serves as a reminder of the responsibility judges bear to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects the gravity and importance of their position.

3.1 Judicial Status and Authority

Judicial dignity is conferred through a formal process of appointment or election to a judicial position. This state act of conferral signifies societal recognition of the role's importance and authority. For example, as Cicero understood it, *dignitas* is deeply intertwined with one's social standing, reputation, and role in public office. In Cicero's context, *dignitas* was not an individual trait but a reflection of the honor and respect due to a person by virtue of their position and contributions to the *res publica*. As McCrudden puts it:

Indeed, *dignitas* was not confined to humans and applied to institutions and the state itself. This concept of dignity has long been incorporated in some legal systems in the private law context as the basis for providing protection for dignity in the sense of "status," "reputation," and "privileges."

A judge, upon appointment, inherits a measure of this conferred *dignitas* (Cicero, *De Officiis*). Furthermore, the dignity of office is inherently relational, existing within the dynamic among the office holder, the public, legal actors, and other branches of government. It concerns the respect and deference owed to the office and, by extension, to the individual occupying it, precisely because of the functions they perform and the authority they represent. Avishai Margalit suggests that a society functioning with judicial dignity is one in which its institutions, including the judiciary, avoid humiliating their subjects and in which citizens are expected to show appropriate respect for these institutions. This involves recognizing legitimate authority and the processes it embodies (Margalit, 1996). While conferred and relational, the dignity of office is also profoundly performative; it must be continually upheld and demonstrated through the office holder's actions and conduct. This is where the distinction from intrinsic dignity becomes most apparent, and where the possibility of undermining emerges. Jeremy Waldron noted, in his discussion of dignity's historical roots in notions of rank and status, that how one *performs* within that rank significantly influences its perception. For a judge, this performance necessitates adherence to ethical standards, impartiality, wisdom, and an unwavering commitment to justice (Waldron et al., 2015).

Distinguishing judicial dignity from other forms of social dignity is crucial. It differs from the dignity of skill or achievement, which is earned through individual excellence in a craft or profession, because judicial dignity is grounded in the office itself rather than in individual merit alone. Similarly, it transcends the dignity associated with social status or wealth; while judges may come from high-status backgrounds, their dignity as judges stems from their public role. Lastly, it is distinct from the dignity of collective identity, such as national dignity, focusing instead on the individual judge's embodiment of the judiciary's institutional standing. Judicial dignity is unique in its direct link to the exercise of state power and the administration of justice, effectively embodying the dignity of the rule of law itself.

The dignity of the judiciary rests on several interconnected elements. Fundamentally, it is grounded in the legal and constitutional framework. Constitutions and statutes establish the judiciary as a distinct and independent branch of government, vesting it with specific powers and responsibilities. This framework confers legitimacy and authority on the office and, by extension, on its occupants. The very existence of judicial review, for instance, under-

scores the immense trust and authority vested in the judiciary, which contributes significantly to its dignity. A cornerstone of this dignity is institutional independence, which safeguards judges from political pressure and external influence. Protected by constitutional provisions such as security of tenure and financial autonomy, this independence enables judges to decide cases based solely on law and fact, free from fear or favor. This insulation from partisan considerations enhances the integrity and perceived impartiality of the judiciary, both of which are vital components of its dignity. Furthermore, judicial dignity is significantly constituted through ritual and symbolism. The wearing of robes, the formal setting of the courtroom, the respectful address of “Your Honor,” the decorum of proceedings, and the solemnity of oaths all serve to elevate the office, imbuing it with a sense of gravity and importance.

These rituals are not mere formalities but deliberate acts that reinforce the judiciary’s authority and distinctiveness, contributing to its dignity in the public consciousness. Public trust and confidence are both a consequence of these elements and constitutive of that dignity. The dignity of the judiciary is inherently fragile, heavily reliant on the public’s perception of its fairness, impartiality, and competence. When the public has faith in the judiciary’s ability to uphold justice, the dignity of the office is strengthened; this trust is built over time through consistent, principled decision-making and ethical conduct. Finally, the dignity of office is constituted by the established norms of deference and respect shown to judges and the judiciary, including lawyers’ conduct in court, the media’s portrayal of judicial proceedings, and the general public’s willingness to accept and abide by judicial decisions, even unpopular ones. This collective adherence to norms of respect helps maintain the status and authority of the judicial office.

3.2 The Dignified Role of Judges as Reason Givers

Given their role, we might say that judges are thought to be more dignified *qua* judges. Judges are often seen as the epistemic gatekeepers in the procedural aspects of a trial. Reducing errors that may lead to wrongful convictions is part of this gatekeeping role. From a utilitarian perspective, reducing error is a value that ought to be promoted, but it can also be justified by a non-instrumentalist axiology. Arguably, reducing error preserves the dignity of everyone involved in the trial dynamic. This epistemic gatekeeping function directly relates to judicial dignity because it establishes judges as authoritative interpreters of legal meaning and procedural correctness. When judges fulfill this role effectively, they demonstrate the kind of reasoned judgment and institutional competence that sustain public confidence in judicial authority. Conversely, when this gatekeeping function is compromised, whether through error, bias, or over-reliance on external systems, it threatens the foundation of judicial dignity by undermining the perception that judges possess the wisdom and discernment their role requires.

Judicial decision-making is shaped and constrained by law, custom, and technology (Calo, 2017; Schauer, 2009; Sunstein, 2018). The role of the judge, we contend, cannot be adequately understood or appreciated outside its social function. Put simply, judges are to decide cases. But much remains to be filled in when it comes to determining exactly what is involved in judges’ decision-making. At a minimum, we expect judges to apply the law fairly and impartially. Yet this merely trades one ambiguity for two others. Socially, we expect judges, in a sense, to represent the best of us. In fulfilling their roles, we expect judges to have developed a breadth of knowledge of the law, human behavior, and the consequences of their judgments (among other things). In centuries when common law was the dominant mode of judicial decision-making, judges were expected to do more than simply apply the

law as written, because much of the law had not yet been written. Put another way, when judges decided cases, they also determined the law - that is, they made law. This exemplifies the historical impact judges have had on both maintaining and shaping social and legal norms.

The dignity of office entails a specific set of entitlements and duties for the office holder. Judges are entitled to deference and respect, both in their official capacity and, to some extent, in their private lives, insofar as their conduct reflects on the office. This is not about personal vanity but about maintaining the authority and integrity of the institution. They are also entitled to protection from undue influence, threats, or harassment, ensuring they can discharge their duties without fear, and to institutional support, including adequate resources, to effectively carry out their functions. Furthermore, judges typically enjoy certain privileges and immunities, such as judicial immunity from suit for actions taken in their official capacity, designed to protect their independence and enable them to perform their duties without fear. Conversely, judges bear significant duties. Foremost among these is the duty of impartiality and objectivity in all decisions, central to maintaining the legitimacy and dignity of the office. They also have a stringent duty to uphold high ethical standards, both on and off the bench, ensuring their conduct reflects the dignity and seriousness of their office, including avoiding conflicts of interest and maintaining decorum. A duty of competence and diligence in applying the law is essential for upholding the dignity of a body entrusted with administering justice. Ultimately, judges have an overarching duty to uphold the rule of law, which is the bedrock of their authority and the source of their dignity, encompassing respect for precedent, faithful interpretation of statutes, and safeguarding constitutional principles. This culminates in a duty to actively maintain and enhance public trust in the judiciary, as this trust is inextricably linked to the dignity of their office.

3.3 Tarnishing Judicial Dignity

The question of how judicial dignity can be tarnished is complex, particularly given the common understanding of intrinsic human dignity as untarnishable. The key lies in viewing the dignity of office as both *ascribed* through appointment and *maintained* through conduct and respect. Misbehavior by judges themselves is perhaps the most direct route to tarnishing. When judges abuse their authority, act corruptly, or demonstrate clear bias, they undermine the very foundation of their office's dignity, betray public trust, and directly affront the rule of law.¹ Unethical conduct, whether on or off the bench, can also diminish the perceived dignity of the office by bringing disrepute to the judiciary. Even less dramatically, consistent incompetence, gross negligence, or a demonstrated lack of understanding of the law can erode public confidence and thereby tarnish the dignity of the office, suggesting a failure to adequately fulfill the duties inherent in the position. A lack of decorum in the courtroom further diminishes the solemnity and authority of proceedings, thereby tarnishing judicial dignity. Philosophically, this tarnishing is not a loss of the inherent value of the individual judge, but rather a diminishment of the *status*, *authority*, and *public esteem* that constitute the dignity of office. The judge, through misbehavior, fails to perform their role in a manner

1. Here an example might be helpful in thinking through how a judge might act against the standards expected of them, apart from the obvious cases of accepting bribes, acting with prejudice towards one of the parties, or being unprepared for a case. Before retiring, former Appellate Judge Richard Posner had a change of mind on *pro se* cases. Pro se cases are when one of the parties acts as their own representation in court. According to Posner, a significant contributor to his decision to retire involved his dissatisfaction with the way judges, especially those he served with, treated pro se cases - often with disdain and with a reluctance to provide any sort of assistance. Arguably, what Posner is also pointing to is that the attitude of his former colleagues represents a tarnishing of their status as judges, in addition to as a failure of maintaining the dignity of *pro se* cases.

consistent with the values and expectations associated with it, violating the implied social contract that underpins the conferral of that dignity. The office itself is seen as diminished because its occupant has acted in a way that contravenes the very principles the office represents.

As noted above in our example of Cynthia, disrespectful behavior from others can also significantly tarnish judicial dignity. Unjustified or malicious attacks on judicial integrity by political actors, the media, or the public aim to undermine public trust, a vital component of the office's dignity. Open defiance of court orders or systemic obstruction of justice directly challenges the authority of the judiciary, thereby tarnishing its dignity. Even incivility and disrespect within legal proceedings, such as excessive antagonism or frivolous challenges to judicial authority by lawyers, can erode the decorum and solemnity that contribute to judicial dignity. This tarnishing represents a withdrawal or undermining of the *relational component* of dignity. If the dignity of office is partly constituted by the respect and deference it commands from others, then deliberate acts of disrespect or attempts to de-legitimize the office directly attack this constitutive element. It is not that the individual judge inherently loses value, but that the *office's standing and efficacy* in the public sphere are diminished, creating a perception that the office is not worthy of its inherent respect and weakening its social and legal force. This aligns with Margalit's concept of institutional humiliation, which a society that values the rule of law ought to resist (Margalit, 1996).

The "how" of tarnishing the dignity of office lies in the erosion of legitimacy, as misbehavior or disrespect makes it harder for the public to accept judicial decisions, thereby diminishing the office's dignity. It also involves a direct diminishment of authority; when dignity is tarnished, the authority of the judge and the institution is weakened, potentially leading to reduced compliance and a diminished deterrent effect. A breach of expectations also plays a role: society confers dignity through certain expectations about judicial conduct, and when these are consistently breached, that dignity is undermined. Furthermore, there is a symbolic degradation in which the rituals and symbols constituting judicial dignity are compromised by inappropriate conduct or a lack of reverence. Ultimately, tarnished dignity has a profound impact on future effectiveness, as a judiciary whose dignity has been severely compromised will struggle to attract qualified individuals, maintain public trust, and effectively uphold the rule of law.

It is a form of *dignitas* that requires constant maintenance through the ethical conduct of office holders and consistent respect from the public. Its tarnishing is not a loss of the individual's inherent moral worth, but rather a degradation of the conferred status, institutional authority, and public respect that are essential for the proper functioning and legitimacy of the judicial system. Cicero's understanding of *dignitas* as something earned and maintained through public service and reputation, alongside Waldron's historical tracing of dignity to notions of rank and performance, provides valuable frameworks for understanding the context in which AI can undermine judicial dignity. Thus, when evaluating how the use of AI and algorithmic tools in court can affect judges' dignity, it is this relational or social strand that will allow us to best articulate potential concerns.

4. AI Augmentation of the Judiciary

The growing use of risk assessment instruments (RAIs) across domains reflects a growing willingness to leverage data and algorithms to enhance decision-making. While recent advances in machine learning and generative AI have accelerated the development of sophisticated digital RAIs, it's crucial to recognize that risk assessment itself is not new. What we call "first-generation RAIs" have long been used in non-computational forms in the legal,

medical, and financial sectors, predating the widespread availability of advanced digital technologies. To date, philosophical discussions of algorithmic use in the legal context have focused nearly exclusively on their impacts on pretrial risk assessment, parole, and sentencing decisions (Barocas & Selbst, 2016; Desmarais et al., 2021; Morin-Martel, 2024).

Essentially, RAIs can be understood as operating in two distinct modes: non-computational and computational. In the legal sphere, the pursuit of consistent, objective decision-making has driven the development of tools to limit judicial discretion and reduce judgmental variability. This variability manifests as inconsistencies and biases in an individual judge's decision-making history, influenced by factors such as personal experiences, moods, and unconscious biases. Furthermore, disparities and inconsistencies are observed across courts, jurisdictions, and even legal systems, arising from variations in laws, procedures, and judicial interpretations.

One prominent early attempt to address these concerns is the United States Federal Sentencing Guidelines, enacted in the 1980s (Posner, 2013). These guidelines were intended to standardize sentencing practices and reduce disparities by providing judges with a structured framework for determining appropriate punishments. Initially, the guidelines were rule-like, obligating judges to follow their recommendations. Even after the Supreme Court's decision in *U.S. v. Booker* rendered them advisory, studies have shown that judges still rely heavily on them, demonstrating a significant anchoring effect (more on this later).

One's standing as a knower and a source of testimony is especially important for questions of status and social dignity. As Symons and Alvarado (2022) have argued, data science technologies are particularly susceptible to epistemically unjust applications. Even in cases where questions of epistemic authority are legitimately changing, and no injustice is involved, it is valuable to understand how the introduction of AI artifacts increases or diminishes social dignity.

Competing schools of judicial philosophy—formalism and realism—highlight the interpretive and epistemic burdens that constitute much of judicial dignity. Formalists, such as Scalia (1997), cast judges as interpreters whose role lies in disciplined reasoning through textual and linguistic principles, while realists, like Posner (2006) emphasize the moral, ideological, and experiential judgments required in difficult cases. Despite these differences, both perspectives affirm that much is demanded of the judge in adjudicating cases and administering justice. Historical reflections reinforce this theme. Mill's notion of the "competent judge" (2001) presents judgment as grounded in accumulated knowledge and discernment, while Dworkin's Hercules (1977, 1986) imagines the ideal judge as possessing exceptional memory, practical wisdom, and interpretive skill. Together, these traditions frame the judiciary as a role that commands respect precisely because of the intellectual, moral, and experiential capacities it demands.

Against this backdrop, the integration of AI into judicial processes raises concerns about whether algorithmic assistance diminishes the very qualities that have historically underpinned the dignity of the office. If AI tools shoulder interpretive burdens or provide ready-made answers, they risk reducing judges from epistemic authorities and reason-givers to overseers of machine outputs—thereby threatening the performative and relational dimensions of judicial dignity.

In addition to changing perceptions of authority, the use of AI itself might cause reduced cognitive capacities of various kinds. An over-reliance on AI and algorithmic systems, for example, could lead to a gradual erosion of judges' critical thinking and legal reasoning skills. Such examples of the erosive effects of cognitive offloading on skill development have already been observed in educational contexts (Gerlich, 2025). If judges become accustomed to simply accepting AI-generated recommendations, they risk becoming overly dependent

on the technology, potentially diminishing their own capacity for independent judgment. Furthermore, the opacity of some AI algorithms poses a challenge to transparency and explainability. When the reasoning behind an AI's recommendation remains opaque, it can be difficult for judges to legitimately trust and understand the basis of its suggestions.

For our purposes, we will grant that the use of these data science technologies may serve certain epistemic or intellectual purposes by limiting bias and noise in judicial decision-making. With this said, their continued use raises concerns about the social dignity of the judiciary. We distinguish epistemic status, intrinsic epistemic dignity, social dignity related to epistemic properties, and the social dignity of the role. We will consider the possibility of legal bots serving as either judges or lawyers.

RAIs, a set that includes machine learning and soon-to-be generative pretrained algorithmic models, raise additional traditional concerns. These are the models we focus on. Given the breadth of literature spent on identifying the issues raised by the use of algorithmic RAIs, there are at least three persistent objections we have identified: (1) Opacity, (2) Bias, (3) Philosophical anchoring.

Opacity poses a risk of epistemic injustice (Symons & Alvarado, 2022). Symons and Alvarado argue that data science technologies, while offering many benefits, can perpetuate and even amplify existing injustices in ways that affect the dignity of individuals as “knowers” and sources of testimony. Although opacity is a serious concern that can undermine the principle of due process, other forms of opacity are tolerated within court procedures. Judges, for example, are not required to provide reasons for all their judgments. Similarly, jury deliberations have traditionally been treated as a protected black box within the overall system. Keeping jury deliberations private is seen as an important and necessary part of shielding participants from public influence, or, in more diabolical ways, from financial enticements from either party. There are certainly important differences among these forms of opacity. Most importantly, despite not always having access to jury deliberations or a judge's reasoning, we are fairly certain that decisions were made through trustworthy procedures, and, of course, we can locate responsibility for a decision in an individual. The same cannot be said about algorithmic decision-making.

The next issue many have with algorithmic assessment tools is that they are often designed with embedded human biases. Many ML-based risk assessment instruments are developed and trained on past criminal sentencing decisions within a given jurisdiction. For example, in a case involving a defendant living in Paris, Texas, the RAI will base its assessment on how closely the new case resembles previous cases from the same area. Here, bias enters in two primary ways. First, if the training data itself contains cases that were subject to biased reasoning, any new case that uses this data may suffer similar issues. Second, information used in a program's training data can be curated in ways that limit its decision-making. Additionally, much of the training data focuses on cases in which individuals received specific types of sentencing, thereby introducing bias into the system.

Finally, there is the issue of cognitive anchoring. Anchoring, generally, refers to a phenomenon in which an agent's decision-making is heavily constrained or tethered to a value or principle in ways that do not serve them well (Donohue, 2019, pg. 665). According to Donohue, RAIs can anchor judicial decision-making in at least two ways. First, the scores they provide regarding a defendant's risk, even in human-in-the-loop scenarios, could cause judges to question their well-developed judicial intuitions – what virtue theories might call practical wisdom. Second, RAIs tether overall decision-making to a particular sentencing philosophy – namely, retributivism.

This anchoring effect is problematic because it ties judicial decision-making to a single sentencing philosophy – in this case, the retributive model – causing judges to inadvertently prioritize retribution over other important sentencing goals, such as rehabilitation, deterrence, or restorative justice. By anchoring their decisions in these guidelines, judges may be less inclined to explore sentencing alternatives, such as rehabilitation services or other forms of punishment that do not require the accused to spend time in jail. This limitation of discretion, even in an advisory system, raises concerns about unjust outcomes, as it can hinder judges from considering individual circumstances and tailoring sentences to achieve a more holistic and equitable form of justice. Posner (2008) notes that judges are acutely aware of how their peers regard them, and that having one's decisions overturned or scrutinized may diminish professional prestige. In this light, the adoption of RAIs raises intra-professional concerns: judges who regularly rely on algorithmic outputs may be viewed differently from those who resist them. Similar divisions can be seen in creative fields, where writers or artists debate whether the use of AI tools undermines the authenticity of their craft. Similar tensions within the judiciary would raise questions about whether reliance on AI is compatible with fully discharging the judicial role.

Now, this line may not be all that compelling to those sympathetic to the retributivist approach to sentencing. So this, too, cannot, on its own, be a compelling reason to dissuade the use of machine learning algorithms. Nonetheless, it raises concerns about RAI's impact on a judge's ability to maintain court proceedings and on their overall role. Aside from these moral or philosophical concerns, judges may also make poor decisions by relying on oversimplified decision heuristics. Formal heuristics, whether computational or non-computational, can certainly help make decisions less biased and more efficient, but they may also aid judges in making bad decisions more efficiently and more widely.

To clarify these behavioral criteria, we can turn to Aurel Kolnai's (1976) analysis of dignified character traits. His account complements the relational conception of judicial dignity by clarifying the personal comportment through which office-holders sustain institutional authority. Kolnai emphasizes qualities such as "composure, calmness, restraint, reserve" and "self-contained serenity" with an "inward power of self-assertion" (Kolnai, 1976, pg. 253). For judges, this means maintaining deliberative authority and reasoned independence even under political or social pressure. His insistence that dignity requires "distinctness, delimitation, and distance" (pg. 253) resonates with the ceremonial and institutional boundaries that preserve judicial integrity. Kolnai's emphasis on dignity as marked by "self-contained serenity" and measured self-assertion (pg. 253) also highlights the risks of judicial reliance on RAIs. Such reliance can render judges passive and deferential, undermining the independence Kolnai's account associates with dignity. Yet if judges reject algorithmic outputs, they may appear defensive or irrational, suggesting a loss of authority within an institution increasingly shaped by AI. This tension illustrates how opaque systems can destabilize the very behavioral traits that sustain judicial dignity.

Sulmasy's (2013) distinction between attributive dignity—the inherent worth possessed by all persons simply by virtue of their humanity—and inflorescent dignity—the dignity that 'flowers' through one's actions and character—provides a crucial framework for understanding judicial dignity. Judges possess both the fundamental attributive dignity that warrants basic respect and the opportunity to express inflorescent dignity in how they exercise their judicial responsibilities. While all individuals entering the courtroom, including judges, litigants, and observers, share equal attributive dignity that demands fundamental respect and fair treatment, judges bear the additional responsibility of demonstrating inflorescent dignity through their deliberations, reasoned decision-making, and the embodiment of judicial virtues such as impartiality, wisdom, and moral courage.

The use of RAIs poses distinct threats to these dimensions: while such systems may not directly infringe judicial attributive dignity, they risk diminishing inflorescent dignity by reducing decision-making to algorithmic processing, thereby undermining the very practices through which judicial character and authority are expressed. As noted earlier regarding cognitive offloading (Gerlich, 2025), reliance on AI systems can weaken critical thinking and reflective reasoning, raising concerns that judicial adoption of these tools may erode the very capacities that sustain judicial dignity. Posner (2008) notes that judges are acutely aware of how their peers regard them, and that having one's decisions overturned or scrutinized may diminish professional prestige. In this light, the adoption of RAIs raises intra-professional concerns: judges who regularly rely on algorithmic outputs may be viewed differently from those who resist them. Similar divisions appear in creative fields, where writers or artists debate whether the use of AI tools undermines the authenticity of their craft. Similar tensions within the judiciary would raise questions about whether reliance on AI is compatible with fully discharging the judicial role.

5. Maintaining the dignity of the judiciary

To address the above-mentioned augmentation of the judiciary, it is essential to prioritize the development and implementation of AI systems that provide clear explanations for their outputs. These explanations should go beyond simply providing a result or score; they should articulate the reasoning behind the AI's suggestion, including the factors considered and the logic applied. This transparency allows judges to critically evaluate the AI's recommendation, identify potential biases or errors, and ultimately maintain control over the final decision-making process. For instance, if an AI tool suggests a particular sentence for a defendant, it should also provide a breakdown of the factors that influenced its suggestion, such as the severity of the crime, the defendant's prior record, and any mitigating circumstances. This transparency would enable the judge to assess whether the AI's recommendation aligns with their own judgment and with legal principles.

Judges must receive comprehensive education and training on the capabilities and limitations of AI technologies. This training should go beyond basic technical understanding; it should equip judges with the knowledge and skills to critically evaluate AI outputs and use AI effectively to enhance their decision-making. This education should include understanding how different AI algorithms work, interpreting AI-generated outputs, and identifying potential biases or errors. It should also address the ethical implications of AI in legal contexts and the importance of maintaining human oversight and control. By fostering AI literacy within the judiciary, we can empower judges to use AI responsibly and effectively. Judges will be better equipped to understand AI's limitations, question its recommendations, and ensure AI is used in ways that align with legal principles and ethical considerations. A common retort from the philosophy of science perspective places pressure on this requirement for understanding. After all, many of us use services and tools where understanding of this sort is neither required nor should it be. For example, as is sometimes said, as passengers on a plane, we would hardly be required or expected to acquire an intimate understanding of aerodynamics prior to boarding. As an intellectual and moral virtue, understanding amounts to the capacity to grasp the reasons, contexts, and implications underlying a judgment. As we discussed extensively above, opaque systems prevent all relevant parties (judges, lawyers, and clients) from understanding algorithmic outputs.

AI systems in the legal context should be designed to support and augment human capabilities, not replace them. The goal is not to create "robo-judges" but to equip judges with tools that enhance their ability to make informed, just decisions. This human-centered

design approach ensures that AI tools serve as aids to judges, helping them process information, identify relevant precedents, and explore different legal perspectives. However, the final decision should always rest with the human judge, who can consider the nuances of the case, the defendant's individual circumstances, and the broader societal implications of the decision.

These steps collectively uphold the dignity of the judicial role by ensuring that AI enhances, rather than undermines, the judge's expertise, authority, and decision-making autonomy. This approach recognizes the inherent value of human judgment in legal proceedings and ensures that AI tools remain subordinate to the judge's final decision. By prioritizing transparency and explainability in AI systems, we enable judges to understand and critically evaluate AI-generated recommendations. This helps judges maintain control over the decision-making process, preventing them from becoming passive recipients of AI outputs. Instead, AI tools serve as aids to judges, providing information and insights that inform their decisions without dictating the final outcome.

Focusing on education and training is crucial to empowering judges to use AI effectively. By understanding AI's capabilities and limitations, judges can make informed decisions about when and how to use AI tools, ensuring that AI augments their expertise rather than replaces it. This ensures that the judge remains the ultimate arbiter of legal decisions, guided by their knowledge, experience, and ethical considerations. One might ask what type of education would provide judges with a sufficient understanding to make informed decisions. This project deserves more space to be fully explicated, a space we do not have here. For now, it should be sufficient to say that judges, at the very least, need to understand the social implications of RAI.

Promoting human-centered design ensures that AI systems are developed to support and enhance human capabilities rather than replace them (Groff & Symons, 2024). This approach preserves the role of human judgment, experience, and empathy in legal proceedings, recognizing that AI is a tool for judges, not a replacement for their decision-making. The judge's role as the final decision-maker is reinforced, ensuring that AI remains a supportive tool rather than an autonomous authority.

These steps collectively underscore the subordinate role of AI tools relative to the judge's expertise, authority, and decision-making autonomy. This approach fosters a hierarchy in which AI assists and enhances the judge's capabilities, allowing the legal system to benefit from the strengths of both while preserving the judge's ultimate authority in legal proceedings.

With all this said, however, there remains an aspect of this dynamic that may keep us skeptical of its ability to enhance judicial decision-making. In ordinary circumstances, a judge may seek the advice of a trusted colleague. When judges oversee a difficult case, they might feel compelled to seek trusted counsel, which may lead to what we call *collegial pushback*. Collegial pushback goes well beyond merely providing advice and an alternative point of view. Rather, it includes this, along with some form of *rational persuasion*, to encourage the recipient of the advice to truly consider their position in light of it. Donohue (2019) suggests that RAIs might even serve as epistemic mentors or partners. He argues that instead of replacing judges, RAIs might augment "discretion through partnership..." (672). Similar to our proposal, Donohue recommends what he calls the human-AI partnership, which involves coupling a common-law approach with a Sentence Information System (SIS) program. Where we differ, however, is in whether artificial artifacts can adequately serve as epistemic mentors or partners.

Our argument emphasizes the central role of concepts such as understanding, epistemic authority, and social dignity in deliberations about AI's role in legal contexts. While human dignity captures many of the harms caused by the use of artificial artifacts, the concept of social dignity is useful for articulating perspectives that go beyond a straightforward evaluation of the outcomes of specific decision-making processes. There is harm to what we might call critical social infrastructure when the judiciary's dignity is undermined. Reasons and the giving of reasons are traditionally regarded as essential elements of any legal procedure. We further believe that, as a reason-giving enterprise, the legal system promotes both individual and social dignity by upholding the value of reason. Employing opaque models to assist decision-making, even when keeping a human in the loop, threatens the maintenance of this ideal.

The erosion of reason-giving inherent in opaque AI has implications for the perceived legitimacy of legal processes and the dignity of the judiciary. One can imagine scenarios in which individuals subject to legal judgments derived from such models are denied the opportunity to understand and challenge the rationale behind those decisions. This undermines their sense of agency and their ability to participate meaningfully in processes that directly affect their lives. Furthermore, the obfuscation of reasoning within AI models fosters distrust and suspicion toward the legal system itself. When citizens cannot comprehend the basis on which justice is administered, the sense of shared understanding and the solidarity that ideally underpin the rule of law are weakened. This ultimately diminishes social dignity for all concerned by eroding the shared understanding of fairness, accountability, and the value of reasoned discourse in the pursuit of justice.

Even if an AI tool can provide a judge with a set of perspectives on sentencing, this advice may be ignored or ill-considered in the absence of collegial pushback. In this sense, AI systems can be thought of as more like judicial clerks, helping judges with information retrieval and writing briefs or case memos. As with our account of judicial dignity, effective collegial feedback requires that it be provided by a human person whom others trust and regard as having equal or substantially greater epistemic authority. Further, this dynamic is effective when the judge in need of assistance feels pressure to consider their position more thoroughly.

5.1 Trading Dignity for Good Outcomes

Following our argument, an objection might be raised regarding the benefits of fairer outcomes versus the potential to lower judicial status. This objection goes as follows. Lowering judicial status – socially and professionally – is a cost worth incurring if there are significant benefits to be had through the use of algorithmic tools in sentencing. In other words, the appeal to dignity fails to be an *all-things-considered* reason-generating approach when we consider benefits such as fewer people in the prison system and generally fairer outcomes. In response to this objection, there are two general lines of argument we can consider. The first involves recognizing that, currently, there are few benefits sufficient to justify incurring the costs to the dignified role of judges. Further, the inherent framework of algorithmic tools, as we mentioned above, is that they use potentially noisy data to base predictions or to anchor decisions to a particular sentencing philosophy.

Until these factors are addressed as we suggested in the previous section, there can hardly be any talk of overriding reasons for benefits. Without adequate understanding enabling judges to identify potential errors in algorithmic outputs, it is too early to say that such tools will amount to substantive changes in criminal law. Further, reducing the normative questions surrounding recidivism and sentencing to largely risk-based questions is a picture of

the judiciary that ought to be questioned and scrutinized before employing tools that assist in such matters. Additionally, these systems must not replace the role or function of judges in this or other decisions. Maintaining human involvement in the process not only preserves the dignity of the judiciary but also that of those subject to court decisions. The ability to question or raise objections is a crucial aspect of fair and just procedures. Having a human oversee the process also allows judges to ensure that algorithmic tools function in ways that uphold the judiciary's core principles. We should not be construed as arguing that algorithmic tools ought to be excluded from use in court. Rather, we have argued that, if they are to be used, they must meet certain requirements to ensure fair and just outcomes and the dignity of all those involved.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we have explored the social dignity of judges in light of the growing use of AI and machine learning in the courtroom. We introduced the concept of social dignity and highlighted how it captures the dignity one might receive from others. We then examined judges' social dignity and argued that judges are uniquely situated with respect to it. Finally, we have laid out a framework for the appropriate use of AI tools to enhance judicial decision-making in ways that enhance rather than diminish the dignity of the judiciary. While we will specifically examine the dignity associated with the judiciary, similar considerations apply to educators, medical professionals, people in religious life, and others in socially significant roles.

In making our case, we have given central roles to concepts such as understanding, epistemic authority, and social dignity in deliberations about AI's role in legal contexts. The concept of social dignity is a useful framework for elaborating on perspectives that go beyond straightforward evaluations of the outcomes of specific decision-making processes. There is harm to what we have called critical social infrastructure when the judiciary's dignity is undermined.

We have drawn on the concept of social or relational dignity to argue that judicial dignity is not merely a personal attribute but a social construct sustained by the expectations and norms of legal institutions and society at large. When judges cede too much authority to AI-driven systems, they risk losing the qualities that make their role dignified. The ability to engage in reasoned deliberation, exercise judgment, and explain decisions is central to the judicial role. Algorithmic decision-making, particularly when opaque, weakens the judiciary's essential reason-giving function and undermines public trust in the legal process. This is not merely an issue of epistemic justice but a fundamental challenge to the institution's legitimacy.

Despite these concerns, we do not advocate rejecting AI in legal contexts. Instead, we argue that AI must be designed and implemented to reinforce, rather than undermine, judicial dignity. Transparency, explainability, and human-centered design must be prioritized so that AI tools serve as assistants rather than replacements. Judges must remain the final arbiters of legal decisions, with AI enhancing human judgment rather than diminishing it.

Further, judicial education and training must evolve to equip judges with the skills to critically engage with AI-generated insights. Just as legal reasoning has adapted to new forms of evidence and argumentation throughout history, the judiciary must likewise develop a nuanced understanding of AI's capabilities and limitations. This will enable judges to integrate AI into their decision-making processes, preserving their role as epistemic authorities while benefiting from the technology's enhanced cognitive capabilities.

As AI becomes increasingly prevalent in judicial decision-making, institutions must remain vigilant to ensure that technological advancements uphold, rather than erode, the values that underpin the institutions that support the rule of law in liberal democracies.

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