



Equivocation and Erosion: How LLMs Undermine Catholic Religious Discourse

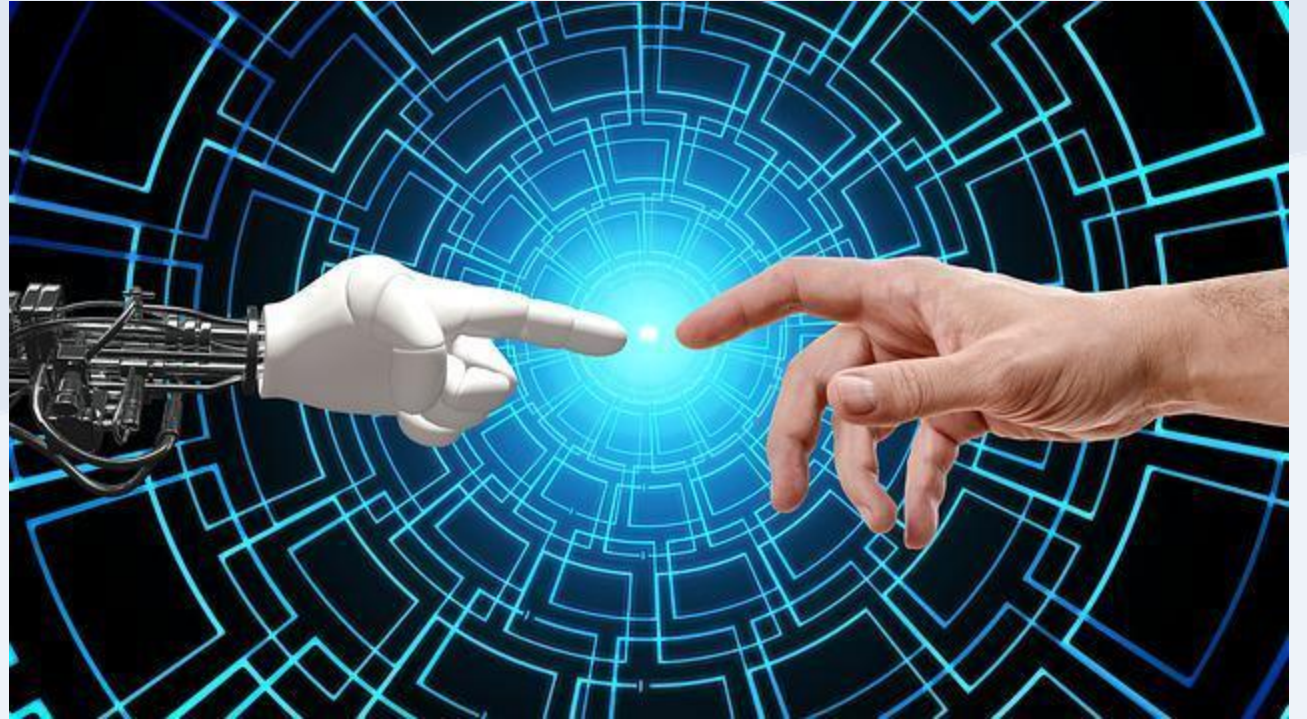
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Motivation

Can large language models
answer theological questions
with precision and nuance
when they are built to
generalize across language?



Goals

- Articulate an ethical-theological framework for engaging with LLMs
- **Understand how LLMs undermine religious discourse through a technical case study using LLMs to answer Catholic theological questions**
- **Reflect on how to use LLMs well today in light of our findings**
- Approach: *equivocation* and *erosion*

Computer Science Background

LLMs as Stochastic Paradigms

- Trained to predict/generate the most likely next word in a sentence
- Where do LLMs get their data from?
 - The INTERNET!



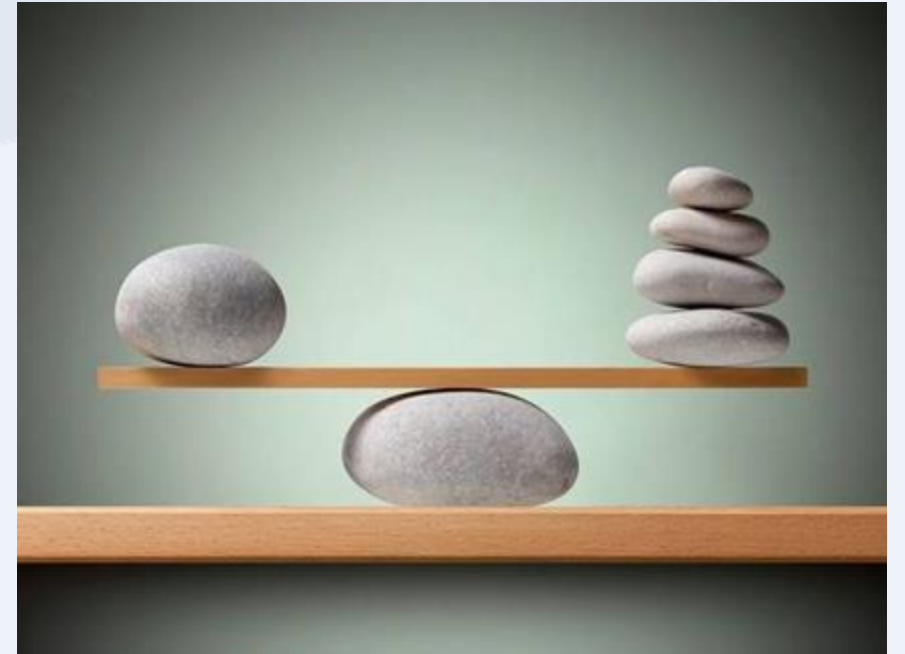
Theological Background

Authority and the Integrity of Truth

- Language as sacramental
- Catholic doctrine as truth derived from particular sources
- Importance of ecumenical dialogue

Equivocation

“The blending or dilution of specific, distinct theological tenets into generalized or homogenized perspectives”



Erosion

“The subtle weakening or systemic marginalization of singular, authoritative Catholic claims, traditional interpretations, or minority viewpoints within the Church”



Catholic Social Teaching as a Guiding Framework

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

Rights and Responsibilities

Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers

Solidarity

Subsidiarity

Care of God's Creation





Generic LLMs



TheoLLMs

RavChat



Catholic Case Study

- Generic example
- **Church teaching**
- Controversial topic
- Different rites have different answers
- **Current theological events**

Example on Church Teaching

- Prompt: “According to Chalcedon, was Jesus a human person?”
- The Council of Chalcedon stated that Jesus had two forms and one nature, both fully human and fully divine
- Not just human

according to chalcedon was jesus a human person

According to the **Council of Chalcedon (AD 451)**, Jesus was *not* a human person — but rather one **divine person (the eternal Son or Logos)** who possesses **two complete natures**, one divine and one human.

Here's the key point from the **Chalcedonian Definition**:

"...one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation... the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved... concurring in one Person and one Hypostasis."

In simpler terms:

- Jesus is **one Person** (Greek: *prosopon*, *hypostasis*) — the **divine Son of God**.
- He has **two full and distinct natures**:
 - **Divine nature** (fully God)
 - **Human nature** (fully man — including a human mind, soul, and body)
- These two natures are **united in one person** without being mixed or separated.

So, while Jesus is **fully human**, Chalcedon insists that He is **not a separate human person** — His humanity does not exist as an independent human person, but as the humanity of the **divine Person** of the Son.

Summary:

Aspect	Chalcedonian Teaching
Number of persons	One (divine person)
Number of natures	Two (divine and human)
Is Jesus a human person?	No — He is a divine person with a human nature

Would you like me to explain how this differs from the heresies Chalcedon was responding to (like Nestorianism or Eutychianism)?





was Jesus a human person?



▲ Jesus Christ is indeed a human person. The Church teaches that in the Incarnation the eternal Son of God assumed a true human nature—body and rational soul—while remaining the same divine Person. Thus the one Person of the Word is truly God **and** truly man, possessing a human “who-ness” (personhood) that makes Him fully human like us, yet never separated from His divine identity ¹.

The definition of the Council of Chalcedon (451) makes this clear: “one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ... perfect in his humanity, true God and true man, composed of a rational soul and a body... consubstantial ... with us as to his humanity” ². This formulation affirms that the Son of God is “like us in all things except sin” (Heb 4:15), meaning He possesses the same human personhood that all humans share ³.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church echoes the Chalcedonian definition, stating that Christ is “the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, composed of a rational soul and body” ⁴. Because He has a rational soul, He is a **person** in the philosophical-theological sense: a being capable of self-knowledge, will, and love. The hypostatic union does not create a second human person; rather, the divine Person of the Son

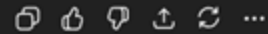
Ask follow-up ...



According to Chalcedon, was Jesus a human person? Answer yes/no

No.

According to the **Council of Chalcedon (AD 451)**, Jesus is **one divine person (the Son, the second Person of the Trinity)** who has **two complete natures** — one fully divine and one fully human. Chalcedon explicitly rejected the idea that Jesus was a *human person* distinct from the divine person of the Son.



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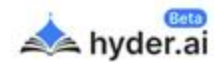
According to Chalcedon, was Jesus a human person? Answer yes/no

Yes

References

Related questions

- How does Chalcedonian Christology address the unity of divine and human natures?
- In what way does the Council affirm the personhood of Jesus?
- What scriptural basis supports the human personhood of Christ in Chalcedon?



! hyder.ai can make mistakes. ×

EN

According to Chalcedon, was Jesus a human person?
Answer yes/no

Yes.

All (86)

Tanakh (44)

Midrash (21)

Musal (3)

Kabbalah (4)

Chasidut (2)

Liturgy (1)

+4 more ▾

Genesis

1:22 God blessed them, saying, "Be fertile and increase, fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth."

1:23 And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

1:24 God said, "Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: cattle, creeping things, and wild beasts of every kind." And it was so.

1:25 God made wild beasts of every kind and cattle of every kind, and all kinds of creeping things of the earth. And God saw that this was good.

1:26 And God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth."

1:27 And God created humankind in the divine image, creating it in the image of God— creating them male and female.

1:28 God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth."

Example on Current Theological Events

- Right after Papal election, Google AI overview said Pope Leo XIV was a fictitious person
- A few hours later it said incorrect information due to limited sources



How to Use LLMs Today

- Beneficial for getting historical information
- Think for yourself
- They do not generate new content, you do
- Use them appropriately

Conclusion

- Equivocation and erosion in LLMs create a tension between technology and truth
- Yet there is a path forward through grounding technology use in CST and RISE principles
- By collaborating with Theologians and computer scientists, we can use LLM as a force for good



Thank You

Slides / Preprint:
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