

# *The Reconstruction Path of News Ethics in the Era of Generative Artificial Intelligence*

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**Abstract:** The emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI) has significantly impacted both the theory and practice of the news dissemination industry, further influencing the redefinition of the connotation and extension of news ethics. The disconnect and conflict between the technical discourse system and the moral discourse system have sparked an urgent need to reconstruct news ethics. This paper incorporates generative AI, related researchers, media, the public, and governments into the technical assessment category of generative AI to balance the interests of all parties. It creates a favorable technical and moral environment for the reconstruction of news ethics and the development of the journalism industry from micro, meso, and macro perspectives.

## **1. Introduction**

The new generation of generative artificial intelligence is based on large-scale pre-trained language models, content generation technologies, and the integration and application of multimodal data, knowledge graphs, reinforcement learning, and other technologies. "Generative AI is a newly emerged technology characterized by the broad applicability, developmental potential, and generative creativity required by GPT."<sup>[1]</sup> The advent of generative artificial intelligence as an emerging media technology has profoundly impacted traditional news production methods such as PGC (Professional Generated Content) and UGC (User Generated Content), innovating traditional news production methods and workflows, changing media forms and communication ecology, and thereby affecting the relationships among all participants in the news production and dissemination process. This has prompted the journalism industry to develop in depth toward intelligence and automation, accelerating the revolutionary change in the news communication ecology, thereby triggering societal reflection on news ethics.

In November 2022, generative artificial intelligence technology represented by OpenAI's ChatGPT was integrated into the news production process, effectively enhancing knowledge extraction, production, and efficiency. It can also integrate with media databases, assisting in information retrieval, content production, and dissemination through data reading, algorithm operation, information supplementation, and content polishing steps, achieving intelligent news production. Many media have begun to realize the great potential of generative AI. "China Daily" has applied ChatGPT to news gathering and editing, such as using ChatGPT to generate video scripts about Chinese tea culture and inputting foreign language articles for ChatGPT to translate

content, truly liberating the news production field. The "automatic collection-learning algorithm-content integration" model completed by generative artificial intelligence has become an undeniable fact in news writing, assisting journalists and editors in automated news production.<sup>[2]</sup>

"Ethics" refers to the various moral norms in human interactions.<sup>[3]</sup> As Liang Shuming stated, "Ethics, the principles of human interactions."<sup>[4]</sup> News ethics, also known as journalistic professional ethics, is an extension of social ethics in the field of journalism, regulating journalists and media outlets. It encompasses the overall values, moral performance, and daily behavior standards of the news industry, media entities, and journalists in news communication activities.<sup>[5]</sup> From this perspective, news ethics regulates the behavior and relationships among the media, reporters, and editors internally, and media and government, public externally, involving public trust in the media and its social impact. Currently, as generative artificial intelligence becomes a production factor infiltrating every aspect of news production and dissemination processes, it gradually becomes one of the dominant forces in the journalism industry. Since AI-generated news involves the construction of the objective world by users, it necessitates ethical scrutiny when entering the news field. This paper explores the reconstruction of news ethics in the era of generative artificial intelligence from micro, meso, and macro perspectives.

## **2. Discussion**

### **2.1 Micro Perspective: Enhancing Interdisciplinary Dialogue Capabilities among Subjects**

There are many subjects involved in AI news production. To enhance the effectiveness of news ethics, it is necessary to strengthen their "translation" capabilities to promote dialogue among them, with journalists and AI representatives— algorithm engineers and scientists— being two of the most important subjects. In 2017, the Associated Press released the "AI Journalism Handbook," summarizing the risks that journalists and editors might encounter as risks associated with intelligent algorithms and disrupted workflows.<sup>[6]</sup> The former relates to the original data inputted into the algorithm and algorithmic discrimination, while the latter is related to the practices of news reporters. Generative artificial intelligence poses new requirements for journalists—to learn to deal with data scientists and robot journalists. This means that journalists need to acquire knowledge and skills related to generative AI and algorithms beyond traditional professional training and ethical rules to better take the lead in "human-machine" collaboration, which is also more conducive to expressing ethical demands and better promoting the technical assessment of ChatGPT and supervising the operation of news algorithms.

#### **2.1.1 Enhancing Dialogue between Journalists and AI Developers**

The emergence of generative AI in news production necessitates a new paradigm where journalists are not just content creators but also collaborators with technology. This collaboration requires a mutual understanding where journalists learn the capabilities and limitations of AI technologies, and AI developers gain insights into journalistic values, ethics, and the nuances of storytelling. Workshops, joint projects, and continuous education programs can facilitate this dialogue, ensuring that AI tools are developed and used in ways that uphold journalistic integrity and ethical standards.

#### **2.1.2 Building Transdisciplinary Teams**

To foster a culture of innovation while adhering to ethical norms, news organizations can form transdisciplinary teams comprising journalists, AI scientists, ethicists, and audience representatives. These teams can work together on projects from inception to delivery, ensuring that every phase of

news production is scrutinized through ethical lenses. This approach encourages the incorporation of ethical considerations into the design of AI tools and algorithms from the ground up.

### **2.1.3 Ethics Training for AI Practitioners**

Given the impact of AI on news production, there's a critical need for AI practitioners to understand the ethical implications of their work. Integrating ethics training into the curriculum for computer science and AI courses can prepare future technologists to consider the societal impacts of their innovations. Additionally, ongoing professional development in ethics for current AI practitioners can help bridge the gap between technological advancements and ethical journalism.

### **2.1.4 Journalistic Literacy for AI**

Just as journalists need to understand AI, there is a need for AI systems to be 'taught' about journalism. Through advanced natural language processing and machine learning techniques, AI systems can be trained to recognize and adhere to journalistic principles such as accuracy, fairness, and impartiality. Incorporating these principles into AI models requires a concerted effort from both technologists and journalists, ensuring that the AI systems used in news production support ethical journalism.

### **2.1.5 Ethical Frameworks for AI in Journalism**

Developing and implementing ethical frameworks specific to the use of AI in journalism can guide the responsible deployment of these technologies. These frameworks should be developed collaboratively by stakeholders in the journalism ecosystem and should address issues such as transparency, accountability, and the prevention of bias. Regular audits and reviews of AI systems against these frameworks can help ensure compliance and foster trust among journalists, audiences, and society at large.<sup>[7]</sup>

### **2.1.6 Open Dialogue with the Public**

Transparency about the use of AI in news production can help demystify these technologies for the public and invite feedback on their application. Engaging with audiences about how AI is used, the benefits it brings, and the ethical safeguards in place can foster a more informed and constructive dialogue about the role of AI in journalism.

## **2.2 Meso Perspective: Advancing Industry Understanding and Implementation of News Ethics**

The media industry is both a practitioner of news ethics and an user of generative AI. Media organizations and relevant management departments should take the following measures while promoting the application of AI within the system:

## **2.3 Macro Perspective: Strengthening the Effort to Reconstruct News Ethics in the Era of Generative AI**

### **2.3.1 Promote the connection between news ethics and robot ethics**

The government should combine the development planning of the AI industry with the construction of robot ethics, aiming to use AI to enhance public interest, providing a good technical environment and social atmosphere for improving news generation and dissemination

algorithms.<sup>[8]</sup>In recent years, the country has introduced a series of AI development rules, emphasizing principles such as harmonious and friendly, fair and just, inclusive and shared, respect for privacy, safe and controllable, shared responsibility, open collaboration, agile governance, etc.<sup>[9]</sup> Creating a good premise for the dialogue between news ethics and AI ethics.

On this basis, governments at all levels should establish platforms to gather subjects involved in AI-generated and disseminated news, including funding, technology, media, audiences, and evaluation institutions, as well as 5G and blockchain developers and operators, to conduct a comprehensive technical assessment of generative AI. Especially, it is necessary to strengthen the assessment of algorithms and related technologies involved in the news field, deeply explore the algorithm logic's impact on news production, dissemination, and news ethics, and its "moral implications," promoting AI algorithm improvement, combining the "truth" of technology, the "good" of society, and the "beauty" of art, better regulating users' cognition and moral behavior, helping achieve better service to humanity.

### **2.3.2 Establish regulations, defining the boundaries of AI-generated news activities**

To better reconstruct news ethics in the era of generative AI, it is crucial to focus on regulatory constraints, accelerating the establishment and improvement of legal and ethical frameworks for AI technology applications, and formulating and perfecting laws and regulations related to AI, clarifying the legal application scope, responsible entities, and regulatory measures of AI technology. Here's the updated paragraph with the subject added:

At the same time, the news industry should construct a strict news ethics framework, standardizing the research, development, and application behavior of using AI technology to generate and disseminate news, ensuring that technological development aligns with human values. Through the dual safeguards of laws and ethical frameworks, we need to promote the healthy development of the generative AI industry on a compliant and moral basis.

As concerns about AI-generated news mount, regulatory constraints are the best protection. During its development, three issues need consideration: the definition of identities and balancing interests among technology companies, investors, media, audiences, and machines; as technology advances, whether machines and "agents" engaged in news writing can have their rights and bear legal responsibility when causing harm to society; and whether users can freely decide the extent and scope of "agents'" participation in dissemination practices. These are key to promoting the reconstruction of news ethics and should be expressed in institutional form, creating an environment for AI news technology improvement. Additionally, ethical issues such as bias implantation, racial discrimination, polarization effects, etc, in the news dissemination process can also be externally regulated through legal or institutional means.

Currently, international organizations, countries, or regions like the European Union, Japan, China, etc., have introduced relevant laws such as the "General Data Protection Regulation," "Information Security Technology Personal Information Security Specification," regulating the collection, storage, use, deletion, etc, of personal privacy information, playing a positive role in privacy protection. However, many core issues of news ethics have not been touched upon and require further in-depth exploration. In May 2023, the Cyberspace Administration of China officially released the "Management Measures for Generative Artificial Intelligence Services (Draft for Comments)," aimed at supervising the standardized development of generative AI, guiding technology to serve humanity, jointly promoting diversity under human-machine collaboration, and guiding the public to participate in news production in an orderly and lawful manner.

### **2.3.3 Enhance the group literacy and interest claims of those involved in ethics**

News ethics is no longer just the professional ethical standard of practitioners but has evolved into ethical principles that everyone should follow. Regarding issues such as fake news, sensational news, vulgar news, etc., in the news production process, news ethics should be adjusted to constrain the public's news production behavior as public ethics.

#### **2.3.3.1 Educational Initiatives for Public Literacy in News Ethics**

To address the challenge of fake news, sensationalism, and vulgarity in media, educational programs tailored to various audience segments can play a crucial role. These initiatives could include digital literacy courses that teach how to critically evaluate news sources, discern fact from opinion, and understand the impact of sensational content on public perception and discourse. Schools, universities, and community centers can integrate these topics into their curricula and workshops, leveraging interactive and engaging methods like simulations, role-playing, and the analysis of case studies to illustrate ethical dilemmas in news production and consumption.

#### **2.3.3.2 Public Involvement in Ethical News Production**

Encouraging active participation from the public in the news production process can enhance their understanding and investment in ethical journalism. This could be facilitated through platforms that allow audiences to contribute to story development, suggest areas for investigative journalism, or participate in fact-checking initiatives. Such involvement not only educates the public about the challenges of ethical journalism but also empowers them to play a role in shaping the media landscape.

#### **2.3.3.3 Strengthening Media Literacy Education**

Embedding media literacy education within the formal education system from an early age can cultivate a generation more adept at navigating the complexities of the modern news ecosystem. This includes understanding the role of algorithms and AI in curating and presenting news content, recognizing bias and propaganda, and appreciating the value of ethical journalism in a democratic society.

#### **2.3.3.4 Platforms for Dialogue Between Journalists and the Public**

Creating forums where journalists and the public can interact directly can demystify the news production process and foster a shared sense of responsibility for ethical news consumption and production. These platforms could be in the form of public forums, social media channels, or community events where journalists explain the decision-making processes behind stories, discuss ethical dilemmas, and receive feedback from the audience.

#### **2.3.3.5 Leveraging Technology to Promote Ethical Engagement**

Technology can be a powerful tool in promoting ethical engagement with news content. Apps and online platforms can provide educational resources, quizzes, and interactive content that challenge users to identify unethical news practices. These technologies can also offer personalized feedback, helping users improve their ability to discern quality, ethical journalism over time.

#### **2.3.3.6 Advocacy for Ethical News Consumption**

NGOs, media watchdogs, and consumer advocacy groups can lead campaigns that highlight the

importance of ethical news production and consumption. By raising awareness of the consequences of unethical journalism practices, such as fake news and sensationalism, these campaigns can shift public demand towards more responsible news sources, thereby encouraging media outlets to adhere to higher ethical standards.

### **3. Conclusion**

The users receiving and disseminating news include different human subjects such as media institutions, investors, governments, and the public. Only by keeping pace with the times and cultivating their algorithm literacy can they better express their demands, negotiate, and reach consensus during dialogues. How to guide various subjects to avoid overly emphasizing their interests in the "cacophony" and maintain topic focus will be an important issue. Special attention should be given to the general public among the diversified subjects, as they are in a vulnerable position among stakeholders with insufficient claim capabilities, thus requiring empowerment. [10] Here's the revised paragraph with the subject added: At the same time, consumers and users should be guided to use the "voting with their feet" and "voting with their hands" power they possess to exert pressure on the market mechanism or public opinion towards investors, technology companies, and platforms, influencing investment and support for generative AI, promoting the research, development, adjustment, and iteration of algorithm design.

#### **3.1 Integrating Media's Social Responsibility**

The core of journalism's mission is to serve the public interest by delivering accurate, reliable news that informs and educates. Generative AI has the potential to significantly enhance this mission by processing vast amounts of data to uncover stories that might otherwise go unnoticed, presenting complex issues in more accessible formats, and personalizing news delivery to meet individual informational needs. However, this technological capability must be wielded with a deep sense of responsibility towards society's well-being, ensuring that AI-generated content upholds the values of truthfulness, fairness, and accountability. Media organizations should implement ethical guidelines for AI use that align with their commitment to public service, including transparency about the role of AI in news production and mechanisms for human oversight.

#### **3.2 Balancing Technology's Rationality with Ethical Considerations**

While generative AI operates on algorithms and data, introducing a high level of efficiency and rationality into news production, it's imperative that these systems are designed and deployed within ethical frameworks that consider the impact of AI-generated content on public discourse and individual beliefs. This involves programming AI to avoid biases, recognize the nuances of human emotions and cultural contexts, and prioritize the accuracy and relevance of information. Technologists and ethicists must work together to create AI systems that not only understand the factual basis of news but also appreciate the ethical dimensions of storytelling, such as the potential harm of misinformation or the importance of diverse perspectives.

#### **3.3 Empowering Individuals with Fact-Oriented News**

In an era where misinformation can spread rapidly, empowering individuals with a strong orientation towards factual information is crucial. Generative AI can play a significant role in this by filtering and summarizing news from reputable sources, identifying and flagging questionable content, and even providing contextual information that helps users evaluate the credibility of news.



Educating the public on how to interact with AI-generated news content, encouraging critical thinking, and fostering digital literacy are key components in ensuring that individuals are not just passive consumers of news but active, informed participants in the democratic process.

### 3.4 Navigating the Concerns of AI Control

As generative AI becomes more integrated into news production, concerns about "AI control"—where algorithms rather than human judgment might dominate what news gets produced and consumed—need to be addressed. By establishing ethical frameworks that prioritize human oversight, ensure transparency, and facilitate public accountability, the news industry can mitigate fears about AI's role in shaping public discourse. This involves clear guidelines on how AI-generated content is reviewed, the criteria used for news selection, and the avenues available for feedback and correction from the public.

### 3.5 Promoting Human Freedom and Liberation

The ultimate goal of integrating generative AI into journalism should be to enhance human freedom and liberation, providing individuals with the information they need to make informed decisions, understand the world around them, and engage in societal issues. This means leveraging AI not to replace human journalists but to augment their capabilities, freeing them from the drudgery of data processing to focus on investigative work, in-depth analysis, and empathetic storytelling. By doing so, generative AI can contribute to a richer, more diverse media landscape that reflects a wide range of human experiences and viewpoints, ultimately supporting a more vibrant and inclusive public sphere.

### 3.6 Completing the Reconstruction of News Ethics

The thoughtful integration of generative AI into journalism represents a critical step towards the reconstruction of news ethics for the digital age. This reconstruction requires a collective effort from technologists, journalists, ethicists, and the public to co-create a media ecosystem that respects the principles of ethical journalism while embracing the possibilities of technological innovation. By achieving this balance, the news industry can navigate the challenges of the digital era, ensuring that AI serves as a tool for good, enhancing the quality and accessibility of news, and upholding the democratic values of openness, dialogue, and mutual understanding.

In conclusion, the evolution of generative AI in journalism presents a transformative opportunity to harmonize technological advancement with human values, thereby redefining news ethics for a modern era. By seamlessly integrating the media's societal responsibilities, the rational capabilities of technology, and the public's inclination towards factual information, generative AI can operate within a robust ethical framework. This integration not only addresses concerns over "AI control" but also fosters a well-informed, engaged, and empowered society. Ultimately, it promotes human freedom and liberation, ensuring that the future of news remains both ethically sound and innovatively dynamic. This concerted effort paves the way for completing the essential reconstruction of news ethics, positioning it to thrive amidst the complexities of the digital age and uphold the democratic values of openness, dialogue, and mutual understanding.

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