EduVision: Journal of Innovations in Pedagogy and Educational Advancements
Volume 2, Issue 2, February 2026
brightmindpublishing.com
ISSN (E): 3061-6972

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AS SUBJECT OR INSTRUMENT: PHILOSOPHICAL AND LEGAL BOUNDARIES OF RESPONSIBILITY

Sitora F. Abdusattarova
Doctor of Philosophy (DSc), Associate Professor
Tashkent State University

Abstract

The article presents a philosophical and legal analysis of the problem of the legal subjectivity of artificial intelligence in the context of the digital transformation of society. The increasing autonomy of algorithmic systems and their active integration into public administration, judicial practice, and economic governance raise the question of whether artificial intelligence may be recognized as an independent subject of law. The study draws a distinction between the ontological and normative status of artificial intelligence, thereby avoiding the conflation of technological autonomy with moral subjectivity.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence; legal subjectivity; legal responsibility; algorithmic governance; digital transformation; philosophy of law; autonomy; electronic personhood.

Introduction

The digital transformation of contemporary society is accompanied by a profound restructuring of social, legal, and institutional regulatory mechanisms. The integration of algorithmic systems into public administration, judicial decision-making, financial markets, healthcare, and education has led to the emergence of a new architecture of decision-making, in which a significant portion of analytical and predictive functions is delegated to artificial intelligence systems. Under these conditions, not only the technological infrastructure of society is changing, but also the philosophical and legal understanding of agency and responsibility.

The growing autonomy of algorithmic systems based on machine learning and neural network models intensifies the problem of their normative status. Modern AI systems are capable of self-learning, decision-making under conditions of uncertainty, and generating recommendations that affect human rights and

EduVision: Journal of Innovations in Pedagogy and Educational Advancements
Volume 2, Issue 2, February 2026
brightmindpublishing.com
ISSN (E): 3061-6972

freedoms. At the same time, such autonomy remains functional in nature and is not accompanied by consciousness, moral reflection, or intentionality. This raises a fundamental question: should artificial intelligence be regarded as an independent legal subject, or merely as a complex instrument of human activity? This issue becomes particularly acute in the context of the distribution of legal responsibility. Algorithmic decisions may result in material damage, discrimination, violations of fundamental rights, or other adverse consequences. However, within a complex technological ecosystem, responsibility appears "distributed" among developers, operators, users, and the state. There is a risk of normative dilution of responsibility, where none of the participants in the digital chain bears it in full. Ongoing debates concerning the potential legal subjectivity of artificial intelligence, including the concept of "electronic personhood," further reinforce this uncertainty.

The scientific novelty of the present study lies in distinguishing between the ontological and normative status of artificial intelligence. It proposes differentiating between the philosophical understanding of the subject as a bearer of consciousness, free will, and moral responsibility, and the legal construction of the subject as a bearer of rights and obligations. This distinction enables a critical assessment of the possibility of recognizing artificial intelligence as a subject of law and determining the limits of such recognition without undermining the principle of personal human responsibility.

The aim of the article is to define the philosophical and legal boundaries for recognizing artificial intelligence as a subject and to develop a model of distributed responsibility under conditions of algorithmic governance of social processes. Achieving this aim involves analyzing classical conceptions of the subject, examining the technological nature of autonomous systems, and formulating an original conception of the legal status of artificial intelligence as an instrument with an enhanced degree of autonomy.

The problem of the subject occupies a central place in the history of philosophy and law. In the classical tradition, the subject is conceived as an autonomous, rational, and self-conscious being capable of free will and accountable for its actions. These characteristics constitute the foundation of both moral and legal subjectivity.

EduVision: Journal of Innovations in Pedagogy and Educational Advancements
Volume 2, Issue 2, February 2026
brightmindpublishing.com
ISSN (E): 3061-6972

Rationality is regarded as a key attribute of subjectivity. In modern European philosophy, the subject is defined through the capacity for cognition and logical reasoning. In the Kantian tradition, rationality acquires a normative dimension: the human being, as a rational agent, is capable of formulating universal moral laws and subordinating personal actions to them. Rationality thus functions not merely as a cognitive faculty but as the foundation of moral obligation.

Self-consciousness constitutes the second essential element of subjectivity. The subject recognizes itself as the source of action and is capable of reflection and evaluation of its own conduct. In classical philosophy, self-consciousness is closely linked to personal identity and the continuity of the "self." Without reflexive capacity, neither moral judgment nor the attribution of guilt is possible.

Free will within the classical understanding of the subject denotes the capacity for autonomous choice. Autonomy presupposes that the subject acts not merely under the influence of external causes but in accordance with internally adopted norms. In the Kantian tradition, freedom is interpreted as self-legislation – the capacity of reason to serve as the source of normativity.

Responsibility follows from autonomy. If the subject is free and rational, it is capable of understanding the consequences of its actions and bearing moral and legal responsibility for them. In legal theory, a subject of law is defined as a bearer of rights and obligations endowed with will and the capacity for conscious conduct. Thus, the classical model of subjectivity rests upon an anthropocentric premise: only the human being, as a morally autonomous entity, may serve as a full-fledged subject of responsibility.

The personalist tradition reinforces this position by emphasizing the uniqueness of the human person and human dignity as the foundation of legal status. The legal subject is not reduced to a purely formal construction but is grounded in the ontological status of the human being.

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, however, the classical understanding of the subject has been subjected to substantial critique. Post-structuralist and social constructivist approaches have questioned the autonomy and unity of the subject, interpreting it as a product of discursive practices, social structures, and power relations. A process of decentration occurs: the "self" ceases to function as the absolute source of meaning and action.

EduVision: Journal of Innovations in Pedagogy and Educational Advancements
Volume 2, Issue 2, February 2026
brightmindpublishing.com
ISSN (E): 3061-6972

Under conditions of digital transformation, this tendency becomes even more pronounced. Technological systems increasingly act not merely as tools but as active mediators of social processes. Algorithms participate in shaping information agendas, managing social flows, predicting behavior, and influencing administrative decision-making. This raises a critical question: does the status of the subject change under such conditions?

The technological mediator becomes a participant in social interaction, influencing the distribution of opportunities and constraints. Yet its "participation" remains functional in nature and is not accompanied by internal reflection or moral evaluation. Despite their apparent autonomy, algorithmic systems remain derivative of human design and institutional frameworks.

Contemporary philosophy observes a transition from rigid anthropocentrism toward more complex models in which human beings and technology form hybrid structures of action. Nevertheless, recognizing technological systems as full-fledged subjects would require moral autonomy -the capacity for self-determination, reflection, and responsibility. These characteristics remain exclusive attributes of the human person.

Historical-philosophical analysis demonstrates that the category of the subject is intrinsically and fundamentally linked to moral autonomy, rationality, and the capacity for responsibility. The decentration of the subject in post-classical philosophy does not eliminate its normative core but rather complicates the understanding of the conditions of action. Consequently, in addressing the issue of the legal subjectivity of artificial intelligence, it is essential to distinguish between the functional autonomy of technical systems and moral autonomy as the foundation of genuine subjectivity.

Modern artificial intelligence systems consist of complex algorithmic models primarily based on machine learning technologies and deep neural network architectures. Machine learning involves the identification of statistical patterns within large datasets and the construction of predictive models capable of adapting to new inputs. In doing so, the system does not "understand" data in a semantic sense but operates through probabilistic correlations.

Neural network models, including deep neural networks, function through mathematical optimization procedures. Their "learning" process consists in adjusting weight parameters to minimize predictive error. Even in cases of a high

EduVision: Journal of Innovations in Pedagogy and Educational Advancements
Volume 2, Issue 2, February 2026
brightmindpublishing.com
ISSN (E): 3061-6972

degree of operational autonomy, system behavior is determined by its architecture, training data, and the objective function specified by the developer.

The autonomy of contemporary AI systems is therefore functional in character: a system may operate without direct human intervention, yet it lacks self-consciousness, intentionality, and moral reflection. It does not comprehend the aims of its activity, formulate normative commitments, or engage in ethical evaluation of consequences.

Accordingly, technological autonomy is not equivalent to the philosophical autonomy of a subject.

Within legal doctrine, the possibility of recognizing artificial intelligence as an independent subject of law has been actively debated. Particular resonance was generated by the concept of "electronic personhood," discussed within the institutions of the European Parliament in the context of regulating robotics and autonomous systems.

Proponents of this concept draw an analogy with legal entities: just as a corporation lacks consciousness yet is recognized as a subject of law, artificial intelligence might be granted limited legal subjectivity for the purpose of allocating responsibility. A legal entity functions as a juridical construct created to facilitate economic and social relations.

However, the corporate analogy has fundamental limitations. A legal entity ultimately represents an association of individuals and acts through human will. Artificial intelligence does not possess collective human will and cannot be considered a bearer of interests in the proper sense. Moreover, recognizing AI as a subject risks artificially transferring responsibility from concrete individuals to a technological system.

Critics of the idea of AI legal subjectivity argue that such a model may create a normative fiction enabling participants in the digital ecosystem to evade responsibility by invoking the "autonomous decision of the algorithm."

The functional autonomy of artificial intelligence is not equivalent to ontological subjectivity. The absence of consciousness, intention, and moral autonomy prevents AI from being recognized as a полноценный subject in either the philosophical or the legal sense.

Traditional legal responsibility is grounded in three key elements: fault, causation, and intent.

EduVision: Journal of Innovations in Pedagogy and Educational Advancements
Volume 2, Issue 2, February 2026
brightmindpublishing.com
ISSN (E): 3061-6972

Fault presupposes the possibility of a conscious choice between lawful and unlawful conduct. Causation establishes the connection between the subject's action and the resulting consequences. Intent reflects the internal attitude of the person toward the act performed.

Within algorithmic systems, these categories become difficult to apply. An algorithm does not possess a mental attitude toward its actions, and the causal chain is distributed among multiple participants in the technological process.

Algorithmic governance creates a complex structure of interaction involving:

1. the developer (designer of the model and system architecture);
2. the user (who initiates the application of the algorithm);
3. the platform owner (who provides the infrastructure);
4. the state (which establishes the regulatory framework).

In cases of harm, a phenomenon of "diffusion of responsibility" arises: each participant may refer to the limited scope of their role. The algorithm, functioning as an intermediary in decision-making, becomes a kind of "black box," complicating the establishment of causal links.

Under conditions of algorithmic governance, it is therefore more appropriate to speak not of transferring responsibility to artificial intelligence, but of redistributing responsibility among the participants of the digital ecosystem.

The following model is proposed:

1. Ontological responsibility – vested exclusively in the human being as the bearer of moral autonomy.

2. Technological responsibility – assigned to the developer for system architecture, data quality, and potential model defects.

3. Operational responsibility – borne by the operator or user who decides to deploy the system.

4. Institutional responsibility – attributed to the state, which establishes normative standards and oversight mechanisms.

Such a model preserves the principle of personal responsibility and prevents the normative "depersonalization" of decision-making.

The recognition of artificial intelligence as a subject of law encounters several fundamental limitations.

EduVision: Journal of Innovations in Pedagogy and Educational Advancements
Volume 2, Issue 2, February 2026
brightmindpublishing.com
ISSN (E): 3061-6972

First, AI lacks moral autonomy and is incapable of self-legislation. Second, an algorithm does not possess intention and cannot form an internal attitude toward the action performed.

Third, it lacks the capacity for ethical reflection – that is, for understanding consequences and morally evaluating its own conduct.

Granting subject status to a machine creates the risk of relieving humans of responsibility, thereby contradicting the fundamental principles of the rule-of-law state.

The central thesis of this article is that recognizing artificial intelligence as a subject of law may generate a normative fiction that dilutes human responsibility and undermines the anthropocentric foundations of law.

Instead of recognizing artificial intelligence as a subject, it is proposed to conceptualize it as a "quasi-subject of technological action" – an instrument endowed with expanded functional autonomy but lacking moral subjectivity.

This approach entails:

- rejecting the idea of independent AI responsibility;
- introducing a regime of heightened human responsibility when deploying autonomous systems;
- institutionalizing the principle of algorithmic transparency;
- mandating auditing, testing, and explainability of decisions.

An algorithmic system should be regarded as an amplifier of human action rather than its substitute.

The conducted analysis demonstrates that artificial intelligence does not possess the philosophical attributes of subjectivity – self-consciousness, free will, and moral autonomy. Its legal status should therefore be defined as an instrument characterized by a high degree of functional autonomy.

Responsibility cannot be delegated to a machine, as it is rooted in the human capacity for conscious choice. In the context of digital transformation, a transition toward a model of distributed responsibility is required – one that preserves the personal character of legal evaluation.

A promising direction for further research lies in examining the transformation of legal consciousness and juridical culture under conditions of algorithmic governance of social processes.

EduVision: Journal of Innovations in Pedagogy and Educational Advancements
Volume 2, Issue 2, February 2026
brightmindpublishing.com
ISSN (E): 3061-6972

References

1. Abdusattarova, S. (2025). Artificial Intelligence as a Phenomenon of Contemporary Philosophy of Science and Technology. International Journal of Scientific Trends, 3(6), 77-83.
2. Bryson, J. J. (2018). Artificial intelligence and pro-social behaviour: An ethical approach to AI design. Springer.
3. Calo, R. (2016). Robots in American Law. University of Washington School of Law Research Paper, No. 2016-04.
4. Floridi, L., & Sanders, J. W. (2004). On the morality of artificial agents. Minds and Machines, 14(3), 349–379.
5. Gunkel, D. J. (2018). Robot rights. MIT Press.
6. Kant, I. (1785/1991). Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals (H. J. Paton, Trans.). Harper & Row.
7. Latour, B. (2005). Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network-theory. Oxford University Press.
8. Nagenborg, M. (2012). Autonomous systems and responsibility: Ethical and legal perspectives. Springer.
9. European Parliament. (2017). Report with recommendations to the Commission on Civil Law Rules on Robotics (2015/2103(INL)).
10. Saifnazarov, Ismail & Musaev, Fakhriddin & Khusanov, Bakhodir & Ernazarova, Yorkinoy & Xujaev, Muminjon & Bekbaev, Rauf & Ochilova, Noila. (2025). The Impact of Local Community Education on Sustainable Practices in Eco-Tourism Areas. Natural and Engineering Sciences. 10. 186-206. 10.28978/nesciences.1811117.