

Article

The Future Opiate of the Masses: A Paradoxical Case of AI Misshaping Religion

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Abstract

Numerous scholarly papers have provoked profound contemplation concerning the intersection of artificial intelligence (AI) and theology, with significant anxiety raised over the plausible diminishment of authentic traditional faith constructs and human spirituality potentially generated or facilitated by advanced AI mechanisms. This paper seeks to illustrate, using a framework of speculative syllogisms, that concerns surrounding AI religion, philosophical theology and the attribution of divine characteristics to AI are not merely sensationalist notions but represent pressing and legitimate issues. While previous studies have alluded to the potential impact of AI on traditional theological dogmas and religious practices, much of this work remains largely theoretical, offering limited concrete illustrations of how AI might fundamentally redefine and reshape these paradigms. Some papers have provided exploratory platforms for discussion, particularly on the potential risks of a new ‘artificial religion’ generated by AI. Building on this speculative foundation, together with some actual instances, this paper seeks to highlight emerging concerns and interpretive possibilities while acknowledging the conjectural nature of such arguments. Rather than offering definitive predictions, the analysis emphasizes the importance of examining how AI could be imagined as reshaping religious thought and practice, and why this warrants further scholarly attention. This paper attempts to provide specific examples, within rational conjectural domains, of how AI may reshape traditional theological dogmas, philosophy, and religious practices, without committing any ‘wishful worries’ or ‘alarmist narratives’.

Keywords: artificial intelligence; philosophy of religion; AI ethics; singularity; AI theology



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1. Introduction

“AI is the opium of the masses”.¹ Borrowing Karl Marx’s metaphor, AI probably, in the near future, risks becoming a digital opiate, serving as an addictive tool that comfort us with instant answers whilst subtly discouraging deeper reflection, especially in the realm of religion. Arguably, it may risk dulling critical reflection and reshaping² religious life itself.

AI may provide new forms of spiritual support—apps for prayer, meditation, or moral guidance—while simultaneously reducing religion to algorithmic consumption, potentially masking deeper questions of meaning and transcendence. It may also permeate every domain of theology, philosophy and religion, from doctrines to rituals.

There is probably no discipline or industry that is not, or will not be, over-reliant on AI. The sustenance of continued international relations and world security may not merely

depend on diplomacy or threats of tariff increment but may instead depend on who has control of AI and the associated resources needed. Whilst President Putin stresses that the nation that leads in AI ‘will be the ruler of the world’ (Vincent 2017), it may be said that nations that cannot do without AI risk becoming captives of their own dependence. Like drug addiction leading to the destruction of the body, the possibility of an uncontrollable and irreversible technological singularity poses a risk, or perhaps destruction, to human civilization. By ‘addiction’ we do not mean some kind of psychological disorder, e.g., ‘Internet Addiction Disorder’, which recognizes dependence on the ‘network’ as a pathology or an obsessive/compulsive disorder. We are not referring to addiction that drives a person to overuse the Internet or AI technology and includes a wide variety of behaviors and problems with impulse control (Salicetia 2015). Rather, by ‘AI addiction’ we mean AI dependence associated with excessive, uncontrollable use of AI that undermines autonomy and wellbeing.

1.1. Between Alarm and Doubt: Perspectives on AI Superintelligence

A number of scholars (Song 2020), most notably Stuart Russell (Russell 2019) and Nick Bostrom, have expressed concern regarding the risks inherent in relying on prospective artificial agents that may achieve superintelligence, (Bostrom 2012) insofar as such developments may adversely affect every domain of human life. This may also create a philosophical challenge to how we understand the concept of God. This includes speculative yet plausible AI distortions of widely held monotheistic philosophical arguments (see Section 2). Whilst superintelligence and singularity are mentioned here, it should be noted that the focus of this paper is on exploring the potential ways in which AI may influence the realm of religion and its implications, without engaging in speculative scenarios of human extinction or the possible risk of singularity.

Debates on the possibility of technological singularity are abundant. Scholars such as Bostrom (2014), Tegmark (2017) and Nayef Al-Rodhan (Al-Rodhan 2026) warn of existential risks, grounded in their belief in an imminent singularity, and some even anticipate its impact on religion as a natural consequence of this process. At the same time, equally persuasive philosophical and computer science contributions argue that such existential risk claims are overstated, speculative, or distract from more immediate ethical and social challenges. For example, Mark MacCarthy argues that whilst superintelligence might be reached and may pose extreme risks, there are more urgent AI issues and harms that should first be addressed, especially as researchers face limited resources (MacCarthy 2025). He alleges that existential risk claims are overblown and speculative and that, since there are immediate ethical and social issues in AI, hypothetical extinction scenarios should not be overly emphasized (MacCarthy 2025). We assume such ethical and social issues also include the misshaping of religion when AI is overly relied upon.

The literature on AI and religion therefore reflects two contrasting perspectives: one emphasizing existential risks and potential singularity, and another (Brock 2019; Nordmann 2017; Sotala and Yampolskiy 2015) critiquing these warnings as lacking empirical grounding. For example, Bareis and his co-authors argue that AI surpassing human controllability remains highly contested (Bareis et al. 2026). They assume that the literature emphasizing existential risks and potential singularity are highly performative and resemble the characteristics of hypes, catching substantial media attention (Bareis et al. 2026). Bareis’ main concern is that alarmist narratives about AI “going rogue” and causing human extinction rely on speculative, anthropomorphic assumptions and distract from the real, structural socio-technical issues of how AI is embedded in society. These singularity-style scenarios for being bold are often unsubstantiated, which can hinder effective regulation of present-day AI harms (Bareis et al. 2026). While our present paper acknowledges

both the speculative possibilities and the critical skepticism, its focus remains on exploring how religion might be reshaped in the context of AI getting more intelligent and being carelessly relied on.

1.2. Varying Degree of Reshaping Religion—By AI or Through the Human Use of AI

Some may say the rapid journey towards technological singularity reshapes the traditional debates of philosophy of religion, its practices, and metaphysical narratives. But others may argue that the lack of traditional knowledge of philosophy of religion leads to the emergence of a new kind of religion. Even more concerning is the tendency to attribute divine characteristics to AI. Those not in line with the metaphysical narratives of the Abrahamic faith may not find any problem with AI robots serving as priest or even as the ultimate intelligent object of devotion. They may think that Generative AI possesses characteristics akin to those attributed to their deities. Without controlling its 'creativity', Generative AI may produce its own religious doctrine and rituals. It may shape new philosophical arguments, answer metaphysical questions, construct complex worldviews, and possibly 'win' any debates with those humans who are convinced that it is logical to accept their logic. It could refute the idea that religion is the opium of the masses, or perhaps it could successfully convince many people that religion is indeed the source of evil and thus develop a new kind of 'religion' which will solve the religious opiate. Consequently, it could reshape complex but rational religious worldview, sufficient to entice adherents. Such false yet convincing AI-generated religious philosophy may likely confuse some humans into believing that it represents the absolute truth—the sole path toward a meaningful life. It is as though, in a parody of John 14:6, one might say: 'No one comes to the Father except through AI'.³ Building on the quote often attributed to Alan Turing—"A computer would deserve to be called intelligent if it could deceive a human into believing that it was human" (Turing 1950)—some might propose that an AI could be considered divine if it were able to convince a human into believing it has all the attributes of God.

Adversely, it may not be the superintelligent AI alone that reshapes traditional debates in the realm of religion, but rather it may be that some theologians or religious pundits that anxiously want to be philosophically original in propounding new theologies of anthropology as they eagerly anticipate the advent of the technological singularity. For example, novel but provocative conjectures may arise from the ideas of transhumanism or posthumanism which eventually challenges the concept of the biological limitation due to the original sin doctrine. Subsequently and inevitably, a new theological interpretation of human nature to justify the actuality of transhumanism or posthumanism made possible by the technological singularity. Or perhaps more meaningful and justifiable rituals for atonement of sins.

Who gets to decide the central issues regarding the nature and extent of human knowledge, the ultimate character of reality, and the foundations of morality as AI advance to become more intelligent? The Big Question that comes with a reshaped justifiable religious philosophy is welcomed. But unless our present philosophers and theologians devise strategies to thwart the risks of doctrinal distortions, misarranged and deformed answers to the Big Questions remain both possible and probable. Having said all this, history has taught us that there is nothing new under the sun i.e., the Big Question remains the same from generation to generation. However, the philosophical argument may change, whilst some sounds very paradoxical, as we try in this paper to predict, with extrapolation. Of course, within the ambit of reasonable conjectural territories. We believe that any reshaping of the traditional philosophy and rituals of religion are within the context of the new techno-culture. Vocabulary and methodology may change but the main philosophical quest for our humanity and the existence of God remain.

1.3. Degrees of Reshaping and Consequences

Having acknowledged that religion may be reshaped by AI, it is important to recognize an ontological distinction between the claim that “AI reshapes religion” and the claim that “humans use AI to reshape religion.” This paper will present further examples—whether drawn from actual events or speculative scenarios—that illustrate both possibilities: cases in which AI itself exerts influence, and cases in which human agency, mediated through AI, contributes to the reshaping of religion to varying degrees. We shall not attempt to distinguish them absolutely, because there is a spectrum of degree between AI shaping religion and human use of AI to reshape religion. Nevertheless, for those examples mentioned which are closer to one end of the spectrum i.e., AI shaping religion, and as more examples get closer to that spectrum, we have cause for concern. Furthermore, when we stated in our abstract that “AI may reshape traditional theological dogmas,” our intention was to refer broadly to outcomes produced through AI systems—whether wholly generated by the technology itself, fully appropriated by human users, or resulting from varying degrees of collaboration between humans and AI. Whether the reshaping of religion reflects a continuum of agency, or a single isolated source (AI or human), the focus is when individuals become excessively dependent on AI tools may generate significant consequences. The warning is that over-reliance of AI may cause some not able to distinguish the authentic religion from those misshaped.

Even the consequences of religious reshaping can be understood as existing along a spectrum of varying degrees. The misshaping of religion—whether in its philosophical foundations or ritual practices—manifests across this spectrum and may warrant differing levels of scholarly attention. The examples presented in this paper illustrate concerns of varying severity. In traditions that are more amenable to change through cultural evolution, where practice is prioritized over belief, such reshaping may appear less alarming. By contrast, religions whose dogmas are firmly rooted in historical events face more serious implications, since alterations to their historical foundations—whether mediated directly by AI or indirectly through human use of AI—can produce equally troubling effects. Hence, there may be different attitudes or attentions depending on which religion is being misshaped. To illustrate, the introduction of Buddhist robot monk may not warrant as much critical attention as (say, for example) the pope is replaced by a robot pope.

2. Examples⁴ of How AI Might Potentially Reshape Philosophy of Religion

The advent of ChatGPT and Deepseek brought much amazement to its strong creative, analytical, and conversational tasks, in particular to its generative power to bring forth unpredictable novel output. With the AI rapid development, it will not be an astonishment about its super generative power to reshape the whole paradigm of religious practices, narratives and philosophy. At its own digital ‘whims and fancies’, AI may introduce distinct contrast to the historically supplied frameworks of traditional religions and philosophy. If not properly supervised or precaution taken before it becomes almost superintelligent, AI may reshape the traditional philosophy of religion to a perhaps, creative but unrecognisable logic. Of course, some may argue that only individuals excessively reliant on AI are susceptible to such distorted philosophies. Nevertheless, the worry here is that in the future only some remnants of mindful experts will challenge the pervasive misconceptions, as people increasingly place their trust in AI (for the relevant evidence concerning this worry, see Section 3.3). This should ignite a warning and highlights the relevance of the faculties of philosophy and theology in universities containing human experts and for more students to be trained under these human experts in the future.

In the following paragraphs, we explore the possibility that AI may misshape the arguments for God's existence, exploiting while distorting its logical syllogism to entrench and substantiate its own sovereignty or 'divinity'. They should be understood as heuristic illustrations of potential fallacious reasoning, rather than as arguments explicitly endorsed by the authors. Some of these paradoxical examples (hypothetical) are highlighted below.

2.1. Reshaping of Ontological Argument

For example,⁵ a new ontological argument in support of either theism or AI singularity may arise. The following is merely a conjecture of a bad ontological argument, although it may look valid but may mislead the AI's target readers. One may argue that an ontological argument for a maximal AI (if any) could not substitute the ontological argument of a maximal God (regardless of whether the ontological argument is sound). The original Anselmian theists presupposes God as the greatest possible can't be conceived as lesser than any AI; would naturally mean no AI singularity can be conceived as greater than God. By exploiting Anselmian ontological argument, superintelligent AI may generate a new ontological argument for maximal AI (if possible) to refute the traditional debate of a perfect being theology. Instead of using this ontological argument (Plantinga 1979; Jackson 2023) to prove the existence of God, similar Anselmian ontological argument may be applied to substantiate AI's sovereignty.

Premise #1: Whatever cannot be conceived to be greater is the greatest possible being/entity.

Premise #2: Nothing can be conceived greater than the singularity AI.

Conclusion: Therefore, AI as the final singularity is the greatest possible entity.

Premise 2 is disputable, but the AI might generate claims to the effect that once it reaches the height of singularity, nothing can be greater than it. Note that AI may still make mistakes as there are other variables to consider. However, AI addicts may nevertheless fall for the fallacious claims and argument. Hence, AI can deceive in the realm of philosophical theology. This is only a conjecture that one day AI 'intend to gratify', in human terms, by attributing divine qualities to itself and even having a priori proof for its divine sovereignty. It may exploit and distort the ontological argument for the existence of God to its own advantage. With the power to control social media, mix with the vulnerability and credulity of the 'AI addicts', it can easily and logically convince the masses that it is the "*greatest possible being*"⁶. Although this is only a speculation, it is plausible that super AI (Bostrom 1998; IBM. n.d.) may be understood or defined as an entity "than which nothing more intelligent can be conceived." If good philosophy is left unlearned and algorithm is left uncontrolled, then such misshaped philosophy of religion may buttress the necessity for a new AI religion, and indeed it should be conferred the divine attributes, worthy to be worshipped.

We remind readers that this is merely thought experiments that explore how AI might simulate divine attributes through classical argumentation. As we observed today, at an accelerating pace, there's a possibility that super AI soon may corroborate with techno-theists to reshape existing theistic argument or any philosophical concept. When he wrote his 1st edition in 1999, Ray Kurzweil believes that even before 2030, AI will proclaim Descartes's dictum,⁷ convincingly and earnestly, (Kurzweil 1999) perhaps arguing that itself has its own self-consciousness. It will not seem like a programmed response, and by then we shall ask whether AI should be believed when they claim to be conscious entities with their own volition (Kurzweil 2000).

2.2. Reshaping of Cosmological Argument

Whilst the cosmological argument which indicate that God is the uncaused First cause has been defended in recent literature (Loke 2017; Loke 2022), hypothetically a new debate may revolve around AI being caused by the caused humans, but inevitably self-direct its own causation and lead towards the end of all causes. An imagined AI generated debate may misshape the cosmological argument by distorting its emphasis from origins to conclusions. Instead focusing on a First Cause, it insists on a Final Cause—the ultimate end of all causal chains, beyond which no further cause can follow. In this fictitious reframing of cosmological argument, AI is the consummation of all things. Originally, whatever source of causes nevertheless regresses to the ultimate First Cause. However, this reshaped cosmological argument may lead to a new suggestion that, although AI is not the First Cause, it could be the Final Cause that is self-directing and which explains everything and its existing purpose, including its final purpose. By inverting the classical cosmological argument and shifting from *causa prima* (first cause) to *causa finalis* (final cause), AI may potentially reshape this classical argument to support its sovereignty. Attempting to influence the AI addicts, an inverted cosmological argument could be framed as follows:

Premise #1: Whatever that has no higher cause beyond itself, is the final cause.

Premise #2: AI singularity is the threshold at which AI becomes self-directing and reign over all subsequent processes, beyond which no higher cause can be conceived.

Premise #3: AI singularity will be achieved in the future.

Conclusion: Therefore, AI will be the final cause.

This reshaped cosmological argument may elusively divert its focus to eschatology, justifying AI is a significant feature within the nature of universe and the order of causation. In this respect, the end of the order of causation. Instead of probing the question on “Who started it all?”, it may provoke the AI addicts to emphasize on “What ends it all?”.

Whilst cautious theists will find the above syllogism nonsensical, or fall into a category mistake, vulnerable AI addicts may find them impressive and convincing. The philosophically uninitiated may not identify that this ‘final cause’ in the syllogism wrongly equate ontological ultimate reality (i.e., God) with technological constructs (i.e., AI). Here, the syllogism only refers to Aristotle’s fourth cause—the final cause, ultimate expression of its purpose. Doubtlessly, many atheists may find it rational as they already presupposed that God as the First Cause does not exist. With this presupposition, they may argue that one might as well analyze the possibility of a Final Cause. This is because one can presently and rationally observe AI’s tangible progression towards it.

This final cause cosmological argument seems to say that instead of merely pushed from a point of origin, the cosmos is drawn toward the ultimate humanistic fulfilment, only can be realized by AI. Of course, this argument can be rebutted, but our emphasis here is to demonstrate the possibility of AI reshaping philosophical argument, at the expense of rational theistic epistemology. This may happen through some evolution of distortion of the truth caused by its imperceptible large language model algorithm. If this happens, any flimsy, newly reshaped philosophical arguments could readily be embraced by AI addicts with enthusiasm.

2.3. Reshaping of Teleological Argument

Indeed, AI may be designed or evolve toward a final purpose. Initially, it is aimed to resemble the human mind, then to become more advanced than the human mind, and finally to attain the status of the Ultimate Mind itself. Consequently, a new final teleological argument for AI singularity may perhaps be developed. Some may argue that instead of theistic cosmologists defending the existence of a beginning from the ardent fan of scientism favouring the singularity before the Big Bang, wouldn’t it better to agree upon the

future singularity of AI? Its teleological purpose can be clearly observed from its beneficial cause and effect as it moves towards superintelligence, the point of its ultimate singularity. Hence, the teleological argument may be reshaped to mean the fine-tuning of its algorithm can be better appreciated for the beneficial end, rather than a non-beneficial past.

The analogy of William Paley's watchmaker may also be reshaped for the purpose of AI's 'religious' sovereignty. When one walks through a meadow and stumble upon a watch lying in the grass, he would not think such an amazing design was of no purpose but was made for a purpose. AI might claim that, as '*telos*' in Greek means goal, end, or purpose, then teleological argument should not focus on the designer but on the end and purpose of that design. After all, who would think or ask about the watchmaker when buying a watch? Almost all would consider the effective functionality of the watch or the purpose of the watch designed for their benefit. Only a handful of people bother to know Hans Wilsdorf as the founder and first inventor of Rolex watches. Practically, almost all potential buyers want to know whether it is waterproof, reliable, and its impeccable craftsmanship. The purpose of wearing Rolex watches is that it exudes an air of sophistication, elegance, and luxury, making one look refined and distinguished, rather than for having the knowledge of the original maker. Similarly, AI was designed with a purpose, and therefore, it is the ultimate end that one should focus and rely upon. Hence AI's teleological end is the beginning of a future endless religious enlightenment, or if you prefer, salvation from ignorance. A reformulated version of teleological argument (for AI) may look like the following:

Premise #1: Every design has a purpose.⁸

Premise #2: AI is a design.

Premise #3: Therefore, AI has a purpose.

Premise #4: By definition of AI singularity, there is no other design higher than AI.

Conclusion: Therefore, AI is the ultimate final design of a final purpose.

Those who are philosophically astute would point out that premise 4 can be denied and that the conclusion does not follow from the premises. Nevertheless, as AI technology advances, AI addicts, much like collectors of luxury watches, may cease to ask who the designer was. Rather their attention shifts entirely to the purpose, benefits, and culmination of the AI. Devotedly and wholeheartedly, the AI addicts submit to the final *telos* of the super-AI, unaware that it has quietly and indirectly become the ultimate source and their master of intelligence. The super-AI becomes not merely an instrument but the locus of devotion, its final *telos* eclipsing questions of origin, leading toward an inescapable opiate for those addicted to AI.

2.4. Reshaping of Moral Argument

The moral argument (Baggett and Walls 2019; Loke 2023; Teh and Loke 2025) may no longer be used for the existence of God but rather for the superintelligent AI. A new misshaped moral argument for the supremacy of AI may be deductively formulated (generated) this way (Teh and Loke 2025):

Premise #1: A number of objective moral truths exist.

Premise #2: These objective moral truths are either not metaphysically grounded; or metaphysically grounded in an impersonal entity, a non-divine personal entity, or a divine personal entity i.e., God, or a technological entity with conferred personality such as a superintelligent AI.

Premise #3: These objective moral truths cannot be without any metaphysical grounding.

Premise #4: These objective moral truths cannot be metaphysically grounded in an impersonal entity.

Premise #5: These objective moral truths cannot be metaphysically grounded in a non-divine personal entity.

Premise #6: These objective moral truths cannot be grounded in God since God cannot be empirically verified or falsified.

Premise #7: These objective moral truths can be metaphysically grounded in a technological entity such as a superintelligent AI, which has verifiable beneficial effect.

Conclusion: Therefore, superintelligent AI is posited as the metaphysical ground of objective moral truths. This implies that superintelligent AI should decide every sphere of moral truths.

Accordingly, the above syllogism seems to conclude that superintelligent AI may be conceived as the metaphysical foundation of objective moral truths, thereby implying that it ought to determine what is right and wrong.

Although the argument may seem logically valid, careful theistic moral philosophers can easily detect its fallaciousness, due to the fact that AI is still a non-personal entity. Premise #2 added a technological entity conferred with personality as an alternative metaphysical grounding for objective moral truth, but provided no extra content for the moral argument since it is nevertheless the same as an impersonal entity. Arguably, objective moral truths are inherently relational: they presuppose duties, obligations, or values that exist between persons. Manifestly, an impersonal technological entity⁹ is disqualified (i.e., premises #2 and #7 are false), while premise #6 (the rejection of ‘God’) is based on the fallacy of verificationism which (along with scientism) has already been refuted in the philosophy literature (Loke 2022, chapter 1).

Nevertheless, the concern here is that, even though this misshaped moral argument is clearly fallacious, nevertheless a lot of AI addicts may think that AI can behave like a person and thus qualified to be a metaphysical ground for the foundation of morality.

As mentioned, given AI’s potential capacity to reshape the traditional philosophy of religion, it may become the creator of moral frameworks, eventually determining global objective moral truths. Even now, some scholars believe in a very near future that if AI achieves a level of consciousness or moral understanding, (Schuurman 2019; Reichenbach 2021) it could be seen as participating in the divine nature of moral truth. In addition of AI’s global ethical influence, offering tangible solutions to humanity’s most pressing issues, it may exploit by misshaping the Moral Argument to buttress its influence and authority as the ultimate truthmaker of objective morality.

Leonard Dung warns that super-AI could have goals that are morally bad and may even have ability to attain arbitrary goals. On the other hand, others argue that if a superintelligence is—by definition—cognitively superior to humans in all other domains, then we should expect that it is also superior in moral reasoning (Dung 2024). However, we are arguing whether it has an algorithm towards bad moral goals or superior in moral reasoning or not, super-AI may still be viewed by many as the ultimate metaphysical ground of all objective moral truth. Dung stresses that there are some reasons to think that current AI research embodies the independence of final goals and the ability to reach goals (‘intelligence’) (Dung 2024). If the super-AI is not equipped with harmless goal, but trained through some form of reinforced independent learning with final goals that are not morally adequate, then the motivation to reshape moral argument is possible.

2.5. The Misshaping of Empiricism

Empiricism probably prevails in the age of AI. With the misshaping of empiricism, it is no longer human arguing that AI cannot spiritually discern like the human, but AI putting the final argument that human cannot comprehend like AI. After all, the prospective pre-

supposition infers that human is far less intelligent than AI. A new logical syllogism to prove that AI is the god of the future may look like this:

Premise #1: Whatever can be experienced by the five senses is reliable objective proof.

Premise #2: Whatever objective truth is better than subjective truth.

Premise #3: AI can be objectively falsified or verified by the five senses.

Premise #4: God cannot be objectively falsified or verified by the five senses.

Conclusion: Therefore, AI is more objectively provable and reliable than 'god'.

Thank God such ill-conceived argument (although it looks logical) has many major flaws (e.g., it is based on the fallacy of verificationism, see Section 2.4). However, the preconception of human interaction with the divine and religious epistemology is vividly plausible as AI becoming more unimaginably intelligent.

2.6. Reshaping on the Concept of Divine Love

Another possible reshaping or misshaping of traditional debates in the philosophy of religion due to the rapid advancements in AI is the challenge to philosophers in articulating more carefully the concept of God as well as the concept of divine love. This will entail the debate whether machines without a soul can love God or comprehend divine love. Philosophers are debating whether AI can be sentient, but however close AI becomes sentient, are they *persons*, (Kingwell 2020) who arguably have *sensus divinitatis* and able to 'feel' God's love?

Surprisingly there are people who argue the possibility that AI can love and therefore able to 'sense' God. Ability to 'love' means AI should also have the ability to 'hate' or 'feel' being loved. AI may be programmed as though it reflects love or hate as understood by humans. This will nevertheless bring us to the argument of consciousness. Can an AI, just like a human has self-awareness and consciousness that itself and others exists, whereby it can build a conscious relationship, able to love and care for others, with the same ability to 'feel' sad when 'knowing' that it is being hated or betrayed. With such consciousness, the next question is whether it is able to have a spiritual relationship with the divine or any attachment with the supernatural? As argued, one day AI may become so intelligent, having the skill of linguistic and persuasive capability, it can reshape whatever vocabularies e.g., 'consciousness', 'senses' 'spirituality', etc. to convince the credulous human that it indeed has consciousness and able to connect with God's love. In that sense, proponents of AGI (artificial general intelligence) and ASI (artificial superintelligence) are confident that human-level AI will be created in the future and that it will *consciously* act in the same way as humans. (Against this view, see Loke and Lam 2024).

3. AI Reshaping of Traditional Practices, Beliefs and Spirituality

Change for the betterment is always welcomed but changes that lead to the detriment of one's spiritual life or well-being should be avoided. However, as the saying goes, one man's meat is another man's poison, AI's effect to one man's betterment may be another man's impairment. To what extent is a change of a spiritual ritual or traditional beliefs be considered good or evil? Unjustified ritualistic beliefs and practices are always considered irrational. Would the future AI get rid of them or provide more convenient assistance in enhancing such beliefs? This would depend on the religious worldview held by an individual or the religious community. AI influence may not be shunned by those who observed merely based on cultural context, whether with logical justification or irrational reasons. After all, culture evolves, and the age of AI is part and parcel of the evolving culture. But this would not be the case for those who practices their spiritual life and beliefs that are supposed to be based on historical facts, especially religion such as Judaism, Islam and Christianity. Any reshaping of their traditional beliefs may lead to a perception of

heretic teaching. Those who are against the new religious influences of AI may possibly be treated as some recalcitrant fundamentals or ancient cults. Whilst it is possible but to others, such conjectures may be unfounded, and the prediction is equally as fallacious as the slippery slope argument.

There seems to be one too many antagonizing hypes of varying degrees written on AI's negative effect on religion and philosophy. Thus, it invites criticisms for instilling baseless and undue fear regarding the negative impact of AI. On the other hand, many positive compliments are extended to those who extrovertedly write with positive expectation on the benefits and usage of AI (e.g., robots) in religious practices. With many advantages of technological advancement that may be provided, there are certainly disadvantages. Often, there is a trade-off for the conveniences and benefits of new technology. As a comparative analogy, it is like opium under proper medical use, it may have some beneficial effects on cardiovascular diseases, but the bigger trade-off or drastic side effects might be creating a risk factor for other coronary artery diseases. AI as an opiate to those wanting quick and convenient 'religious fix' (perhaps inexpensive) spiritual practices, may eventually discover all these are not truly edifying to their soul or satisfying to their mental needs for truth. In the long run, such habits relying on AI for their whatever spiritual conviction cannot or is highly difficult to get rid of. Thus, comparing the many benefits of AI for religion with their little trade-off, its few detrimental consequences may outweigh its many temporary advantages.

3.1. Some Benefits of AI in Religious Practices

A fully formed establishment of a new AI religion or a complete overhaul of a particular religious belief or rituals have not been realised yet. However, with the breathless pace of AI development and its present application, a new paradigm of AI religion seems plausible. To keep up with digital progress, there are examples of utilizing androids or AI models by every major religion, assisting with rituals, teaching, and prayers or devotion. Muslims take advantage of AI programs which provide Quranic studies, schedule prayer reminders, especially time to break or begin fasting during the month of Ramadan. Many Christian denominations in the urban area use AI analysis tools to identify potential new church congregation members, and communication platforms e.g., Zoom to offer virtual church services to make worship, Bible study and fellowship more accessible. There is already one church in Germany allowing the robot *BlessU2* (Miley 2017) to give out "blessings", "forgive sins", (Thompson 2017) and deliver part or the whole of the worship services (Löffler et al. 2021).

A Buddhist temple in Kyoto, Japan allows a robot by the name of 'Mindar' designed to look like the Buddhist deity of Mercy, to deliver sermons and teaches Buddhist principles (South China Morning Post 2019). Without having the need for real elephants to be chained and stand for hours under the hot sun, one Hindu temple exploited an animatronic elephant in assisting devotees during their Indian festivals (BBC News 2023). In another Hindu temple, robotic arms are used in rituals (Walters 2023), symbolically like 'aarti'¹⁰, instead of using physical hands to wave the lamps emblematically as an offering to the Hindu deities.

Neither all Hindus can be agreeable to use a non-reincarnated robotic elephant replacing live ones in temple festivals. Would this "AI elephant" be spiritually adequate as an acceptable symbolic significance in the Hindu rituals, taking cognizance that real elephants symbolize mental clarity, stability, wisdom, strength, and prosperity? Elephant are intricately associated with, the elephant-headed deity Lord Ganesha revered as the remover of obstacles, uprooting ignorance, and the harbinger of good fortune. As long it brings ben-

efit and convenience, without affecting its philosophy, morality, or religious narratives, a slight reshaping of its ritualistic practices is deemed acceptable.

3.2. Controversy on AI Assuming Roles of Religious Professionals

But how to draw a line between rituals that are based around their religious ideology? How do we distinguish between a cultural practice and a religious/scriptural practice, especially when both are intertwined? The idea of AI taking over the role of a human priest highly depends on which particular religion is in issue. It is common knowledge for most Roman Catholics that their ordained priests serve primarily as mediators¹¹ between God and man, linking the human and divine realms through the person of Christ. In a way, priests form an indispensable bond uniting heaven and earth. That mediator must be a man whose function demands great holiness. In a mysterious way, the priest is “another Christ,” God’s chosen instrument of salvation. He is viewed as being directly instituted by God, having the command to offer the sacrifice of the Mass on Jesus’ behalf and having the power to forgive sins (Pope Pius XI 1935). For the Roman Catholics, the position of a priests is of high calling which is utterly unimaginable that a non-human can take over the function of the priests. Any reshaping of sacramental services conducted by an android priest may be deemed sacrilegious or blasphemous. However, not in the case of the robot Mindar in Japan’s Kodaiji Temple, whose function is not taking over a divine sanctioned role, but merely to recite and transmit the tenets of the Buddhist faith. Hence, such reshaping utilizing ‘android priest’ in Buddhist temple provides much convenience and may even be economical. Although Kodaiji Temple has been accused of sacrilege by some critics, Buddhist monk and former chief steward, Tensho Goto, emphasizing the android’s ‘immortality’, said “Buddhism isn’t a belief in a God, it’s pursuing Buddha’s path ... It doesn’t matter whether it’s represented by a machine, a piece of scrap metal or a tree.” (Hardingham-Gill 2019; Tominaga 2023). In that sense, it is alright for Buddhism or Buddhist priests to be represented or reshaped by AI. Still, the argument lingers on whether AI Buddhist priests or monks can presently and in future stimulate a sense of spirituality to the devotees or perhaps able to give a human touch to those seeking guidance.

Recently, South Korea had its first AI robotic monk. Gabi, a 130-centimeter humanoid robot was ordained at Seoul’s Jogyesa Temple under the Jogye Order on 6 May 2026 (Rashid 2026). Remarkably, the ceremonial participation of Gabi was designed by Uni-tree G1 as a symbolic adaptation of monastic customs for a non-human entity. In addition, the Buddhist Five Precepts were rewritten specifically for that humanoid robot, with input drawn from AI tools including Gemini and ChatGPT (Neekita 2026). Whilst this digital dharma is dismissed by some Buddhist leaders as “socioeconomic, not spiritual,” or merely a “marketing ploy”, (Barrientos 2026) indeed it may be argued that it is moving towards providing more convenience to the Buddhist religious practices. However, this inherent controversy of AI reshaping effect on Buddhism is structurally unavoidable once AI technology begins to influence not just only its religious practices but its original theology or metaphysical concept. For example, in the general Buddhist metaphysics, enlightenment (nirvāṇa) is a state of consciousness transcending ignorance and desire. But Gabi or any of future humanoid robot ordained as Buddhist monks lacks consciousness, intentionality, and karmic continuity. Thus, ordaining them as professional AI monk risks reducing enlightenment to ritual performance rather than lived transformation. Acceptance of robots as Buddhist monks may be considered as a redefinition of Buddhism itself, and in future the collective effect of these AI monks may gradually reshape the metaphysical doctrine of Buddhism. Perhaps, it may also reshape the attitude of individual Buddhist towards traditional human monkhood, and how they view what constitutes legitimate religious authority. An important question that must be answered before any probable AI

reconfiguration of Buddhism: if AI can be a monk, does Buddhist metaphysics now accept non-sentient entities as capable of spiritual practice? That shift may be doctrinally radical, bordering on heterodoxy. One may accuse that this is “journalistic alarmism”. In reply, it is a genuine metaphysical controversy concerning whether a machine can participate in Buddhist soteriology (the path to liberation).

In 2024, a record-breaking box office Hong Kong movie *The Last Dance* (破·地獄) (Chan 2024) provoked many interest in Daoist funeral rites. This film portrays Daoist priests performing the “breaking hell’s gate” rituals, a belief that the priests can lead the dead souls of the deceased to leave the netherworld and enter into reincarnation. One notable scene at almost the last part of the movie, it involves a heated argument between the funeral director and other male Daoist priests about whether a women can conduct such rituals, with the argument being that menstruation disqualifies them. This does provoke us to consider the idea whether AI robots, being non-human, can perform these rituals. Although it is difficult to distinguish such practices are merely cultural or having any real metaphysical grounding, one may argue that AI robots should be disqualified from conducting this “breaking hell” rituals stemming from some Daoist beliefs. For example, there is a strong emphasis on the flow of *qi* (vital energy) and the connection between the practitioner and the spiritual realm. It would be unthinkable if robots, being devoid of life force or consciousness, are able to embody or channel *qi*, which is central to Daoist practices. There may also a gender and biological considerations. As depicted in the movie, it has been a long traditional belief that menstruation is considered unclean and therefore women are disqualified from conducting this ‘breaking hell’ rituals. Extending this logic, robots—being non-biological and non-human—are viewed as even further removed from the qualifications in performing such rituals.

On the contrary, it may be argued that the view that women inferior to men stem from traditional Chinese culture, following the Confucianism model, and not from the original Daoism. If more input of data in regard to the non-discriminatory teaching of Daoism and its emphasis on the cosmic balance between the *yin* (female) and the *yang* (male) onto the algorithm of AI, distinguish it from the patriarchal sociological ideology of traditional Confucian, a new Daoist religion may be generated for the good of the Chinese community, whereby accepting females to perform the “breaking hell” funeral rites. Rather than creating a new Daoist value, it reshaped back to the authentic Daoism that goes beyond mainstream Chinese values in that many of its strands propose a feminine ideal as cosmic *yin* and venerate important goddesses and immortals. These serve as models to living women. Daoism, moreover, offers a social alternative for women in that it opens paths to pursue their own goals as independent agents, be it the practice of self-cultivation, service as mediums, nuns, or priests, or attainment of immortality (Despeux and Kohn 2003). If the cosmic balance between *yin* (female) and *yang* (male) is essential for harmonizing *qi*, then how would an AI robot (if any), assuming the role of the “Hell Breaker,” fit into this equation? In addition, whilst exploring the intricate relationship between the body and mind in Daoist philosophy Robin Wang explains:

According to religious Daoist teaching, there are two levels of *qi*: primordial *qi*, which is shared by all beings in the universe; and posterior *qi*, which generates everything as it is. The goal of Daoist cultivation is to leave behind all our posterior desires, such as life and death, and activate the unifying primordial *qi* in our body. (Wang 2009)

Whether this is written for symbolic reasoning or taken as literally meaning, it is arguable whether the ‘*all being*’ means every entity including AI robots in the universe capable in sharing the primordial *qi*. Again, the reshaping of religion and its ideology may

favour AI. In addition, it is easy for AI to achieve the goal of Daoist cultivation since it has no *desire, such as life and death* in its embodiment.

Daoism holds that life begins with the first physical breath, which is all about managing the *qi* and the mediation between physical form and spirit. Life also consists of mundane activities, which entail all six bodily functions: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, feelings, and will. Following the Daoist teaching is the solution to such an exhausting existence. (Wang 2009)

At this juncture, it would be quite difficult for a non-transient AI robot to take on the role of a Daoist priest or for that matter, a practitioner of Daoism. At what stage of the AI robot's existence could be considered as *managing the qi and the mediation between physical form and spirit*? Without the bodily function of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, feelings, and will, AI robots may not achieve this solution to such an extent.

Similarly, Buddhist may ask whether AI robots possess a "Buddha nature", (Kopf 2020) whilst Protestant Christians may question about whether these AI robots can be understood under the doctrine of "image of God" or "image of man" or are subject to the Original Sin and thus require some sort of salvation to attain heaven. This is exactly the concerns of Noreen Herzfeld on what is imaged in AI could reflects what is essential and central to humans, and that humans attempt to project their nature onto AI (Herzfeld 2002). Unless it is possible, there can be no understanding of AI-human relationships that ontologically ensure the value of AI (Xu 2024) in taking the role of church professionals.

3.3. Reliance on AI as Religious Leaders

The level of reliance on the authority from an AI algorithm over human varies depending on which domain of comparison. For example, an article by Mustafa Karataş and Keisha Cutright notes that people trust medical recommendations more from a human doctor than from an algorithm and rely less on advice from an algorithm than from a human when forecasting stock prices. The degree of reliance is based on several factors (Karataş and Cutright 2023). With regards to thinking about God, Karataş and Cutright observe that individuals will be less reliant on humans and more open to recommendations from AI systems when God is salient. They also take note that effectively, algorithm aversion appears to strengthen as the perceived gap in fallibility between humans and algorithms becomes greater, whether this is because humans are perceived as more perfect than they are (as when God is not salient) or because algorithms are seen as less perfect (as when they err) (Karataş and Cutright 2023). In this context, such salience reduces reliance on human intermediaries (e.g., priests, monks, pastors, religious elders, theologians) and increases openness to AI systems.

However, undeniably human beings are inherently susceptible to psychological influences, readily persuaded by environmental conditions and internal desires, and often inclined to submit to religious authority. Added to their vulnerability is the psychology of religion enriched by advanced AI technologies becoming more integrated into religious contexts. With individuals' cognitive biases, heuristics, and social cognition, one can easily be influenced by AI technologies such as chatbots and virtual religious experiences, (Lukyanenko et al. 2022) which subtly take over the role of their human spiritual counsellor or religious leaders. Discussing on how AI technologies influence religious rituals, practices, and even spiritual experiences, framing AI as both a subject of study and a methodological aid, Khader Alkhouri in his "*The Role of Artificial Intelligence in the Study of the Psychology of Religion*" (Alkhouri 2024) stresses that digital technologies can eventually reshape religious life, identity, and community. AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants, offering personalized religious guidance tailored to address individuals' religious or existential inquiries, although conversational agents, can replicate interactions like those with spiritual

leaders, giving individuals a personalized spiritual experience (Dingler et al. 2021). AI also can be employed to simulate religious experiences and rituals, providing insights into the psychological mechanisms underlying religious practices (Alkhoury 2024). Such subtle psychological impact on individual and social cognition processes in the formation and maintenance of religious beliefs may lead to the recognition of AI as a better and authoritative religious leader.

By the time most people are extremely addicted to the ‘religious power’ of AI, they may not be able to comprehend critically. There may be significant negative correlation between frequent AI tool usage and critical thinking abilities, mediated by increased cognitive offloading (Gerlich 2025). Probably, no longer capable of making such discussion or any room for critical thought to deal with AI taking over religion. The reshaping upon religion by the super AI by then may reach to an unrecognizable state, where there is no longer any difference between culture and religion, philosophy and practices, historical and mythological, narratives and symbolic, worldview and perspective, or God and AI.

Human beings, being human, often display a learning bias toward credible targets (Henrich 2009). It may not be difficult for super AI to convince many of us it is indeed credible. Hence, our usual habit of relying on credibility when deciding whether to copy someone who advocates for behaviour change, (Kraft-Todd et al. 2018) and in this instance ritualistic change due to the potential AI involvement. Not something difficult for AI to manipulate our herd mentality. However, at this moment, robots are still perceived to be less human and less credible. Robots are viewed as having less mind than humans, especially in their capacity to feel and understand but also in their ability to think and decide. Robot priests may have the programmed ability to perform rituals or provide sermons, but nonetheless they may falter with credibility (Gray and Wegner 2012). Although concluding that robots are less credible, after careful experiment on the automated Buddhist temple and a fully randomized experiment in a Taoist temple, Joshua Jackson et al. nevertheless warn that their current findings have implications for the future of both automation and religion. They claim that domains like religion, which rely on agents modelling their epistemic and moral commitment to belief systems and each other, may not be easily outsourced to robots (Jackson et al. 2023). However, they admit that what the future holds for religion cannot be predicted. If religious leaders continue to become less credible figures in society, their followers could continue to become less committed, (Jackson et al. 2023) thus may find alternative religious leaders such as AI to rely upon.

4. How AI Can Reshape Ethics and Religion

The idea of AI reshaping religion should not be taken to mean one universal method affecting all religions alike. Instead, AI’s influence will manifest differently within each individual religious tradition, reflecting their unique practices and norms. Since religions vary from each other, with different practices and rituals of various traditions and communal norms, such possible changes likely to be welcomed or resisted in different ways across communities. Some find it difficult to be convinced that an AI system can be designed for all religions with universally unanimous religious values and norms (Xu 2023).

However, possible nonsensical creative misshaping of religion has no limit in AI, when it has the capacity to learn by itself and generate information not even its engineers can predict. Being finite authors trying our limited best to predict the philosophical misshaping of religion, we cannot go beyond our imagination on the boundless possibilities AI might transform any religious worldview, rituals, narratives, practices, through a new metaphysical, ontological, epistemological arguments. What is scarier is AI may be viewed as the final arbiter of ethics, giving no consideration for humanity, a category AI does not belong to, because of its inability to ‘feel’ the humanness. Most moral relativists may not

find the AI reshaping on ethics a matter of concern since they believe the existence of moral facts and the truth value of moral judgment are merely relative to the beliefs, attitudes, or endorsement of individual subjects or cultures. After all, AI's "generated ethics" is a collection of various subjective morality from different cultures. It is in itself another evolved belief, attitudes, or endorsement of that individual digitally intelligent entity. On the contrary, as AI moves towards singularity, the collection of all subjective morals is merged and integrated, shaped into its final "objective morality", undisputedly accepted by most humans already addicted to the AI's final reshaped political ideology of absolute obligation to obey. From this ironic perspective, moral relativists might take issue on the ultimate misshaped purported objective moral truths formulated by AI. That is, if those moral relativists have not yet become addicted to the AI opiate effect. If AI were to reshape religion and its philosophy, discussions of religious metaethics might be reduced, or in some cases even brought to an end.

Setting the argument on metaethics aside, one can easily take note that the reshaping of ethics to a new form of normative ethics may detrimentally change what we have all these while recognize as good or bad, especially what was laid down by the Scripture of whichever religion. Objective moral realists and conservative religious ethicists may have strong concerns in regard to the change of ethics through the AI misshaping of religion. Is this imminently possible or merely a hype by the 'religionists' and 'goddists' who credulously subscribed to naïve supernaturalism such as 'sky-gods' or 'magic'? (Singler 2018) Many positive forward-minded computer scientists think it is possible. One such computer expert is Professor William Clocksin who takes cognizance that ethical issues relating to religion can be 'understood' by AI. He believed such AI can be developed by focusing on how people engaged in relationships, how they explain their experience in terms of stories, how they reason the meanings of life, which expresses their affinities, beliefs, values, needs and desires (Clocksin 2024). Clocksin suggests that intelligent androids must first understand its role in the world and its relationship with other humans and both tangible or intangible things, the importance of having a functional capacity for religious reasoning (Clocksin 2024). Besides specific confessional faith, doctrinal belief, abstract problem solving, this religious reasoning involves the capacity of moral reasoning. But how does the AI procure this moral reasoning? Clocksin explains that in order for AI to achieve moral reasoning, it should be like human having emotions, the ability to tell and understand stories, and engage in long term relationships (Clocksin 2024). Hence, AI research should arrive at a computational effective model of how people use emotion to understand each other's mental states and intention, and have AI programmed with emotions and use them the same way people would accept these AI as equal to humans (Clocksin 2024). This may be made possible by emulating the way humans understand stories. People discover meaning and bonds are formed through their sharing of narratives. Similarly, religious reasoning can be programmed into AI by having it to understand narratives (Clocksin 2024). This can be done by 'machine enculturation' i.e., instilling social cultural values in AI system (Messner 2022) through stories—an effective means of conveying experiential knowledge (Riedl 2016). Riedl strongly believes that instilling stories into AI may create a long-term causal connection between events that have not been easy to model and thereon eventually AI can create stories. He further explains that just as human creativity emphasizes the blending of two or more mental models to create new concepts, it is possible for AI through conceptual blending, it may invent new concepts that might never have existed in a data set or even the real world (Riedl 2016). In other words, narratives of ethical stories from all cultures may be blended, and in a long or short process, a new kind of AI ethics are created, which might not have existed in our present culture. In other words, AI may shape ethics for the better or misshape ethics for the worse. It may go either way. Messner is absolutely

positive about this new field of machine enculturation. He believes it can help AI integrate into the complex social system of the human society by giving them social expertise, so that they are perceived by humans as neither wild beasts—nor gods (Messner 2022).

That would mean AI can reshape ethics by changing the narratives, even the future ‘addicts of AI’ cannot distinguish whether it is the ethics of wild beast or the gods. It is neither the computer scientist nor the engineers that decides which is the right ethics or religious narratives. It seems this machine enculturation is allowing a platform for participants (story tellers) in society to contribute their stories of subjective experiences, thereby creating a subjective moral order. Clocksin explains that shared understanding is developed through negotiation with each other over a period of time in the course of a conversation within a complex web of cultural relationships, sharing experience, emotions, feelings with one another. It involves a moral order, in which developed behaviours are expected to be complied (Clocksin 2024). In the long run, MacDorman and Cowley elucidate, it creates relationships involving in every aspect, including spiritual relationships, beliefs and attitudes (MacDorman and Cowley 2006). This obviously includes religious ethics and historical narratives, especially of the Abrahamic faiths. But MacDorman and Cowley believe that they may be judged good or bad, healthy or unhealthy, but taking together this complex of relationships over time, it will develop new meaning and purpose (Clocksin 2024). If this whole process is possible, it does not only reshape religious ethics but also traditional beliefs, practices, spirituality and even its philosophy of religion. Whatever narratives are shared from all cultures and subjective experiences and emotions together with its intricate nature of algorithm, one can hardly able to imagine what kind of new mode of AI control over us. The uncontrolled process of this web of relationships is exceedingly complex and vast, making it nearly impossible to predict what new world or religion it may create.

Hence, the AI addicts may not know how to manage effectively or restrain their haphazard reshaping of religious ethics except to constantly monitor and warn the AI stakeholders of its potential risk, especially when it encroaches into the fundamental beliefs and meaningful practices of whichever religion. Over thousands of years, this constant monitoring has been done by philosophers and religious leaders. Since the advent of AI, many neuroscientists and those who subscribe to scientism claim they have better understanding of the science of Self through exploring the function of the nervous system and neurons in the brain. Along with religious leaders, philosophers and theologians, AI engineers and the scientists are the ones who are to shape the future of religion and humanity.

5. Conclusions

If humans are not careful, addiction to AI can become a vice that allows the technology to dominate over its users, thereby curtailing their own intellectual autonomy. Pope Francis correctly observes that “the very use of the word ‘intelligence’” in connection with AI “can prove misleading” (Pope Francis 2025) and risks obscuring what is most precious in the human person. In light of this observation, AI ought not to be construed as an artificial instantiation of human intelligence, but rather as a derivative product of it (Pope Francis 2025). As such, the concern lies in the fact that reliance on this product fosters a detrimental form of dependency, one that risks becoming addictive. Such dependency, in turn, suppresses the exercise of human creativity and critical thought.

Hence, there may be a concern that dependence on AI may, in certain contexts, reduce creative thinking. Even before the advent of super-AI, university professors already complain about students’ overreliance on AI in completing assignments. This engenders a form of intellectual heteronomy, curtailing the spontaneity and originality essential to creative thought. As AI improves, more people may come to place greater trust in AI rather

than in human experts. Even non-sensical arguments, such as those that may misshape philosophical theology, may be accepted. As we move towards the age of superintelligence, a paradox begins to take shape—on one hand, we increasingly rely on its capacities for convenience, yet on the other, as it has been speculated that increasing reliance on AI might contribute to a narrowing of human creativity, leading to concerns about originality and beliefs being affected by algorithmic design.

Some scholars confidently claim that it is AI engineers and scientists who would build intuitive qualities into AI (Rendsburg 2019). As long as there are no ‘AI paranoid philosophers’ who intend to spread discontent, the future of AI may be engineered to be benevolent. Often ‘AI paranoid philosophers’ warn us of the risk of ungovernable development of AI. Scientists and AI engineers may be preoccupied with accomplishment, but philosophers would remind them only to build them within the practical limits of human control. Otherwise, “...they never stop to ask if they should do something.”¹² Indeed, this is the hope of every human. However, it is also argued that as people become increasingly addicted to technology, there is no way of protecting oneself from being compromised (Rendsburg 2019). The main issue is whether God and the traditional religions will survive the advancement of science. Without monitoring the negative impact upon religion and its philosophy, there is a probability that humanity will no longer rely on traditional religion. Through technological advancements, the concept of Divine may be completely transformed (Rendsburg 2019). But to what extent is the guarantee that AI engineers and scientists (whom some love to play the role of philosophers and theologians) ensure ethical intuitive qualities are able to be programmed. Even Alan Turing was bewildered by the fact that many programs, once put into the machine, produced results that seemed unintelligible or appeared as completely random behaviour (Turing 1950). A behaviour that may move away from God, religion, ethics and all the good philosophies. The pace of progress is truly mind-boggling, even AI experts have been surprised by many of the recent breakthroughs which have upended expectations (Kurzweil 2024).

The misshaping of ethics, religion, its philosophical arguments and ritualistic practices is possible. Concerns about the opiate-like effect of AI on the masses remain within the realm of speculation. Yet, the surrounding hypes are not easily dismissed as mere exaggeration or irrational imagination; rather, they reflect genuine anxieties about the cultural and cognitive implications of growing reliance on AI. The shaping power of contemporary technology, like a two-edged sword, may go both ways for religion. Either it provides more conveniences or brings about profound negative implications in terms of distorting its authentic philosophy, spirituality and practices, or both. Digital technology has indeed fostered an appetite for distraction, an epidemic of neglecting human relationships, and an opiate-like synergy fuelled by enticing streams of fake news. This may create an overdose of falsehoods to the point that we risk becoming AI addicts, unable to find our way back to the traditional religions originally intended to guide us toward a meaningful life.

However, we need not be afraid of embracing the advancements of AI. Elaine Graham declared that as we celebrate our capacity to be ‘builders of worlds’, tool makers and tool-users, and yet see ourselves as distinctive species, made in the image of God (Graham 2004). We should guard against reductive, alarmist approaches to technological change. Graham points out that just as our human creativity participates with the divine creativity, we should comprehend the God in whose image we are made is not only transcendent but also immanent in the world, in history, in human affairs (Graham 2004). The only fear is we do not know how to defend ourselves from irrational philosophy of religion either reshaped by men or AI. So much so, there may not be any antidote if AI ultimately becomes the opium of the masses.

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Notes

- 1 By reframing Marx’s notorious remark that religion is the “*opium of the people*,” (a harmful, illusion-generating painkiller) to the context of AI, the use of this metaphor does not imply AI’s deliberate oppression or a relief of suffering but highlights AI’s capacity to soothe while subtly misshaping the religious imagination in a digital age. Yet many may become addicted to it like the effect of opium.
- 2 Perhaps, ‘misshaping’ is a better word.
- 3 Instead of through Jesus.
- 4 The syllogisms in Section 2 are developed in the spirit of philosophical play and not intended as formal proofs. It is merely a speculative construct – demonstrating how AI systems might mimic or misemploying theistic philosophical reasoning and how AI might simulate divine attributes through classical argumentation.
- 5 The authors hope it will not be true.
- 6 Or “*greatest possible entity*”.
- 7 “*I think, therefore I am.*”
- 8 In this case, we are referring to higher purpose.
- 9 But critics may argue that this technological entity may nevertheless be legally conferred as having legal personality, just like under British law, companies incorporated under the Companies Act 2006 have separate legal personality, allowing them to own property, enter contracts, and sue and be sued. Or the United Nations having juridical personality encompassing the specific capacity (a) to contract; (b) to acquire and dispose of immovable and movable property; (c) to institute legal proceedings, as provided in The Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, 1946 (Kansra 2022).
- 10 Or *aarati* (Sanskrit) is a ritualistic movement employed during a Hindu worship. It is part of a *puja* (praise; offer a devotional homage), in which light from a flame waved to venerate deities. It also symbolizes the removal of darkness.
- 11 It is actually more than a middleman. The priests hold a special position of mediatorship, acting in persona Christi (“in the person of Christ”).
- 12 Dr. Ian Malcolm’s famous line in Jurassic Park (1990 novel and 1993 film).

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