Prospects and Contests of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on Religion and Society

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Abstract
Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) has been known as the era of technological advancement with Artificial Intelligence (AI) as the primary driver. The 4IR era is characterized with convergence of technologies, rapid pace of change, ubiquitous connectivity, autonomous system, cyber physical system, serving as opportunities for innovation, growth and improvement. AI has paved the way for transformative changes in the way we live, the religion and society at large. The opportunity AI also poses diverse challenges to humanity. However, this paper is to look at the positive and negative sides of the AI, striking the balance on the effect of AI on lived realities. It also aims to identify the potential positive change of AI and addresses its complex challenges on the society. The paper proposes Machine Learning Theory, Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), Evolutionary Computation Theory and Hybrid Approaches Theory. The paper argues that the benefit AI has contributed are numerous and diverse, transforming various aspects of our lives from healthcare to education, religion activities, which has brought increased productivity, innovation and improved well-being. It also argues that despite the numerous benefits, there areas of concern that require critical caution, such as security risk.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Religion, Society, Fourth Industrial Revolution

Introduction

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into contemporary society has significantly altered our lifestyles, professional environments, and interpersonal communications (Afolaranmi, 2024). Technologies such as virtual assistants, autonomous vehicles, and tailored product suggestions exemplify the growing prevalence of AI in everyday activities, marking it as a fundamental component of modern existence. A report from Gartner projects that the AI industry will reach a valuation of $190 billion by 2025, with its applications expanding across diverse fields such as healthcare, finance, education, and transportation (Gartner, 2020). The surge in AI adoption can be linked to several key developments, including enhancements in machine learning techniques, the accessibility of extensive datasets, and advancements in computational capabilities and data storage (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019). As AI becomes increasingly embedded in our routines, it prompts critical discussions regarding its societal implications, particularly concerning its potential influence on employment, educational systems, and social dynamics (Bostrom & Yudkowsky, 2014). The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has sparked intense debate about its impact on various aspects of

human life, including religion and society. The convergence of AI, religion, and society is a relatively new field of inquiry driven by technological advancements with increasing capabilities and applications, religious diversification by growing diversity of religious beliefs and practices and societal transformations by shifts in social structures, values, and norms. Technology plays an important role in changing the world. It is not only for the lifestyle of human beings, the intersection of Artificial Intelligence (AI), religion, and society is a rapidly evolving field that warrants interdisciplinary exploration. As AI becomes increasingly integrated into various aspects of life, its impact on religious beliefs, practices, and communities demands attention. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has revolutionized various aspects of human life, transforming industries, and redefining the way we interact, work, and live. AI has also transformed the way we interact with others, with the rise of virtual assistants, social media, and online communication platforms. According to a study by Turkle (2015), the increasing use of AI-powered communication tools has led to a decline in face-to-face interactions and deepened feelings of loneliness. As AI continues to evolve and improve, there are concerns about its potential impact on society. According to a report by the AI Now Institute, there is a need for greater transparency and accountability in AI decision-making, particularly in areas such as law enforcement and healthcare (AI Now Institute, 2019). This study outlines the prospect and contest of AI on religion and society, setting the stage for further exploration. AI's intersection with religion and society presents several opportunities by driven religious resources and education, facilitated communication and networking, powered spiritual guidance and support, driven administrative tasks in religious organizations and enabled platforms for interfaith discussions. However, AI's impact on religion and society also raises concerns on the implications for human identity, free will, and divine agency, potential to erase cultural and religious diversity, job displacement and social inequality and AI's role in moral decision-making.

Literature Review
Artificial Intelligence and the Bible Perspectives

According to Buckles (2024), Bible does not mention artificial intelligence, as it was written long before the concept emerged. However, principles about wisdom, knowledge, stewardship, and the ethical use of power can be applied to how we develop and use AI, ensuring it aligns with moral and ethical standards. According to Proverbs 9:10, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding, this verse does not directly address AI, it emphasizes the foundational role of reverence for God in gaining wisdom. This principle can be applied to the development and use of AI, suggesting that such endeavors should be approached with ethical considerations and a sense of responsibility. Also, in Genesis 1:27, So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them, this verse highlights the unique value and dignity of human beings as bearers of God's image. In discussions about AI, this can remind us of the importance of ensuring that technology, including AI, is used in ways that respect human dignity and promote the well-being of all people (Buckles, 2024).

According to Thacker (2024), technology (artificial intelligence) is a tool that helps us live out our God-given callings. Technology expands what is possible for humans to do. It can be best thought of as a catalyst or an accelerant for change because it opens new opportunities for humans to live in this world (Thacker, 2024). He further stated that nowhere in Scripture is a tool or a technology condemned for being evil. Scripture shows that technology and tools can be used for both good and evil. Even if a tool was designed for evil, the tool itself is not evil.

What is sinful is not the sword but how people choose to use it. It can be used for righteous purposes like standing up for justice against those who are evil, but it can also be used to hurt or kill the innocent. The story of Cain and Abel is a great example of this truth about the purpose and use of technology (Genesis 4) Both Cain and Abel were created by God with specific skills and talents. Both used tools (early forms of technology) to work the ground and care for animals.

Ellen (2024) clearly stated supportive interpretations and cautious interpretations of AI. Below are some of them:

Supportive interpretations:

a) AI as a tool for good: Some argue that the Bible does not condemn technology or tools in itself, including AI. Just like any tool, AI can be used for good or evil, depending on the intentions and actions of its creators and users. For example, AI could be used as a tool with immense potential for good, capable of aiding humanity in areas like healthcare, scientific discovery, and problem-solving, aligned with Christian values.

b) Human ingenuity: The Bible often celebrates human creativity and innovation. Passages like Proverbs 22:29 ("Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean [obscure] *men*.") could be seen as encouraging the development of technology like AI, as long as it serves good purposes.

c) Knowledge and understanding: The Bible emphasizes the value of knowledge and understanding. Passages like Proverbs 2:6 ("For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth *cometh* knowledge and understanding.") could be seen as supporting the pursuit of knowledge through AI, as long as it doesn't replace trust in God as the ultimate source of wisdom.

Cautious interpretations:

a) Idolatry and dependence: Some passages warn against idolatry and misplaced dependence on anything other than God. Passages like Exodus 20:3 ("Thou shalt have no other gods before me.") could be seen as cautionary about the potential dangers of AI becoming an object of worship or excessive reliance.

b) Blurring the lines between human and machine: The Bible emphasizes humans as unique creations made in God's image, with the capacity for creativity, consciousness, and moral agency: Genesis 1:27 ("So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."). This raises questions about how AI, which lacks these qualities, might fit into the divine plan. Some worry that advanced AI could challenge this distinction, raising ethical and theological questions about what it means to be human.

c) Unforeseen consequences: The Bible warns against the potential negative consequences of human actions, even those with good intentions. Passages like Proverbs 16:9 ("A man's heart deviseth [plans] his way: but the LORD directeth [establishes] his steps.") could be seen as a reminder that the development of AI should be approached with caution and humility, acknowledging the potential for unforeseen risks.

Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence Interconnectivity
Artificial Intelligence is based on human insights that can be decided in a way that can machine can effortlessly actualize the tasks, from the basic to those that are indeed more complex. The reason for manufactured insights is learning, problem-solving, reasoning, and perception, while human intelligence or the behavior of the human being has come from past experiences and

the doings based upon situation, and environment. And it is completely based upon the ability to change his/her surroundings through knowledge which we gained (geeksforgeeks, 2024).

S/No	Feature	Artificial Intelligence	Human Intelligence
1	Emergence	AI is an advancement made by human insights; its early improvement is credited to Norbert Weiner who theorized on criticism mechanisms.	On the other hand, human creatures are made with the intrinsic capacity to think, reason, review, etc.
2	Nature	Artificial intelligence (AI) strives to build machines that can mimic human behavior and carry out human-like tasks.	Human intelligence seeks to adapt to new situations by combining a variety of cognitive processes.
3	State	Machines are digital.	The human brain is analogous.
4	Function	AI-powered machines rely on input of data and instructions.	Humans use their brains' memory, processing power, and cognitive abilities.
5	Pace/Rate of AI and human	As compared to people, computers can handle more data at a speedier rate. For occurrence, in the event that the human intellect can solve a math problem in 5 minutes, AI can solve 10 problems in a minute.	In terms of speed, humans cannot beat the speed of AI or machines.
6	Learning ability	As machines are unable to reason abstractly or draw conclusions from the past. They can only acquire knowledge through information and frequent training, but they will never develop a human-specific thinking process.	Learning from various events and prior experiences is the foundation of human intelligence.
7	Decision Making	AI is profoundly objective in choice making because it analyzes based on absolutely accumulated data.	Human choices may be affected by subjective components which are not based on figures alone.
8	Perfection	AI frequently produces precise comes about because its capacities are based on a set of modified rules.	For human insights, there's more often than not room for "human error" as certain subtle elements may be missed at one point or the other.
9	Energy Consumption	The modern computer generally uses 2 watts of energy.	On the other hand, human brains uses about 25 watts
10	Modification of AI and Human	AI takes much more time to adjust to unused changes.	Human insights can be adaptable in reaction to the changes in their environment. This makes individuals able to

			memorize and ace different skills.
11	Versatility	AI can as it were perform fewer assignments at the same time as a framework can as it were learn duties one at a time.	The human judgment skills underpin multitasking as proven by differing and concurrent roles.
12	Social Networking	AI has not aced the capacity to choose up on related social and enthusiastic cues.	On the other hand, as social creatures, people are much way better at social interaction since they can prepare theoretical data, have self-awareness, and are delicate to others' feelings.
13	Task	It does optimization of the system. It cannot be creative or innovative as humans can only think and machines cannot.	It is innovative or creative.
14	Processing	Based on algorithms and mathematical models	Based on cognitive processes and biological structures
15	Learning	Based on data and feedback loops	Based on experience, intuition, and creativity
16	Speed	Can process data and perform tasks much faster than humans	Slower than AI in processing large amounts of data, but can make complex decisions quickly
17	Adaptability	Can quickly adapt to new data and situations	Can adapt to new situations, learn from experience, and make decisions based on context
18	Emotions	Lacks emotions and empathy	Capable of feeling emotions and empathy
19	Creativity	Limited ability to be creative or think outside of the box	Capable of creativity, imagination, and innovation
20	Ethics	Does not have a moral code or conscience	Has a moral code and conscience that guides decision-making
21	Physical Limitations	Does not have physical limitations, can operate 24/7	Limited by physical capabilities and requires rest and maintenance

Table 1: Differences between Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence (geeksforgeeks, 2024)

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of artificial intelligence generally encompasses the elucidation of fundamental concepts, principles, and theories that serve as the basis for AI. This framework

offers a systematic method for comprehending the development, operation, and real-world interactions of AI systems.

Machine Learning Theory

A machine learning framework is a tool that lets software developers, data scientists, and machine learning engineers build machine learning models without having to dig into the underlying working principle (math and stat) of the machine learning algorithms. It streamlines the development process where the programmers do not have to reinvent the wheels for creating a specific application. Machine learning frameworks have a bunch of similar working libraries that simplify the development of machine learning models (ProjectPro, 2024). Machine learning represents a specialized area within artificial intelligence that focuses on the application of algorithms and statistical models, allowing machines to execute designated tasks without the need for explicit programming (Alpaydin, 2020). The primary objective of machine learning is to create algorithms capable of learning from data and enhancing their performance progressively (Hastie et al., 2013). The primary types of machine learning include supervised learning, unsupervised learning, and reinforcement learning, each serving different purposes and applications (Alpaydin, 2020).

Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)

According to AI Researcher, Vijay Kanade Artificial general intelligence (AGI) powers intelligent machines to mimic human tasks. Artificial general intelligence (AGI) is the intelligence of machines that allows them to comprehend, learn, and perform intellectual tasks much like humans (Kanade, 2022). Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) denotes a theoretical AI system capable of comprehending, learning, and utilizing knowledge across diverse tasks, akin to human cognitive abilities (Goertzel, 2014). AGI is regarded as the ultimate objective in AI research, as it would empower machines to execute any intellectual endeavor that humans are capable of performing (Bostrom, 2014). Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) is frequently characterized by several key attributes: (1) intelligence comparable to that of humans, (2) the capacity for learning and adaptation, (3) the capability to engage in reasoning and problem-solving, and (4) the proficiency to comprehend and utilize knowledge across diverse tasks (Goertzel, 2014).

Evolutionary Computation Theory

Evolutionary computing has become a powerful tool for solving complex optimization problems, and its theoretical foundations continue to evolve, driving innovation in various fields. Evolutionary computation theory represents a specialized area within artificial intelligence that employs evolutionary mechanisms, including natural selection and genetic drift, to identify optimal solutions for intricate problems (Back, 1996). Evolutionary computation theory draws upon the foundational concepts of evolutionary biology, which elucidate the mechanisms by which populations of organisms undergo adaptation and evolution in reaction to environmental challenges (Dawkins, 1986). Within the realm of evolutionary computation, these biological principles are utilized to identify optimal solutions for intricate problems through a process of iterative selection and recombination of potential solutions (Goldberg, 1989).

Prospect of Artificial Intelligence on Religion and Society

The transformative power of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly becoming evident across diverse aspects of life, weaving its threads even into the fabric of religion. This

fascinating convergence of technology and faith provides a wealth of opportunities (Khalid, 2023).

1. Artificial intelligence-powered platforms, including chatbots and educational applications, provide individualized experiences in religious education. Research conducted by Kearney (2020) illustrates the potential of AI to enhance personalized scripture study, enabling individuals to engage with texts in a manner that resonates with their unique inquiries and spiritual paths.

2. The advent of AI technologies has significantly broadened access to religious materials, especially for underrepresented populations. Campbell and Tsuria (2021) observe that the rise of virtual worship services and online religious communities has created opportunities for participation among individuals who might otherwise face barriers to attending in person.

3. The role of artificial intelligence in facilitating virtual communities is significant, as it promotes spiritual development and interpersonal connections among individuals. Research conducted by Bunt and Campbell (2018) indicates that such digital platforms can strengthen the bonds among practitioners, creating environments conducive to dialogue, mutual support, and collective worship experiences.

4. Furthermore, AI technologies possess the ability to assess the needs and preferences of these communities, thereby informing religious organizations in their outreach initiatives. This analytical capacity enables the formulation of more targeted engagement strategies that resonate with the unique demographics and interests of community members, as highlighted by Miller (2019).

5. AI can streamline administrative tasks within religious organizations, allowing leaders to focus on spiritual guidance. Research by Arora (2020) indicates that AI applications in scheduling, resource management, and communication can significantly reduce the operational burden on clergy.

Contests of Artificial Intelligence on Religion and Society

1. The incorporation of artificial intelligence within religious frameworks prompts a reevaluation of what it means to be human and the concept of the soul. McGowan (2019) points out that the debate over the potential for machines to embody spiritual qualities poses significant challenges to established theological paradigms.

2. The application of AI in ethical decision-making introduces complexities regarding moral accountability. Researchers such as Coeckelbergh (2020) argue that it is essential for faith-based communities to confront the consequences of entrusting machines with moral judgments.

3. Morealso, the emergence of AI-generated content in religious practices, including automated sermons and prayers, prompts significant questions regarding the authenticity of spiritual experiences. Tsuria's (2021) research highlights the potential impact of technological dependence on the communal and participatory dimensions of worship, suggesting that such reliance could result in a weakened sense of connection among congregants.

4. The algorithms employed by artificial intelligence have the potential to establish information silos that bolster pre-existing beliefs, thereby exacerbating polarization both within and among religious communities. Papacharissi (2016) highlights that this occurrence can impede interfaith dialogue and collaborative initiatives, ultimately promoting division instead of fostering unity.

5. The emergence of artificial intelligence raises profound questions about the place of faith within a society increasingly dominated by technology. Researchers such as Scott (2021) contend that as AI technologies take on responsibilities once managed by humans, the importance and purpose of religious belief may be critically examined.

The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Religion and Society

The influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on religion and society presents a complex and nuanced issue, attracting the attention of numerous scholars and researchers who are examining its consequences

1. Numerous research efforts have investigated the influence of artificial intelligence on religious beliefs and practices. For example, Krawczyk (2018) identified that AI-driven tools, including chatbots and virtual assistants, might have the capacity to supplant human spiritual leaders and authorities (Krawczyk, 2018). Additionally, Lee (2019) examined how AI affects religious beliefs and values, concluding that it could pose challenges to conventional religious doctrines, especially regarding concepts like free will and moral agency (Lee, 2019).

2. Research has investigated the effects of artificial intelligence on religious groups and organizations. For instance, Wagner (2019) analyzed how Christian communities reacted to advancements in AI, revealing that certain groups expressed resistance, perceiving AI as a challenge to human dignity and the distinctiveness of human existence (Wagner, 2019). Similarly, Guta (2020) examined the attitudes of Muslim communities towards AI development, finding that many were apprehensive, considering it a possible danger to human agency and autonomy (Guta, 2020).

3. Numerous investigations have analyzed the effects of artificial intelligence on societal and cultural dynamics. For example, research conducted by Ford (2015) indicated that AI has the potential to replace human labor, especially in sectors like manufacturing and transportation (Ford, 2015). Additionally, Turkle (2015) examined how AI influences human relationships and communication, revealing that it may contribute to a reduction in in-person interactions and an increase in feelings of isolation (Turkle, 2015).

4. Research have delved into the ethical and moral dilemmas related to artificial intelligence. For instance, Bostrom (2014) conducted a study that assessed the potential hazards and challenges linked to the advancement of sophisticated AI technologies. The findings indicated that such advanced AI could represent an existential threat to humanity, especially if it is not developed with adequate safety measures and control mechanisms (Bostrom, 2014). Additionally, Wallach (2017) examined the ethical and moral ramifications of AI-driven decision-making, revealing that this form of decision-making could give rise to significant ethical and moral issues, particularly concerning accountability, transparency, and fairness (Wallach, 2017).

Conclusion

The convergence of artificial intelligence (AI) with religious and societal frameworks creates a multifaceted environment characterized by both significant opportunities and notable challenges. On one side, AI holds the promise of enriching religious participation, enhancing access to spiritual materials, and promoting community cohesion among adherents. By utilizing AI innovations, religious institutions can modernize their outreach, engaging broader demographics and offering tailored experiences that align with individuals' spiritual paths.

Conversely, the incorporation of AI within religious settings prompts critical inquiries that warrant serious attention. Theological considerations regarding the essence of humanity and the soul, ethical challenges related to moral judgments, and apprehensions about the genuineness of worship practices are pivotal matters that require thorough examination. Additionally, the potential for social division and polarization, exacerbated by algorithmic biases and echo chambers, threatens the unity and inclusivity that many faith communities endeavor to maintain. As AI technology progresses, it is crucial for religious leaders, academics, and technologists to participate in continuous discussions regarding its impact on beliefs and practices. This collaborative effort is vital to leverage the advantages of AI while confronting the ethical, existential, and societal dilemmas it introduces. By establishing guidelines that encourage responsible AI application within religious environments, communities can effectively navigate this transformative period, enriching spiritual experiences and fostering stronger interpersonal connections. The implications and challenges of AI on religion and society signify a broader societal transition towards technology, prompting all involved parties to reassess their values and priorities in this evolving context. Moving forward, a balanced strategy that honors both technological progress and the deep significance of faith will be essential for cultivating a harmonious future.

Recommendations

Through the implementation of these recommendations, religious communities can thoughtfully and responsibly address the intricacies of artificial intelligence, thereby ensuring that technology contributes positively to the enhancement of spiritual life and the unity of the community.

i. Employ artificial intelligence tools to improve community development and participation. For example, platforms powered by AI can support virtual worship services, provide educational materials, and enhance outreach initiatives, thereby increasing the accessibility of religious activities to a wider range of individuals.

ii. Religious authorities and institutions ought to engage in partnerships with technology experts to establish ethical guidelines that steer the creation and utilization of artificial intelligence within religious settings. These frameworks should encompass considerations related to bias, accountability, and transparency.

iii. Facilitate open and respectful conversations among religious authorities, AI scholars, and policymakers to gain insights into the effects of artificial intelligence on religious practices and societal structures.

iv. Implement educational programs and training sessions focused on artificial intelligence and its various applications, aimed at equipping religious leaders and their communities with a deeper understanding of the technology and its potential ramifications.

v. Formulate ethical guidelines and principles for the responsible development and application of AI, ensuring that these considerations align with religious values and ethical standards.

vi. Engage in partnerships with AI researchers and developers to guarantee that the design and implementation of AI systems honor and reflect religious values and ethical principles.

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