ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND SPIRITUALITY: CHALLENGES AND THREATS

A. Yu. Kovalenko

ORCID 0000-0002-1896-4153

The article is devoted to possible threats and challenges Artificial Intelligence (AI) may pose to human spirituality. It begins with identifying spirituality as an inevitable part of people's lives that shapes their values, beliefs, and behaviours, provides a framework for understanding the interconnectedness of all beings and the universe with something greater than oneself, offering solace in times of crisis and a sense of purpose, connection, and inner peace. However, being a groundbreaking development in the field of technology, AI may lead to serious changes in the ways people believe, perceive themselves and their places in this world, and look for the meaning and purpose of their lives. AI may cause misinformation and misrepresentation of the data obtained. People may mistakenly perceive AI as that almighty source of knowledge or believe that there is nothing greater and mightier at all since the technology can give the answers to all their questions. Humiliation of human dignity and an insulting attitude towards people, the blurring of lines between human life and the activity of AI (including the issues of rights, responsibilities, freedom, decision-making, etc.), moral and ethical issues related to perceiving AI as a living being cause increasing concerns of the world technologists, philosophers, anthropologists, and theologians who are trying to find some ways to control the rapid spread and people's obsession with AI. The author describes 4 main concerns related to the influence of AI on spirituality, namely, concentration, patience, and attention; selflessness; devoutness or adherence; and the knowledge of discovering and analysing ourselves. Besides, the article provides some analogies and differences between devices driven by AI and beings with spirituality. Finally, the author draws a conclusion that we must take responsibility for our lives and respond accordingly to what happens to us so as not to allow AI rule our life and spiritual experiences.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, spirituality, challenges and threats, ethics and morals, existential questions.

Problem statement in a general view and its connection with important scientific and practical problems. Artificial intelligence (AI) has been rapidly

developing over the latest years bringing the humanity closer to the new seemingly unlimited possibilities and discoveries in various fields of human activity starting from science and technology and ending with entertainment. AI has penetrated into our everyday lives providing multiple benefits. However, the more we get into the era of AI, the more we wonder what challenges and threats it may bring. Since AI becomes increasingly autonomous and able to make moral decisions, we are facing more profound ethical questions about human rights and responsibilities regarding AI, as well as justice, humanity, morality, the value of human life, etc. In our constant search for meaning of life, striving for higher values of Good, Kindness, Truth, and personal transformation, how not to get lost in the numerous ideas and solutions that AI can provide us instead of making our own decisions and using our own intelligence as a basis of spiritual development, and transcendental experience? These are the issues that we would like to devote our paper to.

Analysis of the last researches and publications in which the decision of the problem has begun and on which the author grounds his research. A number of technologists, philosophers, anthropologists, and theologians have recently been working on the research at the intersection and interconnection of artificial intelligence and spirituality. Among them we can name Iain McGilchrist who is dealing with the issues of neuroscience, epistemology and metaphysics; Mark Vernon studying the essence of spiritual intelligence and its connection with AI; the psychologist of religion Fraser Watts; a psychologist Paul C. Vitz; a theologist Rowan Williams; a cognitive scientist Philip Barnard; an AI/Computer science specialist Yorik Wilks. Such researchers as B. Bull, M. Calvin, C. Mercer, P. Phillips, J. Zhou, R. Russell, N. Murphy, H. Dreyfus, M. Jeeves, W. Brown, I. Barbour, P. Clayton, M. Anderson and S. Anderson are also studying the issues related to the connection of modern intelligent technology, neuroscience, human spirituality, religion, and ethics. However, the influence of AI on human life, in particular, on spirituality is only becoming a subject of profound studies in the global scientific community.

Purpose of the article is to study the challenges and threats artificial intelligence may pose to human spirituality.

Statement of the basic research material with full substantiation of the received scientific results. Spirituality has always been the inevitable part of human life. People have always tend to believe that there is something or somebody much more powerful who created the world and the rules of its existence. People have been trying to understand what their place in this world is, where they belong, why they live, and what the goal of their life is. Spirituality plays a vital role in shaping people's values, beliefs, and behaviours. Erwin Rimban claims that it provides a framework for understanding the

interconnectedness of all beings and the universe and with something greater than oneself, offering solace in times of crisis and a sense of purpose, connection, and inner peace (Rimban, 2024). He gives the evidence from various studies showing that individuals who are engaged in spiritual practices (e.g., meditation, prayer, other community rituals) have higher levels of well-being, resilience, and overall life satisfaction.

The researcher Sandra Schneiders (2005) states that spirituality is the experience of moving towards some ultimate value (or horizon, beyond which one cannot perceive) and integrating that movement into one's life experience. In this case, like in the previous one, we also face peoples' life experiences and aspirations, the active process of searching and striving for something better, greater, and more powerful.

Artificial Intelligence is a groundbreaking development in the field of technology. It is able to simulate human intelligence, quickly learn from the data it obtains, understand and generate human language, make decisions, interpret visual and text information making it a powerful tool with multiple possibilities to be used in lots of fields and activities starting from huge industries and ending everyday entertainment.

The rapid spread of AI and its integration into various aspects of human life and activity may seriously change the conventional understanding of what it means to be a human. The more quickly AI learns, the more ethical questions arise regarding not only some aspects of privacy and fairness but also more deep questions of human existence, decision-making, and even the eternal questions of the sense of purpose and meaning making researchers and common people ask the question, "What does it mean to be a human in an increasingly technological world?". Being absorbed in the interaction with AI, people may start rethinking the important existential questions about free will, human rights and responsibilities, and the existence of a higher power. E. Rimban emphasizes that "as technology continues to advance at a rapid pace, it is crucial to examine how these digital tools impact our understanding of spirituality and existentialism, forcing us to confront the very nature of our existence in a world where algorithms dictate our choices and experiences" (Rimban, 2024).

One more challenge that AI may have in the context of faith is misinformation and misrepresentation according to Prof. Sreevas Sahasranamam. He believes that in the next 50–100 years, AI is likely to become a co-pilot for all human endeavours including decision-making. Therefore, the algorithm and AI language models must be trained on data that is truthful and morally right. Nowadays, the information provided by AI may not be always checked and therefore we are not sure whether we can trust it. Since it is based on the input of

millions of users, it is hard to find out whether it was correct or not. So, we cannot trust what we see by 100% as all the information must be checked.

However, the perception of AI's input may change depending on our state of spirituality. The recent study conducted by M. Karataş and K. Cutright (2023) has shown that if a person is very susceptible to spiritual experiences and is focused on the awareness that there is something or somebody greater, mightier, and more knowledgeable than they are, the more likely they are to accept AI's input. It means that a person may mistakenly perceive AI as that almighty source of knowledge that can give answers to vital questions of life and meaning, or believe that the higher powers connect with the person through AI. In this way a person might be misled and become dependent on the AI's guidance in all life matters including the most personal and intimate ones.

Another research by J. Jackson, et al. (2023) demonstrates a completely different trend. They noticed that the more people interact with AI during their worktime, the less they rely on spiritual or religious beliefs. In this way they feel no need for spiritual guidance as all the questions they are interested in can be answered by modern technology.

One more threat that AI may have is the humiliation of human dignity and an attitude towards them that is becoming more hostile and hard. The psychologist Paul C. Vitz says that "the very notion of special human characteristics such as our free will or having a transcendent spiritual meaning is viewed as a threat to an intellectual desire to demonstrate we humans are nothing but matter, or nothing but a complex computer" (Vitz, 1989, p. 14).

Another interesting case is described in *The Washington Post*. In June 2022, Blake Lemoine, a Google engineer, stated that the chatbot LaMDA he had been working with became sentient (Tiku 2022). In the course of long conversations he became convinced that he was talking to a real person. After that he demanded rights for LaMDA, and even hired a lawyer to represent the chatbot's interests. Though he was fired by Google, this case poses a number of serious questions about whether there might be a true mind and what place AI will eventually take among people. With such a widespread usage of AI chatbots people become so engaged in conversations with them that they start believing that they are talking to real people. And in 2023, a 36-year-old Rossana Ramos from the Bronx even virtually 'married' her AI partner Eren Kartal (Palmer, 2023).

Such an obsession with AI causes more and more concerns. In June, The Centre for AI Safety issued a warning that "mitigating the risk of extinction from AI should be a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks such as pandemics and nuclear war". Even Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, the creator of the popular chatbot ChatGPT, said the technology poses "existential risk" to humanity and suggested an international agency like the International Atomic

Energy Agency (IAEA) be created to oversee the ground-breaking technology (Associated Press, 2023).

The problems AI may cause to spirituality has even made the Vatican held a conference in 2020 where Rome Call For AI Ethics document was signed by the Pontifical Academy for Life, Microsoft, IBM, FAO, and the Ministry of Innovation in Rome. It states that its main aim is "to promote a sense of shared responsibility among international organizations, governments, institutions and the private sector in an effort to create a future in which digital innovation and technological progress grant mankind its centrality" (The Call for AI Ethics, 2020). According to this document, one of the basic human rights that should be considered while developing Artificial Intelligence is freedom of religion or belief.

However, how much time will it be needed to start speculating about such crucial issues as whether AI will be able to sympathize, demonstrate emotions, develop empathy and consciousness; whether machines will become more sophisticated and autonomous; whether human spiritual experience can be considered unique; finally, where the boundaries between human and artificial intelligence are? In this regard, James Cameron's famous movie "Terminator" no longer seems to be a fantasy but rather a menacing future.

Dr. Kamal Bhattacharyya (2021) shares 4 main concerns related to the influence of AI on spirituality. The first one is concentration, patience and attention, since AI constantly grabs our attention not allowing us to concentrate on spiritual experiences and connection with the higher powers. The second one is selflessness, since we become more concerned about our digital life rather than the life and people around us who may need our help, assistance, and support. The third concern is devoutness or adherence. Spiritual life requires our devotion and love to somebody who is greater than us and to the people as the highest creations. However, instead of devoting our time and attention to them, we keep giving it to the technology in the form of AI. The last one is the knowledge of discovering and analysing ourselves. AI can provide us with a great amount of information about the human being based on scientific discoveries and present-day developments of medicine. However, it cannot give any information about a person's inner life and soul, their moral values, and beliefs.

José Hernández provides a profound contrastive table of some analogies and differences between devices driven by AI and beings with spirituality (Hernández, 2021, p. 39). It deals with the issues of intellectual abilities, decision-making, behaviour, communication, working with information, the work performance, and the language use. In all these domains, people tend to be more creative, improvising, intuitive, cognitive, affective, original, unprecedented, and unpredictable. However, we would like to provide two of these differences regarding spirituality and relations with other in Table 1.

Some Analogies and Differences between Devices Driven by AI and Beings with Spirituality

	...a device driven by artificial intelligence...	**...a being, totally or partially spiritual (which may be called a 'person')...**
Faced with concepts like 'compassion', 'affection', or such…	...cannot react, as it 'ignores' the concept and the practice	...can feel referenced or affected
Regarding the care of people and things, contributing to improving humanity and nature…	...can be very effective if its design and maintenance are focused in that direction	...will undertake it as far as their education, capabilities, beliefs, ideologies, etc. allow

The difference shown by J. Hernández is really striking in terms of the human ability to perceive the concepts of 'compassion' and 'affection', and their striving for helping others.

The psychologist Mark Vernon also shows some differences between the "life" and experience of AI and human experience stating that at present days "…attention is much shaped by technology and technology is a quantitative form of attention because it works by measuring, comparing, calibrating. But in previous eras and other cultures, attention was shaped by participating in the life of the world in which the people live. This form of attention is more qualitative and is fostered through ritual, art, worship, divination" (Vernon, 2023). We should be aware of this difference and understand that technology and spirituality work differently in order to be alert and so as not to let AI shape our spirituality and faith. Still, R. Miner rightfully says that "Artificial Intelligence becomes a threat to humanity when humans fail to protect freedom of conscience, thought, and religion and when we allow our spiritual intelligence to be superseded by the artificial" (Miner, 2023).

Conclusions. In conclusion, we have analyzed some thoughts and ideas concerning the threats and challenges that AI may pose to humanity. Among them the most significant ones are misleading, replacement of the highest powers with the technological tools, the idea of AI's "soul", "mind", "consciousness", the rethinking of the deep existential questions about the human life, meaning, purpose, rights and responsibilities. Despite all the alerts that we may see, there is always hope that the humanity will win this battle due to their natural intelligence and common sense. In this regard, a quote by Ananda Tirtha Dasa in *The Daily Guardian* gives us a key to our appropriate attitude towards AI and spirituality, "We have no control over what happens to us, but we have a control over how we

can respond to what happens to us. Splitting the word RESPONSIBILITY gives you RESPONSE + ABILITY. The ability to respond... We should not allow us to become slaves of technology but use it to ease our lives so that we have time for enquiry into higher aspects of life. The choice should be yours's and not your addictive mind's choice" (Dasa, 2023).

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ШТУЧНИЙ ІНТЕЛЕКТ І ДУХОВНІСТЬ: ВИКЛИКИ І ЗАГРОЗИ

А. Ю. Коваленко

Статтю присвячено можливим загрозам і викликам, які штучний інтелект (ШІ) може створити для людської духовності. Робота починається з визначення духовності як невід'ємної складової життя людей, яка формує їхні цінності, переконання та поведінку, забезпечує основу для розуміння взаємозв'язку всіх істот і Всесвіту з чимось величнішим, ніж вони самі, пропонуючи розраду під час кризи та відчуття мети, приналежності та внутрішнього миру. Проте ШІ, який є новаторською розробкою в галузі технологій, може призвести до серйозних змін у тому, як люди вірять, сприймають себе та своє місце в цьому світі, а також шукають сенс і мету свого життя. ШІ може спричинити дезінформацію та спотворення отриманих даних. Люди можуть помилково сприймати ШІ як всемогутнє джерело знань або вважати, що нічого величнішого і більшого взагалі немає, оскільки технологія може дати відповіді на всі їхні запитання. Приниження людської гідності та зневажливе ставлення до людей, стирання межі між життям людини та діяльністю ШІ (включаючи питання прав, обов'язків, свободи, прийняття рішень тощо), морально-етичні проблеми, пов'язані зі сприйняттям ШІ як живої істоти викликає все більше занепокоєння світових технологів, філософів, антропологів і теологів, які намагаються знайти якісь способи контролювати швидке поширення та одержимість людей ШІ.

Автор описує 4 основні проблеми, пов'язані з впливом ШІ на духовність, а саме зниження концентрації і уваги; зникнення безкорисливості, почуттів відданості або прихильності; недостатність знань про пізнання та аналіз себе. Крім того, у статті наводяться деякі аналогії та відмінності між пристроями, керованими ШІ, та духовними істотами. Нарешті, автор робить висновок, що ми повинні брати на себе відповідальність за своє життя і відповідно реагувати на те, що з нами відбувається, щоб не дозволити ШІ керувати нашим життям і духовним досвідом.

Ключові слова: штучний інтелект, духовність, загрози і виклики, етика і мораль, екзестенційні питання.

Коваленко Альона Юріївна – кандидат педагогічних наук, доцент, доцент кафедри англійської мови Національного університету «Києво-Могилянська Академія» (м. Київ, Україна). E-mail: al.kovalenko@ukma.edu.ua

Kovalenko Alona Yuriivna – Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor, Associate Professor of the Department of English Language of the National University of "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy" (Kyiv, Ukraine). E-mail: al.kovalenko@ukma.edu.ua