

Entertaining God in an Artificially Intelligent Heaven

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When considering the Kingdom of Heaven, many immediately picture floating pearly gates that open up to endless happiness surrounded by family and friends. Now consider an artificially intelligent system that, when you are fused with whether living or in death, celebrates you as one with your family and friends, shedding all your bodily needs and leaving you to explore endless possibilities from within. Artificial intelligence has always been subject to speculation, with the scientific community holding high hopes in achieving a truly artificially intelligent system one day. Michio Kaku believes these AI robots are far from coming into existence, as there are many downfalls to creating something in our likeness and intelligence. On the other side of the spectrum, religion has continually butted heads with scientific discovery, which according to Alfred Whitehead, is part of the healthy relationship in stimulating further research and adventure. Although the creation of truly artificial intelligence has the potential to create a corrupt society, fracturing apart religious institutions and reigniting fear and mistrust among the people, there is a more likely pathway AI could take in the future, bringing together religion and science as one in the digital world of cyberspace.

In order to understand the relationship between technology and religion, it is important to trace technological development and the response from religious communities from the past up until the present. Before any sort of printing press or typewriter was invented, the only mode of communication to spread religious ideals was through word of mouth and handwritten documents, which was “a painstaking process only a few were even able to undertake” (Brescia University). Even written word was difficult to spread as most people were illiterate, which left it in the hands of the religious leaders of

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how to reconcile conflicting values is one of the most important challenges facing AI designers...failure to do that leads to AI algorithms that are unfair and unjust” (West). Within the caveat of ethics, there is also a worry among the religious community that the creation of such an intelligent AI will create a type of identity crisis for those who believe we were created in God’s image. Marius Dorobantu had much to say on this topic, stating that “at the root of this [identity] crisis lies the question of what, if anything, makes humans unique and distinctive...the notion of human distinctiveness had traditionally been articulated in the doctrine that humans are created in the image,” further emphasizing that “the intuition of our uniqueness, encapsulated in the doctrine of the *imago Dei*

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as directed toward producing a being in which God could incarnate (Dobson). The whole idea of religion is to transcend into heaven and become one with God, and by creating an AI cyberspace capable of uploading human minds into, it is believed that AI will not only bring communities together, but it will stimulate further research and discoveries that our physical being couldn't begin to touch on for another thousand years. Robert Geraci's article "Apocalyptic AI" dives into this, where he speculates that "real, meaningful activity will cease to take place in the physical world, instead to cyberspace. Just as meaningful prayer characterizes heaven in Christian apocalypticism, meaningful computation occupies all individuals in Apocalyptic AI" (Geraci, 14). This is corroborated by Matt Rossano, who believes that "advances in AI that break down barriers of distance also hold promise for strengthening human communities" (Rossano, 15), and furthermore leads to the hope that becoming one with artificial intelligence will "rectify the perceived failures of human life" and allow human minds to leave behind the need for material wants and desires (Geraci).

Now, with the perception of artificial intelligence holding both positive points for the religious community and negative points for both religious and scientific minds, there are things that both can come to an agreement on. For one, the prospect of great AI as omniscient and intelligent as we might like to envision for the future is a long way from ever being a possibility. Michio Kaku researched just how far AI has come in his article, "Physics of the Impossible," acknowledging that AI is still primitive in basic human emotion and logic. When comparing a computer's ability to process information to that of a human, Kaku observes how "digital computers can calculate at nearly the speed

that “most researchers agree that a superintelligent AI is unlikely to exhibit human emotions like love or

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technology continues to advance, religion will change with it. Believers will find new and innovative ways to explore and grow their faith, no matter what the future holds” (Brescia University).

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