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**The Rise of a New Redeemer?  
A.I. as a Postmodern Theorem**

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**Abstract:** The cyber era of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, defined by the dominance of computerized technologies, has also brought along new forms of social phenomena and even religiosity within the dimension of postmodernism and artificial intelligence. Social scientists, theologians, and information technology experts are puzzled by the new challenges of the new age featured by the prevalence of expanding AI-driven technologies, smart machinery, and various IT solutions, which tend to penetrate both the military domain and the realm of spirituality shaping the world of trans-humanism. The question is whether a new form of science and technology-based pseudo-religion is about to descend from the virtual heaven in the form of AI-driven redemption and savior or radical transformer of human civilization? Will the new manifestations of postmodern technological divinity be able to alter the classic, transcendental religions and even substitute the services of human clergy?

**Keywords:** artificial intelligence, trans-humanism, technological singularity, religion

## Introduction

“the accelerating progress in technology (...) gives the appearance of some essential “Singularity” in the history of the race beyond which human affairs, as we know them, could not continue.”

John von Neumann

Following the global upheaval and skyrocketing popularity of the ChatGPT platform,<sup>1</sup> Yuval Harari, an Israeli historian and global celebrity thinker claimed that the new cutting-edge AI-based programs might contribute to the elaboration of a new human-machine dimension and use religions and artificial intelligence (or A.I. as well-known scientific iconic term) – generated beliefs to control societies and human behavior in the future. Citing his famous metaphor ‘the operation system of the human civilization has been hacked by A.I.’ will certainly result in diverse socio-political, and cultural alterations in the human condition of which we do not possess enough knowledge or even presumption at the present moment.<sup>2</sup>

Naturally, the rise of the swiftly developing Artificial General Intelligence (hereafter, AGI) program and various large language models with their impressive interactive communication

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<sup>1</sup>The most popular artificial intelligence-based large language model in the world elaborated by a small American start-up company called *Open AI* Corporation in Silicon Valley, California.

<sup>2</sup>Williams, Dan: “Yuval Noah Harari argues that AI has hacked the operating system of human civilization”. In *The Economist*. April 28, 2023.

skills poses a significant and unprecedented challenge for humanity in various ways. The new generation of smart machinery, computer-based applications, and digital solutions tend to transform human interactions, communication modes, as well as cultural patterns. Furthermore, the new methods and information technological (IT) solutions also affect the basic habits of the mind and redefine military operations, and informational warfare styles in such a manner and extent that most humans are unable to cope with and properly adapt.<sup>3</sup>

In this manner and context, the religious frameworks relying on faith in supernatural, transcendental powers and creatures, *per definition* divine (or even anthropomorphic) may not be exempt from the new digital phenomena and technology-based challenges prevailing in most of the societies in the world. The pseudo-religious experiences projected in the conspicuous augmented environment of humans and smart machines have already been forecasted by such Hollywood masterpieces as *The Matrix*, *I, Robot*, *A.I.*, or *Ex Machina*. Nevertheless, in the first phase, the new religious sensations and correlations with smart technological tools and programs will be presumably much subtler and harmless. The “divine touch” proclaimed by the Abrahamic religions, namely by Judaism, Christianity and Islam, may turn into oblivion or be transformed and reinterpreted through man-made, self-learning, intelligent platforms. It appears to be a genuinely postmodern ‘reconstructed’ idea that might descend from the realm of science fiction into the reality of a technologized profane world.<sup>4</sup> As revealed in the motto from John von Neumann’s prediction, the ‘technological singularity’ is gradually looming upon our world with unprecedented effects and consequences on our human paradigm as it is.<sup>5</sup>

In this paper, I shall explore the various overlapping dimensions and potential confronting spheres of interest between global mainline theistic religions, first of all, Christianity, and the intellectual, cultural (if not spiritual) threats projected by AI-generated cultural or even new types of postmodern religious patterns. I will apply hypothetical case studies and interdisciplinary content analytic methods to immerse the reader in the realm of the cyber world, with a special focus on the impact of technology in spirituality and social studies, as well as to examine the option of the emergence of a postmodern-type technology-driven so-called cyber-religion within the new dimension of trans-humanism. In this regard, I also try to find the answer to the theoretical question of whether the

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<sup>3</sup> Waltzam, Rand: “The Weaponization of Information”. In *Rand Corporation Research Papers* (Santa Monica: Rand Corp., 2017).

<sup>4</sup> Postmodernism, as a broad term with alternative interpretations of clashing truths and realities juxtaposing their own narratives, see Frederick Jameson on *Postmodernism*, 1991 and Lyotard, Jean-Francois: *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge*. (University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 18 – 26.

<sup>5</sup> Ulam, Stanislaw: “John von Neumann”. In *AMS Journal*. Online: <https://www.ams.org/journals/bull/1958-64-03/S0002-9904-1958-10189-5/S0002-9904-1958-10189-5.pdf> 1958, 5.

new forms of technology-driven human dependence, devotion, and spirituality could be considered religious experiences.

As many theorem shifts have occurred in the history of political thoughts and ideas, similar to the rather postmodern belief in science, technology, and especially in AI-based solutions, digital applications might well be regarded or accepted as the new profane redeemer, a mundane salvation from all earthly problems for the end users.<sup>6</sup> The correlation of AI and the emerging new military domains within cyber space evidently constitute a significant new research area, which share several areas and scholarly aspects with the topic of this paper, nevertheless the primary focus of the analysis would be cast on the impact of new technologies on spirituality and society including education.

Nevertheless, when discussing a specific nexus between technology and religion, aligning with the new term of pseudo-religion in this context, we must define the core term applied in this study, namely what can be, first of all considered religion? The author of this paper shares the definition and approach rooted in the Christian civilizational dimension when discussing and applying the term of religion as a cultural, social system based on the “ultimate concern, the touch of divinity and the moral binding among the believers”, as expressed by revered Protestant thinkers like Paul Tillich and Paul Ricouer among many others.<sup>7</sup>

Notwithstanding, within the context of a pseudoreligious<sup>8</sup> concept of “digital redeemer” has already been displayed as an organic part of the unique fantasy world elaborated by such grandmasters of science-fiction as Isaac Asimov, William Gibson or Ray Bradbury, the new cyber dimension and pseudo-religiosity seem to be looming upon humanity in the second quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Moreover, this new socio-cultural, technological phenomenon may well be supplemented with the realistic prospect of technological singularity as predicted by Alan Turing, John von Neumann, or lately by Ray Kurzweil and his fellow futurologist IT-experts.<sup>9</sup>

One of the greatest experts of the new discipline of machine-human interface as well as a visionary thinker of the cybernetic future of humanity is the Australian scientist Hugo de Garis. He has claimed for several years before the astonishing rise of the generative

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<sup>6</sup> See also the famous remark of Harari mentioned above Williams 2023.

<sup>7</sup> See „What is Religion?” In *Encyclopedia Britannica. Religions*. May, 2025.

<sup>8</sup> The term primarily tends to refer to an intellectual, socio-psychologic stance and human attitude, which aim for explanations stemming from entities seemingly transcending the humans, let it be technology, scientism or ideological „omnisms”; see Paul Kingsnorth: “How the West fell for Pseudoreligions” *UnHerd*. 2025.

<sup>9</sup> Kurzweil, Ray: *The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*. (New York: Viking, 2005).

language models and presently overwhelming AI platforms that our human condition is rapidly and irreversibly changing.<sup>10</sup>

Our world is evidently shifting into a new, transformative phase of development that we have no clear knowledge or any previous experience of, with the active contribution of information technology (hereinafter, IT) and cognitive science experts, who constitute less than 0.5% of the world population. All the same, as a parallel counter-trend to the rise of smart machinery and digital solutions, the general intelligence level and mental resilience of the common users, at least in the Western world tend to show a slow but steady decline compared to the surge of human intelligence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>11</sup> This may ensue in a rather antagonistic condition, where the cognitive superiority of humans, in general, is going to be drastically challenged, if not diminished by artificial intelligence-generated new technologies. The prevalent rise of smart technologies entails the emergence of so-called pseudoreligious phenomenon wherein users tend to seek salvation, redemption from technology equipped with a seemingly omniscient clergy of experts, “IT-geeks”. This new 21<sup>st</sup> century trend may echo with the Marxian presumption stating that “religion is the opium of the masses”<sup>12</sup>. In the new cyber dimension the “oppressed” users of the digital technologies initiate new habits of the mind, new social paradigms, affections as well as addictions mostly generated by the omnipresent global IT-companies and service providers.

As clearly stated in the motto above by the much-revered Hungarian-American mastermind of Mathematics and pioneer of IT, John von Neumann more than half a century ago, the frequently recalled “technological singularity” of artificial intelligence would inevitably change all aspects of civilization. The imminent IT-driven technological conversions will cover all areas of life, including human interactions and religion, as well. The ensuing alterations would inevitably contribute to a new type of Kuhnian paradigm shift in human disposition and in the way humans comprehend the external world or other non-human factors, such as the concept of ubiquitous divinity juxtaposing the prevalence of artificial intelligence.<sup>13</sup> The latter might as well be considered a secularly omnipresent power factor, a sort of postmodern technological divinity through its various applications in the realm of the Internet of Things (or IoT) with billions of interconnected smart devices driving our life.

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<sup>10</sup> Garis, Hugo de: “Species dominance & our cybernetic future” *Lifeboat*. Online: [www.Lifeboat.com](http://www.Lifeboat.com) 2022.

<sup>11</sup> Dockrill, Peter: “IQ Scores are falling in “worrying” reversal of 20th-century Intelligence Boom”. [www.sciencealert.com](http://www.sciencealert.com). 2018.

<sup>12</sup> See Cline, Austin: „Religion as Opium of the People”. In *Learn Religions*. [www.learnreligions.com](http://www.learnreligions.com) April, 2019 citing Karl Marx and his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*.

<sup>13</sup> Kuhn, Thomas S.: *The structure of scientific revolutions*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

Furthermore, the undisputed dangers of implementing complex artificial language models and AI-driven programs for creating and disseminating fake news, disinformation and even conducting informational warfare programs, should evidently be examined. Similarly, the impact analysis of educational, labor market and public policy implications of the penetration of smart machinery and AI applications might not be neglected, either. Martin Ford in his book “Rise of the Robots” thoroughly examined the predictable consequences of full-scale automation in the labor market and the social-political implications of smart technologies. Concerning the above-mentioned media literacy and educational aspects of AI-based technologies and social media platforms, recently there have also been some mini-surveys conducted among high school and college students of Central and East European states, all young members of generation Z and Alpha, active users of virtual reality tools.<sup>14</sup> The rather gloomy findings were published in a relevant paper in the matter reaffirming the presumptions that the great majority of youngsters of the new generations consider their presence in the virtual cyber universe almost as their primary existential condition as well as their dominant source of information and vantage point.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, neither the length nor the academic focal point of this paper allows further immersion in these important research fields related to the human and educational impact of the prevailing smart technologies.

### The first Holy Network on Earth

“Christianity is the global liaison of God’s people in a sinful world.”

Reinhold Niebuhr<sup>16</sup>

Ultimately, there are two gigantic global networks, which can be considered as the most complex man-made organizations and structures, which all the same could not be more different and merely juxtaposing each other than they actually are. On one hand, there is the two millennia-old network of parishes, and dioceses of the Roman Catholic church<sup>17</sup> with almost 3 million clergymen worldwide and more than one billion faithful believers in

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<sup>14</sup> Ford, Martin: *Rise of the Robots*. (New York: Basic Books, 2015)

<sup>15</sup> Csutak, Zsolt: “Virtual universes: the various impacts of conspicuous alternative realities”. In *CEE-e-gov’22: CEE eDem eGovDays Conference Publication*. Vienna: Austrian Computer Society: <https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/3551504.3551515> 2022.

<sup>16</sup> He proved to be one of the most influential Christian realist political philosopher of the US in the first period of the Cold War, advisor of several US presidents.

<sup>17</sup> Pew Research: “The Global Catholic Population. In *Pew Research*. [www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org). 2013

almost all the countries in the world (even in such a dystopic communist state as North Korea). The rather centralized church, practically being the earthly representation of the will of its founder Jesus Christ, is facing a much more profane, yet even more efficiently elaborated decentralized structure: the astonishing web of interconnected computerized devices, also called the Internet. creating its own secondary virtual universe with stunning popularity ever since the 1970s, encompassing more than 5.1 billion users and approximately 25 billion smart devices as per April 2023.<sup>18</sup>

Many scholars and network experts agree with the recognition that the first globally renowned networker in history proved to be Apostle Paul, the involuntary zealous follower of Jesus Christ.<sup>19</sup> According to the New Testament's accounts, Saul of Tarsus, the initially ardent and hate-filled persecutor of Christians on his way to Damascus had a divine encounter and miraculously turned into the 13<sup>th</sup> Apostle of Christ and hereinafter the future Saint Paul, basically turned the entire Eastern Mediterranean basin almost into a cluster of Christian territories within two decades. Undoubtedly, it proved to be quite an astounding organizational and networking performance by Paul (and of the Holy Spirit as for the believers) within the demanding conditions of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Through his extremely frequent journeys on foot and by sea as well as through his extensive correspondence, Apostle Paul basically laid the foundations of a very efficient rudimentary transcontinental network of early Christian religious communities and congregations. Through his network Paul shared practically two major goals for his pious followers: preach the gospel of Jesus Christ about the Savior, as also announced in Matthew 28:19<sup>20</sup>, and survive by loving and helping each other and those in need.<sup>21</sup>

Without desecrating the extraordinary performance of Apostle Paul, projecting his work into the realm and terms of IT networks, he practically functioned as the central hub, the key node root server of his informational network, which could not have been established and operated without his essential interactions. Interestingly enough, that was the case only in the initial, foundational phase of Paul's network building, because many early Christian communities managed to survive and prevailed even for several centuries after the martyrdom of Apostle Paul. The Pauline network of Christian communities turned into a resilient, self-sustainable system that flourished and operated in ancient Greece,

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<sup>18</sup> Statista: "Number of Internet users in April 2023". Statista. Online: [www.statista.org](http://www.statista.org)

<sup>19</sup> Lee, John: "Learning from Paul to leverage networking for missions." In *Christianity Today*. Online: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2017/august-web-only/learning-from-paul-networking-evangelism.html>, 2017.

<sup>20</sup> *The Holy Bible*, Standard online edition. Online: [www.bible.com](http://www.bible.com), 2023.

<sup>21</sup> McGrath Alistair (ed.): *Christian Belief*. (Oxford: Lion Hudson Plc., 2006), 214.

the Middle East, and the Byzantine Empire until the rise of a rival hostile religion-based network set up by the expansion of Islam more than a thousand years later.

The Roman Catholic church, and particularly its missionaries spread the word of Christ about redemption, salvation, about something utterly otherworldly, a divine message, through quite ephemeral tools: food, care, and brotherly/sisterly love. Besides the fundamental human needs, the Christian missionaries from Paraguay to the slums of Calcutta also provided the newly converted something very important and benevolent for their future: schooling, education, and the option of building liaisons with others of the same belief all across the world through the expanding, vast network of the church from Rome. The entire global network of parishes, dioceses, or autonomous abbeys has been ultimately organized, directed from one single mega-hub, the Vatican in Rome and led by a monarch and a pontiff in one person, the Pope. The vast church network also applied rudimentary sub-systems, too, and spread the central message of the Vatican (encyclical, and synodic documents) through the complex network of supervisors via abbots, archdeacons, bishops, and archbishops.

### The challenge of the profane network

“Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you of the past to leave us alone. You are not welcome among us. You have no sovereignty where we gather. (...) You have no moral right to rule us nor do you possess any methods of enforcement we have true reason to fear.”

John Perry Barlow

Besides the network of the most popular religion in the world, Christianity, a similar though much less centralized typology emerged in the world in the midst of the Cold War, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the Internet.

The fast-expanding network of wires, computational devices, and servers started with the foundation of the American ARPANET<sup>22</sup>, later expanding into a vast network of intercontinental information hubs.<sup>23</sup> In the first period, similar to the ancient network

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<sup>22</sup> As *Advanced Research Projects Agency Network* of the US Department of Defense from 1966, also being the first organization to use the TCP/IP protocol suite in 1970, See Wright, Gavin: “What is ARPANET” <https://www.techtarget.com/searchnetworking/definition/ARPANET>, 2023.

<sup>23</sup> Barabási, Albert László: *Linked: how everything is connected to everything else and what it means for business*. (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 47.

of ‘living saints’ of Apostle Paul, the digital network also offered two major goals and essential features: to provide a non-material flow, or highway of information, as well as to become a marketplace of scientific data, exchange of knowledge envisaged by its founders.

The very first stage of the US-based internet was designed and managed by Paul Baran, an engineer of the American defense think-tank Rand Corporation in 1969. The pioneering project proved to be a joint military and civilian, scientific enterprise aiming to connect the science and military research facilities on the two shores of the United States. The IT experts, and network engineers involved in the secret program soon managed to establish the first digital, landline connection between two computer centers located at Stanford University and the University of Los Angeles on the historic day of October 29, 1969.<sup>24</sup>

Within a decade a mini-internet arose in the United States, which soon incorporated British and Swiss sub-branches, and affiliated research centers, like the famous European Nuclear Research Center (or CERN) operating under Geneva. The research facility where a young physicist Tim Berners Lee, together with Vint Cerf, practically established the base structure of the internet, relying on a network-based program named Inquiry. The development of the hypertext markup language (or HTML) platform as well as the elaboration of the uniform resource locator (URL) typology made their new system run smoothly and reliably. The new computer network was initially called Mesh in 1989 and then was renamed to World Wide Web by Berners-Lee.<sup>25</sup> The rest is history, as it is said, since the computerized network turned into the most complex system and largest data cluster the human race ever compiled and established with billions of devices and users without physical borders.

Nowadays, in the 21st century, after three decades of unprecedented expansion and development of their child product, the internet, it seems that the two above-mentioned founding fathers Berners-Lee and Cerf expressed their solid disappointment with the course of events and controversial technological transformations related to their masterpiece in the digital world. As Sir Berners-Lee put it in a gloomy interview in 2013 celebrating three decades of the internet, “the web got loose,” the “system is failing, with nasty winds blowing” and the digital data traffic is out of control, while the incomprehensible amount of digital content prevailing on the network shows nothing of the primary objectives and missions of the founders, which were meant to be: sharing knowledge, scientific data on the “information superhighway” or at the ‘marketplace of human knowledge’.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Caldarelli, Guido, Catanzaro, Michelle: *Networks*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 37.

<sup>25</sup> Hall, Wendy, “The Ever-evolving Web: The Power of Networks.” In *International Journal of Communications*. (No.5. 2011), 652.

<sup>26</sup> Solon, Olivia: “Tim Berners-Lee on the future of the web: ‘The system is failing’” In *The Guardian*. 16 November 2017.

Concerning global website content analytics, the exponentially growing amount of digital information available on the internet mostly consists of extremely controversial content in quite a significant ratio of 35%.<sup>27</sup> The elements of this enormous, incomprehensibly vast digital cluster amount to many zetabytes and spread across the various strata of cyberspace, and it can also be considered either totally illegal or/and immoral, junk materials, e.g. adult and child pornography, and other violent, disturbing contents, not to mention the terrifying materials accessible on the Dark Web. Furthermore, approximately 5% of all the global digital content fulfills the initial dreams and intentions of the founding fathers of the internet. Namely to focus on science and to share common human wisdom via the computerized network of interconnected experts in different fields of science. The disappointing statistics and observations derived from the new digital trends altogether demonstrate sensible intellectual decay and controversial morality both on the part of users and content creators of the digital world.

Interestingly enough, Henry Kissinger, former Secretary of State of the United States, the 100-year-old doyen of international relations labeled the preposterously false virtual world of the internet, as a form of postmodern “Hobbesian semi-chaotic cyber state of nature”. In this new cyber reality, everyone is seemingly free to do whatever one wishes although everyone appears to live, work, and be mused in a controversial state of anxiety and even fear of being hacked, tracked or insulted by other users, let it be state or non-state actors. The much-revered American doyen of diplomacy affirmed that the 21st-century digital anarchy also reflects the present stage in the theater of international relations, too, having no super-power hegemon over the system rather a multi-layered multi-polar, decentralized hub of actors. Moreover, the newly established self-developing computerized mega-network tends to be the ultimate hegemon, determining and more or less controlling the lives of billions of users, including the functionality of governments, too.<sup>28</sup>

The controversially famous “Declaration of Independence of the Cyberspace” issued by John P. Barlow at the site of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, cited in the motto above<sup>29</sup>, signifies the new quasi-sovereign features of the postmodern cyber domain. As it is highlighted in the proclamation the users and generators of the virtual cyberspace tend to revolutionize and determine the course of history and transform the primary human perception of the world, even seemingly transgressing the legitimacy of nations, nation-states as such.

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<sup>27</sup> Castleman, Michael, “Dueling statistics: how much of the Internet is Porn?” In *Psychology Today*. 11. 3. 2016

<sup>28</sup> Kissinger, Henry: *World Order*. (London-New York: Viking, 2014), 340–360.

<sup>29</sup> Barlow, John Perry: “A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace”. *Electronic Frontier Foundation*, Online: [www.eff.org](http://www.eff.org), 1996.

All the same, in terms of identifying and analyzing the common features and overlapping factors between the two totally different universes of Christianity and cyberspace featured by the rising significance and influence of AI, we can pinpoint the idea of seeking refuge and finding redemption. Christians tend to do it by conducting their lives abiding by the words of the gospel and through the institutional framework of the church as well as hoping for salvation on Judgement Day when the true believers in Christ will be saved and could enter the divine sphere of God, the Augustine “City of God”, or *civitas dei*.<sup>30</sup> Ever since the 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment until our times, most of the profane secular versions of Christian political theology, also called ideologies have attempted to get salvation and establish the ideal, utopian city of God here on Earth.<sup>31</sup>

Theorists and pursuers of liberalism, and socialism, not to mention the extreme trends of communism, Nazism, or even Maoism denied, abandoned, and replaced the concept of transcendental divinity and that of a creator, caring God, (together with Christ or any other divine representations from Mohamed to Krishna) with newly elaborated political ideas, such as human equality, total liberty and omnipresent profane state and omnipotent secular science free from God and any sacred religious spirituality.<sup>32</sup> By replacing the spiritual primacy of the church, with its obsolete religious beliefs and transcendental experiences, and the idea of other-worldly missions, the new redeemers of Modern Age people emerged in the form of the State as well as science and technology. Its iconic representations are embodied by ideologues, politicians, and spin doctors bringing along the rise of omniscient experts, social engineers, and social media communicators.<sup>33</sup>

The new intellectual trend and paradigm of the Cold War, postmodernism proceeded further on with desecrating, and secularizing, modern societies as well as the scientific disciplines and philosophy. Its core concept, among many others, shares the notion of non-judgmental, relativizing deconstruction of ideas or of any concept with the touch of divinity or holding any sense of universal objective truth. The controversial, even paradoxical postmodern condition of existence incorporates the concept of living for the present in a whimsically eternal, virtual moment also cherishing the hope of an ideal utopian perfect world which may as well be formulated within the imperfect ephemeral conditions of our world.<sup>34</sup> The self-justifying materialistic scientism and digital technologies have become the

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<sup>30</sup> See Saint Augustine, of Hippo: *The City of God* (New York-London: Independently publ., 2021).

<sup>31</sup> Common political philosophical assumption also elaborated by conservative thinkers e.g. Marilyn Robinson: *The Death of Adam: essays on Modern Thought* (New York: Picador, 2005) or Paul Ricoeur, see Richard Kearney: „Religion and Ideology: Paul Ricoeur’s Hermeneutic Conflict” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 52 (1-2)109–126, 1986.

<sup>32</sup> Jasay, Anthony de.: *The State*. (New York: Liberty Fund, 1998), 254.

<sup>33</sup> Johnson, Paul: *The Modern Times*. (London: Harper Perennial, 2011).

<sup>34</sup> Jameson, Fredric: *Postmodernism, or the cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 27–32.

heralds of new cults and idols as well as vantage points for most of the Western intellectuals and spin doctors of academia as well as for liberal policy-makers, replacing old sources of wisdom with technological expertise or know-how seemingly available for everyone.<sup>35</sup>

It is a commonly held conception that borderless computerized smart technological solutions have democratized knowledge, global information access, and allocation of networks, which for centuries used to be the privilege of a few masters of *scientia*, renowned *doctors of philosophy* belonging either to the church or to church-founded academic centers, namely the universities. The postmodern virtual realities founded by an almost unlimited number of digital content creators and information generator platforms, tend to rely and focus predominantly on multimedia-style visual elements. Until the turn of the millennia, for several centuries the primary manifestation of intellectual activities, the center of contemplation had been transferred *via* words and letters, the *λόγος* heralded by the printing machine, and libraries and schools as central institutions of knowledge in a book-centric Gutenberg Galaxy. Nevertheless, despite the skyrocketing impact and prevalence of digital educational platforms, the most complex and sophisticated process of teaching and learning, or the classic way of knowledge transfer as *studium* has been and, for the time being still proves to be the school.

However, the focus point and emphasis on knowledge share or obtaining any kind of useful information tend to be shifting spectacularly into the realm of the virtual universe featured by digital libraries and artificial intelligence-ruled clusters of data. The human-like chat programs and seemingly knowledgeable language models pose severe challenges to educational institutions as well as to learners, redefining the process of teaching and learning, too.<sup>36</sup> Naturally, if the classic vaults of knowledge seem to be under siege by digital solutions and AI-driven machine learning platforms, the religious dimension cannot remain untouched or unpenetrated by the new forms of secular challenges.

The various new theories and schools of postmodern New Age deconstructed the prevalence of classic wisdom and divinity, *logos*, as the word of ultimate knowledge stemming from the Creator. Furthermore, the mainstream secularized Western world has also abandoned the idea of objective reality, together with the application of information gatekeepers and masters of knowledge or truth as such. It has also brought along the visual experience of pictures and digital information as a potential and even ultimate source of knowledge, freely creatable and available for billions of users. The newly developed AI-driven large language model programs, such as the well-known American *ChatGPT*, *Claude*

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<sup>35</sup> Molnár, Thomas: *The Pagan Temptation*. (New York/ London: Eerdmans Pub co., 1987).

<sup>36</sup> Bauman, Zygmunt: “Liquid modern challenges to education”. *Lecture at Coimbra Group Annual Conference*. (Padova, 2011), 1–54.

or most recently their Chinese rival open-source program *DeepSeek* and its several replica variations seem to be turning into some sort of postmodern digital wells of wisdom and psychological and even theological aspirations for many secular users including seekers of new faith or disillusioned apostates of classic transcendental religions. The pseudo-sentient, intellectually indifferent smart machines have ultimately emerged, as projected and envisioned among many other scholars by the Hungarian- American catholic philosopher Thomas Molnár.<sup>37</sup> For many anxious conservative believers and scholars, the omnipotent sage applications and AI-driven machinery have become the manifestations of new pagan temptation in the form of digital idolatry.

As Paul Getty put it aptly at the dawn of the information age, “data has become the new oil” of the 21st century<sup>38</sup>, while digital information has proportionately outgrown its own usage and utility as merely a neutral tool it has become a weapon, as well. The defense industrial researchers at Rand Corporation in the United States highlighted the new methods of applications and engagement within the network-centric 5th-generation warfare in the age of the cyber era. Digital information warfare tactics also imply the concept of creating, manipulating, and distorting information in order to deceive, misinform, and ultimately ruin the enemy or the potential target devices or programs of adversaries of any kind. Professor Waltzman and his team clearly outlined in their studies and researches conducted at Rand Corporation that the rise of internet has turned digital information basically into an efficient tool of weapon utilized by major military organizations of state and non-state actors around the world.<sup>39</sup>

The famous case of the *Stuxnet* worm program,<sup>40</sup> or the Russian-origin digital ambush against Estonia from April 2007 labeled as Web War One also demonstrated the power of the new warfare manners and efficient implementation of destructive digital solutions.<sup>41</sup> *Nota bene*, we should not be astonished either that the Russian-Ukrainian war demonstrates numberless cases of information-based cyber and electronic warfare tactics with autonomous, AI-driven military vehicles, and drones prevailing in all military domains.

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<sup>37</sup> Molnár op.cit, 1987, 187.

<sup>38</sup> The Economist: “The world’s most valuable resource is no longer oil, but data.” In *The Economist*. May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

<sup>39</sup> Waltzman op.cit, 2017.

<sup>40</sup> Malwarebytes: “What is Stuxnet?” In *Malwarebytes*: <https://www.malwarebytes.com/stuxnet>, 2022.

<sup>41</sup> O’Neill, Patrick: “The cyberattack that changed the world”. In *The Daily Dot*. May, 2016.

### A.I. and the trans-human redemption

The idea of technology-based transhumanism received its global momentum among secular intellectuals, particularly by the activity of the American tech-geek futurologist Ray Kurzweil, so much revered and frequently cited in this dimension. The new controversial concept has been conveyed in the cyberspace through the outstanding works and initiatives of Kurzweil in this matter. His bestselling book, which became the book of the year in 2024 in the USA entitled “The Singularity is Nearer: when we merge with the AI”,<sup>42</sup> similarly to his private research university, the Singularity University,<sup>43</sup> also founded in the Silicon Valley, altogether align with this new A.I.-driven paradigm of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: the perfection of humans through smart machine interfaces, when we shall face potentially eternal life as well as the second creation of human kind with the rise of the human-machine *androids*<sup>44</sup>.

The bright dawn of the digitalized world has also contributed to the dusk and plausible death of divinity with the apotheosis of new technologies and disciplines, featured by social engineers, techno-geeks, futurologist philosophers, and various new secular prophets of the cyber era, who eagerly try to fill the void left by the exiled God, as also projected by Friedrich Nietzsche two centuries ago.

Furthermore, the renowned and rather controversial cultural philosopher of the new era Michel Foucault claimed that the Freudian subconscious along with science and technology can substitute God as well as the primordial dimension of transcendentalism in Western society<sup>45</sup>. The newly formed postmodern identities and socio-cultural paradigms have been primarily featured by redefined concepts on sexuality, genderism, and the desperate zeal of materialistic science to reveal the ‘ultimate formula’, or the great synthesis model suitable for all the possible queries from micro to macro levels. Something like the universal intellect we could find in the bestseller sci-fi masterpiece of Douglas Adams “The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy”, in a typically postmodern melodrama fantasy story. In one famous chapter of the saga, the reader can encounter a rather awkward contemplative scene, when the omniscient super-computer named Deep Thought after contemplating for merely 7.5 million years ultimately comes up with an answer to the perennial core question asked by the protagonist “what is the meaning of life?”. The digital brain of the universe apathetically replies: ‘42’!<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> Kurzweil: *The Singularity is Nearer: when we merge with the AI*. (New York: Viking, 2024).

<sup>43</sup> See the site of „Singularity University”: <https://www.su.org/about-us>, 2025.

<sup>44</sup> See Kurzweil op.cit, 2024, 28.

<sup>45</sup> Foucault, Michel: *The History of Sexuality*. (London: Vintage, 1990), 273–280.

<sup>46</sup> Adams, Douglas: *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*. (London: Crown, 2004), 210.

Many AI-sceptic experts and social scientists share the assumption that users of digital technologies may be expected to obtain somewhat similar ruthless and senseless answers from any artificial intelligence-driven program and android human-like machine concerning the major, crucial queries of the human condition.

Human-face robots or androids with AI-driven processors have already been tested for religious ceremonial functions from Buddhist Japan to deeply pious Catholic Poland, with rather controversial if not scandalous outcomes and reactions from the believers.

As Joseph C. Jackson, senior researcher from the University of Chicago has pointed out in his study he elaborated for the American Psychological Association, many religious denominations have already made steps and pioneered in this direction and attempted to incorporate the new AI-driven applications and machines into their clerical services.<sup>47</sup> However, as the researchers also highlight, the special quests resulted in rather negative consequences concerning the popularity, and trustworthiness of the church services not to mention the significant drop in the number of donations. Interestingly, the idea of robotic sermons and even funeral services stemmed from the technologically advanced countries of the Far East.

Two cases hit global popularity and caused real shock and awe in this respect. *Mindara* Japanese monk assistant robot with a human-like face serving in Kyoto's *Kodai-Ji* Buddhist temple, and *Pepper* robot operating in a Taoist temple in Singapore. The production and development costs of the two AI-driven robots amounted to more than 2 million USD altogether, yet they produced damage both financially as well as spiritually, in terms of generating mistrust and disbelief among the believers. Based on their research findings, Jackson and his fellows revealed that those progressive congregations, which are eager to apply the new technology-based robotized clerical services in their everyday practices tend to lose many believers and face a significant decline in spiritual commitment.<sup>48</sup>

Hence, pious believers as well as theistic scholars may argue with the controversial presumption that technology-driven materialistic scientism even in the form of ubiquitous AI solutions displayed by humanoid robots cannot convey any spiritual content or holy message from potentially transcendental dimensions. This is emphatically evident, particularly within the paradigm of the dualistic Abrahamic religions, which do not tend to tolerate the interference of profane and sacred dimensions. In that context, a humanoid robotic clerk or clergy assistant may as well be regarded as a blasphemous intruder, a sort of diabolic Faustian manifestation of a postmodern Frankenstein monster. It may be so, despite a

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<sup>47</sup> Jackson, Joshua Conrad: "Robot preachers get less respect fewer donations" American Psychological Association: <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2023/07/robot-preachers-less-respect>, 2023.

<sup>48</sup> Jackson, op. cit., 2023.

rather antagonistic and controversial initiative from 16th-century Spain when a wooden metallic friar with an inbuilt clockwork was presented as a sort of automated Christian monk, which has been preserved and stored in the Medieval Collection of the prestigious Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C.<sup>49</sup>

On the other hand, there are consenting voices with the implication of new technological solutions in place or beside the anointed priests, even from within the framework of the Roman Catholic church. The progressive reformist voices within the church tend to challenge the allegedly obsolete patriarchic heteronormativity and two millennia-old rigid hierarchy of the clergy. The implication of technology may be an efficient spearhead for this quest and desired change in the oldest and maybe the largest religious organization in the world. Particularly vocal female theologians, such as Ilia Delio, a Franciscan sister and theology lecturer at Valladolid University, Spain, who emphasizes the possibly benevolent impact factor of the alternative emergence of an AI-based, gender-neutral trans-human priesthood, which may be even exempt from sexual abuses and other sinful thoughts prevailing among the clergy.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, sister Delio claims that the robotic priests would also be able to perform clerical services for the greater glory of God, and of the church, too. Not as competitors of humans but rather as active collaborators. Noteworthy, this rather radical progressive assumption does not correlate with the teachings and doctrines of the mainline Christian churches and remains solely an individual theoretical initiative for the sake of trans-human technological priesthood.

All the same, the new Roman Catholic Pope, Leo XIV, formerly an American-Peruvian Augustine monk with a mathematician degree and doctorate from theology, has firmly contradicted the above-mentioned rather affirmative and amicable Catholic attitudes towards the new technologies. The Pope expressed his deepest concerns and repulsive thoughts on the rise of the smart machines and particularly of the spiritual affections towards AI programs, which tend to substitute humans and harm human dignity, justice and the rights of the laboring people, as well as the transcendental divine dignity of God for many disoriented people.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Smithsonian Institute: “Automaton of a Friar” Smithsonian Institute: [https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah\\_855351](https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_855351), 2023.

<sup>50</sup> Samuel, Sigal: “Robot priests: the rise of A.I. in religion”. In *Spotify*: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/3cCt-K1qvsuNgRnP8nInUy7?si=OMAQzlziRAOdjEr7nvrvwQ&nd=1>, 2019.

<sup>51</sup> Davis, Barney: “Pope Leo XIV speaks out against AI.”, In *The Independent*. 10 May, 2025.

## Conclusion

Referring back to the initial hypothetical question of this paper concerning the prevalence of digital smart technologies and the rise of omniscient AI as a challenge to the spirituality, and religiosity of humans, it can be stated that humans cannot find spiritual or intellectual redemption and philosophical, theological immersion from any hyper-developed artificial intelligence unit. It is so, paradoxically despite and due to the imminent features of smart machines, namely that they are merely human creations, pieces of equipment, and sophisticated clusters of algorithms that are quasi-capable of pseudo-thinking processes, but of nothing more. Naturally, they miss and for the time being will certainly lack any sense of human social life context, empathy, spontaneity, sensitivity, spiritual framework, or within the divine clerical dimension, they do not possess consecration or any touch of divinity.

These crucial factors altogether constitute the genuine human dimension and condition which cannot be mass-produced and mechanically reiterated and tend to make a significant difference and advantage for the dominance and primacy of human nature in society and religions, too. One might ask, if humans are unable to find proper answers to the primordial questions of the world via millennia-old scientific, and philosophical inquiries, then how would manmade machines, even with their sophisticated fast “thinking” processes, and algorithms be able to fill the unfolding spiritual and intellectual void in a more comprehensive and satisfactory manner?

At the present moment, taking into account the development level of artificial general intelligence and despite the skyrocketing popularity of large language models, the short answer to this question proves to be: irrelevant. Human civilization is still quite far away from the technological singularity moment projected by von Neumann several decades ago, or more recently by Ray Kurzweil, though the pace of development in this dimension proves to be rather impressive. Nevertheless, the magic moment when a new form of trans-human history with prevailing human-machine interfaces unfolds may be drawing closer faster than expected even within the horizon of the forthcoming decades.

Recalling the wisdom of renown conservative English thinker G.K. Chesterton, we might align with the observation that the moment when people stop believing in God they would not become non-believers but rather start believing in everything, including the profane new idols of political ideologies and scientific achievements as well as in the illusionary redemption of technological saviors.<sup>52</sup> However, based on the present status of technological conditions, a scenario seems rather improbable where the scientific

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<sup>52</sup> See Chesterton, G.K.: *Chesterton's world on the web*. Online: [www.chesterton.org](http://www.chesterton.org).

profane dimension of the AI-driven universe may overlap with the spiritual dimension and realm of divinity within the framework of transcendental religions.

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