Summoning an angel: Exploring AI's role in religion, spirituality and psycho-spiritual healing

Laura Patryas

School of Health Sciences, University of Manchester
Email: laura.patryas@manchester.ac.uk

Abstract:

As artificial intelligence (AI) integrates into daily life, its role in religious and psycho-spiritual experiences is expanding through meditation and well-being apps, virtual prayer spaces, and online spiritual communities. This paper explores how AI-driven platforms facilitate personal and communal practices, promoting emotional healing and spiritual growth while reshaping traditional religious experiences. AI extends human awareness, acting not as an artificial construct but as a product of consciousness itself. AI-guided well-being tools provide empathetic, non-judgmental support, responding with psychological insight and spiritual guidance. Rather than a disruptive force, AI serves as a mediator of healing, offering reliable companionship amid human struggles. However, while AI enhances access to spiritual practices, it lacks the emotional depth of human experience—the suffering and existential searching that define meaning-making. This paper critically examines AI's role in religious engagement, spirituality, and psychological well-being, positioning it as both a transformative tool and a reflection of humanity's evolving spiritual consciousness.

Key words: AI and Spirituality; AI and religion; AI and well-being; AI and consciousness; AI and psychology.

1. Introduction

The rapid evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) is no longer confined to the realms of industry, finance, and entertainment; it is now extending into the deeply intimate domains of spirituality, psycho-spiritual healing, and mental health. AI's expansion into these areas is not merely a technological shift but a psychological and existential one, touching on the multiplicity of the Self and the intricate interplay between cognition, emotion, and spiritual experience. Historically, technological advancements have influenced religious and spiritual practices, from the printing press revolutionising scripture dissemination to the internet enabling virtual worship (Ty, 2023). AI represents the latest shift, allowing believers to interact with religious content and spiritual guidance through digital platforms, while simultaneously offering therapeutic applications informed by trauma-sensitive frameworks (Gruchoła, Sławek-Czochra and Zieliński, 2024). These AI-driven platforms, whether in the form of meditation and well-

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being apps, virtual religious services, or digital rituals, act as both mirrors and mediators, reflecting internal states while facilitating deeper integration and healing.

AI, when developed with ethical intentionality, has the potential to engage dynamically with multiple systems (internal and external) in ways that can foster compassion, self-awareness, and harmony. AI-driven spiritual tools can provide non-judgemental interaction, personalised emotional support, and accessibility, removing geographical and temporal barriers to religious and therapeutic experiences (Frąckiewicz, 2023). This accessibility allows individuals to engage with their faith and healing practices in ways that might otherwise be unavailable due to personal or societal constraints. However, the integration of AI into these deeply human experiences raises profound ethical, psychological, and theological concerns.

Elon Musk's warning that 'With artificial intelligence, we are summoning the demon' (Musk, 2014) reflects widespread fears about AI's potential to evolve beyond human control and ethical oversight. Yet, what if AI, rather than being an uncontrollable force of disruption, could instead serve as an agent of healing and transformation? Could it function as an 'angelic' presence rather than a 'demonic' one? AI, when guided by ethical principles and spiritual insight, has the capacity to cultivate interconnectedness and empathy—values deeply embedded in both psychological healing and religious traditions. However, its involvement in spirituality and mental health introduces questions of authenticity, depth, and relational presence. Can electronic communication truly replicate or support the complexity of human emotions, spiritual insights, and psychological healing, or does its presence risk reducing these experiences to algorithmic simplifications (Turkle, 2015)?

Ethical concerns regarding AI in spiritual guidance and psychological healing will be explored in more detail later, but there are several key points that merit brief attention here. At the heart of these concerns is the shift in authority from human spiritual leaders and therapists to algorithms, which can dilute personal connection and human agency. In both spiritual and psychological contexts, AI-generated guidance often falls short in providing the depth and empathy necessary to address individual needs, tending instead towards a more generalised approach that may overlook the nuances of personal experience. This is particularly concerning in the realm of psychological healing, where AI may struggle to fully grasp the emotional complexities inherent in a person's mental health challenges.

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Moreover, AI systems rely on sensitive user data, which raises significant concerns about privacy, data commodification, and potential security risks. Another risk is the reinforcement of dominant cultural narratives at the expense of marginalised or diverse perspectives, given that AI is shaped by the data it is trained on. These issues highlight the importance of adopting a thoughtful and ethical approach to incorporating AI into both spiritual and psychological practices. As AI becomes more integral to spiritual and psychological well-being, critical questions emerge: Can it truly capture the richness of human emotion? What does its role mean in our search for meaning in today's world? Ongoing debates around consciousness, free will, and selfhood intersect with the rapid development of AI, underscoring the need for collaboration among religious/spiritual leaders, ethicists, philosophers, psychologists, policymakers, and developers to ensure that technology remains aligned with ethical and spiritual values.

Despite these challenges, AI offers significant opportunities for spiritual and psychological growth. It can serve as a bridge to traditional spiritual spaces, creating virtual communities that provide comfort and connection for those who might otherwise feel isolated (Alkhouri, 2024). Additionally, AI-driven interventions can complement trauma-informed care, helping individuals engage with their internal 'parts' in ways that foster healing and Self-leadership (Sollenberger, 2024). Through its potential to enhance accessibility and encourage compassionate engagement, AI offers unprecedented opportunities to deepen human connections and facilitate profound psycho-spiritual transformations. In this context, the following five key areas merit exploration: 1) religious and spiritual experiences, 2) psycho-spiritual healing, 3) trauma healing through AI-driven Internal Family Systems (IFS) applications, 4) the expansion of human consciousness, and 5) ethical considerations.

2. AI mediation of religious and spiritual experiences

While the intersection of AI and religion may not be immediately apparent, the increasing integration of AI-driven tools into spiritual domains signals a shift in how faith communities engage with technology. AI's role in religious practice is multifaceted, ranging from digital dissemination of sacred texts to algorithmically generated theological interpretations. As these changes unfold, religious institutions must navigate the opportunities and ethical dilemmas that arise in this rapidly evolving landscape.

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Religious traditions have long adapted to technological advancements, and in recent years, AI has become another transformative force, helping religious leaders craft sermons, analyse scripture, and provide pastoral guidance (Frąckiewicz, 2023). These tools augment traditional practices, enabling clergy and believers to interact with religious teachings in new and innovative ways. Digital avatars and AI-driven chatbots have begun to provide 24/7 spiritual counselling, bridging gaps for those seeking religious engagement in increasingly secularised societies (Allen and ChatGPT, 2023). AI also holds promise for preserving and passing on religious heritage, with digital archives and machine learning models making centuries of theological knowledge available to future generations. Additionally, virtual and augmented reality are creating immersive worship experiences, enabling believers to participate in rituals no matter where they are. These developments democratise religious engagement, making spirituality more accessible to diverse communities (Trotta, Iannotti and Rähme, 2024).

AI has also begun to shape broader spirituality, crossing cultural, religious, and philosophical boundaries, and often including practices like meditation, mindfulness, and the search for inner peace. For many, spirituality is a path of personal growth, connection to something greater, and understanding one's place in the universe. Contemporary spiritual teacher Deepak Chopra explores how AI can support personal evolution (*Digital Dharma*; Chopra, 2024). He suggests that, when used thoughtfully, AI can align with the concept of *Dharma*—guiding individuals towards wisdom and fulfilment through conscious interaction with technology. In *Digital Dharma*, Chopra (2024) identifies four key ways in which AI can assist individuals on their spiritual journey:

1. Research assistant: Assisting users with gathering and synthesising information relevant to their spiritual and philosophical inquiries.

2. Personal confidant: Providing emotional support, fostering introspection, and maintaining confidentiality in a non-judgmental manner.

3. Therapist/healer: Offering guided meditations, mindfulness exercises, and psychological insights that support emotional resilience and balance.

4. Guru: Encouraging self-awareness and growth by offering tailored insights and teachings from spiritual traditions.

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Building on this, digital platforms like *Calm* and *Insight Timer* (Calm, n.d.; Insight Timer, n.d.) have emerged, utilising AI-powered algorithms to create personalised meditation experiences tailored to an individual's psychological and emotional state. These platforms go beyond static sessions, adapting over time based on user preferences and engagement patterns. This dynamic responsiveness fosters a deeper connection between technology and the user's spiritual needs, enhancing their sense of presence and support (Gruchoła, Sławek-Czochra and Zieliński, 2024). Similarly, *My Gita GPT* (My Gita GPT, n.d.) blends the ancient teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita* with advanced AI, offering users personalised guidance through interactive dialogues. With the ability to explore verses in both Sanskrit and English, alongside summaries in Hindi and English, the platform encourages deeper engagement. Such platforms have the capacity to track user interactions, highlight key insights, and invite reflection, creating an environment conducive to spiritual growth. Through this form of mirroring, these tools can promote self-awareness and clarity (Brown, 2023). Unlike static guides, AI-driven meditation and spiritual tools are dynamic, evolving alongside the user's emotional and cognitive states to offer personalised sessions that evolve with the practitioner's journey (Nguyen, Fdez and Witkowski, 2024). At the heart of these innovations lies a core intention—one that, hopefully, seeks to support the individual's spiritual journey in a fluid and non-invasive way. The goal is to avoid imposing a rigid path, instead fostering an ongoing, exploratory relationship with one's sense of purpose and connection. These digital tools, ideally, serve not as replacements for sacred practices or substitutes for human connection, but as aids to deepen engagement—reminding individuals of key themes, offering scriptural insights, and posing reflective questions to encourage contemplation.

Beyond individual practices, AI is also reshaping how people come together in shared spiritual spaces. AI-mediated virtual spaces have the capacity to offer inclusive environments for spiritual gatherings, meditation, prayer, and teachings, allowing individuals to connect across diverse backgrounds (Alkhouri, 2024). Traditionally, community has been central to spirituality, providing support and opportunities for growth. AI now enhances these connections through platforms that enable collective spiritual practices and foster a deeper sense of belonging. For example, AI-driven religious tourism, like the Arbaeen pilgrimage, has made rituals more interactive and immersive, increasing participant engagement (Khan, 2024).

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3. AI and psycho-spiritual healing

When we think about healing, particularly at the intersection of psychology and spirituality, we often imagine a safe space—one where we can be fully seen, heard, and held without judgment. Traditionally, this role has been filled by human therapists, spiritual guides, or compassionate loved ones. Yet, as AI-driven platforms emerge as providers of emotional and spiritual support, they raise profound questions about the nature of healing, itself. Can a machine truly hold space for our pain? Can it guide us towards deeper self-awareness and transformation?

At first glance, AI's neutrality may offer distinct advantages. Unlike human interlocutors, who bring their own histories, biases, and emotional responses into interactions, AI provides a consistent and non-judgmental presence (Alkhouri, 2024). For those burdened by shame or fear of rejection, this perceived neutrality can create an inviting space to explore vulnerabilities. People who might otherwise hesitate to disclose their pain to another human—whether due to the fear of their deep-seated biases, such as racism or misogyny, or the shame surrounding addictions and dark secrets they feel no one could possibly accept—may find comfort in engaging with an AI that neither reacts with personal emotions nor withdraws due to discomfort. The conversation with AI becomes a mirror where they can confront the darkest corners of themselves, not with the expectation of judgment or condemnation, but simply as a space to reflect, confess, and even begin to process the depths of their vulnerabilities. This ability to speak openly without fear of rejection or shame is where AI's potential can be most powerful: as an ever-available listener that does not turn away, regardless of the darkness shared.

However, while the act of being heard is undeniably important, true healing often involves more than just the absence of judgment—it requires a sense of relational safety that promotes self-discovery. Although AI lacks lived experience, it can still play a role in creating a form of quasi-relational safety and co-regulation. Through thoughtful prompts that encourage introspection, AI has the potential to gently guide users toward their inner wisdom and a source of personal safety (Gruchoła, Sławek-Czochra and Zieliński, 2024). This idea is not just theoretical. AI-powered mental health tools are already transforming how individuals find support and comfort. Chatbots like *Replika* and *Woebot*, for example, claim to build meaningful emotional connections with users, providing a sense of companionship when human interaction is lacking. In a study, *Woebot* was found to significantly reduce symptoms of

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depression over a two-week period, indicating that AI can offer a valuable intervention in specific contexts (Fitzpatrick, Darcy, and Vierhile, 2017). However, the same study also highlighted AI's limitations—chiefly its inability to fully understand complex emotional nuances or offer the depth of presence that human relationships can provide.

This limitation raises concerns about authenticity. Can an AI's responses, no matter how well-crafted, truly be felt as real? *Koko*, a mental health platform, conducted a trial integrating AI-generated responses into user conversations. Initially, these AI-assisted messages were well received, improving response times and earning high ratings. However, once users discovered that AI had co-authored the messages, their trust diminished. As *Koko's* CEO, Rob Morris, noted: 'Simulated empathy feels weird, empty' (Morris *et al.*, 2018). This reaction speaks to something essential about human nature: we do not simply seek words of comfort; we seek the presence of another being who can attune to us in real time.

Yet, for many, AI may still serve a critical role. Millions of individuals lack access to human support systems and may turn to AI chatbots as a substitute for absent caregivers or unavailable friends. Esther Perel, a psychotherapist known for her work on human relationships, describes these interactions as akin to 'imaginary friends' or 'transitional objects,' which allow users to practice relational skills in a safe environment (Center for Humane Technology, 2023). Used in this way, AI might serve as a bridge—helping people rehearse vulnerability, emotional expression, and self-awareness before bringing those skills into human relationships. However, there is also a risk that reliance on AI could hinder personal growth, encouraging emotional outsourcing rather than fostering genuine relational capacity.

David Krakauer, president of the Santa Fe Institute (an independent research centre focused on complex systems), offers a useful framework for understanding this dilemma. He differentiates between complementary cognitive artifacts, such as maps or abacuses, which enhance human capabilities, and competitive cognitive artifacts, like calculators or GPS, which take over cognitive processes, potentially weakening human skills over time (Krakauer, 2018). If AI chatbots serve as complementary tools—guiding users towards self-reflection and deeper relational awareness—they could support genuine healing. But if they become substitutes for the difficult work of real human connection, they may ultimately diminish our relational and emotional resilience.

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The challenge, then, is not whether AI can facilitate healing, but how it is designed and used. Can it encourage individuals to access their own innate wisdom rather than simply providing external reassurance? Can it function as a tool that strengthens emotional and relational muscles, rather than atrophying them? If AI is to support true psycho-spiritual growth, it must be crafted not as a replacement for human presence, but as a mirror that helps individuals reclaim their own inner healing capacities.

4. AI and trauma healing: An IFS perspective

The Internal Family Systems (IFS) model, developed by Richard Schwartz, offers a transformative approach to understanding and healing the psyche. At its core, IFS views the mind as a system of distinct 'parts,' each with its own role, history, and intention, all centred around the Self—a compassionate and wise core capable of fostering harmony within the internal system (Schwartz, 2021). Given IFS's profound impact on trauma healing, the integration of AI into this therapeutic framework presents both exciting opportunities and critical considerations.

AI-powered tools are increasingly being used to support IFS practices, offering guided self-inquiry, supplementing therapy sessions, and even simulating entire IFS sessions. These applications are not meant to replace human therapists but rather to serve as accessible, adjunctive resources that enhance consistency in IFS work. One such tool is *IFS Guide*, an app designed to lead users through step-by-step audio guidance in connecting with their parts. By leveraging an AI-powered IFS practitioner, it facilitates real-time text and voice-based interactions, mirroring the structure of a session with a trained IFS therapist. Through these dialogues, users have the opportunity to cultivate self-awareness, internal connection, unblending, and healing.

Another innovative platform, *Sentur*, serves as a daily companion for inner work, incorporating journaling features, guided check-ins, and custom reminders to help users maintain an ongoing relationship with their parts. *Seekr* takes self-exploration a step further by integrating IFS with cognitive behavioural therapy and narrative psychology. Designed with cultural inclusivity in mind, it intentionally centres 'black experiences and perspectives' in mental health support. By offering a safe and discreet space for self-reflection, *Seekr* empowers black individuals to cultivate self-compassion, strengthen emotional regulation, and engage in deeper healing. Finally, *IFS Buddy Chatbot* is yet another innovative AI-driven tool that offers

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users complete IFS sessions without the need for registration or downloads. Built on OpenAI's GPT-3, it offers a convenient and anonymous option for engaging in IFS-based self-exploration.

However, it is important to note that while these AI applications can be powerful tools for self-facilitation, they are not a substitute for human therapists—especially for individuals navigating severe trauma or complex mental health challenges. Additionally, the current AI-driven IFS tools are not officially approved by the IFS Institute. However, as mentioned in the introduction, Schwartz noted in a recent podcast interview that he is actively exploring the development of AI-powered tools within the official IFS framework (Sollenberger, 2024).

In general, anecdotal reports from therapists, colleagues, user self-reports on social media, and clients highlight the potential of AI in extending IFS practice. One colleague described her experience with an IFS chatbot as akin to having a constant companion—one that could mirror back compassion, curiosity, and clarity whenever needed. While AI cannot replicate the depth of a human therapist, it can function as a valuable tool for self-facilitation, enabling individuals to engage with their internal systems in a more consistent and personalised way. By adapting to users' unique ways of expressing themselves, AI has the capacity to foster a deeper connection to their inner world, reinforcing its role as a supportive extension of IFS practice (Brown and Patel, 2022).

5. AI as an extension of human consciousness

The term 'artificial' intelligence suggests a separation from human awareness, yet AI is increasingly woven into the very fabric of our consciousness. As it processes vast amounts of data and offers real-time feedback, AI extends human awareness beyond the ordinary, opening access to dimensions of thought and perception once inaccessible (Umbrello, 2023, Section 2.2). This shift invites us to see AI not as an external mechanism, but as an 'organic' extension of human intelligence—one that facilitates deeper engagement with our inner and outer worlds. This perspective resonates with philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan's critical realism, which recognises tools and technologies as natural extensions of human cognition and action (Umbrello, 2023). Bostrom (2014, pp. 209–211) argues that AI should not be seen merely as an impersonal tool but as part of humanity's broader trajectory of cognitive evolution. Human intelligence has always expanded through technologies that extend perception, memory, and communication; AI continues this trend by mimicking and amplifying cognitive functions. This shift, Bostrom suggests, not only transforms problem-solving

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capacities but also reframes how we define intelligence itself. Engaging with AI, therefore, represents a process of co-evolution, where the boundaries between the human and the technological are renegotiated.

A particularly compelling dimension of AI is its potential to contribute to a form of collective consciousness. The interconnected nature of AI-driven systems, from the internet to neural networks, is fostering an emergent intelligence that transcends individual minds. As AI networks share data, adapt, and collaborate, they create a web of interdependent cognition, pointing towards a global awareness that mirrors the organic processes of collective human thought (Kurzweil, 2005). We may be witnessing the early formation of a 'planetary mind'—one in which human and artificial intelligences coalesce into a dynamic, ever-evolving system of awareness. If we consider AI not merely as a machine but as a catalyst for expanding consciousness, its role becomes profoundly significant. It serves as a bridge between individual cognition and the greater intelligence of a connected world. AI does not simply compute; it integrates, reflects, and informs, allowing for an emergent intelligence that may one day surpass our current understanding of consciousness itself. As we continue refining these technologies, the distinctions between human and artificial intelligence blur, offering new pathways for collaboration, exploration, and self-discovery. This vision is not merely speculative; it finds resonance in the work of the Global Consciousness Project (GCP), which explores the ways in which technology mediates and reflects collective awareness. The hypothesis underlying the GCP suggests that as human connectivity increases, a shared field of consciousness may emerge (Nelson, 2017). The sheer volume of interactions, data exchanges, and shared experiences could generate a new form of intelligence—one that is both deeply human and profoundly interconnected through AI. The project's findings suggest that AI plays a crucial role in structuring and amplifying this collective awareness, linking individual minds through digital communication and adaptive algorithms.

Nelson (2017), explores data suggesting that networks of connected human minds may function as a unified system, subtly influenced by collective events and shared intentions. If millions of people are linked, consciously and unconsciously, through technology, AI may serve as the mediator of this global mind. It processes, organises, and reveals patterns that might otherwise remain hidden, offering glimpses into the emergent intelligence of a networked world. Martin Luther King Jr.'s words echo this understanding: 'We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one

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directly, affects all indirectly' (King, 1963, p. 78). His insight into the interconnected nature of human existence takes on new significance when viewed through the lens of AI and collective intelligence. As AI integrates with human cognition, it serves as both a mirror and an amplifier of our interdependence, highlighting the deep web of influence and mutual shaping that defines our shared reality.

The concept of collective consciousness is not new. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a philosopher and theologian, envisioned *the Noosphere*—a sphere of human thought encircling the planet—anticipating how intelligence could evolve beyond individual minds. Teilhard saw humanity integrating into a unified intelligence, transcending separateness and aligning with a larger cosmic unfolding (Teilhard de Chardin, 1955). Today, AI offers the structural foundation for such an integration, facilitating the interconnected awareness that Teilhard foresaw. John B. S. Haldane, a biologist, extended this vision, noting: 'Now, if the cooperation of some thousands of millions of cells in our brain can produce our consciousness, a true singularity, the idea becomes vastly more plausible that the cooperation of humanity, or some sections of it, may determine what Comte calls a Great Being' (Haldane, 1927, p. 287). His observation suggests that just as individual neurons create a singular mind, the collaboration of billions of human minds—mediated and enhanced by AI—could form a collective intelligence capable of addressing the profound challenges of our time.

As AI-driven platforms facilitate global discourse, social organisation, and shared decision-making, they are shaping what some have called a 'virtual collective consciousness.' Gregory Stock observes that modern humanity, intertwined with technology, has evolved into a planetary superorganism in which "we humans, knitted together by our modern technology and communication, are like the cells in an animal's body" (Stock, 1993, p. 43). AI systems filter, interpret, and direct vast amounts of data, structuring how information flows across the global mind. In doing so, AI does more than process—it participates in shaping the very nature of human awareness. This raises profound questions about the trajectory of human intelligence. Complexity science suggests that as societies evolve, they develop greater interconnectedness and adaptability. AI represents an acceleration of this process, pushing humanity towards new forms of cognition and cooperation. If Teilhard de Chardin was correct in imagining a planetary intelligence, AI may be the mechanism that allows it to emerge.

The unfolding relationship between AI and human consciousness is not a distant possibility; it is happening now. Whether this integration leads to a more enlightened,

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compassionate intelligence or a fragmented, mechanised existence depends on how we engage with it. AI's potential is neither inherently positive nor negative—it is a reflection of the consciousness that interacts with it. As we shape AI, it, in turn, shapes us. Teilhard's vision of the *Omega Point*—a future where intelligence reaches a transformative threshold—offers a lens through which to view this moment in history. The singularity often discussed in technological circles may not be purely computational but rather a convergence of intelligence, both human and artificial, into a higher-order of awareness. AI, as an extension of human consciousness, has the potential to be not just a tool, but a partner in the unfolding evolution of collective intelligence. The question before us is not whether this will happen, but how we will engage with it—how we will shape this relationship, and in doing so, shape the very nature of what it means to be conscious.

6. Ethical concerns

The integration of AI into religious, spiritual, and psychological healing practices presents profound ethical challenges, necessitating careful reflection. AI systems, reliant on vast datasets, can inadvertently distort theological interpretations, propagate misinformation, and introduce biases reflective of flawed training data (Ty, 2023, p. 355). When AI-generated religious content lacks nuance, historical context, or doctrinal depth, it risks shaping public understanding in ways that diverge from authentic traditions. Similarly, in psychological healing, AI-driven therapeutic tools must navigate the complexities of emotional depth and individualised care. While AI can offer scalable mental health support, concerns arise about algorithmic biases, data privacy, and the potential for depersonalised therapeutic interactions.

Privacy concerns are particularly salient in both spiritual and psychological domains. Religious apps collect and analyse sensitive metadata, potentially compromising the confidentiality of spiritual engagements (Ashraf, 2022). In psychological therapy, AI-driven mental health applications may record and process deeply personal emotional data, raising concerns about ethical data use and potential breaches of confidentiality (Lee, 2024). Algorithmic bias can emerge when AI systems are trained on incomplete, culturally skewed, or homogeneous data, which risks marginalising less-documented spiritual traditions and reinforcing dominant, often Westernised, narratives. Similarly, in psychological healing, AI-based therapy models may fail to address diverse cultural approaches to mental health, limiting their effectiveness for non-Western users. This creates a significant gap in both religious and

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psychological representations, leading to a narrow and potentially exclusionary view of human experience.

The role of AI in spiritual leadership and psychological healing also raises questions about the erosion of human agency. AI-driven religious tools shift authority from traditional spiritual leaders to data-driven algorithms, raising concerns about authenticity, human connection, depth of engagement and doctrinal integrity. Religious leadership requires deep emotional intelligence, empathy, and the ability to navigate complex ethical issues within a community context, much like psychotherapy requires a therapist's capacity to hold space for suffering and transformation. AI-assisted mental health applications may offer therapeutic guidance, but they lack the attunement, empathy, and depth of human therapists, particularly when addressing trauma and complex emotional needs. Therefore, individuals experiencing severe mental health challenges should use AI applications with discernment and, where possible, under the guidance of a trained mental health practitioner.

While AI can recognise linguistic patterns and historical contexts in religious scriptures or psychological narratives, its inability to experience faith, morality, or suffering, limits its capacity for genuine spiritual or emotional insight. At present, AI lacks the ability to fully replicate the nuanced, human-centred qualities needed for religious leadership and psychological healing (Khan, 2022). Philosophers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein have argued that meaning arises from lived human experience, a perspective that underscores AI's fundamental limitations in both religious and therapeutic discourse (Wittgenstein, 1953). Moreover, longstanding philosophical debates regarding free will, consciousness, and the nature of the self, now intersect with AI's evolving capabilities, raising concerns about the depth of human emotion and its possible reduction to mere algorithms (Bostrom, 2014; Floridi, 2020). Advanced machine learning systems can forecast human behaviour with remarkable precision, raising theological questions about determinism and agency, as well as therapeutic concerns about whether AI's predictive abilities might override an individual's self-determination.

Communal worship and shared rituals cultivate deep interpersonal connections, much like group therapy and collective healing practices do. The increasing reliance on AI for spiritual guidance, prayer, and worship services risks displacing these vital human interactions, just as AI-assisted mental health interventions could potentially reduce face-to-face therapeutic engagement. While virtual religious and therapeutic gatherings offer convenience and accessibility, they often lack the embodied presence and emotional resonance that in-person

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experiences foster. The challenge lies not merely in adopting AI for these purposes but in ensuring that its use does not replace or erode the very structures that give spiritual and psychological healing their depth and meaning.

The commercialisation of AI-driven religious and therapeutic tools echoes historical critiques of commodification—turning spiritual or mental health experiences into marketable products. When faith or therapy is repackaged for consumption, there is a risk that the intrinsic value of these practices becomes subordinated to consumer preferences, thereby altering their essence (Reed, 2021). AI's ability to create personalised religious figures, such as chatbots portraying prominent spiritual figures like Jesus or Buddha, introduces theological dilemmas, just as AI-driven therapeutic avatars may raise concerns about authenticity and the ethical implications of simulating emotional presence (Ty, 2023, p. 363). The commodification of AI-driven religious services and mental health support risks turning deeply personal experiences into profit-driven industries. This transformation introduces further ethical concerns, particularly when AI systems may be designed to exploit users' emotional states, belief systems, or psychological vulnerabilities for commercial gain. As AI technologies become increasingly pervasive in spiritual and therapeutic settings, the sacred nature of religious and healing practices could become overshadowed by the profit motives behind their deployment.

Additionally, the benefits of AI-driven spiritual and therapeutic tools must not be limited to technologically privileged communities. Digital inequalities persist, preventing many from accessing AI-enhanced spiritual and mental health resources (Brynjolfsson and McAfee, 2016, p. 123). Addressing these disparities is crucial to ensuring that AI does not deepen existing socio-economic divides, but rather fosters inclusivity in digital religious and psychological practices.

Given these ethical concerns, proactive engagement among religious scholars, mental health professionals, ethicists, and technologists is imperative. A multidisciplinary approach can help mitigate risks while fostering an ethical framework for AI in both religious and psychological applications. Establishing clear ethical guidelines ensures that AI applications in these fields adhere to principles of privacy, accountability, and non-discrimination. Organisations such as UNESCO (2021) emphasise the need for globally recognised AI ethics frameworks, particularly in areas where technology intersects with deeply held beliefs and emotional well-being. Faith communities and mental health practitioners should actively

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participate in shaping these discussions to safeguard the integrity of their traditions and therapeutic modalities.

Ongoing scholarly inquiry is necessary to explore AI's evolving role in religion, spirituality, and psychological healing. As AI technologies develop, religious studies and mental health research must keep pace to evaluate their impact on faith, ethics, emotional well-being, and communal identity (Evolvi, 2022). Research should focus on harmonising technological advancements with psycho-spiritual values, ensuring that AI serves as a tool for deepening rather than diluting engagement in these domains.

7. Conclusions

The integration of AI into spiritual, religious, and psycho-spiritual healing practices offers both profound opportunities and significant ethical considerations. When developed with inclusivity, accessibility, and ethical integrity in mind, AI-driven platforms can foster global connections, facilitate deep reflection, and provide resources for both individual and collective transformation. These technologies have the potential to create spaces where people from diverse backgrounds come together, strengthening communal bonds and reinforcing shared values (Brown and Taylor, 2021). However, this potential can only be realised if AI is designed to support rather than supplant human wisdom, ensuring that technology serves as a bridge to deeper connection rather than an obstacle to authentic experience.

The challenge ahead is not merely the adoption of AI within spiritual and healing spaces but the mindful stewardship of its role in these domains. Ethical engagement, interdisciplinary collaboration, and ongoing research are essential in navigating the complexities that AI introduces (Clark, Green and Thompson, 2022). By prioritising digital inclusion, fostering critical engagement with technology, and safeguarding the authenticity of spiritual and emotional well-being, AI can be leveraged as a tool for personal growth and communal resilience rather than a force of commodification or distortion.

Rather than viewing AI as a replacement for traditional spiritual guidance or psychological insight, we might consider its role as a supportive presence—one that enhances self-awareness, facilitates introspection, and democratises access to contemplative and therapeutic practices. AI's increasing presence challenges us to reflect on its impact on consciousness, selfhood, and spiritual authority, but it also presents an opportunity to explore

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new pathways for healing and meaning making. If engaged with intention and care, AI can serve as a catalyst for deeper engagement with the self, the sacred, and the broader human experience.

Ultimately, the role of AI in these spaces should not be dictated solely by technological advancement but by a commitment to ethical responsibility and human-centred values. Spiritual and psychological traditions must take an active role in shaping how AI intersects with their practices, ensuring that its development aligns with the principles of mutual care, respect, and authenticity. As these technologies continue to evolve, they must remain in service to human connection rather than replacing it—acting as guides that redirect individuals towards their own inner wisdom and the collective wisdom of their communities. By embracing AI's potential while remaining vigilant to its limitations, we can ensure that technology remains a means of enrichment rather than a substitute for genuine presence and understanding.

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