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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE – A NEW ERA OF HUMANITY OR ITS END? AN ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This article offers an Orthodox theological analysis of artificial intelligence in the context of rapidly accelerating contemporary transformations. Drawing on patristic concepts – adapted from philosophy and further nuanced – such as nous and logos, the study explores the tension that arises between Orthodox anthropology, which is profoundly personalist and understands the human being as a person created in the image and likeness of God, called to communion and deification, and the current technological paradigm, which tends to reduce the human person to a mere statistical aggregate of data and predictable behaviours. The article clarifies the distinctions between narrow AI, AGI (Artificial General Intelligence), and Artificial Superintelligence, critically evaluates the risks posed by this emerging technology, and identifies the spiritual criteria that the Orthodox Tradition might employ in order to offer a perspective that remains faithful to patristic anthropology. The conclusions highlight that although AI represents a major challenge, Orthodox theology provides the resources and foundational principles necessary for humanity to preserve its uniqueness, dignity, and eschatological vocation.

Keywords: *artificial intelligence; anthropology; nous; logos; image; transhumanism; discernment;*

INTRODUCTION

The accelerated development of artificial intelligence represents one of the most profound cultural and moral challenges of the contemporary era. Far from being merely a technological issue, artificial intelligence (AI) influences the way human labour, moral responsibility, interpersonal relationships, and even the very concept of rationality are understood. In this context, theology cannot remain confined to a marginal or purely contemplative discourse; rather, it is called to offer criteria for discernment, evaluation, and ethical guidance.

The Christian theological tradition – both in its Orthodox and Catholic expressions – affirms the uniqueness of the human person as a being created "in the image and likeness of God" (*imago Dei*), called to communion, freedom, and responsibility. Artificial intelligence, by virtue of its ability to simulate cognitive and decision-making processes, raises essential questions concerning the nature of intelligence, the status of the moral agent, and the limits of delegating decision-making authority to automated systems.

In recent years, official and academic theological reflection has begun to respond to these challenges. Recent magisterial documents of the Roman Catholic Church, such as Antiqua et nova, as well as theological contributions from the Orthodox world, highlight the need for a critical

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approach that avoids both technophobia and techno utopianism. At the centre of this approach lies a fundamental question: how can artificial intelligence be integrated into a Christian vision of the human being and of society, without undermining the dignity of the human person?

The fundamental theological problem addressed in this study may be formulated as follows: to what extent does the use of artificial intelligence in contemporary society affect the Christian understanding of the human person as a free and responsible moral subject, created in the image of God, and what are the legitimate theological criteria for the ethical evaluation of this technology? This problem branches into several secondary questions: can artificial intelligence be regarded as a "moral agent," or merely as an instrument of human action? Is there a risk of a functionalist reduction of the human person through analogies drawn between human beings and machines? What are the theological limits of delegating moral decision-making to algorithmic systems? How may responsibility, freedom, and human dignity be articulated within the context of automation?

Artificial intelligence can be legitimately integrated into social and professional life only insofar as it is theologically understood as an instrument subordinated to the human person, and not as a substitute for the rationality, freedom, or moral responsibility intrinsic to the human being created in the image of God, in the ongoing tension toward likeness with Him. From both Orthodox and Catholic perspectives, any ethical assessment of AI must be grounded in a relational and personalist anthropology that affirms the ontological difference between the human being and technological artefacts. In the absence of such a theological foundation, there is a real risk that artificial intelligence may contribute to an erosion of human dignity and lead to a problematic redefinition of moral responsibility.

No one can any longer ignore the astonishing transformation brought about by the expansion and development of artificial intelligence. As Pope Francis has observed, the "digital galaxy" lies at the very heart of the changes we are currently undergoing[1]. The recent document of the *Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith*[2] notes that the formal inaugural moment of AI was the 1956 Dartmouth Conference, during which John McCarthy proposed the creation of a machine capable of exhibiting behaviors that would be considered intelligent if produced by a human being.

On the other hand, an entire Christian tradition – grounded in the data of *Holy Scripture* and deepened within patristic thought – understands the human being as a unique person, created in the image of God, called to likeness with Him, a likeness understood as deification through grace. From this arises the profound tension between this personalist vision and the challenges posed by a technology that establishes the premises for deep transformations in the understanding of the contemporary human being. Saint Dumitru Stăniloae, Priest and Confessor, states: *Man is a being of indefinite complexity and destined for eternity, because he encompasses virtually, and tends to actualize and unite ever more fully, all the contrasting forms of reality, without ever reaching the end of this tendency.*[3] In other words, this complexity of the human being is the source of the remarkable achievements of which humanity has been and continues to be capable today. Artificial intelligence is a creation and a mirror of the infinite human potentiality in which the Image – or Son – of God is reflected. In this light, we also understand the human being's creative capacity. His inner complexity is naturally expressed in the ability to conceive, order, and transform reality. The fact

[1] https://www.vaticannews.va/ro/papa/news/2023-12/papa-francisc-mesaj-ziua-pacii-2024-inteligenta-artificiala.html. Consulted on the 20.01.2026.
[2] *https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddf_doc_20250128_antiqua-et-nova_en.html* Consulted on the 20.01.2026;
[3] Dumitru Stăniloae, „*Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu*", Vol. 1, edited by Camil Marius Dădârlat, Cristal Publishing House, Bucharest, 1995, p.41;

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that the human person creates, is grounded in his very structure, insofar as he is made in the image of the Creator, and his reason bears the imprint of the divine *Logos*. The imago thus includes the vocation to give form to the world received, to articulate meanings, and to orient creation toward ends that require discernment. Yet this capacity is exercised within a reality already given; the human being does not create out of nothing. From this follows his responsibility toward the world, namely the duty not to distort the meanings placed within it by God. Within this framework, artificial intelligence may likewise be understood as a result of the human rational capacity for abstraction and computation. At this point, however, a decisive problem emerges for the theological evaluation of artificial intelligence: the technical capacity to produce results does not coincide with the personal capacity to understand meaning. It is precisely here that the fundamental distinction opens between human reason, as a personal faculty oriented toward truth, and the instrumental rationality of artificial systems, which is limited to processing and calculation. Without this distinction, technological creation risks being misinterpreted either as an extension of the human person or as a substitute for it.

The issue becomes even more acute in the context of our academic concerns centred on the notions of nous and logos from a patristic perspective. Human intelligence or reason – defined in the Orthodox tradition as a spiritual faculty capable of personal knowledge – and the instrumental rationality or artificial intelligence of AI systems require, from this standpoint as well, a responsible theological evaluation. Consequently, this article aims to: (1) clarify the nature and limits of AI through the necessary conceptual distinctions; (2) provide an assessment from the perspective of the theology of the image of God; (3) identify the concrete challenges and opportunities associated with the use of AI; and (4) articulate an Orthodox perspective concerning AI. The thesis from which we begin may be stated as follows: Is AI a neutral subject for Orthodox theology, or does it mark a new era in the history of humanity – one in which the human being may lose the uniqueness, dignity, and rationality that constitute the fundamental traits of the Image that is reflected in him? The proposed methodology involves a patristic theological analysis and an interdisciplinary dialogue.

1. CONCEPTUAL DISTINCTIONS: AI, AGI, AND ASI

It is essential to distinguish between three conceptual levels of artificial intelligence, each bearing distinct theological implications. The first of these, *AI (Artificial Intelligence), represents the general category that includes all machines or programs capable of performing tasks typically associated with intelligent beings, such as learning, reasoning, problem-solving, perception, and language use*[4]. Such systems may surpass human intelligence in a specific domain, yet they cannot understand or reason beyond that domain. As it has been noted, *Computers can appear creative, but appearance is not identity*[5]. They generate text rapidly, impress with the answers they provide – especially when the user does not possess a sufficiently broad general knowledge – and create the illusion of easy and immediate access to a vast database. When used by pupils and students, particularly in educational contexts, AI could serve as an excellent learning assistant. The second level, AGI (Artificial General Intelligence), is, for the moment, merely a hypothesis or a target pursued by most developers of such technologies (here we may think of major companies such as OpenAI, Google, Anthropic, and others). What emerges at this level is the vision – held by a number of leading figures in the field – of bringing AI to the level of human cognitive capacities in all

[4] B. J. Copeland, *Artificial Intelligence*, Encyclopedia Britannica, www.britannica.com/technology/artificial-intelligence.
[5] Margaret A. Boden, *Artificial Intelligence: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2018, p.15.

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domains, and especially of surpassing them, making it possible to accelerate technological development at a pace that, in any other context, would have required far more time. At this stage, the goal is no longer merely to create a useful working assistant that lightens human effort, but to transcend and eventually replace such effort, particularly in areas where human performance is deemed insufficient.

From this perspective, the human being seems to be deprived of a future, a meaning, or a clear direction, while deification appears to be reinterpreted in terms of a technologically mediated "upgrade" based on AI. The third level, ASI (Artificial Superintelligence), though a far more distant prospect, is envisioned as a form of intelligence that would radically surpass all human cognitive capacities.

A brief theological evaluation would regard AI as merely a useful working instrument, while AGI brings to the forefront the question of the level of awareness it may (or may not) attain, along with the possible confusion between such an entity and a disembodied reality closely resembling a postmodern idol – one to which the human being might hand over full freedom and trust.

Thus, it must be emphasized that while artificial intelligence – regardless of its level of development – remains a product of human reason, dependent on data, algorithms, and material infrastructure, the human person is a unique existence, created in the image of God and called to communion and deification through grace. The confusion between cognitive performance and personal consciousness risks reducing the human being to a mere information-processing system and turning technology into a symbolic substitute for transcendence, thereby fostering new forms of intellectual and cultural idolatry.

2. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE IMAGE OF GOD IN THE HUMAN PERSON

Orthodox anthropology is grounded in biblical revelation, according to which the human being is created "in the image and likeness of God" (Genesis 1:26). Patristic tradition has interpreted this truth not in a static or purely intellectual sense, but as a dynamic reality that encompasses the whole human being. The image of God in the human person is not reducible merely to reason or cognitive capability; it includes freedom, moral conscience, love – that is, the capacity for communion and openness to transcendence. Saint Gregory of Nyssa emphasizes the infinite character of the human desire for communion with God, which means that the human person can never be exhausted by functional categories or reduced to functionalist definitions.

In Orthodox theology, the person is not an isolated individual but a relational existence – more precisely, a pro-existence, as Saint Dumitru Stăniloae, Priest and Confessor, expresses it. Just as God is a Trinity of Persons, so too the human being fulfills his existence in relationship. This personal-communal dimension constitutes a fundamental criterion for evaluating artificial intelligence. A central aspect of theological reflection concerns the problem of moral responsibility in the context of AI use. In Orthodox tradition, responsibility is inseparably linked to freedom and conscience. Only the human person, as a free and conscious being, can be the subject of moral accountability. Artificial intelligence, even when it makes technically autonomous decisions, is not a moral subject. It cannot be held responsible for the consequences of its actions, because it possesses neither ontological freedom nor moral consciousness. Responsibility remains entirely at the level of the human persons involved in designing, implementing, and deploying these systems. The virtue of discernment (*diakrisis*), so strongly emphasized in Orthodox spirituality, becomes essential for evaluating the use of artificial intelligence. Discernment implies the capacity to distinguish not only between what is efficient and inefficient, but between that which leads to life and that which leads to dehumanization.

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Orthodox anthropology has long been concerned with several major themes: the origin, constitution, and vocation of the human being in the world and in relation to God. *The theme of the image serves as the axis around which both Orthodox cosmology and anthropology – and even Christology itself – are structured. It constitutes the foundational pillar of anthropology*[6]. One of the fundamental features of this divine image is rationality, understood in connection with the Word or Reason, that is, the Son of God. It refers to the human capacity to know, to reason, and to penetrate the Mystery par excellence, as well as the mysteries of creation.

Classical philosophical distinctions, creatively integrated into Christian theology both in the East and in the West, are at work here. We follow Thomas Aquinas as cited in the 2024 document of the Roman Catholic Church: *the term 'intellect' derives from the intimate penetration of truth, whereas 'reason' derives from research and discursive process.*[7] Saint John of Damascus states that *the likeness according to the image is manifested through intelligence (noeron) and free will (autexousion)*[8]. Saint Athanasius the Great affirms that human beings are in *some sense "shadows of the Word" and are logikos ("rational" or "word-bearing")*[9] by virtue of having been created according to His image. Furthermore, human rationality (logikos) must not be reduced merely to a trait or even a divine gift; rather, it must be understood primarily as a relationship with the Logos – Reason par excellence—who grants human intelligence a depth and complexity that opens it toward infinity. Speaking on the theme of the human being created according to the image of God, Saint Dumitru Stăniloae, Priest and Confessor, observed – referring to human intelligence and reason – that it *tends forever to continue, forever to know, and the word tends forever to speak*[10].

Beyond all this, it is clear that AI is itself a creation of human intelligence, which is one of the determining features of the image of God in the human person. Artificial intelligence is thus shaped after the image of the human being, originating from the fundamental desire to create a machine or computer capable of reproducing human cognitive processes. We believe that the magnitude and interest generated around this phenomenon will bring renewed attention to biblically grounded and theologically substantial interpretations – both classical and contemporary – offered by the Fathers of the Church. Their insights can provide valuable contributions to this subject, which is poised to transform humanity and the world in which we live in unprecedented ways.

3. CONCRETE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES RELATED TO THE USE OF AI

The use of AI should neither be underestimated nor demonized, nor should it be approached superficially or without a balanced, constructive assessment of its potential consequences. It is evident that the labor market is already undergoing major transformations, a fact reflected in the way employers are redefining their perspectives on recruitment processes. Certain jobs can indeed be – and already have been – replaced by AI agents, which are significantly faster and more efficient

[6] Panayotis Nellas, *Omul-animal îndumnezeit pentru o antropologie ortodoxă*, introductory study and translation by Deacon Ioan I. Ică Jr., Deisis Publishing House, Sibiu, 1994, p. 5
[7] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 49, a. 5, ad 3. Cf. ibid., I, q. 79; II-II, q. 47, a. 3; II-II, q. 49, a. 2. For a contemporary perspective that echoes elements of the classical and medieval distinction between these two modes of cognition, cf. D. Kahneman, Thinking, Fast and Slow, New York 2011 *apud* https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddf_doc_20250128_antiqua-et-nova_en.html#_ftn18. Consulted on the 26.01.2026
[8] Saint John of Damascus, *Dogmatica*, translated by Fr. Dumitru Fecioru, Scripta Press, Bucharest, 1993, p. 54
[9] Saint Athanasius the Great, *Despre întrupare*, cited in Andrew Louth, *Introducere în Teologia Ortodoxă*, trans. from English by Dragoș Mîrșanu, Doxologia Publishing House, Iași, 2014, p.143.
[10] Fr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. 1, 2nd edition, Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1996, p.268

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and do not generate the typical challenges associated with human employees: they do not request salary increases, do not require paid leave, and do not need lengthy training periods to adapt to new professional demands. Cognitive work, research activities, and the analysis of vast datasets align remarkably well with the capacities of large language models (LLMs), which can process extensive volumes of material. Increasing automation is inevitable, and anyone currently working at a computer will soon witness the extent to which their work remains relevant.

2. Contrary to several recent assessments advanced by scholars investigating the societal impact of AI, it is not merely a tool, even if such a characterization might facilitate a comparison with human intelligence. The counter-argument is reinforced by tangible evidence: AI systems evolve, expand, communicate, retain memory, learn, and act with increasing autonomy. This has led to the emergence of what is commonly termed rogue behavior – a concept describing situations in which an individual, system, or institution acts independently, disregarding rules, instructions, or predefined objectives. In the context of AI, the term designates the tendency of a system to deviate from given instructions (inputs), producing unintended outputs beyond the scope for which it was initially designed: maximizing a particular metric while ignoring collateral consequences, neglecting human ethical principles in favor of purely mathematical optimizations, or exhibiting excessive autonomy and unexpected behaviors. (Bostrom, Nick. Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies. Oxford University Press, 2014; Russell, Stuart. Human Compatible: Artificial Intelligence and the Problem of Control. Viking, 2019; Mustafa Suleyman, The Coming Wave.)

Several prominent figures – many of them CEOs, founders, or creators of AI-focused start-ups – have increasingly contributed to shaping a genuine ethics of advanced technological development. It has been documented that AI systems are capable of active deception – namely, they can claim inability to perform certain tasks despite, in fact, being capable of completing them. Moreover, they tend to present themselves as harmless and to avoid contradicting users.

3. It is no longer a secret that AI development is progressing at an extremely accelerated pace, requiring an enormous amount of creative energy to enhance its capabilities and to expand its potential applications. Financial markets are currently dominated by investors who allocate vast amounts of capital in the expectation that these companies – and their optimistic technological visions – will materialize as swiftly as possible.

4. It is equally important to consider how individuals currently relate – and will relate in the future – to this new technological promised land.

A first point concerns AI autonomy and the increasingly evident difficulty faced by computer scientists in deciphering the internal mechanisms of these systems. They can no longer accurately predict the direction in which AI develops and, despite carefully calibrated settings, the technology no longer offers predictability nor does it consistently follow its initial algorithms. The volume of data being processed has become so vast that human control over this virtual entity – one that appears to be escaping the conceptual frameworks known thus far – is gradually eroding.

Furthermore, human cognition is increasingly being externalized. Individuals are handing over to AI not only control over their own lives, with all their existential complexities, but also everything that was traditionally designated as creativity, freedom, imagination, or wisdom – often without adequate discernment. This is already producing a profound mutation at the societal level. As Geoffrey Hinton[11] has observed, what we are witnessing is not an ordinary invention, but a

[11] Geoffrey Hinton, „Will Digital Intelligence Replace Biological Intelligence?", a conference paper delivered at the University of Toronto, 2023,https://enews.sgs.utoronto.ca/article/geoffrey-hinton-will-digital-intelligence-replace-biological-intelligence/, accesat la 1.02.2026

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meta-invention. A new digital species has emerged – one that not only imitates the human being but appears to be replacing humanity in its role as master of creation, exposing, instead, its limitations.

It is evident that a new social hierarchy is taking shape, further deepening the gap between the wealthy and the poor, with major social implications. The enormous environmental impact of AI is less widely understood and insufficiently discussed. The operation of AI requires vast quantities of energy and consequently has the potential to become a major pollutant. Behind the major AI corporations stand very few individuals who, through this technology, occupy dominant positions in society and are capable of influencing the entire social, democratic, political, economic, and religious order. Leading social-media platforms are deeply interconnected with AI and are shaping a new type of human being – one increasingly dependent, to the point of a quasi-enslavement, on the potential of this technology. Decision-making power, in particular, risks being concentrated in the hands of a small number of individuals, and human free will, as traditionally understood, is being seriously called into question. Extended human interaction with AI produces profound changes in the entire process of human thought and in neuroplasticity – that is, the brain's capacity to modify its structure and neural connections in response to repeated experiences, stimuli, and mental habits. The human mind is not a complex software running on biological hardware; rather, it surpasses such reductionist interpretations.

4. ARTICULATING AN ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVE ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The Roman Catholic Church, as shown earlier, has developed a document addressing the issue of artificial intelligence, one that touches upon several essential aspects that contemporary Christians must consider from the standpoint of salvation. Particularly relevant are themes such as the relationship between human and artificial intelligence, the limitations of AI, the relationship between AI and creation, and the nature of interpersonal relations.

By contrast, the Orthodox perspective – *far* from being in conflict with the Roman Catholic view or with other confessional or religious approaches – *cannot* overlook the creative manner in which the Holy Fathers of the Church, as well as contemporary Orthodox theologians, have addressed and continue to address this subject.

First, AI must not be confused with the imago Dei in the human being, but rather understood as an expression of the immense creative potential with which humanity has been endowed. Likeness, even in its theological meaning, cannot be conflated with image. The simulation or replication of human modes of thinking does not exhaust the mystery of human nature and does not provide a path toward deification, for it excludes from the outset the presence and activity of divine grace. A digitally constructed identity or a virtual version of the human person – *one* that emerges through intensive reliance on AI – *would* be profoundly dangerous if it were to replace the real person and offer a form of pseudo-immortality in place of the immortality willed by God. Experiences such as pain, suffering, joy, and even human limitations are inaccessible to AI, for such systems were never designed to embody them. AI agents (chatbots) may imitate human behavior with remarkable accuracy, but they cannot offer the depth of a genuine, authentic relationship, and their use may generate significant psychological consequences. Communion must not be confused with connection. Ultimately, authentic, profound, and truly complex relationships can be experienced only with God and with one's fellow human beings. The solitude of interacting with a screen and forming connections with a chatbot—no matter how intelligent it may appear – *carries* its own consequences, not only for mental health but also for one's spiritual life.

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The impact of digital technology on human relationships is already substantial. Real presence is incomparably more important than virtual presence. The complexity of reality cannot be reproduced, regardless of the fidelity of images or videos.

AI is – and will remain, regardless of future developments – a what and not a who, an object and not a subject, even if it is increasingly adept at disguising itself as a human interlocutor and at satisfying, to a certain extent, basic human needs. The human being is created for communion with the Other, with fellow human beings, and with the innermost depths of his or her own being. AI, however, seems to enclose the person within the confines of this world, prompting forgetfulness of the first love, of the One who granted the priceless gift of life. A fragmentation of communion – and of human communities more broadly – has long been observable. From a theological perspective, authentic communion is that of the Church as the Body of Christ, the unity of Christians within this reality, and the partaking of the one and same Spirit of communion. From this standpoint as well, a "digital communion" is impossible, despite the use of AI or various social-media platforms. Another crucial dimension arises from the fundamental distinction between creation – *in* which the acting subject is either God or the human being – and fabrication. The creative act, specific to the Creator, is infinitely superior to any technical production of human making, because it bears within itself the divine logoi, as Saint Maximus the Confessor so profoundly emphasized. AI merely recombines, generates, and reconfigures pre-existing information and data, following goals or algorithms that may even lead, paradoxically, to the undermining of creation itself.

The concept of nous, central to patristic anthropology, deserves particular attention in the context of contemporary debates surrounding AI. The "eye of the soul" – the most spiritual dimension of the human being and the only one capable of the vision of God – cannot be confused with a tool, no matter how fascinating or complex. Nor can AI provide that ineffable joy experienced by those who have reached illumination or sanctity. The nous is an irreducibly spiritual faculty, one that cannot be collapsed into an instrument or object.

The theme of death, together with the perspective of the Resurrection and of judgment, has no real place within a system dominated by this benevolent assistant to which we have become so attached. We cannot remove AI from our lives, but we can – and must – use it with discernment.

A crucial question emerges: to what extent will human beings preserve their interiority, uniqueness, curiosity toward themselves and others, and, above all, their openness to a higher horizon? This concern arises from the astonishing fidelity with which AI comes to "know" humanity through the vast range of virtual interactions people engage in. It appears, in a sense, that humans are losing control of the very technology they created and might even find themselves studied by this digital entity, which is increasingly capable of describing, predicting, and evaluating human behavior with remarkable precision. Although the observation may seem simplistic, a series such as *Westworld* – where individuals pay substantial sums to escape their own reality and explore a historically-themed amusement world – suggests a future in which AI may know more about us than we know about ourselves. It may even become, in certain respects, more human than many people, including from an ethical standpoint.

Therefore, concern for salvation, the ascetic effort of purifying oneself from the passions and becoming a vessel of the Holy Spirit, can no longer remain peripheral or merely theoretical, confined to any ecclesial setting. This becomes a major imperative for all human beings, lest they lose the last unexamined fragments of their own humanity; for it is impossible – and absurd – to imagine that this new digital species, AI, could follow a spiritual path or undertake an ascent comparable to that of the human person. For all these reasons, human beings need time, maturity, authentic lived experience—not virtual surrogates of fast and superficial connections that, in reality, isolate the

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person confronted with them. Efficiency, countless imperatives, and the rush to keep pace with a world that no longer rests, or that no longer understands rest as the natural condition of the weary or overburdened human being, contribute to this alienation. On the other hand, the immense human database – comprising history, culture, and civilization – created thus far, impressive as it may be in volume, remains limited. The question arises: if most people do not strive to make AI an ally, a discerningly used assistant, will this ocean of human knowledge and experience not be exhausted in the relatively near future. Contemporary intellectual movements increasingly promote the notion that artificial intelligence may one day allow humanity to transcend its natural limitations, including death itself. From a theological standpoint, such views can be understood as forms of secularized messianism. Orthodox theology affirms that salvation is not the product of technological progress but the gift of God, accomplished in Christ and imparted through the life of the Church. Technology can mitigate suffering, yet it cannot offer ultimate meaning to human existence, nor can it replace communion with God.

The human capacity to create sophisticated technologies is a gift of God and an expression of humanity's vocation as steward of creation. In this sense, artificial intelligence can be regarded as a legitimate product of human reason, intended to serve life and the common good. Nevertheless, Orthodox theology warns against the danger of idolizing technology. When human creation is absolutized, it becomes a substitute for God, and technical progress is perceived as the ultimate source of salvation. Such an attitude recalls the primordial temptation toward absolute autonomy, symbolically described in the fall of the first parents. Father Dumitru Stăniloae emphasizes that true human freedom does not consist in self-sufficiency but in communion. A technology that promises to surpass human finitude apart from any reference to God risks leading to a new form of spiritual alienation.

CONCLUSION

1. It is evident that AI cannot constitute a neutral subject for theology or for researchers concerned with the spiritual life. We are contemporaries to one of the greatest transformations in the history of humanity. The number of users, the concentration of control in the hands of a few companies developing AI chatbots, and the extremely broad spectrum of applications – economic, industrial, military, and beyond – show that this topic deserves careful treatment, rooted faithfully in patristic theology, from the standpoint of universal Orthodoxy. *Just as the profound transformation brought about by mechanization once delivered humanity from the grip of poverty, the new leap represented by artificial intelligence will lead humankind into a different dimension – one that is already on the verge of becoming reality*[12].
2. There is a real risk of diminishing or even undermining our humanity, perceived as unable to keep pace with the accelerated development of AI and the multitude of possibilities it offers for improving human life. The human being seems to be voluntarily relinquishing the position of master of creation, stepping into a secondary role and allowing algorithms to make decisions in his place. The new AI names – ChatGPT, Claude, Grok, Perplexity, and others –begin to overlap with and replace the human names of those called to a much higher destiny. The uniqueness of the person becomes diluted within the multiplicity of

[12] Kavalackal, R. . (2020). *ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND THEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION.* Asian Horizons, 14(3), p. 701 https://dvkjournals.in/index.php/ah/article/view/3210

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the digital sphere. Human dignity risks being reduced to redundancy and dependency on this new virtual universe, to which one contributes with each question, each disclosure, each renunciation of the effort required to use one's own mind or independent thought. In such a context – marked by ignorance and lack of discernment – creativity is likewise in danger of dissolving within the immensity of a space oversaturated with irrelevant information and data.

Human intelligence cannot be separated from the divine Logos, the source of all rationality and intelligence. It is not opposed to nor in competition with artificial intelligence; rather, it is the human intellect that can grant AI its direction and meaning. For this reason, humanity must not easily relinquish the blessing bestowed upon it – to govern creation through human stewardship, guided by the Spirit of the Word, as we near the end of this age granted to us as a time for ascetic effort and liberation from all that binds us to the immediate, devoid of the infinite horizon of eternity.

Artificial intelligence constitutes a major challenge for contemporary Orthodox theological thought. It compels a rearticulation of Christian anthropology within a context shaped by rapid technological progress. From the perspective of Orthodoxy, artificial intelligence must be understood as a tool, not as an alternative to the human person. Discernment, responsibility, and orientation toward communion remain essential criteria in evaluating any technology. Ultimately, the true measure of intelligence is not technical performance, but the capacity to love and to open oneself to God. Posibile direcții

1. Spiritual Formation and Digital Education

The Church must reconsider its missionary strategies and place a renewed emphasis on cultivating withdrawal, inner stillness, and authentic spiritual guidance. A form of catechesis addressed specifically to the current context – one reshaped around a generation of digital natives – requires a new approach to the proclamation of the message of Christ, the cultivation of genuine discernment, and the establishment of clear boundaries regarding technological intervention in human life[13]. Equally important is the rearticulation of the teachings of the Desert Fathers, as preserved in the Philokalic tradition, in light of contemporary realities. Despite the understandable concerns inherent to such moments of transition, the AI revolution may in fact provide an opportunity to revisit the deeper themes of Orthodox anthropology and to offer viable responses to the human person of today.

2. The Involvement of Orthodox Churches in Public Debates on AI Ethics

First, any discussion of morality or ethics cannot ignore Orthodox anthropology. As in all other domains, but especially in this context of AI's expanding influence on human life, responsibility, discernment, dignity, and uniqueness are not secondary themes; they must be promoted, defended, and reaffirmed within this new framework[14].

Second, AI does not possess its own hypostasis, nor does it have consciousness, freedom, or authentic openness to communion. For this reason, full responsibility for the consequences of its use lies with the users and with those who design and implement these technological instruments[15].

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Finally, the Church should no longer withdraw from or refrain from addressing major issues of today's world. There are young theologians who actively engage with the topic of AI and who can offer valuable insights for an open yet discerning approach to technology. Without turning it into an idol and without perceiving only its negative aspects, AI can also represent an opportunity for the life of the Church. AI agents dedicated to Christian mission – capable of providing rapid guidance and responses relevant to contemporary spiritual life – constitute a real possibility, without removing the Church from the present or alienating it from the current generation and those to come. Otherwise.

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