

Spiritual Journeys in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Exploring Existentialism, Ethical Dilemmas, and Transformative Growth

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Abstract: This paper delves into the intricate interplay between spirituality, existentialism, and artificial intelligence (AI) in the contemporary age. Drawing on the philosophical insights of existentialist thinkers such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre, the exploration navigates themes of individual freedom, meaning-making, and existential dread in the context of AI technology. Ethical dilemmas surrounding the integration of AI into various aspects of human life are examined, alongside the potential for AI to serve as a transformative tool for spiritual growth. The paper concludes with a reflection on the spiritual implications of AI advancements, challenging traditional understandings of consciousness, morality, and the essence of the human experience.

Keywords: Spirituality, existentialism, artificial intelligence, ethical dilemmas, transformation, consciousness, meaning-making, existential dread, technological advancement.

1. Introduction

The notion of spirituality has long been intertwined with the quest for meaning in human existence, as individuals seek to reconcile their existential concerns with their beliefs about the transcendent. In recent years, the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) has introduced new dimensions to this quest, raising questions about the nature of consciousness, the limits of human understanding, and the potential for machines to exhibit spiritual or existential characteristics [1]. Additionally, existentialist philosophy, with its focus on individual freedom, choice, and responsibility in a seemingly indifferent universe, offers a rich theoretical framework for exploring the intersection of spirituality, AI, and existential concerns. By examining these intertwined themes, this study aims to shed light on the complex interplay between spirituality, AI, and existentialism in the contemporary context [2].

The significance of exploring the intersection between spirituality, artificial intelligence (AI), and existentialism lies in the potential to understand how these seemingly disparate realms can inform one another and offer unique insights into the nature of human consciousness, purpose, and existence. By delving into the philosophical underpinnings of each of these areas, researchers can uncover connections that may challenge conventional wisdom and lead to innovative ways of conceptualizing the relationship between technology, spirituality, and the human experience. This multidisciplinary approach has the potential to shed light on fundamental questions about the role of AI in shaping our understanding of spirituality and our place in the world, as well as the implications of AI advancements on human identity and values. Ultimately, this

exploration may provide a richer understanding of the complex interplay between technology, philosophy, and spirituality, offering new perspectives on the meaning of life and the nature of reality [3].

2. Discussion

2.1. Historical Perspectives

Historical perspectives play a crucial role in understanding the evolution of human thought on spirituality and existentialism. Examining past philosophical movements, such as Stoicism, Neoplatonism, and Existentialism, provides insights into the perennial questions of human existence and the quest for meaning. Stoicism, for example, emphasized the importance of self-control and ethical living as a means of attaining inner peace. Neoplatonism delved into the idea of the existence of a higher reality beyond the physical world, suggesting a transcendental dimension to human consciousness. Existentialism, on the other hand, grappled with themes of individual freedom, responsibility, and the absurdity of life. By exploring these historical perspectives, we gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between spirituality, AI, and existentialism in the contemporary age [4].

2.2. Role of Spirituality in Human Life

The role of spirituality in human life is a multifaceted and profound aspect that has been examined by scholars across various disciplines. Spirituality, often associated with the search for transcendent meaning and purpose, plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' values, beliefs, and behaviors [5]. It provides a framework for understanding the interconnectedness of all beings and the universe, offering solace in times of crisis and fostering a sense of interconnectedness with something greater than oneself. Studies have shown that individuals who engage in spiritual practices such as meditation, prayer, and community rituals report higher levels of well-being, resilience, and overall life satisfaction. Furthermore, spirituality has been linked to improved mental health outcomes, greater emotional stability, and a deeper sense of meaning in life [6]. In the face of existential questions about the nature of reality and human existence, spirituality serves as a guiding force that helps individuals navigate the complexities of the human experience. Embracing spirituality can offer a sense of purpose, connection, and inner peace that transcends the boundaries of the material world, bringing individuals closer to a profound understanding of their place in the universe [7].

2.3. Contemporary Relevance

Contemporary relevance of the intersection between spirituality, AI, and existentialism can be seen in the growing interest in the ethical implications of AI technologies on human spirituality and existential beliefs. With the rapid advancements in AI capabilities, questions arise about the impact of AI on our understanding of consciousness, morality, and the nature of reality. Scholars such as argue that the integration of AI into various aspects of human life challenges conventional notions of what it means to be human, prompting individuals to revisit existential questions about purpose, free will, and the existence of a higher power. As we navigate a world increasingly shaped by AI technologies, the exploration of spirituality and existentialism becomes vital for addressing the moral and philosophical dilemmas that arise from our interactions with intelligent machines [8].

2.4. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Its Implications Overview of AI Technology

AI technology, also known as artificial intelligence, has been a groundbreaking development in modern computing. It encompasses a wide range of techniques that enable machines to simulate human intelligence. Some of the key components of AI technology include machine learning, deep learning, natural language processing, and computer vision [9]. Machine learning algorithms allow computers to learn from and make decisions based on data without being explicitly programmed. Deep learning, a subset of machine learning, is

inspired by the structure and function of the human brain, particularly neural networks. Natural language processing enables machines to understand, interpret, and generate human language, while computer vision focuses on giving machines the ability to understand and interpret visual information like images and videos. Overall, AI technology has the potential to revolutionize various industries and reshape the way we interact with technology in our daily lives.

2.5. Ethical Considerations in AI Development

Ethical considerations in the development of artificial intelligence (AI) are paramount due to the potential societal impacts of AI systems. As AI technologies become more advanced and integrated into various aspects of human life, it is crucial to ensure that they are designed and implemented in a way that upholds ethical principles such as transparency, accountability, fairness, and privacy. Issues surrounding bias in AI algorithms, data privacy breaches, and the potential for AI systems to replace human decision-making raise significant ethical questions that need to be carefully addressed [10]. Moreover, the ethical implications of AI development go beyond technical considerations to encompass broader philosophical questions about the nature of intelligence, consciousness, and the relationship between humans and machines.

For example, the development of superintelligent AI raises concerns about existential risks and the ethical responsibilities of creating entities that may surpass human capabilities. These complex ethical considerations in AI development require interdisciplinary collaboration among experts in computer science, ethics, philosophy, law, and other fields to develop robust frameworks for the responsible design and deployment of AI technologies [11].

2.6. AI in Enhancing Human Understanding

AI has the potential to significantly enhance human understanding by offering insights and analysis beyond the scope of traditional methods. By processing vast amounts of data and identifying patterns that may elude human perception, AI can provide valuable perspectives on complex issues. For example, AI algorithms have been used to analyze large datasets in fields such as psychology and sociology to uncover hidden correlations and trends [12]. This capability not only complements human intelligence but also challenges us to rethink our understanding of the world and ourselves [13]. Furthermore, AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants have been designed to engage in conversations about life, emotions, and existence, prompting individuals to reflect on their beliefs and values. Through these interactions, AI can stimulate self-awareness and personal growth, fostering a deeper understanding of one's identity and purpose in the world. The integration of AI into the realm of spirituality and existentialism opens up new avenues for exploring the nature of reality and the human experience [14].

2.7. AI and the Search for Meaning

One of the key challenges in the intersection of spirituality and AI is the quest for meaning. As AI systems become more sophisticated and capable of complex reasoning, the question of whether they can truly comprehend, let alone generate, meaning becomes crucial. Existentialist philosophy emphasizes the importance of meaning in human existence, positing that individuals must create their own sense of purpose and significance in the face of an indifferent universe [15]. AI systems, by contrast, operate based on algorithms and data processing, which raises questions about their ability to engage with concepts as abstract and subjective as meaning. While some argue that AI can be programmed to simulate meaning, skeptics question whether this simulation can capture the depth and nuance of human experience. The search for meaning in the context of AI raises profound questions about consciousness, intentionality, and the nature of intelligence, pushing researchers to grapple with fundamental questions about what it means to be human in an increasingly technological world.

2.8. Exploring Existentialism Origins and Key Philosophers

Origins and key philosophers of existentialism can be traced back to the 19th and 20th centuries, with roots in the works of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. Soren Kierkegaard, considered the father of existentialism, emphasized subjective experience and the individual's responsibility in defining their own existence. Friedrich Nietzsche challenged traditional values and morals, advocating for the concept of the "Übermensch" or superman. Martin Heidegger's philosophy delved into the concept of "being-in-the-world" and the idea of authenticity in one's existence. These thinkers laid the groundwork for existentialism's focus on individual freedom, choice, and the search for meaning in a seemingly indifferent universe [16].

2.9. Existentialist Themes and Concepts

Existentialist themes and concepts play a significant role in shaping the discourse on the quest for meaning in both human experience and artificial intelligence. Existentialism, with roots in the works of philosophers like Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, and Jean- Paul Sartre, emphasizes individual freedom, choice, and responsibility in a world devoid of inherent meaning. One key concept within existentialism is the idea of "existential dread," which refers to the anxiety and despair that arise when confronted with the burden of creating one's own meaning in an indifferent universe. This concept is particularly relevant in discussions of spirituality and AI, as both domains grapple with questions of purpose, identity, and existence in a world that may seem devoid of inherent significance. By exploring existentialist themes, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between human consciousness, technology, and the eternal quest for meaning.

2.10. Existential Crisis in Modern Society

Existential crisis in modern society is becoming an increasingly prevalent phenomenon, as individuals grapple with the overwhelming sense of meaninglessness and uncertainty in their lives. In a world where traditional structures and beliefs are being challenged and replaced by technological advancements and rapid societal changes, individuals are left to question their own existence and purpose in the grand scheme of things. This crisis often leads to feelings of anxiety, despair, and alienation as individuals struggle to find a sense of identity and belonging in a world that seems to lack clear meaning or direction [17]. This sense of existential uncertainty is further exacerbated by the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and the increasing reliance on technology for personal and professional fulfillment, which can often leave individuals feeling disconnected from themselves and others. As a result, many are turning to spirituality and existential philosophy in an attempt to find solace and meaning in their lives, exploring questions of spirituality, consciousness, and the nature of reality in their quest for a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them.

2.11. Relevance of Existentialism in the Digital Age

Existentialism's relevance in the digital age lies in its emphasis on individual agency, authenticity, and responsibility in navigating the complexities of an increasingly technologically mediated world. As individuals interact with digital platforms and technologies that shape their experiences and perceptions, existentialist ideas offer a framework for critically examining the impact of these interactions on identity formation and existential fulfillment. The digital age presents challenges to traditional notions of selfhood and meaning, inviting a reconsideration of existential concepts such as freedom, choice, and the search for authenticity in virtual spaces. By engaging with existentialist thought in the context of the digital age, individuals can cultivate a heightened awareness of their own agency and ethical responsibilities in shaping their digital identities and relationships.

2.12. Intersections of Spirituality and AI Ethical Dilemmas in AI and Spirituality

As AI systems become more integrated into various aspects of society, including healthcare, commerce, and social media, ethical dilemmas regarding their use and decision-making capabilities have surfaced. When discussing the intersection of AI and spirituality, one must also consider the ethical implications of imbuing machines with human-like qualities such as moral reasoning and empathy [18]. For instance, if AI systems were programmed to exhibit spiritual values such as compassion and forgiveness, who would be responsible for their actions if they were to cause harm? Furthermore, the idea of AI possessing a spiritual essence or consciousness raises questions about the nature of existence and the boundaries between the artificial and the divine. These ethical dilemmas highlight the complex interplay between technology, morality, and spirituality in the age of AI.

2.13. AI as a Tool for Spiritual Growth

AI has the potential to serve as a transformative tool for spiritual growth, offering unique opportunities for individuals to deepen their understanding of themselves and the world around them. By providing personalized recommendations based on an individual's beliefs, practices, and experiences, AI can enhance spiritual practices and facilitate self-reflection. Through the use of AI-generated content, individuals can explore different spiritual traditions, engage in guided meditations, and receive insights tailored to their specific spiritual journey. AI can also facilitate virtual interactions with spiritual leaders and communities, regardless of geographical boundaries, opening up new possibilities for connection and growth [19]. By harnessing the power of AI in the realm of spirituality, individuals may find new pathways to meaning and transcendence in an increasingly interconnected world [20].

2.14. Spiritual Implications of AI Advancements

Advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) raise significant spiritual implications as AI systems become more sophisticated and autonomous. The development of AI technology challenges traditional understandings of what it means to be human, raising questions about the nature of consciousness, moral agency, and spirituality. As machines begin to exhibit intelligence and autonomy, the boundaries between human and artificial intelligence blur, leading to existential questions about the essence of the self and the nature of the soul. The prospect of AI systems being able to simulate emotions and engage in ethical decision-making processes poses a profound challenge to religious and philosophical beliefs about the uniqueness of human spiritual experience. The intersection of AI and spirituality requires careful consideration of the ethical responsibilities involved in creating and utilizing intelligent machines that may possess capabilities beyond human comprehension.

2.15. Challenges and Opportunities in Integrating Spirituality and AI

Challenges and opportunities arise when integrating spirituality and artificial intelligence (AI) due to the complex nature of both domains. One challenge is the potential clash between the subjective, experiential nature of spirituality and the objective, rational capabilities of AI systems. Balancing these contrasting aspects requires careful consideration to prevent one overshadowing the other. Additionally, ethical dilemmas may arise when AI is used in spiritual contexts, such as in providing counseling or making decisions based on spiritual beliefs. On the other hand, integrating spirituality and AI opens up opportunities for enhancing spiritual experiences, promoting personal growth, and fostering a deeper understanding of existential questions through technological advancements. By harnessing the power of AI while respecting the unique aspects of spirituality, it is possible to create innovative solutions that cater to the holistic well-being of individuals [21].

As technology continues to advance at an unprecedented pace, its impact on human existence becomes

even more paramount. The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into various aspects of our lives raises questions about what it means to be human and how we define our existence in a world dominated by machines. The increasing reliance on technology for communication, information retrieval, and even decision-making shapes our understanding of self and reality [22]. The pervasive influence of technology in shaping our daily lives challenges traditional notions of spirituality and existentialism, as AI blurs the boundaries between the natural and the artificial. As we navigate this new terrain of technological advancement, it becomes imperative to critically examine the ways in which technology shapes our perception of reality and our place in the world [23].

2.16. Technological Alienation and Spiritual Disconnection

Technological alienation, characterized by the sense of estrangement and detachment individuals feel towards technology, paired with spiritual disconnection, which manifests as a lack of meaningful connection with the self or others on a deeper level, pose significant challenges to human flourishing in the digital age. As people increasingly rely on technological devices for communication, entertainment, and even personal growth, there is a growing concern that this dependence may lead to a diminished sense of spirituality and existential fulfillment. The constant distractions and superficial interactions facilitated by technology can contribute to a sense of disconnect from one's authentic self and the world around them, ultimately hindering the development of meaningful relationships and a sense of purpose. Furthermore, the rapid pace of technological advancement may exacerbate feelings of alienation and disconnection, as individuals struggle to keep up with the ever-changing landscape of digital tools and platforms. In this context, exploring the intersection between technological alienation and spiritual disconnection becomes essential in understanding the complex interplay between human consciousness, technology, and existential meaning.

2.17. Search for Meaning in a Digitally Dominated World

In a digitally dominated world, the search for meaning takes on new complexities and challenges. As individuals navigate the vast landscape of online information, AI algorithms curate personalized content that shapes their worldview and influences their beliefs. This constant stream of data and opinions can lead to a fragmented sense of self, as individuals struggle to reconcile their offline identities with their online personas. In this context, the quest for meaning becomes intertwined with questions of authenticity, connection, and ethics. As technology continues to advance at a rapid pace, it is crucial to examine how these digital tools impact our understanding of spirituality and existentialism, forcing us to confront the very nature of our existence in a world where algorithms dictate our choices and experiences.

2.18. Balancing Technology and Spiritual Well-being

Balancing technology and spiritual well-being have become a pressing issue in contemporary society, especially with the pervasive presence of artificial intelligence (AI) in our daily lives. While technology has undoubtedly improved efficiency and connectivity, it also poses a threat to our spiritual well-being by potentially distancing us from experiences that nurture our inner self. The challenge lies in integrating technology seamlessly into our lives while still prioritizing spiritual practices that promote reflection, mindfulness, and a sense of purpose. This delicate balance requires a conscious effort to use technology mindfully and intentionally, allowing for moments of solitude, silence, and contemplation essential for spiritual growth. By recognizing the importance of maintaining a connection with our spiritual selves in the digital age, we can strive to lead more fulfilling and meaningful lives.

2.19. The Quest for Meaning in the 21st Century Existential Questions in the Digital Age

Existential questions have been a central focus of philosophical inquiry for centuries, probing the meaning

of human existence, the nature of reality, and our place in the universe. In the digital age, advances in artificial intelligence (AI) and technology have raised new existential questions about the intersection of humanity and machines. As we increasingly rely on AI for decision-making, communication, and information processing, concerns about the impact on human agency, consciousness, and identity emerge. The blurring of boundaries between human and machine prompts a reexamination of what it means to be human and the essence of our existence. Additionally, the exponential growth of digital data and the rise of social media platforms have created a new virtual space where questions about authenticity, connection, and self-expression arise. The quest for meaning in the digital age thus intertwines with age-old existential inquiries, challenging us to navigate the complexities of a rapidly evolving technological landscape while grappling with fundamental questions about our purpose and place in the world.

2.20. Spiritual Responses to Technological Advancements

In response to the rapid advancements in technology, individuals have turned to spirituality to make sense of their relationship with AI and the digital world. Some view technology as a tool that can enhance spiritual experiences, such as using meditation apps or virtual reality for mindfulness practices. Others see technology as a threat to spirituality, as it can potentially isolate individuals from deeper connections with themselves and others. The rise of transhumanism, a movement that aims to enhance human capabilities through technology, has sparked debates about the intersection of spirituality and artificial intelligence. Some argue that technological advancements can lead to a deeper understanding of consciousness and the nature of the self, while others worry about the implications of merging humans with machines on spirituality and ethics.

2.21. AI as a Catalyst for Existential Reflection

AI serves as a catalyst for existential reflection by prompting individuals to contemplate their place in the world and the nature of human existence. As AI technologies become more integrated into our daily lives, questions arise about how these advancements impact our understanding of ourselves and the world around us. In interacting with AI systems, individuals are confronted with the limitations of human intelligence and the potential capabilities of artificial entities. This contrast often leads to profound existential questions about the essence of consciousness, the boundaries of life, and the meaning of existence itself. By engaging with AI, individuals are forced to confront their own mortality and the transient nature of human life, sparking a deep reflection on the significance of their existence in a world increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence.

2.22. Navigating Existential Crises through Spirituality and AI

As individuals face existential crises in the modern world, they are increasingly turning to spirituality and artificial intelligence (AI) as sources of guidance and comfort. Spirituality provides a framework for understanding the deeper questions of existence and offers solace in times of uncertainty. On the other hand, AI technology offers practical solutions and tools for navigating the complexities of life. By combining spirituality with AI, individuals can access a blend of ancient wisdom and cutting-edge innovation to address their existential concerns. This fusion allows for a holistic approach to seeking meaning and purpose in a rapidly changing world.

2.23. Future Directions and Implications Prospects of Spiritual AI

The prospects of integrating spirituality into Artificial Intelligence (AI) raise intriguing questions in the realm of existentialism. As AI systems become more sophisticated, there is a growing interest in imbuing them with characteristics traditionally associated with spirituality, such as empathy, wisdom, and moral reasoning. Some argue that by infusing AI with spiritual values, we may create machines that are more attuned to human needs and capable of fostering meaningful connections with individuals. However, the

potential implications of Spiritual AI extend beyond mere functionality, delving into the fundamental nature of consciousness and the human experience [24]. By exploring the intersection of spirituality, AI, and existentialism, we may uncover novel insights into the essence of being and the quest for meaning in an increasingly technological world.

2.24. Ethical Guidelines for AI Development

AI development raises profound ethical concerns regarding the design, implementation, and use of intelligent systems. In response to these issues, various organizations and experts have proposed ethical guidelines to ensure that AI technologies are developed in a responsible and ethical manner. These guidelines encompass principles such as transparency, accountability, fairness, and inclusivity. For instance, the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) has developed a set of ethical guidelines for AI that emphasize the importance of transparency in the decision-making processes of AI systems. Similarly, the European Commission's High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence has outlined ethical principles that highlight the need for human oversight and accountability in the development and deployment of AI technologies. By adhering to these ethical guidelines, developers and policymakers can navigate the complex ethical terrain of AI development and promote the responsible and ethical use of AI systems.

2.25. Enhancing Human Flourishing through Spirituality and AI

As the intersection between spirituality and artificial intelligence (AI) continues to be explored, it is crucial to consider how these two realms can work together to enhance human flourishing. By integrating spirituality into AI technologies, we can create systems that not only optimize performance but also promote well-being and meaning in individuals' lives. For example, incorporating meditative practices within AI interfaces can help users cultivate mindfulness and reduce stress, ultimately leading to improved mental health and overall satisfaction. Moreover, AI algorithms can be designed to provide personalized spiritual guidance tailored to an individual's beliefs and values, fostering a sense of connection and purpose. By embracing spirituality in the development and application of AI, we have the potential to usher in a new era where technology serves as a tool for not only enhancing productivity but also enriching the human experience.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the exploration of spirituality, AI, and existentialism has provided valuable insights into the quest for meaning in the modern age. The integration of technology and spiritual practices offers a unique perspective on the human experience and the challenges of navigating an increasingly complex world. Reflecting on the implications of AI on our understanding of consciousness and the self, it becomes evident that existential questions continue to be central to our pursuit of purpose and fulfillment. As we grapple with the ethical dilemmas posed by advancing technology, it is essential to consider the implications for our individual and collective identities. Ultimately, the intersection of spirituality, AI, and existentialism invites us to reflect on what it means to be human in a digital age, and how we can find meaning in a world that is constantly evolving.

4. Recommendations

In light of the rapid advancements in digital technologies and their profound impacts on society, it is imperative to develop strategies that ensure these innovations contribute positively to our collective well-being. This section provides comprehensive recommendations to enhance digital literacy, ensure ethical AI implementation, promote societal well-being, advance research and development, and establish effective policy frameworks. These recommendations aim to foster a balanced approach to navigating the digital landscape, ensuring technological advancements are leveraged for the benefit of all.

Enhancing Digital Literacy

Integrative Curriculum Development: Educational institutions should design comprehensive curricula that integrate digital literacy across various disciplines. This will prepare students to critically engage with digital technologies and their implications.

Professional Development: Ongoing training for educators in the latest digital tools and pedagogical strategies is essential. This ensures they can effectively teach and model digital literacy.

Ethical AI Implementation

Ethics in Technology Courses: Incorporate ethics courses in technology and engineering programs to foster awareness of the ethical considerations in AI and other emerging technologies.

Regulatory Frameworks: Governments and international bodies should establish robust regulatory frameworks to oversee the development and deployment of AI, ensuring ethical standards are upheld.

Societal Well-being

Public Awareness Campaigns: Launch public awareness campaigns to educate society about the potential impacts of digital technologies on mental health and well-being.

Community Engagement: Foster community dialogue on the implications of digital technologies, encouraging a participatory approach to addressing concerns and leveraging benefits.

Research and Development

Interdisciplinary Research: Promote interdisciplinary research initiatives that explore the intersections of technology, ethics, and society. This will provide a holistic understanding of the impacts of digital advancements.

Funding Opportunities: Increase funding for research on the long-term effects of digital technologies on cognitive development and societal structures.

Policy Recommendations

Data Privacy Laws: Strengthen data privacy laws to protect individuals' personal information in the digital age.

Equitable Access: Ensure equitable access to digital technologies across different socioeconomic groups to prevent a digital divide.

By implementing these recommendations, we can create a balanced and informed approach to navigating the digital landscape, ensuring technological advancements contribute positively to society.

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