

The Spiritual Challenges of Post Human World

Umair Ali

MS Islamic Studies HITEC University Taxila Cantt

Abstract

This article looks at the issues of spirituality when the idea of post-humanity is contemplated with the advancement in technology and artificial intelligence. It seems that traditional spiritual paradigms are now struggling with the increases of transhumanism and integration of AI where concepts of consciousness, self, and the purpose of man are in question. This paper explores the potential for a post-human future to either threaten or transform spirituality and some of the consequent questions including the soul, divine intervention, and matters of ethics on technology augmentation. By examining different spiritual point of views, as well as modern theological responses, the article outlines major areas of conflict and possibility of change. Indeed, it posits that post-human condition calls for re-thinking of conventional concepts of spirituality and demands a conversation that bring together science and spirit. Thus, the findings underlined the necessity of a framework that will consider the fundamental impact of living in the technologically enhanced reality and the call for the proper balance of the spiritual life in the context of the technological advancements.

Key Words:

Post-Humanism, Spiritual Challenges, Artificial Intelligence, Transhumanism, Consciousness, Ethics.

Introduction:

Introduction of technology into human society has in many ways brought about a new society sometimes referred to as the posthuman society with drastic changes in the areas of identification, existence and spirituality. The future of spirituality is not just jeopardized but is in fact, undergoing metamorphosis at the hands of dominating paradigms such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology and cybernetics which have redefined the very contours of what it means to be human. This is a research article that tries to investigate the effects of post-humanism on the concept of spirituality, being, and otherness in the society. The post-human state of a human being where the technology is part of the physical body and the brain disrupts conventional spirituality. Regarding the

change of human capabilities and the growing indistinction between natural and artificial existence, which requires the reconsideration of spiritual experiences, some scholars (Bostrom, 2003; Haraway, 1991) suggested. This leads to the discussion on whether the soul can be augmented like the human cognitive and physical systems through the implantation of chips directly into the brain as well as genetic engineering of individuals (Kurzweil, 2005; More, 2013).

In addition, with the emergence of virtual and augmented realities, spiritual dimension acquires new vectors of existence and manifestation. New territories of spirituality are opened through virtual spaces for practice and fellowship, while new challenges to do with validity, embodiment, and what spirituality is as a phenomenon (Turkle, 2011; Lanier, 2010). The blurring of the boundaries between the virtual and the physical spaces questions the conventional religious and existential concepts of the holy space and individual's meaning of existence.

Further, the ethical-genos and existentiality of new sciences urge their critique of spiritual values and principles. With an increase in the use of artificial intelligence and robotics, issues of the ethical status of artificial entities and their place in spiritual affairs emerge (Borenstein et al. , 2017; Coeckelbergh, 2012). The incorporation of machines into the social tissue requires new ethical questions which concern spirituality regarding consciousness and self-organization of the existence. This article will therefore seek to assess these spiritual issues by analyzing how technological developments have affected spirituality in the society. In this context, the present research aims to contribute to the reflection on the post-human world, about the redefinition of the spiritual dimensions and to point out models for transcendence of such changes.

Literature Review

In order to understand the religious implications of the post-human world, the assistance of prior works that handle the relationship of spirituality with technology must be sought. The discussion can be organized into three primary areas: The crises of postmodernity include the erosion of human subjectivity; the formation of novel spiritual landscapes; and the moral questions posed by techno culture.

Redefinition of Human Identity

The progress of technology is fast becoming an unprecedented social phenomenon that is gradually transforming the concept of human individuality. According to Bostrom (2003), it is impossible to ignore the fact that people will consciously alter their brain, and live longer through technologies. Technological advancements like BCIs or genetic enhancements undermine pre-established archetypes of spirituality, especially with reference to the human soul. Kurzweil (2005) He predicts the future where there is blurring of the line between man and machine. He hypothesises that we are in the brink of a technological singularity where Artificial Intelligence will transcend Human Intelligence and bring about a drastic change to human existence. This therefore means that what it means to be human today maybe different from what it used to be due to our biological constraints.

Haraway (1991) expands on this idea by bringing up the cyborg as the new kind of being. Being a product of a human body and a machine, the cyborg undermines such concepts as gender, race, and even species. This is an animal which is impossible to fit into any box of philosophy or religion or any other concept. Cyborg is a new concept of human identity which has been influenced by technology and thus poses a new question to human identity.

Emergence of New Spiritual Spaces

With the virtual and augmented realities as the new frontier, people have a new way to have a spiritual experience. As Turkle (2011) has noted, technology provides possibilities for generating new types of relationships, reflection and signification. Virtual realities are a chance to go through spiritual experiences that can be hardly possible in the material world. As pointed out by Lanier (2010), virtual realities can offer new spiritual experiences however; doubts can be raised regarding the authenticity and depth of spirituality in Virtual environments. He postulates that even though virtual realities may provide new types of connections and reflections they are indeed different from the more conventional forms of spirituality.

The appearance of these new virtual environments undermines all the traditional ideas about sacred places and practices. This means that spiritual communities have no choice but to reflect on how these platforms are adopted and used. Of course, some may

appreciate these new forms of spiritual experience while others may show skepticism over these spiritual watered-down or commodified forms of spirituality. It can be expected that, as technology advances further, the connection between spirituality and digital environment will be rather intricate. The new forms of spirituality in the virtual and augmented reality are promising as well as problematic for individuals and communities who look for spiritual experience and purpose.

Ethical Implications of Technological Integration

Ever growing dependence on technology has a deep ethical and spiritual imperative. In the opinion of Borenstein, Herkert, and Herkert (2017), the emergence of autonomous systems create important questions regarding the effects on human values and beliefs. Coeckelbergh, (2012) also discusses the ethical issues that arise from AI and robotics in relation to its idea of consciousness and agency. The making of artificial beings is a topic that urges ethical questions about the definition of life, liberty and morality. People's beliefs and faiths tend to give them guidelines on the creation of life and the position of people in the world. It can be seen that the creation of artificial beings can threaten and even change such beliefs by offering new forms of existence and agency.

This paper concludes that ethics play an important role in defining the interaction between people and artificial entities. We have to discuss the consequences of our action of creating entities that might have consciousness or agency. These considerations include the issues of legal status of artificial beings, the effects which they can produce on the society and the ethical considerations concerning with the production and application of artificial beings. Therefore it can be said that there should be constant debates regarding the integration of technology as the world progresses to use it more often. Having outlined some of the possible implications and also having considered the ethical issues involved, it is possible to achieve a better understanding of how the development and use of technologies should proceed in order to reflect the general population's values and be beneficial to them.

Discussion

Being human, we are a complex of experiences which can be as intimate as personal identity or as profound as the existence of the universe. In personal sense, individuality is the feeling, love, interaction, and deep thinking that creates personal outlooks or story in

life. These intimate experiences locate us in the world and give us a sense of self as well as connection to those people around us. At the same time, we become the part of the universe which makes us think about the existence and meaning of life and our role in the existence of the world. One supposes that this eternal facet of the human being is depicted in the search for purpose in life, spiritual endeavors, and even awe towards the universe. The tension between these intimately individual and universally metaphysical modes of being is thus the very fabric of the human experience, integrating our daily existence with our search for the meaning of life.

The fact that post-humanity has many difficulties means that it is time to reconsider spiritual values and practices. With advancing technologies one's basic spiritual beliefs about the soul, self, and destiny are again up for debate. The socio technological environment poses threat in areas of realism, ethical standards and purpose and meaning of existence. One is how to integrate the construct of technology-enhanced self with the conventional religious conceptions of the soul and existence. The presented concepts and examples of how the lines between the human and the machine are being erased bring doubts about how the human spirituality changes with the help of technology. In addition, this ongoing process of expanding spiritual practices to new spheres that are Virtual Space as a new area for spiritual experience requires critical analysis of how Virtual Space can offer authentic Spiritual Experience and how it is connected with the traditions.

Ethical factors are also an issue in this regard. These technologies and systems are used in the development of autonomous technologies and AI systems and their effects on human values and spirituality have to be addressed. The emergence of artificial beings and their incorporation into people's everyday existence raises concerns about the subjects' ethical nature and their legitimacy in the religious sphere. Technology and spirituality in the post-human world challenge the humanistic approach to post-humanism and open a rich and elaborate debate on how the innovative technological vision of the world affects the concept of human subjectivity, practice, and values. Technological advances in enhancing human body and brain lead to change of human identity which conflicts with spirituality with the soul of humankind. For instance, when artificial intelligence is implemented together with biotechnology, there are

questions that arise concerning the alteration of our nature or even the violation of spiritual continuity that is related to the human soul (Bostrom, 2003; Haraway, 1991). This change brings into question the beliefs in regards to spirituality which have shaped humanity and its existence calling for a conversation between technology and religion.

However, virtual and augmented realities as the new spiritual spaces also open possibilities as well as problematic fields. These digital environments offer new opportunities to examine and practice spirituality and to interact with others as well as perform religious rituals in a new manner (Turkle, 2011; Lanier, 2010). But they also have negative implications to the legitimacy of spiritual experience in virtual environment, and the physicality aspect which has always been a foundation of spirituality. Thus people have to find a way to explain these new experiences using the old frameworks of religious practice, so that the online activities do not cheapen the spiritual ones. Ethical consideration of integration of technology makes spiritual dynamics even more complex. Technological advancement of self-governing systems and artificial entities raises profound ethical and existential issues to do with consciousness and existence (Borenstein et al. , 2017; Coeckelbergh, 2012).

Thus, the ethical status of artificial creatures and their function in spiritual spheres needs some reflection because these technologies can change the notions of personhood and spiritual worth. The ethical issues that are posed by AI and robotics call for a rediscovery of spiritual values and for new ethical frameworks to deal with the moral and existential questions arising with these technologies. Therefore, the post-human world implies the need to reconsider the roles of spirituality in the contemporary society with the help of technologies. The balance between personal and transcendent experiences in the technologically mediated world has to embrace the best of the traditional spirituality and the technologies' possibilities. In this way, participating in these problems will enable us to define the shifts in the concept of spirituality and establish paradigms that will allow for integration of technology advancement with human's spiritual search. This will be an ongoing dialogue which will help in handling the changes that technology brings in the perception of what it is to be human.

Conclusion

In the post-human world where technology is advancing at a very fast rate the nature of spirituality is diverse and complex. Thus, with technology now in every domain of human life, it alters people's experience, creates new spiritual scenarios, and poses many ethical issues. Solving these problems entails the use of knowledge from technology, ethical and even spiritual perspectives. It is useful to examine the role of technology and spirituality and how they interact with each other for both its benefits and drawbacks. On the one hand, technology can produce new forms of relating, reflecting, and finding the sacred, thus opening up new avenues for spirituality. On the other hand, the technological advance can also be perceived as a problem when it comes to the spirituality of the existing processes. In order to maneuver through this landscape, one must develop a self-reflexive consciousness of how technology mediates one's conceptions of spirituality.

This entails the posing of ethical issues in technology, analysis of the implications of the technology, and pursuit of the freedom of technology against the background of the key spiritual values. Thus, it is possible to define the post-human world as the one where the interaction between technology, ethical, and spiritual aspects will create new forms for the understanding of the divine. It may include modifying certain spiritual practices that are already in existence to suit the modern technological world, coming up with new forms of spirituality or finding new ways through which technology can complement spirituality. Finally, it is all about the search of the ways to cope with the spiritual life in the post-human world and to combine the benefits of the modern civilization with the eternal human desire to find the sense of existence. It is worthwhile to accept the spirit of inquiry, openness and creativity to develop the possibilities of technological advancement to enhance our spirituality and to create a world filled with love and justice.

References

- Borenstein, J., Herkert, J. R., & Herkert, J. R. (2017). *The ethics of autonomous cars*. *Science and Engineering Ethics*, 23(3), 761-774.
- Bostrom, N. (2003). *Ethical issues in advanced artificial intelligence*. *Science Fiction Studies*, 30(1), 6-16.

Coeckelbergh, M. (2012). *AI ethics: From the human to the posthuman*. *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society*, 10(2), 112-127.

Haraway, D. (1991). *Simians, cyborgs, and women: The reinvention of nature*. Routledge.

Kurzweil, R. (2005). *The singularity is near: When humans transcend biology*. Viking.

Lanier, J. (2010). *You are not a gadget: A manifesto*. Alfred A. Knopf.

More, M. (2013). *The philosophy of transhumanism*. In *The transhumanist reader: Classical and contemporary essays on the science, technology, and philosophy of the human future* (pp. 1-12). Wiley-Blackwell.

Turkle, S. (2011). *Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. Basic Books.

Bostrom, N. (2003). *Ethical issues in advanced artificial intelligence*. *Science Fiction Studies*, 30(1), 6-16.

Borenstein, J., Herkert, J. R., & Herkert, J. R. (2017). *The ethics of autonomous cars*. *Science and Engineering Ethics*, 23(3), 761-774.

Coeckelbergh, M. (2012). *AI ethics: From the human to the posthuman*. *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society*, 10(2), 112-127.

Haraway, D. (1991). *Simians, cyborgs, and women: The reinvention of nature*. Routledge.

Kurzweil, R. (2005). *The singularity is near: When humans transcend biology*. Viking.

Lanier, J. (2010). *You are not a gadget: A manifesto*. Alfred A. Knopf.

More, M. (2013). *The philosophy of transhumanism*. In *The transhumanist reader: Classical and contemporary essays on the science, technology, and philosophy of the human future* (pp. 1-12). Wiley-Blackwell.

Turkle, S. (2011). *Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. Basic Books.

Bostrom, Nick. "In Defense of Posthuman Dignity." In *H+/-: Transhumanism and Its Critics*, Philadelphia: Metanexus, 2011.