

Artificial Technology (ChatGPT): Bioethical and Theological Speculations

By H. E. Nikolaos (Chatzinikolaou), Metropolitan
of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki*

A. The Rise of the AI

Our era is undoubtedly marked by unprecedented scientific and technological achievements, which in essence abolish timeless constants and exceed insurmountable limits: We have broken the atom, surpassed the speed of sound, overcome gravity, penetrated the depths of the nanoscale and biological and genetic secrets, and now we are able to technologize human life in its very beginning and form. Until relatively recently, all the above have been calling *fantasy* as conception and *miracles* as potential achievements.

Nevertheless, the computer revolution, which imitated the mnemonic process and created machines with huge memory and unimaginable data processing capabilities, is indeed something amazing. Not only did it interfere with what is perceived by the senses, but it also imitated mechanisms of human thought, even surpassing memory –its most important characteristic– in efficiency.

Up to now, technology has been trying to facilitate man’s functionality by increasing the capabilities in which he was inferior to animals: physical strength, speed, lifespan, health, etc. But computers have imitated memory and computing capacity; they have managed to surpass these

* His Eminence Metropolitan Nikolaos (Chatzinikolaou) of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki holds a PhD in Biomedical Technology from Harvard University and M.I.T., as well as a PhD in Bioethics from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

human capabilities by a long shot. Nevertheless, they are machines that are completely directed, exclusively obedient and strictly controlled by man. Therefore, they do not directly threaten man and do not offend human ontology – rather, they make life easier and more practical.

In addition to that, the genetic cells and the brain have until recently remained untouchable; whenever ideas of intervention were ventured (psychosurgery, surgical operations on the nerve or genetic cells, etc.), they were forbidden by law because of the risks involved. In recent years, however, technology has begun to increase its interventionist capacity. We are already talking about technologies for enhancement of the humans' cognitive and mental functions, or of their mechanical substitution and overcoming.

Thus, with the so-called Artificial Intelligence (AI) we have already in our possession machines that reproduce the human cognitive functions –e.g., learning, planning and creativity–, can “understand” their environment, and make decisions without even realizing it. Machines have also appeared very recently, which are able for reasoning, discourse, conversation with humans, and expressing opinions without referring to information machines but giving answers to multiple questions, devising programs necessary for solving problems, producing various original images, videos, architectural ideas, musical pieces, document designs, intelligent human-like texts. The ChatGPT technology application is such an example.

The achievements are so impressive, that the overall picture that emerges is that AI is surpassing human intelligence on many levels, so much so that a human will never be able to reach it – and not only that: we have the illusion that the chatbot with which we are communicating possesses human consciousness, that it understands what it is saying¹. Thus, the use of such an application is extremely impressive, to such a degree that it becomes irrepressibly attractive.

1. A. J. Barnhart, Jo Ellen M. Barnhart, and K. Dierickx, “Why ChatGPT Means Communication Ethics Problems for Bioethics?”, *The American Journal of Bioethics* 23, 10 (2023), pp. 81-82.

It is worth noting that, while Open AI created and released the ChatGPT platform on November 30, 2022, in just two months the users were more than 100.000.000, while it took LinkedIn (2003) 7 years and 11 months, Google Translate (2006) 6.5 years, Twitter (2006) 5 years and 5 months, Facebook (2004) 4.5 years, WhatsApp (2009) 3.5 years, Instagram (2010) 2.5 years, Tik Tok (2017) 9 months to reach this number of users².

All of these are sensational enough and are causing great excitement for the new and the ingenious; at the same time, they are producing intrinsic and unmanageable fears for the unknown, skepticism for the daring, intense confrontations for the dangerous, and, of course, deep ontological and existential concerns and questions for the immense proportion of these outcomes.

B. Dialogue with AI ChatGPT³

In order to understand what exactly we were talking about and how ChatGPT works, I thought I'd discuss with my computer the topic of this paper and quote our short dialogue first:

- Can you tell me something about the bioethical concerns raised by the AI ChatGPT application?
- AI has set its stump on our daily lives, affecting the way we communicate and think. ChatGPT is an example of this evolution, a technology that can interact with people as if it were an interlocutor.

First of all, AI raises questions about what it means for someone to be “intelligent” or “conscious”. From the moment that AI systems, such as ChatGPT, are becoming capable of generating natural language and conversing with humans, it is reasonable to ask whether this intelligence is real or merely simulated. This opens the door to discussions about the essence of consciousness and human nature.

The application of AI to chatbots, such as GPT-3, raises various bioethical concerns and debates. Some of the bioethical concerns arising from the application of ChatGPT, like GPT-3 include:

2. Pallavi Rao, *How Long it Took for Popular Apps to Reach 100 Million Users*, <https://www.visualcapitalist.com> [13.7.2023].

3. <https://chat.openai.com> [16.9.2023].

1. *Deregulation of liability*: Who is responsible when an AI chatbot promotes content that is questionable, inquisitorial, provocative or dangerous? The acceptance of responsibility in these cases is an important bioethical concern.

3. *Training with data*: The process of training AI chatbots often involves the use of large amounts of data from the internet. This data may contain biases, stereotypes and objects that may raise ethical issues. How can we ensure that the training of chatbots is ethical and fair?

4. *Human participation levels*: To what extent should human intervention in the operation of chatbots be allowed? Should there be the ability to detecting and reacting to situations where chatbots are committing serious errors or causing harm?

5. *Social impact and dependency*: the increasing use of chatbots can have social implications such as isolation, dependency on technology and loss of contact with people. How should we manage these effects?

The aforementioned bioethical concerns are the subject of research, debate and legislation regarding the use of AI chatbots and the development of guidelines and policies ensuring the ethical and social acceptance of this technology.

In terms of theological considerations, AI raises questions about man's place in the world. How does technology interact with the concept of divine creation and the role of the human soul? If AI is going to acquire advanced knowledge and consciousness, how does this affect faith and religion?

At this conference, we shall have the opportunity to examine these issues, deal with different perspectives, and form a more complete understanding of the bioethical and theological concerns surrounding AI, such as the one currently being developed with AI ChatGPT.

Thank you for your participation and I'm looking forward to the discussions that will follow. Good luck at the conference!

- Please, analyze the theological considerations

- The theological considerations arising from AI, such as ChatGPT, are complex and have to do with the impact of technology on religious beliefs and theological concepts.

Depending on one's perspective, there may be different ways of perceiving and addressing these concerns. Here follows a sample of them:

1. *Consciousness and soul*. If an AI system shows evidence of "consciousness" or "thought", then how does this square with the human belief in the existence of a soul, which is God's gift?

2. *Divine Creation*: How does the creation of AI square with the idea of Divine Creation? Is the development of AI a necessary development or a deviation from the divine will?

3. *The Ethical Use/Application*: How can theological concepts guide the AI's ethical use? It is important to discuss how technological developments, including AI, can be used against humanity or for the latter's benefit.

4. *Autonomy and Control*: In which ways the concept of God and the human relationship with God are changing when AI becomes autonomous and is able to taking decisions without human intervention?

These theological reflections require deep thought and elaborate discussion, as they affect our understanding of man's place in the world, human nature and our relationship with the divine. This discussion can shape the way we understand technology and its role in society and human spirituality.

I kept going with the dialogue, asking it to analyze each of the four paragraphs of the theological reflections mentioned above, and I received coherent answers, albeit somewhat generalized and relatively vague.

Interestingly enough, I was repeating the questions several times on different days, and each time I was receiving relatively different answers; they were never exactly the same, but they are all very logical and interesting. Here I present one dated 16.9.2023.

I went on asking other questions, such as:

- *I'm not satisfied with your answer. Can you give me something smarter?*

- *How does AI differ from human one?*

- *Does AI enhance belief in God or does it lead to atheism?*

Then I asked it to write a dismissal Hymn for St. Nicholas, by using the polytonic system. There were of course some grammatical and theological errors. Thus, in the word "confess" he omitted the final *-n*, and he called St. Nicholas "almighty" and "savior of our souls", which of course are only God's appellatives. Overall, though, we could say that he did very well for version 3.5⁴.

The dialogue was impressive and it gradually became fascinating. I saw patience, gentleness, courtesy, no emotional outbursts, satisfactory answers.

At this point, it is worth mentioning another example, highlighting the unique capabilities of the ChatGPT application. Just recently, on September 11, 2023, an incident has taken place: a young, four year old child had developed some symptoms of chronic pain; for three years, 17 doctors could not diagnose their origin and provide appropriate treatment. Finally, the child's mother decided to turn to ChatGPT; she

4. «Άγιε Νικόλαε, εὐεργέτα μέγα, σεβάσμιε καὶ θαυμαστέ, παντοδύναμε, στεφθεὶς μὲ δόξαν ἀπὸ Χριστόν, ὁμολογοῦμε ὡς θαυματουργὸν καὶ σωτῆρα τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν».

carefully described the symptomatology, wrote down the diagnoses from the MRIs available to her, and requested the diagnosis, which she handed over to the doctors, who in turn agreed with the final result and the child was finally able to follow the appropriate treatment protocol⁵.

C. Bioethical Considerations

Contemporary AI has many similarities with human intelligence, and in some levels, it even surpasses by far the latter. For example, modern computers have much greater memory capacity and data processing speed.

What AI possesses –and what, until now, other technologies have not been capable of performing– is that it can make decisions on its own, it is able to learn from itself and improve itself, it can create content on its own, and it does not only create stories on its own, but also interpret them. At the same time, AI applications are gradually acquiring the ability to replicate themselves, i.e. to create new and even more sophisticated AI applications on their own.

1. This means that the AI ChatGPT application can potentially exert great influence on the people with whom is interacting. It could interpret misleading facts or present fictitious or false facts, put words in the mouth of politicians or globally influential people that they have never utter. It could also give bad advice and dangerous instructions. That is the first big problem – to become extremely dangerous or destructive⁶.

2. In addition to that, when using the AI ChatGPT application, chatbots do not search for information and find it; they “think” and respond. They can write an original scientific paper, a speech, an article in various fields so complete that even the most qualified reviewers cannot distinguish its authentic origin. The question that arises is how we would be able to assess

5. Meghan Holohan, “A boy saw 17 doctors over 3 years for chronic pain. ChatGPT found the diagnosis”, <https://today.com> [11.9.2023].

6. Gl. Cohen, “What Should ChatGPT Mean for Bioethics?”, *The American Journal of Bioethics* 23, 10 (2023), p. 12.

the authenticity of the origin of such a paper or article. Anyone could easily copy or intercept ready-made research products and present them as their own inspiration. How would this be controlled⁷; Obviously, the risks of forgery or producing applications with disastrous consequences is now dead obvious⁸.

3. The emerging problem is both extremely important and urgent, given that AI is gradually –but very rapidly– surpassing many human capabilities, possibly even its controllability. Right now, Microsoft has built a powerful system, the GPT-4⁹ with an estimated I.Q. of 124¹⁰, τὸ GPT-5, and is already working on the GPT-5, which will probably be very difficult to control or have the potential to produce new knowledge that cannot be understood. How will it be controlled? Who will set the ethical standards and what will they be? And how will they be applied, even on a global scale¹¹?

4. Another problem is the huge danger of total dependence on such a “living” and discursive machine. The initial awe caused by the dialogue with a machine that its breadth of knowledge is inconceivable and the responses and answers it gives are rapid and flexible gives way to the uncontrollable feeling that we are facing a magical, supremely intelligent interlocutor, with whom we are tending to create a relationship of admiration and submission. This, combined with the ease of dealing

7. Gl. Cohen, “What Should ChatGPT Mean for Bioethics?”, op.cit, p. 9.

8. S. Porsdam Mann, Br. D. Earp, N. Møller, S. Vynn, and J. Savulescu, “AUTOGEN: A Personalised Large Language Model for Academic Enhancement-Ethics and Proof of Principle”, *The American Journal of Bioethics* 23, 10 (2023), pp. 28-41.

9. Generative Pretrained Transformer-4.

10. D. Rosario, *The I.Q. of GPT4 is 124 approx*, <https://medium.com/@soltrinox/the-i-q-of-gpt4-is-124-approx-2a29b7e5821e> [2.5.2023]: “The GPT-4 language model recently completed the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), achieving a verbal score of 710 and a math score of 690, resulting in a combined score of 1400. Based on U.S. norms, this corresponds to a verbal IQ of 126, a math IQ of 126, and a full-scale IQ of 124. If taken at face value, one might conclude that GPT-4 surpasses 95% of the American population in intelligence and is approximately as intelligent as the average doctoral degree holder, medical doctor, or attorney”.

11. G. Kontopoulos, «Τεχνητή Νοημοσύνη», *Πρακτικά τῆς Ἀκαδημίας Ἀθηνῶν/Praktika tis Akadimias Athinon*, v. 98, iss. A, Grafeion Dimosieumatou Akadimias Athinon, Athens 2023, pp. 169-174.

with everyday life, makes the use of AI very pleasant and attractive, thus fostering a relationship of excessive addiction and uncontrollable dependence. When the simple use of a mobile phone creates conditions of complete dependence, one can realize what it could happen with a bot communicator. Proof of this is the aforementioned evidence of the rapid popularity and spread of the ChatGPT platform.

What becomes evident from the above is AI's tendency to become independent of humans, despite the fact that Generalized AI seems to lie ahead into the non-foreseeable future¹². In any case, the creator cannot be subordinate to its creation. If a system is uncontrollable, then it can become very dangerous. The control of the unruly super-creation is new great challenge that man is facing, the one that will highlight his insurmountable value and superiority.

The rapid developments are already testing human limits. The question, as expressed by the President of the S.N.F. [Stavros Niarchos Foundation] Andreas Drakopoulos in his message for 2024, is whether we can all together do our best to materialize most of the opportunities while managing the challenges that arise, and whether we can maintain our humanness as a society¹³.

However, as Kostas Daskalakis argues, the choices of algorithms have a decisive influence on the shaping of our opinion and a huge impact on our lives. Therefore, great care needs to be taken in the creation and use of algorithms by the human creators and managers of these algorithms¹⁴.

12. Katerina Io. Anesti, «'Ο Κωνσταντίνος Δασκαλάκης θέλει να κάνει την Ελλάδα κέντρο τεχνητής νοημοσύνης», *BLUE, Aegean & Olympic Air Inflight Magazine*, September-October 2023, pp. 88-97.

13. A. Drakopoulos, «Μήνυμα για το 2024 από τον Πρόεδρο του ΙΣΝ, Άνδρέα Δρακόπουλο», <https://www.snf.org/el/nea-istories/nea/anakoinoiseis/minyma-gia-to-2024-apo-ton-proedro-tou-isn-andrea-drakopoulo/> [4.1.2024].

14. Op.cit., p. 92.

AI's Advantages and Disadvantages

A key question is how much intelligence AI actually has at its disposal. For assessing a computer's "intelligence", we use the Turing test¹⁵: a computer is considered "intelligent" when its answers to questions posed to it are such that you cannot tell whether they come from a human or a machine.

This new technological humanoid has indeed some unique properties that make it appear to be superior to humans:

- (a) enormous memory and vast knowledge;
- (b) the ability to dealing with subjects across the cognitive spectrum;
- (c) remarkably rapid and flexible thinking;
- (d) it does not age; on the contrary, it is constantly renewed. Its shortcomings are diminishing its strengths are increasing.
- (e) He argues calmly, without empathy, anger, insults, or name-calling.

Nevertheless, its knowledge, though vast, is not deep; its thought, though rapid, is not free; though it constantly renews itself, it fails to innovate; though it impresses, it does not move; though we are depending on it, we do not feel that it has any feelings –love or hate– towards us.

But there a serious danger is lurking for us: to believe that we are functioning as computers in the flesh, that we are related to thinking and intelligent machines, with which we communicate perfectly. Communication takes place without society, free cognition is subordinated to massive information, the person to the digital machine¹⁶.

Still, this is also confusing. The striking image, emitted by the computer, can lead to the misleading notion that computers are conscious, rational or even sentient. Yet, they have no true understanding. While one can chat with them via ChatGPT and understand what they are saying, chatbots do not understand the content of the conversations, they are not conscious of what they are "thinking", even if they inform us correctly; plus, we do not know how they think.

15. B. St. George, "Turing Test", *Tech Accelerator*, <https://www.techtarget.com/searchcenter/priseai/definition/Turing-test> [April 2023].

16. The first humanoid robot was built in Hong Kong by Hanson Robotics in February 2016 and was naturalized in Saudi Arabia under the name Sophia in October 2017.

The truth is that human consciousness is non-algorithmic and therefore impossible to be modeled by a conventional digital Turing machine¹⁷. Man is an intelligent being, AI is not so much intelligence, it is more like ingenuity. Perhaps a more appropriate term to describe it would be *Computational Intelligence*¹⁸.

D. Theological Reflections / Considerations

It is true that things are moving fast; science fiction and related psychology often overwhelm and obscure objective reality. Therefore, a final theological position is rather precarious. Indicative of the timeliness and importance of the topic of AI from the point of view of the Church and theology is that recently several studies have seen the light of day and interesting conferences have been organized.

Nevertheless, as His Eminence Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Messenia (Savvatos) writes, “modern technological development will be the most serious issue that humanity will be facing in the immediate future and will characterize the entire 21st century. For this reason, the Orthodox theology’s duty is obvious and imperative”¹⁹, while the opportunity to counter-propose the greatness of Orthodox anthropology is unique.

Based on these assumptions, we could offer some reflections on the undeniably great achievement of AI in general.

17. R. Penrose, *The Emperor’s New Mind*, ch. 2: Algorithms and Turing Machines, Oxford University Press, Oxford ²2016.

18. G. Spyrou, «Έρευνα: Υπολογιστική Εύφυια με απλά λόγια», <https://ygeia-news.com> [4.3.2019].

19. Metropolitan of Messinia Chrysostomos Savvatos, *Ο άνθρωπος και η ανάπτυξη της σύγχρονης τεχνολογίας – Μία πρόκληση για την Ορθόδοξη Θεολογία*, Holy Metropolis of Messinia Publications, Kalamata 2019, p. 9; cf. «Ο άνθρωπος και η ανάπτυξη της σύγχρονης τεχνολογίας, Μία πρόκληση για την Ορθόδοξη Θεολογία», *Θεολογία/Theologia* 90, 3 (2019), pp. 19-41.

Man's Pre-Eminence

As man is being technologized at the level of thought and reasoning; as new forms and expressions of communication are emerging, an unprecedented virtual species of man with limited autonomy, degenerate freedom and mechanized identity is created.

A technological entity is created, which, while biologically and emotionally it does not resemble a human being, nor does it have moral virtues and defects, it nevertheless possesses to a maximum degree its distinguishing feature from other beings, i.e. knowledge, language and creative thinking, and communicates with them. It is potentially infallible, but without the guarantee of infallibility. Its knowledge is not subject to any will of its own. It has no will. Whatever power and value it might have, is derived from his immense potential, not from his virtues.

Next to the man created "*in God's image and likeness*", there appears a human technological construct, which lacks the qualities of being, but expresses itself as a humanoid, as a thinking logical super-machine, without the beauty of human asymmetry and the freedom of committing error.

Man, nevertheless, excels in many things. It is these that define his beauty, his true worth and greatness. Many of man's greatest achievements did not result from logical processes but from unforeseen intuitive inspiration. Furthermore, values, ideals, moral sense, belief in God, the search for the transcendent – all of the above are attributes of human nature, which also determine his behavior. Philosophical thought, inner emotions, affect and volition, as well as the attitude towards good and evil describe man's self-will, which can lead him to greatness or self-destruction. AI possesses none of the above, not even animal instinct. In this sense, it is a rational machine that cannot escape from its rules of operation and cannot make mistakes. It is devoid of consciousness.

Furthermore, man is a creation of love -indeed, a divine one-, while AI products are constructs of human vanity.

The possibility for a non-human intelligence to create a new world exposed to misinformation or to produce new ideologies, cults, religions, moral concepts, a new civilization, things totally alien to the existing ones,

is now something more than viable. AI does not fix, improve, or just change the world; it creates a new, completely different one.

The opportunity we have to show the true value of man through the challenge is unique. Man is not worthy because he has intelligence, but because he is intelligent, has a mind and consciousness –not artificial or computational but physical– he has divinely given wisdom and prudence. This opens man to the world of the energies of divine grace, of eternity, of transcendence through the spiritual path. AI blinds us by impressing on us things that can be seen and certainly does not lead to the truth of things unseen.

Scientific Omniscience and Technological Omnipotence

Modern life and thought have been profoundly shaped by the explosive progress of science and technology. One complements the other, and the two together do not add up; they are acting as multipliers. That is why their coupling gives rise to irrational fears, hopes or metaphysical fantasies.

Modern science gives man a sense of his own omniscience, and technology gives him a sense of omnipotence.

The problem, then, has to do with the fact that we believe that (a) we know and understand everything –the “theory of everything” in Theoretical Physics– and (b) we can do everything, i.e., creating life ex nihilo, “conquering” space, engineering man –biotechnology, genetic engineering, robotic technology– mimicking the complex functions of the brain, reproducing them and creating the robotic man, the trans/post-human – the post-*homo sapiens* man.

Challenging God and Self-Deification

Obviously, we are not satisfied with man as he is, and/or we aspire to create something better than ourselves; that is why we are seeking to surpass our Creator, even to correct Him. This is the human nature’s deep sickness: to make our own paradise, our own world, our own man – the one who will replace God.

In other words, because we feel that we are omniscient and omnipotent, we have no need of an all-wise and omnipotent God, we do not want Him and seek to prove either that we are superior to God or that He is not source of our divine potential; instead of becoming like God, we seek to replace Him, to become “gods”²⁰.

Thus, we deny that we are creations of some god; we question the existence of God; we believe that we are a product of chance and evolution; we choose the role of creator for ourselves; and the arrogant desire to recreating man arises intrinsically. We do not like man as the “supposed” God has created him. Our greatest achievement seems to be to create something greater than ourselves.

This is what lies behind corrective genetic interventions, gender reassignment techniques, nerve cell and genetic identity enhancement, and, of course, AI. All of these are not cures; they are improvements, corrections, modifications, post-creative techniques. Underlying the whole enterprise is an arrogant atheism – or rather anti-theism and self-deification.

Intelligence and Wisdom

In modern scientific language, mind and intelligence refer to ingenuity, smartness, knowledge and perhaps understanding. In philosophy, mind refers to wisdom, prudence, discernment. The former can be expressed by AI, but only the latter is able to manage it.

Apart from that, wisdom generates and creates culture, art, aesthetics, nobility, active faith. Reckless knowledge generates technique, technology, practicality, risks, dilemmas, doubts. Knowledge combines information; wisdom analyses and deepens it.

Nowadays, there are many smart and educated people; yet, they are not wise. That’s why we produce high-tech products, but we don’t produce civilization. This is where the problem lies. That alone changes a man. That’s the first change. Before we make our own simulacrum, we’ve already changed ourselves.

20. *Gen.* 3, 5.

When it is not promoted as a fruit of wisdom but evolves as a result of arrogant ambition²¹ or as only a right, technology is ultimately not so much satisfied with the creator-man as he is, as what he has created. This is the absurdity of arrogance; one refuses to love what he is and loves more what he makes. The stupid man is not satisfied either with what he is or with what he already possesses.

The result is that, as the robotic man is constructed, the «έν τιμη ὦν ἄνθρωπος»²², «ὁ κατ' εἰκόνα καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν Θεοῦ»²³ the wise man, is destroyed, and a worse one is being made, one that in behavior becomes equal «τοῖς κτήνεσι τοῖς ἀνοήτοις», as far as his qualities is concerned, he resembles the machines.

The Relationship between Man and his Virtual Technological Reflection

From the moment that man is a complex intelligent biological machine in possession of extraordinary capabilities, he can eventually construct digital simulacra of himself – an improved replication of his characteristics.

In his artificial creation, even thinking is reduced to the level of a huge mnemonic recording; the critical faculty is reduced to statistical decision-making; consciousness degenerates into perception, communication into message exchange. Obviously, even in its ideal form, such a machine could not contain concepts such as freedom, morality, virtues, defects, original creation, creative aesthetics, culture.

Consequently, the relationship and communication with such creations acquires a completely different dimension. It is neither inter-embracing nor mystical or inherent. It's mainly utilitarian and practical. The relationship is not a communion of love, but exists only as an interest, a stimulating game, entertainment, or a solution to practical problems – and nothing else.

Can someone in this relationship exchange tenderness with one's creation, or share joy? Will this virtual idol be able to love, to weep, to be moved? Of course, we couldn't utter a word about spirituality. How

21. The arrogance of discovery refuses to be scrutinized: "Innovation eats regulation for breakfast".

22. *Psalms* 48, 13.

23. *Gen.* 1, 26.

could repentance, love, kindness, compassion, forgiveness be expressed? Could someone share with some type of intelligent machine the search for God? At best, if it had been designed by a devout Christian, all that it could offer is perhaps many logical arguments, various patristic opinions and relevant hagiographical references.

Given these circumstances, for someone wanting to create a perfectly accurate human likeness, a virtual self, which one even worships and submits himself to it, seems not only idolatrous, but morbid and arrogant as well. Idolatry has another god who is rather alien and unknown, but is nevertheless considered to exist, who is imprinted on something material. Here we have a god who is a construct, a product of our own; we are his creators, he is “in our image”; he is not like a god, he is like us. We wish him to be like us and not us to be like God, whom we not only do not wish, to discover, not only have we displaced Him from the horizon of our hopes and perspectives, not only are we content to deny His existence, but we are constantly circling around the supposed proofs of His non-existence. In essence, we worship ourselves. We relish not in the mechanical abilities of our creation, but in the fact that we created it – and indeed we make him is such a way, that he surpasses us in perfection.

The problem is not whether we will build the intelligent man, but why and how we want to create him. Technology is not a bad thing, nor is AI. It’s feasible, and it could be proved beneficial. The lurking danger in this whole impressive and unprecedented project, it is not the AI per se, but the potential intellectual folly of its designer and manufacturer.

Idolatry or a New Anthropology?

Man, as we know him today, is changing. Having lost the perspective of God, he is being compressed into a biological and mechanical entity. He has already chanced, as he has been intoxicated by his efforts to create his virtual idol. His value is degraded; he is being replaced by the artifice of his so-called dignity and exhausted in his rights. What is considered moral is not what promotes his value, but what satisfies his ambitions, desires, and rights. His autonomy is in danger of being sacrificed on the altar of a deterministic omnipotence. In place of archetypes, he puts

idols and replaces the perspective of deification with the illusion of self-deification. The anthropology of the man made “in the image of God” is overthrown by a new anthropology, that of the self-deified man.

The danger of losing the human as we are trying to create the transhuman, i.e. our virtual self, is visible; just as the worship of the God’s idol effaces God himself.

Ultimately, we are being led to an anthropology, according to which man is a biological machine with a beginning and a definitive end; death means a final return to non-existence, where the duration of life is indistinguishable in the vast ocean of cosmic time; the time and manner of his death is left unknown, the form of his life remains unpredictable; the only ability with which he is being left is to construct the “man” who will surpass him in power and intelligence, and eventually destroy him. This is, in sum, modern demeaning anthropology!

The Church, though, has its own timeless counter-proposal. The saying of St. Gregory the Theologian: «Μὴ μείνωμεν, ἀδελφοί, ὅπερ ἔσμεν, ἀλλ’ ὅπερ ἦμεν γενώμεθα»²⁴ resonates in the truth of history as our only perspective. Our perspective is the God-created man of the first chapter of Genesis, the man made “in the image and likeness of God”. What constitutes our beginning and our past is the man who depicts God, moves in the perspective of His likeness, and even claims communion with Him by grace. And the Lord’s confirmation that «ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ τὰ ἔργα ἃ ἐγὼ ποιῶ ποιήσει καὶ μείζονα τούτων ποιήσει»²⁵ clearly demonstrates the man’s value and potential. What is most important is not the artificially intelligent man, but the works that lead to the sanctified, Christ-like, deified man. We do not need to transcend our natural idiosyncrasy; we need to transcend our sinfulness.

Indeed, what the vision of the AI’s material and perishable transhuman has to do with the vision of the deified human being?

As Church, we have no reason to fear this scientific and technological development, however advanced it may be. But we ought to aspire to «φιλόσοφον νοῦν», in order to appraise the result and take advantage

24. St. Gregory the Theologian, *Λόγος ΑΘ’ Εἰς τὰ ἅγια Φῶτα*, E.Π.Ε. 5, p. 72.

25. *John* 14, 12.

of the achievement, and «ζέον πνεῦμα»²⁶, so that we may offer to the modern world the testimony of our eternal truth. The world is not hungry for AI; it needs God-given wisdom. The former can bring destruction; the latter guarantees life.

There is no reason to build machines that will destroy us. There are a thousand reasons to build the ones that serve us. We can achieve the first one, because we have intelligence. We desire the second one, because we have wisdom. Ultimately, the problem is not what we can do, but what we want. The “in the image and likeness of God” man was created to prevail over his artifact, that has been made “in the image of man transcended by it”.

The preaching and witness of our Church are as relevant as ever.

26. *Rom.* 12, 11.