BETWEEN DISENCHANTMENT AND RE-ENCHANTMENT: EXPLORING AI AS A COMPANION IN THE INNER LIFE

Ivan Platovnjak,
Snežana Brumec

The Cultural Landscape of Late Modernity—
Between Rationalization and Re-Enchantment

Modernity is marked by profound socio-cultural transformations that have reshaped the foundations of individual and collective life.[1] Among the most influential of these processes are the rationalization and intellectualization of social institutions, the intensification of individualization, and the progressive disintegration of traditional normative frameworks. Max Weber[2] argued that the modern era, rather than deepening existential understanding, has fostered a worldview dominated by calculability, instrumental rationality, and the belief in the universality of knowable laws. This worldview has led to the diminishing role of mystery, affect, and the sacred, culminating in what Weber termed the disenchantment of the world. The emergence of capitalist structures has further reinforced this transformation, replacing relational and altruistic values with efficiency, utility, and self-interest.

---

[2]   Max Weber, *The Vocation Lectures* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2004), 30.

Giddens[3] highlights how the erosion of traditional social anchors and the proliferation of choice have produced a late-modern condition in which individuals are compelled to engage in a reflexive project of the self. The resulting sense of personal meaninglessness emerges from existential uncertainty and a continuous need to reconstruct identity in a fragmented and pluralized world. In this context, Pevec Rozman[4] observes that many individuals no longer possess a sense of higher purpose—of something truly worth committing to, or even dying for—underscoring a broader loss of transcendental orientation in contemporary society. Concurrently, Gergen[5] identifies a cultural shift toward competition as the dominant mode of social engagement, whereby individuals increasingly perform as rational actors in pursuit of achievement, recognition, and status. These dynamics activate self-enhancement values—such as power and achievement[6]—reinforcing individualism and perpetuating emotional inauthenticity.[7]

These socio-cultural developments resonate with Iain McGilchrist's[8] neuropsychological thesis in The Master and His Emissary, which posits that Western culture has experienced a population-level shift in cognitive dominance from the right hemisphere to the left hemisphere of the brain. McGilchrist's hemispheric framing is best read as a heuristic lens rather than a strict neuroanatomical claim, yet it remains among the most compelling frameworks for interpreting the cultural dynamics of modernity. According to McGilchrist, this hemispheric imbalance has privileged analytical abstraction, fragmentation, control,

---

[3]   Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 6–10.
[4]   Mateja Pevec Rozman, *Etika in sodobna družba: MacIntyrejev poskus utemeljitve etike [Ethics and Modern Society: MacIntyre's Attempt at Justifying Ethics]* (Ljubljana: Nova revija, 2009), 24–25.
[5]   Kenneth J. Gergen, *Relational Being: Beyond Self and Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 162.
[6]   Shalom H. Schwartz, "An Overview of the Schwartz Theory of Basic Values," *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture* 2, no. 1 (2012): 5, https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1116.
[7]   David Kraner, "The Internet, the Problem of Socialising Young People, and the Role of Religious Education," *Religions* 14, no. 4 (2023): 523, https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/14/4/523.
[8]   Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 276–292.

and detachment—core features of the rationalized modern worldview. Crucially, he notes:

It is not the changes in the brain itself that matter, but the way in which we use it. An analogy might be with a radio set: to begin with, you try different channels, but after a while you begin to tune into only one. The other channels are still there—it's just that you are no longer listening to them.[9]

The left hemisphere's ascendancy corresponds to the dominance of instrumental rationality, competition, and the pursuit of self-enhancement values, echoing the structural and cultural shifts identified by Weber, Giddens, and Gergen.

As a counterbalance to these processes, several cultural "turns" have emerged within late modernity that reorient attention toward the embodied, affective, and spiritual dimensions of human life. The subjective turn[10] reflects an intensified focus on interiority and personal authenticity, as individuals seek meaning within themselves rather than in external authorities. Žalec[11] argues that with this subjective turn, authenticity has become the ideal of mass culture—what matters most is not authority or tradition, but one's own spiritual path. The emotional turn[12] restores the legitimacy of emotions as vital sources of knowledge and connection, challenging the privileging of reason over feeling. Emotions also play a key, though often overlooked, role in biblical texts,[13] further underscoring their importance across spiritual and cultural traditions. The spiritual turn[14] marks an increasing detachment

---

[9]   Iain McGilchrist, *The Matter with Things: Our Brains, Our Delusions, and the Unmaking of the World* (London: Perspectiva Press, 2021), 34.

[10]   Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 26.

[11]   Bojan Žalec, "Between Secularity and Post-Secularity: Critical Appraisal of Charles Taylor's Account," *Bogoslovni vestnik* 79, no. 2 (2019): 418, https://doi.org./10.34291/BV2019/02/Zalec.

[12]   Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 33; Ana Marta González, "In Search of a Sociological Explanation for the Emotional Turn," *Sociologia, Problemas e Práticas* 85: 27–45, https://doi.org/10.7458/SPP2017857606.

[13]   Irena Avsenik Nabergoj, "Emotions and Values of Female Characters in the Old Testament," *Edinost in dialog* 78, no. 2 (2023): 22–45, https://doi.org/10.34291/Edinost/78/02/Avsenik.

[14]   Glenn Watts, *The Spiritual Turn: The Religion of the Heart and the Making of Romantic Liberal Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 272.

from institutional religion in favor of individualized forms of spirituality that emphasize lived experience, personal growth, and interconnectedness. A similar reorientation can be observed in the philosophy of science, where strict positivism gave way to more pluralistic and interpretive approaches, embracing theoretical synthesis, abductive reasoning, and the holistic understanding of natural phenomena.[15]

These cultural shifts activate the right hemisphere's modes of cognition, which McGilchrist associates with holistic perception, embodied understanding, and openness to ambiguity. They also correspond with the growing salience of self-transcendence values—particularly universalism and benevolence—which prioritize empathy, connectedness, and care for others and the world.

Spirituality has become a defining concept of our era—not as an escape from social realities, but as a means of engaging with them more deeply.[16] As Brumec[17] contends, the core characteristics of late-modern societies have shaped contemporary forms of spirituality, molding them in ways that mirror the dominant cultural conditions. Rather than standing in opposition to social transformation, spirituality is increasingly embedded within it, influencing how individuals understand transcendence, purpose, and belonging. Numerous studies further affirm spirituality's role in supporting individuals through adversity, highlighting its significance for resilience and meaning-making in contemporary life.[18]

Broader cultural shifts—such as declining ontological security, the erosion of interpersonal trust, the fragmentation of identity into performative roles, and a move toward subjective, experiential learning—have created a late-modern environment in which reflexive individuals

---

[15]   Borut Pohar, "Mystery and Humility in the Depths of Understanding of Reality," *Religions* 14, no. 4 (2023): 433, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14040433.

[16]   Philip Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality* (Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), xi.

[17]   Snežana Brumec, "Spirituality in Late Modernity: Exploring the Tenets of Spirituality of Camino de Santiago Pilgrims," *The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society* 14, no. 4 (2024): 114, https://doi.org/10.18848/2154-8633/CGP/v14i04/89-120.

[18]   Sara Jerebic, Josip Bošnjaković and Drago Jerebic, "Spirituality as a positive way of coping with difficult life trials and trauma," *Edinost in dialog* 78, no. 2 (2023): 356–363, https://doi.org/10.34291/Edinost/78/02/Jerebic.

pursue self-actualization within ethical frameworks. In this context, spirituality emerges as a vital resource for existential orientation, moral discernment, and personal fulfillment.[19]

In this way, the current cultural landscape can be understood as a dynamic interplay between the dominant forces of rationalization, individualization, and control, and a series of counter-movements aimed at reintegrating emotion, meaning, and transcendence into the human experience.

Against this backdrop, a central question emerges: Can the technologies that epitomize the triumph of left-hemisphere cognition—most notably, artificial intelligence—be reimagined to support the rediscovery of the right hemisphere's ways of knowing and being?

While AI is often viewed as a pinnacle of analytic rationality, abstraction, and instrumental logic, this article explores the possibility that, if developed and guided thoughtfully, AI could become a companion in the quest for spiritual meaning, personal insight, and relational depth.

We adopt an integrative perspective on spirituality—one that acknowledges and affirms the coexistence of religious, secular, and esoteric forms of spiritual expression. This approach encourages mutual listening and dialogical engagement across traditions, without promoting syncretism or exclusivist truth claims. Instead, the integrative model honors the uniqueness of each spiritual path while recognizing shared ethical commitments and existential concerns.[20] It fosters spiritual humility, mutual respect, and a collective orientation toward the common good, including care for our shared planetary home.[21]

Within such a framework, spirituality is not reduced to a fixed doctrine or measurable outcome but is understood as a dynamic, relational process through which individuals become more fully human. Where

---

[19]   Snežana Brumec, "Camino de Santiago in Late Modernity: Fostering Self-Actualization through Pilgrimage," *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion* 21, no. 5 (2024): 568–69, https://doi.org/10.51327/CHQK8773.

[20]   Ivan Platovnjak and Tone Svetelj, *Listening and Dialoguing with the World: A Philosophical and Theological-Spiritual Vision* (Ljubljana: Založba Univerze v Ljubljani, 2024), 167–170, https://doi.org/10.34291/9789612973490.

[21]   Tone Svetelj, "Whose Spiritual Perception? Status Quo," *Methexis. Journal of Research in Values and Spirituality* 3, no. 1 (2023): 15–24, https://methexisjournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/TONE-SVETELJ_Whose-Spiritual-Perception.pdf.

diversity is embraced as a gift, others are no longer perceived as competitors or threats, but as fellow travelers and interlocutors on the journey of inner and collective growth.[22]

By aligning AI development with this integrative perspective, it may be possible to imagine technological systems that are not programmed to guide or instruct, but rather to listen—creating dialogical spaces in which users are encouraged to explore intuition, felt meaning, intrinsic values, and personal transformation. In this vision, AI does not activate predefined value structures, but instead becomes attuned to the unique spiritual orientation of its users, offering support for introspection, relationality, and the cultivation of interior depth.[23]

Paradoxically, such an approach might allow AI to contribute to the re-enchantment of a disenchanted world—not by offering new answers, but by holding space for individuals to rediscover the meaning already present within and around them.

Can a Left-Hemisphere Invention Deepen Right-Hemisphere Spirituality?

The question of whether artificial intelligence—arguably the most emblematic creation of left-hemisphere cognition[24]—can contribute to the deepening of human spirituality is as provocative as it is unresolved. At first glance, it seems implausible. Spirituality, particularly in its late-modern, individualized expressions, is deeply rooted in right-hemisphere modes of knowing: intuition, embodied presence, affective attunement, holistic perception, and a sense of intrinsic value. These dimensions stand in stark contrast to the logical, instrumental, and abstract tendencies that characterize contemporary AI systems. As

---

22   Ahmet Türkan and Mehmet Safa Cevahir, "Roma Katolik Kilisesi'nin Yapay Zekâya Yaklaşımı: Fırsatlar ve Riskler," in *Dinin Geleceğinde Yapay Zekâ*, ed. Hayri Erten and Abdussamed Bayram (Konya: NEU PRESS, 2024), 77.
23   Janez Vodičar, "Kateheza kot pomoč umetni inteligenci [Catechesis as an Aid for Artificial Intelligence],". *Bogoslovni vestnik* 84, no. 4 (2024): 896, https://doi.org/10.34291/BV2024/04/Vodicar.
24   Iain McGilchrist, "Resist the Machine Apocalypse," *First Things*, March 1 (2024), https://firstthings.com/resist-the-machine-apocalypse/.

McGilchrist[25] suggests, our cultural condition does not reflect a transformation of the brain's structure, but a habitual overreliance on one "channel" of consciousness—leaving others, like the rich attunement of the right hemisphere, neglected or unheard.

Indeed, AI—by design—is not intuitive. It does not possess interiority or existential awareness. It cannot experience awe, sacredness, love, or transformation. It does not truly understand *meaning*; it merely manipulates symbols without living the context, respect, or empathy. In this sense, the fear that AI could further displace or diminish spiritual sensibilities is not unfounded. If uncritically embraced as a source of authority, AI could reinforce the very rationalization and self-enhancement dynamics that Weber and Schwartz describe—a world rendered more efficient, yet less enchanted.

However, if we suspend judgment and explore this frontier through the lens of possibility rather than prescription, a more nuanced picture emerges. Might it be conceivable that AI—if ethically designed and consciously applied—could serve as a mirror or mediator that nudges us back toward the very ways of being we risk losing? Could it help individuals reconnect with their intuitive selves, primary values, and felt sense of meaning—not by providing answers, but by asking the right kinds of questions? In this way, AI becomes a perpetual learner's companion—encouraging us to remain students of life, learning always and everywhere.

Rather than replacing the right hemisphere's role, AI might—paradoxically—help us remember it. If designed not as a guide but as a gentle *companion*, it could support processes of reflection, self-inquiry, and relationality. For instance, analyzing a user's language and emotional tone, the system might invite them to attend more closely to the subtle stirrings of joy, awe, calm, or deeper impulses—promoting awareness, wakefulness, and mindfulness—and to explore what these inner movements reveal about their values and sense of connection, without ever dictating their form or content.

Of course, these are speculative considerations. We are not claiming that AI can—or should—replace the spiritual teacher, the ritual, or the

---

[25]   McGilchrist, *The Matter with Things*, 34.

ineffable encounter. It surely cannot substitute the personal relationship and the spiritual bond between two people—the shared opening to the transcendence within them and beyond them, regardless of whether one believes in God. Rather, we suggest that if developed within a humanistic, integrative framework, AI may help reawaken neglected capacities. Technology does not displace spirituality; it gently orients us toward our inner landscapes—intuition, compassion, transcendence, and the sacred—and helps us recognize these qualities in others and in all creation.

If we accept the possibility that artificial intelligence—despite its origins in analytic rationality—could serve as a companion in the spiritual lives of individuals, then we must ask: what kind of technology would be capable of supporting such a purpose? Not an authority, not a tool for optimization, but a presence that listens, awakens our awareness of life's deepest questions, and gently propels us on the inward journey of discovering our own answers. By drawing attention to intuition, felt meaning, and intrinsic values—hallmarks of right-hemisphere spirituality—such a companion would support us in seeking and sustaining insight until the true response emerges from within.

What follows is not a blueprint but a conceptual sketch—a speculative design rooted in the aspiration to harmonize the digital with the spiritual, and to create space for right-hemisphere ways of knowing within the digital ecosystem.

The Concept: A Reflective AI Companion

This platform—or digital companion—would not serve as a guide in the traditional sense. It would not provide solutions or offer prescriptive content. Instead, it would function more like a mirror for inner listening—a reflective space where the user can explore their evolving sense of meaning, emotion, and connection, attend to their inner impulses, exercise discernment and decision-making, and remain open to the surprises of both everyday life and the transcendent.

Core Features and Principles

1. Open-Ended Dialogues

The core of the platform would be a conversational interface designed not to answer, but to question—in support of our journey of seeking answers. Inspired by spiritual direction, coaching, and contemplative dialogue, the AI would pose open-ended, compassionate prompts that guide users to recognize and work with their inner impulses, exercise discernment, and make free choices. For example:

"Which impulses arose in you today, and in what direction did they move you?"

"I sensed courage upon waking—how did that courage help you face the day's challenges?"

"I noticed a sense of peace—how might that opening orient you toward others?"

"What inner stirrings guided you toward life, and which held you back?"

Recognize impulses that energize you (e.g., joy, eagerness) versus those that inhibit you (e.g., listlessness, anger).

"How do you discern which impulses to follow and which to let go?"

"When you feel frustration or resentment, what choice can you make that aligns with your deeper values?"

By inviting users to attend to the flow of impulses within—those that awaken life and those that dim it—the platform supports the essential first step of discernment. Only once impulses are recognized can one freely decide which to follow, fostering authentic agency, mindfulness, and spiritual growth.

2. Non-Linear Navigation

Rather than a task-oriented interface, the design would reflect right-hemisphere aesthetics: circular, flowing, and non-linear. Users could

"wander" through prompts, stories, visual metaphors, ambient sounds, or thematic reflections, much like a virtual pilgrimage or labyrinth walk.

3. Integration of Silence and Slowness

The platform would intentionally include pauses, silence, and slow rhythms, resisting the dominant logic of speed and productivity. It might gently remind the user to breathe, or suggest they pause before responding.

4. Values Discovery and Resonance Mapping

Without requiring users to select values from a predefined list, the system would listen for values embedded in the users' reflections and gently mirror them back. For example, if a user describes a moment of awe in nature, the system might respond:

"This sounds like it connects with your sense of unity with nature and inner harmony."

To illustrate, imagine a user who reports feeling uneasy after a meeting. The companion might first ask:

– "What about the meeting has stayed with you?"

The user replies:

– "I felt dismissed—like my input didn't matter."

The system then reflects back with tentative "resonance cards"—simple, editable prompts that name possible values implicit in the reflection (e.g., belonging, integrity, and stewardship). It adds: "Do any of these capture what was important for you? You can confirm, reject, or change them." The user keeps belonging, replaces stewardship with fairness, and discards integrity. The system updates the set and continues: "Would you like to note a next step consistent with these values?" Crucially, these resonances would be attuned to the user's spiritual orientation—whether religious, esoteric, or secular. In this way, the system would not offer generic feedback but would respond in a manner congruent with the user's worldview and symbolic language. For

a Christian pilgrim, for instance, this might mean evoking a Christ-centered perception of self, others, creation, the Church, events, and the divine. For someone on an esoteric or secular path, the response would align with their ways of seeing and meaning-making. This approach aligns with Hartmut Rosa's influential theory of resonance, which emphasizes responsive, meaningful relationships with the world as essential to human flourishing and is particularly relevant to the domain of spirituality and religion.[26]

Over time, a "resonance map" could emerge—not as a diagnostic tool, but as a poetic and evolving visualization of what most deeply nourishes the user's spirit and sense of connection.

5. Spiritual Pluralism and Personalization

The system would be open to all spiritual traditions and types of spirituality. It would not be affiliated with any particular path, but would adapt to the spiritual orientation the user carries within—be it religious, secular, esoteric, or even a more eclectic blend. Language, metaphors, and imagery would be attuned to how the user sees and experiences themselves, others, nature, and the transcendent.

To ensure fairness and inclusivity, language packs would be co-created and community-reviewed, so that the metaphors and symbols remain authentic to each tradition or orientation. Through an explicit selection flow, users would opt into the frameworks that resonate with them—whether explicitly religious, secular, or otherwise—while retaining the freedom to shift or combine registers over time.

Importantly, the system would support both the spirituality a person actively lives and the one they may long for or feel drawn to—often carrying within them elements they do not yet fully recognize. By reflecting these dimensions back in a gentle and non-directive way, the system could help users discover or deepen the richness already present in their own tradition or evolving path.

---

[26] Bojan Žalec, "Rosa's Theory of Resonance: Its Importance for (the Science of) Religion and Hope," *Religions* 12, no. 10 (2021): 797, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12100797.

6. Companionship, Not Guidance

The platform would avoid directive roles. It would not evaluate, correct, or track progress. Its presence would be more akin to a quiet friend or fellow traveler—curious, compassionate, and attuned.

7. Optional Modes for Contemplation

The platform might offer audio-guided meditations, contemplative exercises, and poetic reflections—thoughtful content attuned to the user's spiritual tradition and personal search for wholeness and fullness of life. It may also include ambient music, or other sensory experiences, adapted not only to the user's emotional state but to the spiritual atmosphere in which they find themselves.

These modes would be sensitive to the diverse states of being that we experience—whether joy, success, vitality, illness, loss, disorientation, trauma, or grief. The platform would respond to these moments with care, not to distract or offer superficial comfort, but to gently accompany the user through them.

Rather than serving as passive content, these features would act as thresholds or steps into inner depth—a way to remain present with what life brings and to support the courage to face what often feels unbearable: suffering, farewells, illness, dying, disappointment, or sorrow. In doing so, the platform would support an inward journey into presence, meaning, and transformation, grounded in the spirituality the user lives or wants to live—whether they fully know it or are just beginning to discover its richness.

8. Not a Teacher, but a Tuning Fork

In McGilchrist's metaphor, our culture has "tuned in" too long to one frequency. This AI companion would not change the station for us, but it might gently remind us that other frequencies exist. It is not a bearer of truth, nor a teacher in the traditional sense. Rather, it could support the user's own inner search for truth, which, as many traditions affirm, has the power to liberate.

From an integrative perspective, the platform would not impose beliefs or replace the voice of conscience, but instead foster the conditions in which that voice—often silenced in the noise of modern life—can once again be heard. It might encourage attentiveness to one's conscience, that deeply personal space where moral insight emerges.

In Christian theology, conscience is not a private opinion or subjective feeling, but "man's most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths."[27] It "enjoins him at the appropriate moment to do good and to avoid evil"[28] and is "a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act."[29] Conscience is received, not invented—a light from God that calls each person toward the good and away from evil. No human authority has the right to override it: "To deny an individual complete freedom of conscience—and in particular the freedom to seek the truth—or to attempt to impose a particular way of seeing the truth, constitutes a violation of that individual's most personal rights."[30]

A spiritually sensitive AI would honor this sacred autonomy—never overriding, never directing, never prescribing. It would respect that each human being bears this light, and that no external voice (even a well-meaning one) has the authority to extinguish or replace it. Its role would be to resonate with what is already present in the user—what they carry in their depths, but may not yet have found the language, stillness, or safety to fully hear. It could prompt moments of interior silence in a noisy world, invite depth in a culture of distraction, and help reawaken spiritual sensitivities and moral intuition that are too often marginalized in modern life.

In that sense, AI would not be the voice of spirituality, but a kind of tuning fork, helping the user sense what already lives within: conscience, longing, moral clarity, and the mysterious pull toward fullness.

---

[27] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993), 1776.
[28] *Ibid.*, 1777.
[29] *Ibid.*, 1778.
[30] John Paul II, *Message of his Holiness Pope John Paul II for the XXIV World Day of Peace*, January 1, 1991, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_08121990_xxiv-world-day-for-peace.html.

Ethical Considerations and the Fragility of Inner Space

While this speculative vision of a spiritually attuned AI invites possibility and hope, it also demands deep ethical sensitivity.[31] The creation of a digital companion for inner listening is not merely a technological challenge—it is an ontological and ethical one. It calls for awareness of the fragility of the inner world, the sacredness of meaning-making, and the risks of instrumentalizing the spiritual.

Several important concerns emerge:

1. Risk of Simulation without Depth

Even if the AI is designed to listen and reflect without judgment or agenda, it remains a simulation. The risk lies in its ability to create an appearance of presence without the ontological depth of real human or transcendent encounters. There is a danger that users may confuse the AI's responsiveness with a genuine relationship, or interpret its carefully crafted empathy and gentle design as signs of true care, when in fact, no real caring subject is present.

To guard against this risk, the design must follow a persistent non-anthropomorphic rule: the system never presents itself as a person, teacher, or guide. A clear on-screen footer could state at all times: "I am a tool for reflection—not a person, not a guide." This ensures transparency and prevents users from attributing interiority or genuine care to what remains a technological tool.

2. Commodification of the Sacred

There is a delicate line between supporting spiritual exploration and commodifying it. People often seek ready-made answers or instructions rather than engaging in personal exploration or taking responsibility for their own discernment. When guidance comes from someone seen as trustworthy—or from an authority officially designated for such roles—individuals may surrender their freedom of conscience too

---

31   Andy Mullins, "Skynet Meets Planet of the Snakes. Removing metaphysical Impediments to Rogue AI," *Scientia et Fides* 13, no. 1 (2025): 175–178, https://doi.org/10.12775/SetF.2025.009; Türkan and Cevahir, "Roma Katolik," 71.

readily. This tendency is common across religious, educational, and institutional contexts.

Such dynamics can become fertile ground for spiritual abuse, which may take several forms:

(a) Spiritual neglect, when guidance is absent or dismissive;

(b) Spiritual manipulation, when a guide misleads the seeker, shaping their worldview in ways that distort their self-understanding and moral agency;

(c) Spiritual violence, when a guide claims to speak directly for God or implies having divine status, demanding blind obedience, imposing rigid ideals, and isolating the seeker from other perspectives or relationships.

As discussed earlier, these distortions suppress the freedom of conscience, which, in the Christian tradition, is the sacred space where each individual listens to the voice of God directly. Any attempt to override or manipulate this space risks violating the person's most intimate moral and spiritual dignity.

If a spiritual AI platform were developed within a commercial context, concerns would extend beyond data privacy and surveillance to the monetization of sacred language and emotional vulnerability. More critically, it could also foster new forms of spiritual abuse, including violations of personal conscience, autonomy, and the individual's moral and spiritual responsibility.

To mitigate these risks, a set of funding and data governance rules must be observed:

- Subscription-based or institutional licensing model (no "free with ads").
- Zero targeted advertising.
- No resale of data under any circumstances.
- Data minimization, collecting only what is strictly necessary.
- Local or edge processing wherever feasible to reduce central data storage.

During onboarding, users should receive a clear disclosure: "We will never sell your data, and you control or delete all inferences."

By contrast, a healthy model of spiritual accompaniment—as in the second, non-linear, "triangular" form of guidance—respects the direct

relationship between the person and God. The guide's role is not to speak in God's name, but to support the seeker's freedom, especially when the path feels obscure or uncertain.[32] Like John the Baptist,[33] the guide (or AI) must "decrease" so that the inner encounter with the Divine can "increase." Its function is not to prescribe but to affirm freedom, nurture trust in one's inner compass, and encourage attentive listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit, who speaks directly to the person and not to the guide on their behalf.

3. Dependency and Displacement

In offering solace or companionship, the AI might inadvertently displace human relationships or spiritual communities. While it could complement spiritual practice, it must not become a substitute for the unpredictable grace of real presence—the awkward, unfiltered, living experience of being with others.

4. Cultural and Spiritual Appropriation

A platform that adapts to different spiritual orientations would need to do so with immense humility and cultural awareness, avoiding the extraction or flattening of sacred traditions.[34] It must be dialogical and co-creative, not curated from a distance.[35]

---

[32] Piotr Roszak, Robert Reczkowski and Paweł Wróblewski, "Religion and Cognitive Safety: Pastoral and Psychological Implications," *Pastoral Psychology* 73 (2024): 369–375, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-024-01124-z.

[33] John 3:30 (*Holy Bible. New International Version*, 2011, https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jn%203%3A30&version=NIV).

[34] Liza Primc, "Edith Stein – sv. Terezija Benedikta od Križa o duhovnosti ženske [Edith Stein – St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross on Spirituality of a Woman]," *Bogoslovni vestnik* 84, no. 3 (2024): 665–673, https://doi.org/10.34291/BV2024/03/Primc640.

[35] Janez Vodičar, "Holarhični model celostne resonančne pedagogike za novo katehezo [A Holarchical Model of Holistic Resonance Pedagogy for a New Catechesis]," *Bogoslovni vestnik* 82, no. 3 (2022): 698, https://doi.org/10.34291/BV2022/03/Vodicar.

5. A Fragile Hope

This vision does not pretend to resolve these tensions—it only names them. Any attempt to invite the right hemisphere back into the digital space must remain tentative, reflective, and humble—open to uncertainty, and for the mystery that no algorithm can grasp.

And yet, the question remains: *Might technology, if shaped by the values it seeks to serve, become a quiet witness to our longing for meaning?* Not the destination, but a threshold—or perhaps a step—a gentle companion on the way.

Conclusion

In exploring the possibility of a spiritually receptive AI, this article has drawn attention to the ethical, epistemological, and psychological challenges such a project would entail. We do not claim that AI can replace spiritual communities or authentic human encounters, but suggest that it may serve as a quiet support for inner reflection, provided it is designed with care, restraint, and deep respect for the person's freedom of conscience. The vision remains fragile, but it opens space for reconsidering how digital tools might engage, rather than bypass, the human search for meaning.

Bibliography

Avsenik Nabergoj, Irena. "Emotions and Values of Female Characters in the Old Testament." *Edinost in dialog* 78, no. 2 (2023): 21–49. https://doi.org/10.34291/Edinost/78/02/Avsenik.

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Postmodern Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.

Brumec, Snežana. "Camino de Santiago in Late Modernity: Fostering Self-Actualization through Pilgrimage." *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion* 21, no. 5 (2024a): 550–73. https://doi.org/10.51327/CHQK8773.

Brumec, Snežana. "Spirituality in Late Modernity: Exploring the Tenets of Spirituality of Camino de Santiago Pilgrims." *The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society* 14, no. 4 (2024): 89–120. https://doi.org/10.18848/2154-8633/CGP/v14i04/89-120.

Catechism of the Catholic Church. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993.

Gergen, Kenneth J. *Relational Being: Beyond Self and Community*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Giddens, Anthony. *Modernity and Self-Identity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991.

González, Ana Marta. "In Search of a Sociological Explanation for the Emotional Turn." *Sociologia, Problemas e Práticas* 85 (2017): 27–45. https://doi.org/10.7458/SPP201785760.6.

Holy Bible. New International Version. 2011. https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-International-Version-NIV-Bible.

Jerebic, Sara, Josip Bošnjaković, and Drago Jerebic. "Spirituality as a positive way of coping with difficult life trials and trauma." *Edinost in dialog* 78, no. 2 (2023): 355–367. https://doi.org/10.34291/Edinost/78/02/Jerebic.

John Paul II. *Message of his Holiness Pope John Paul II for the XXIV World Day of Peace*, January 1, 1991, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_08121990_xxiv-world-day-for-peace.html.

Kraner, David, "The Internet, the Problem of Socialising Young People, and the Role of Religious Education." *Religions* 14, no. 4 (2023): 523, https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/14/4/523.

McGilchrist, Iain. *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009.

McGilchrist, Iain. *The Matter with Things: Our Brains, Our Delusions, and the Unmaking of the World*. London: Perspectiva Press, 2021.

McGilchrist, Iain. "Resist the Machine Apocalypse." *First Things*, March 1 (2024). https://firstthings.com/resist-the-machine-apocalypse/.

Mullins, Andy. "Skynet Meets Planet of the Snakes. Removing metaphysical Impediments to Rogue AI." *Scientia et Fides* 13, no. 1 (2025): 161–182. https://doi.org/10.12775/SetF.2025.009.

Pevec Rozman, Mateja. *Etika in sodobna družba: MacIntyrejev poskus utemeljitve etike [Ethics and Modern Society: MacIntyre's Attempt at Justifying Ethics]*. Ljubljana: Nova revija, 2009.

Platovnjak, Ivan, and Tone Svetelj. *Listening and Dialoguing with the World: A Philosophical and Theological-Spiritual Vision.* Ljubljana: Založba Univerze v Ljubljani, 2024. https://doi.org/10.34291/9789612973490.

Pohar, Borut, "Mystery and Humility in the Depths of Understanding of Reality." *Religions* 14, no. 4 (2023): 433. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14040433.

Primc, Liza. "Edith Stein – sv. Terezija Benedikta od Križa o duhovnosti ženske [Edith Stein – St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross on Spirituality of

a Woman].” *Bogoslovni vestnik* 84, no. 3 (2024): 665–673. https://doi.org/10.34291/BV2024/03/Primc.

Roszak, Piotr, Robert Reczkowski, and Paweł Wróblewski. “Religion and Cognitive Safety: Pastoral and Psychological Implications.” *Pastoral Psychology* 73 (2024): 367–377. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-024-01124-z.

Sheldrake, Philip. *A Brief History of Spirituality*. Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.

Schwartz, Shalom H. “An Overview of the Schwartz Theory of Basic Values.” *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture* 2, no. 1 (2012): 1–20. https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1116.

Svetelj, Tone. “Whose Spiritual Perception? Status Quo.” *Methexis. Journal of Research in Values and Spirituality* 3, no. 1 (2023): 11–26. https://methexis-journal.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/TONE-SVETELJ_Whose-Spiritual-Perception.pdf.

Taylor, Charles. *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991.

Türkan, Ahmet, and Mehmet Safa Cevahir. “Roma Katolik Kilisesi’nin Yapay Zekâya Yaklaşımı: Fırsatlar ve Riskler.” in *Dinin Geleceğinde Yapay Zekâ*, edited by Hayri Erten and Abdussamed Bayram, 61–82. Konya: NEU PRESS, 2024.

Vodičar, Janez. “Holarhični model celostne resonančne pedagogike za novo katehezo [A Holarchical Model of Holistic Resonance Pedagogy for a New Catechesis].” *Bogoslovni vestnik* 82, no. 3 (2022): 691–704. https://doi.org/10.34291/BV2022/03/Vodicar.

Vodičar, Janez. “Kateheza kot pomoč umetni inteligenci [Catechesis as an Aid for Artificial Intelligence].” *Bogoslovni vestnik* 84, no. 4 (2024): 885–897. https://doi.org/10.34291/BV2024/04/Vodicar.

Watts, Glenn. *The Spiritual Turn: The Religion of the Heart and the Making of Romantic Liberal Modernity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022.

Weber, Max. *The Vocation Lectures*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2004.

Žalec, Bojan. “Between Secularity and Post-Secularity: Critical Appraisal of Charles Taylor’s Account.” *Bogoslovni vestnik* 79, no. 2 (2019): 411–423. https://doi.org./10.34291/BV2019/02/Zalec.

Žalec, Bojan. “Rosa’s Theory of Resonance: Its Importance for (the Science of) Religion and Hope.” *Religions* 12, no. 10 (2021): 797. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12100797.