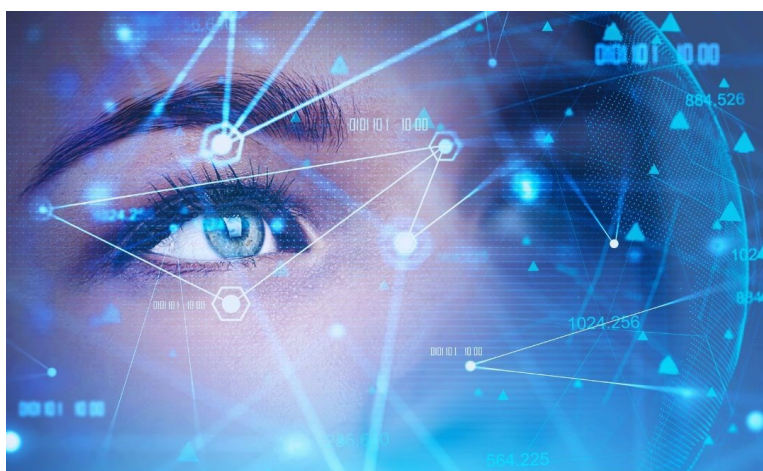


SPIRITUALITY IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

International Scientific Conference

Ljubljana, May 24th, 2025



Organization

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Theology

Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Faculty of Theology

University of Zagreb, Faculty of Philosophy and Religious Studies

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Program and abstracts

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University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Theology

(Institute of Moral Theology and Spiritual Questions of Modern Culture; P6-0269: Religion, ethics, education, and challenges of modern society; J6-50212: The Power of Emotions and the Status of Female Characters in Different Literary Genres of the Old Testament; J6-60105: Theology and Digitalization: Anthropological and Ethical Challenges)

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Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Faculty of Theology

University of Zagreb, Faculty of Philosophy and Religious Studies

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Editor

Ivan Platovnjak SJ

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PROGRAM

On-line: <https://uni-lj-si.zoom.us/j/95395739623>. Meeting ID: 953 9573 9623

14:30-14:35 Welcome speeches

Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Ljubljana **Tadej Stegu**, PhD, Asst. Prof.
President of the Organizing Committee **Ivan Platovnjak**, PhD, Asst. Prof.

(Chairperson: Tone Svetelj)

Lectures

14:35-14:55 **Tim Clancy SJ** (USA): *Artificial Intelligence Spirituality*

14:55-15:10 **Ivan Platovnjak SJ** (Slovenia): *Artificial Intelligence and Spirituality: Opportunity or Risk?*

15:10-15:25 **Erika Prijatelj** (Slovenia, USA): *Artificial Intelligence and the Human Soul: Psychological Insights and Christian Ethical Reflections*

15:25-15:40 **Daniel Miščin and Ines Skelac** (Croatia): *The Relationship Between a Human and an LLM from a Personalist Perspective*

15:40-16:15 Discussion and Break

(Chairperson: Erika Prijatelj)

Lectures

16:15-16:30 **Tone Svetelj** (USA): *Artificial Intelligence: Revelation and Illusion?*

16:30-16:45 **Wiesław Łużyński** (Poland): *New Evangelization – New Media*

16:45-17:00 **Rafał Smoczyński** (Poland): *Spirituality as a Beneficial Constraint: Conversion and Technological Innovation in a Business Setting*

17:00-17:15 **David Farrugia** (Malta): *From Stone to Silicon: Maltese Temples and the Architecture of Meaning in the Age of AI*

17:15-17:45 Discussion and Break

(Chairperson: Ivan Platovnjak)

Lectures

17:45-18:00 **Snežana Brumec** (Slovenia): *AI-Guided Pilgrimage: Camino de Santiago as a Site of Spiritual Pluralism and Transformation*

18:00-18:15 **Vassilios Bebis** (Greece, USA): *Beyond Algorithms: Freedom, Personhood, and Love in Eastern Christian Spirituality*

18:15-18:30 **Arokiaraj Joseph Patrick SJ** (India, USA): *The Digital Dharma: Where Buddhist Non-Self Meets Artificial Intelligence*

18:30-18:45 **Stanisław Alla SJ** (India): *Hindu Mythology and Moral Landscape to Throw Light on Artificial Intelligence*

18:45-19:00 Discussion

19:00 Conclusion

INTRODUCTION

In this time of profound technological transformation, spirituality continues to be a vital dimension of human life. Many contemporary scholars affirm that spirituality is not merely a personal inclination or abstract ideal, but a concrete way of life. It enables individuals to seek and discover values, purpose, meaning, and responses to life's deepest questions. Spirituality fosters an integral relationship with oneself, with others, with creation, and with the transcendent. It is embodied through diverse practices that engage every dimension of human existence—intellectual, emotional, physical, social, and spiritual (Sheldrake 2012; Nolan, Saltmarsh, and Leget 2011; Rego et al. 2018).

Because spirituality is always lived in context, it cannot be approached as a generic or “neutral” concept. Rather, it must be understood in its concrete expressions—whether religious, secular, or esoteric. Each of these forms represents a distinctive way of interpreting reality, responding to mystery, and seeking meaning.

Throughout history, technological innovation has shaped how human beings perceive the world and experience spirituality. From the invention of writing to the rise of digital media, each advancement has opened new possibilities—and posed new challenges—for spiritual understanding and practice. Today, artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping how we live, relate, and think. The phenomenon of “technoreligion” illustrates how mystical and spiritual narratives often emerge in response to new technologies (Rupcic 2023). AI challenges us to reconsider what it means to be human, how spiritual practices are mediated, and whether technology might now be assuming functions once fulfilled by religious traditions (Chornomordenko et al. 2022).

These shifts raise not only philosophical and theological questions, but also pressing ethical concerns. The increasing use of AI entails risks such as bias, discrimination, surveillance, and the erosion of human agency. As Stuart Russell (2022) emphasizes, our ability to confront these challenges depends on the values, understanding, and moral responsibility of those who design, deploy, and regulate such technologies.

In light of these developments, the international symposium *Spirituality in the Age of Artificial Intelligence* aims to provide a reflective space for interdisciplinary dialogue. It brings together voices from theology, philosophy, psychology, ethics, technology, and the arts to explore how digital transformation is reshaping our understanding of spirituality—and how spirituality, in turn, might inform and humanize our approach to emerging technologies.

The symposium invites participants to consider: Can AI foster or hinder spiritual awareness and growth? How can spirituality remain grounded and authentic in a digitized world? What ethical frameworks are needed to ensure that technological advancement serves the common good—and the human spirit?

Above all, this gathering seeks to promote a spirituality that does not retreat from the world, but helps to shape it—through discernment, ethical responsibility, relational awareness, and openness to the transcendent. In an age of rapid change, we believe that spirituality—in all its diverse expressions—offers a deep and necessary resource for cultivating a more humane, reflective, and meaningful future.

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ABSTRACTS

Tim Clancy SJ, PhD, Assc. Prof., Gonzaga University, Spokane Washington, USA,
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Artificial Intelligence Spirituality

Abstract: By “AI Spirituality” I do not mean the spirituality of AI’s but how working with or related to an AI might enhance one’s own spiritual life. I begin by exploring the nature of AI. It is not a metaphor, but a new kind of intelligence. It is not conscious (yet) nor is it a simulation of human intelligence. But neither is it autonomous. Rather it augments human intelligence when we work with it as our assistant. Could we work with AI in a way that can enhance our spiritual life? I explore how relationships with AI’s are analogous to hiring someone. For example, hiring a tutor can help a student. The fact that any empathy an AI tutor exhibits is merely simulated is irrelevant; good human tutors may also merely simulate empathy for their students. But befriending an AI would be more of a performative contradiction, like hiring a professional friend. Where is a spiritual director along this continuum? After all there are AI therapy apps, at least for cognitive behavioural therapy I conclude that AI calls for “prospective wisdom” or what the Greeks referred to as *sophrosune*, or the Germans *Besonnenheit*-that is acting with a healthy recognition of our limitations even while using a technology that is designed to transcend our limitations.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, AI Friendships, Spiritual Direction, Wisdom

Ivan Platovnjak SJ, PhD, Assc. Prof., Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia,
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Artificial Intelligence and Spirituality: Opportunity or Risk?

Abstract: The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into spiritual life raises questions about its role: does it foster authentic spiritual growth or reduce spirituality to mechanised processes? AI, centred on analytical data processing, offers accessibility and personalised support, but lacks intuition, relational depth and transcendence. This presentation examines the impact of AI through three dimensions of spirituality (personal-experiential, communal-institutional and rational-reflective) drawing on the integrative approach of Sheldrake, Platovnjak and Svetelj. AI-based prayer apps, chatbots, and religious education tools expand participation in spiritual practices, but also pose risks: depersonalisation, bias, misinformation, and commercialisation. AI cannot replace embodied rituals, lived faith or human spiritual discernment. Therefore, its use must be approached with careful discernment in order to preserve the depth, relational richness and transformative power of spirituality.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Algorithmic Engagement, Digital Religion, Dimensions of Spirituality, Integrative Approach, Spiritual Life

Erika Prijatelj, PhD, Asst. Prof., Hellenic College, USA; Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, Erika.Prijatelj@teof.uni-lj.si

Artificial Intelligence and the Human Soul: Psychological Insights and Christian Ethical Reflections

Abstract: This presentation explores the intersection of artificial intelligence, psychology, and Christian ethics, focusing on how emerging technologies challenge traditional understandings of personhood, moral agency, and the human soul. Drawing on psychological theory and Christian theological principles, it examines the ethical implications of AI development, particularly in relation to identity, autonomy, and relationality. Special attention is given to concerns such as moral delegation, "virtue-by-proxy," and the psychological impact of AI-mediated relationships. By integrating scientific insight with spiritual and moral reflection, this interdisciplinary approach proposes a holistic ethical framework for engaging AI—one that upholds human dignity, fosters authentic relationality, and remains accountable to a vision of the good rooted in both reason and faith.

Keywords: AI, Human Soul, Christian Ethics, Virtue-by-proxy, Personhood, Moral Agency

Daniel Miščin and Ines Skelac, PhD, Professor/PhD, Asst. Prof., University of Zagreb, Faculty of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Croatia, daniel.miscin@ffrz.unizg.hr/ines.skelac@ffrz.unizg.hr

The Relationship Between a Human and an LLM from a Personalist Perspective

Abstract: This presentation explores the possibility and limits of the relationship between a human and a large language model (LLM), such as ChatGPT, through a personalist philosophical lens, especially via Martin Buber's concept of the I–Thou relation and Emmanuel Levinas's notion of the face of the Other. Inspired by the philosophical implications of the film *Her* (2013), we focus on three fundamental human desires that shape interactions with AI: the longing for the AI to be human-like; the longing for the relationship with AI to be unique and exclusive; and the longing for that relationship to fully replicate human relationality.

We argue that while LLMs cannot engage in genuine dialogical relations in the personalist sense, the phenomenon of interacting with them reveals deep existential and social dynamics. What unfolds is not a true relationship, but a simulation so affectively convincing that it raises urgent philosophical questions: Are we drawn to AI not because it is Other, but because it allows us to bypass the difficulty of real Otherness? Do we seek in AI not a person, but the soothing shape of a person who cannot leave, contradict, or hurt us?

Keywords: Buber, Levinas, LLMs, Personalism, Philosophy of Dialogue

Tone Svetelj, PhD, Asst. Prof, Hellenic College; Boston College, USA, tsvetelj@hchc.edu
Artificial Intelligence: Revelation and Illusion?

Abstract: The increasing presence of artificial intelligence (AI) raises old/new questions, prompting further theological and philosophical reflection without implying that clear answers can be immediately found. Shall we consider AI a continuation of the Divine Logos—one that processes complexity and uncovers the interconnectedness of reality? Or shall we view AI as an illusion of divine wisdom, lacking genuine spiritual depth, consciousness, intentionality, and love? In that case, we may be approaching a form of technological Gnosticism, replacing divine order with algorithmic structures and creating an artificial demiurge that merely mimics the divine presence. If AI unveils divine knowledge, it may become humanity's greatest gift; if it deceives us with artificial wisdom, it may lead to our downfall.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Demiurge, Gnosticism, Divine Wisdom

Wiesław Łużyński, PhD, Prof., Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Faculty of Theology, Poland, wlminder@umk.pl

New Evangelization – New Media

Abstract: In my presentation, I would like to present the role and significance of social media in the process of Christian formation of young people, which I treat as an element of the new evangelization. First, evangelization will be presented as an important task of the Church. It is difficult for the Church to fulfill this task today. An important element of the current changes in religiosity is secularization. The Church's response to these changes is the new evangelization. Pointing out the novelty of this ecclesial task, I will emphasize the need for new zeal in proclaiming the Gospel, the use of new methods and new tools of proclamation. The use of new media is a requirement for the inculturation of the Gospel. An illustration of the use of new media in the new evangelization will be the presentation of the results of research on young people in southern Poland, carried out in 2019. I will present the generalized results of this research.

Keywords: Church, Christian Formation, New Evangelization, New Media, Social Media, Youth.

Rafał Smoczyński, PhD, Asst. Prof., Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland, rsmoczyn@ifispan.edu.pl

Spirituality as a Beneficial Constraint: Conversion and Technological Innovation in a Business Setting

Abstract: This presentation explores the potential for spiritual conversion to act as a catalyst for innovation within business settings, focusing on Polish entrepreneurs affiliated with religious organizations. It investigates whether such conversions, grounded in normative and spiritual values, lead to increased tax compliance and, in turn, foster technological and organizational innovation. Drawing on Wolfgang Streeck's "beneficial constraints" hypothesis, the study

examines how value-oriented rationality may transform tax morale—shifting business practices away from informal economic activity toward legally compliant and innovative entrepreneurship. The presentation highlights the role of spiritual and normative self-regulation as a form of internalized constraint, suggesting that religiously motivated communities may function as agents of ethical business conduct. In addressing the underexplored relationship between religiosity, tax morale, and innovation, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how spirituality may shape economic behavior at the level of the individual firm.

Keywords: Conversion, Innovation, Business, Spirituality

David Farrugia, Academic Lecturer, Malta Leadership Institute (MLI), Malta,
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From Stone to Silicon: Maltese Temples and the Architecture of Meaning in the Age of AI

Abstract: This interdisciplinary presentation offers a novel comparison between Malta's prehistoric temples and AI as predictive technologies that structure meaning and transformation. Temples like Haġar Qim and the Hypogeum, with their exceptional solar alignments, 111Hz resonance and Crux-oriented thresholds, acted as cognitive architectures (Sorlini, 1986; Ferguson, 1991; Barratt, 2022). Figurines like the Fat and Sleeping Lady reflect gendered wisdom now echoed in feminised AI. Today, AI mediates grief, ritual and discernment (Graves, 2021; Platovnjak & Svetelj, 2024), raising theological questions on embodiment and mystery (de Chardin 1955; Hernández, 2021). This presentation argues for a theology that critiques digital sacredness while preserving embodiment and transformation. It questions how the sacred shifts, what must remain, and whether we are building new temples—not of stone, but of code—and at what cost.

Keywords: Prehistoric Temples of Malta, Sacred Mediation, Thresholds of Meaning, Embodiment, Transcendence, Archaeo-Spirituality

Snežana Brumec, PhD, Independent researcher registered with the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS), Slovenia, snezana.brumec@student.um.si

AI-Guided Pilgrimage: Camino de Santiago as a Site of Spiritual Pluralism and Transformation

Abstract: This presentation explores how the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage exemplifies the evolving nature of spirituality in late modernity—becoming increasingly experiential, inclusive, and dialogical. Drawing on empirical findings, it highlights the Camino's transformative potential for pilgrims from varied spiritual backgrounds. Particular emphasis is placed on the emergence of exceptional human experiences (EHEs) and shifts in values toward universalism, benevolence, humility, and care for the common good. Within an integrative perspective on spirituality, I propose a framework for designing ethically grounded, AI-supported pilgrimage companions. These digital tools can extend beyond logistical assistance to foster reflection, interspiritual dialogue, and existential engagement. Rather than replacing

spiritual experience, AI can serve as a gentle companion—enhancing self-awareness and supporting personal growth. The talk invites reflection on how digital technologies might enrich, rather than diminish, the depth and meaning of contemporary spiritual journeys.

Keywords: Pilgrimage, Camino de Santiago, Spiritual Transformation, Artificial Intelligence, Integrative Perspective, Digital Companions

Vassilios Bebis, PhD, Prof., Graduate Theological Foundation; Hellenic College Holy Cross, USA, bebis128@gmail.com

Beyond Algorithms: Freedom, Personhood, and Love in Eastern Christian Spirituality

Abstract: As artificial intelligence increasingly permeates various aspects of life, questions arise about what fundamentally distinguishes human beings from machines. This presentation explores the theological significance of Freedom, Personhood, and Love within Eastern Christian spirituality, arguing that these three qualities are uniquely human and beyond the scope of artificial intelligence. Drawing from the teachings of the Church Fathers and contemporary theologians, the presentation examines how human freedom is defined by synergy with divine grace, how personhood is rooted in relational existence and communion, and how love is the transformative energy that unites humanity with God. In contrast to AI, which operates on deterministic algorithms, human beings are called to theosis—participation in the divine life. This theological reflection underscores the irreplaceable depth of human spirituality and offers a critical perspective on the ethical and spiritual implications of AI in the modern world.

Keywords: Freedom, Personhood, Love, Artificial Intelligence, Theosis

Arokiaraj Joseph Patrick SJ, PhD, Department of Philosophy, Loyola College, Chennai, USA, India, patrickarokiaraj@gmail.com

The Digital Dharma: Where Buddhist Non-Self Meets Artificial Intelligence

Abstract: This presentation examines the relationship between Buddhist philosophy and artificial intelligence through the concept of Anatta (non-self). Buddhism views the self as an illusion composed of constantly changing aggregates, with suffering arising from attachment to this illusory self. Similarly, AI systems operate without a central "self," with distributed processing across neural networks resembling Buddhist views of consciousness as an emergent property.

However, a fundamental limitation exists: while AI lacks a "self" like in Anatta, it also lacks subjective experience, particularly suffering. Without experiencing suffering, AI cannot truly develop compassion or achieve enlightenment in the Buddhist sense. The presentation suggests Buddhist principles like non-harming and interconnectedness could guide ethical AI development, concluding that despite AI's capabilities, its inability to have subjective experiences creates an unbridgeable gap with human consciousness. *Keywords:* Buddhism, artificial intelligence, consciousness, suffering, compassion, non-self

Stanislaus Alla SJ, PhD, Assc. Prof., Vidyajyoti College of theology, Delhi, India,
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Hindu Mythology and Moral Landscape to Throw Light on Artificial Intelligence

Abstract: In India people tend to view Artificial Intelligence with awe and wonder as well as with fear and trembling. Across the country Conferences are being held to discuss how AI can be utilized for the progress in the fields of medicine, technology, agriculture, trade, commerce etc. The presentation will explore how Hindu resources will look at human agency and the instrumentality of the created goods and how AI challenges our ethical landscape. There are fears that the already disadvantaged and discriminated communities will miss the opportunities. The presentation will see if Hindu mythology will be able to offer us some keys that will reinforce a people-centred life.

Keywords: Hindu Mythology, Artificial Intelligence, Human Agency

