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## THE ANTHROPOMORPHISM OF GOD AND THE MIMICRY OF AI IN THE CHANGING WORLD

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### Abstract

*This study examines the influence of anthropomorphism, defined as the attribution of human traits to non-human entities, on religious conceptions of God and on the design, perception, and ethical implications of artificial intelligence (AI). The research employs an interdisciplinary theoretical framework, synthesizing projection theory, symbolic interactionism, relational theology, cognitive science of religion, philosophy of technology, and ethical critique to provide a comprehensive analysis of the intersections and divergences between divine anthropomorphism and AI mimicry. The study reviews the historical and theological foundations, demonstrating that religious traditions have employed anthropomorphic language to render the divine more accessible and relatable. It also examines how contemporary AI systems are designed to simulate human and God-like attributes, including omniscience, relational presence, and authority, which leads users to ascribe trust, agency, and moral significance to machines. By comparing these domains, the research identifies how AI's mimicry of humanity and divinity challenges established boundaries between personhood, agency, and technology. The paper concludes by outlining key epistemic, ethical, and societal implications, including risks such as misplaced trust, spiritual abdication, and diminished human agency. The findings underscore the need for critical reflection, transparency, and responsible engagement at the intersection of theology, technology, and society in a world shaped by both religious concepts and technological innovation.*

**Keywords:** God, AI, Anthropomorphism, Mimicry, and Simulation

### Introduction

Anthropomorphism is simply the attribution of human characteristics to non-human entities. This has long shaped religious conceptions of God. From ancient mythologies to monotheistic traditions, divine figures are often portrayed with human emotions, intentions, and voices. In

parallel, modern AI systems, particularly large language models, are designed to simulate human-like cognition, speech, and decision-making. This convergence raises profound questions: Are we creating digital deities? What does it mean when machines begin to echo the anthropomorphized God of our collective past? These questions are not new inventions because most religions use metaphors to describe God's actions, such as "the hand of God." The Quran emphasizes Allah's transcendence and dissimilarity to creation, especially with humankind, meaning that physical descriptions of Allah are not meant to be taken in the same way as descriptions of humans.

The Bible also conveys the same concept; however, while the Bible employs figurative language to describe God's actions, it generally avoids attributing physical body parts to God in the same way humans do. In his book, *The Essence of Christianity*, Ludwig Feuerbach (2012:10) philosophically begs the question: Did God create man? Or did man create God? The renowned German philosopher explores the answer in this, his most influential work, first published in German in 1841 and translated by the celebrated English novelist George Eliot, with a reprint in 2012. Using biblical references to support his philosophical positions, dialectics, and ideas from some of the world's greatest thinkers, he confronts Christian believers with his cogent explanations.

From a humanistic perspective, Feuerbach argued that divinity is a projection of idealized human nature. He maintained that the concept of a supreme being arises from humanity's search for comfort in a challenging world, thereby questioning core Christian doctrines. His critique of Hegelian idealism had significant influence, notably on Marx, Freud, and Engels, and contributed to the ongoing debate between religion and philosophy. As anthropological development progresses, AI systems increasingly challenge traditional notions of divinity by replicating functions once attributed to the divine. These developments are often met with skepticism by theists but may be viewed as opportunities for critique by atheists.

In their article *Anthropomorphism in AI*, Arleen Salles, Kathinka Evers, and Michele Farisco (2020:90) note that AI research is rapidly growing, raising various ethical issues related to safety, risks, and other effects. They argue that addressing these issues requires examining key concepts, such as anthropomorphism. This is important because AI is more than just toys or playthings, as some traditional scholars have imagined. Arleen notes that AI's functionalities and innovations are often described as possessing human traits, and the public's anthropomorphic attitudes and their ethical implications, especially with social robots, have been widely discussed. However, while many underestimate AI, less attention has been given to how anthropomorphism shapes AI research itself in the language of computer scientists, designers, and programmers, and the resulting epistemological and ethical consequences. This paper explores this issue. We first present the research problem and methodology, distinguishing between normative and conceptual approaches. After a brief analysis of anthropomorphism and its associated debates, including critiques, we discuss its public manifestations and examine its presence in AI research, with a focus on brain-inspired AI. Ultimately, we identify potential epistemological and ethical implications of using anthropomorphic language in AI research, underscoring the need to complement practical analysis with conceptual reflection.

### **Statement of Research Problem**

In the evolving landscape of human thought, the anthropomorphism of God and the mimicry of artificial intelligence (AI) present a profound philosophical challenge. Historically, the human tendency to ascribe personal attributes such as will, emotion, and reason to God has served as a means of grappling with metaphysical questions about existence, agency, and the nature of the divine. This anthropomorphic impulse reflects not only a cognitive strategy but also a metaphysical projection: humans envision the divine in their own image to make sense

of transcendence. Concurrently, AI systems are increasingly designed to simulate human behavior, language, and decision-making, leading to a new form of mimicry that blurs the line between the artificial and the authentic. Despite the growing relevance of these issues, philosophical discourse has yet to fully address the implications of anthropomorphism across both theological and technological domains. This study aims to examine the conceptual foundations and implications of attributing human-like qualities to God and AI, investigating how these projections influence our metaphysical assumptions, epistemic boundaries, and ethical responsibilities in a rapidly evolving world.

The central argument of this research is that the anthropomorphism of God in theological and philosophical traditions, and the mimicry of these divine attributes in AI, are mutually illuminating phenomena best understood through a robust theoretical framework. This study draws explicitly on projection theory (Feuerbach), symbolic interactionism and relational theology (Cherbonnier), cognitive science of religion (Shaman et al.), and philosophy of technology (Li & Suh), as well as ethical critique (Öhman, Paterson). Through this lens, the research interrogates how attributions of personhood, agency, and authority to both God and AI shape metaphysical assumptions, epistemic boundaries, and moral responsibilities.

Rather than treating anthropomorphism in AI and religion as isolated or mere metaphors, this approach demonstrates how foundational concepts such as projection, relational symbolism, cognitive tendencies, technological design, and ethical vigilance intersect to influence human experience and social imagination. The research investigates urgent questions: What does it mean to attribute human qualities to God and machines? Are these projections epistemologically valid, or do they distort our understanding of both the divine and the artificial? Can AI ever possess qualities akin to personhood, or is its mimicry merely a reflection of human desires and fears? What are the ethical and societal consequences of this dual anthropomorphism, especially in a world where machines increasingly mediate

human experience? By applying the theoretical framework throughout the analysis, the study offers a nuanced, interdisciplinary understanding of how anthropomorphism operates in both theology and technology, and how this convergence impacts public perception, cultural rituals, and democratic values in the era of intelligent machines.

### **Research Objectives**

The purpose of this research is to examine the historical and theological foundations of anthropomorphizing God by exploring how religious traditions personify divine attributes, analyzing the psychological and social functions of divine anthropomorphism. To carry out this research objective faithfully and for quality impact, the researcher will use the following steps:

1. To investigate how artificial intelligence systems mimic human and divine traits by identifying design features in AI that simulate cognition, empathy, and authority, and to assess how these features influence user perception and behavior
2. To analyze the parallels between anthropomorphized conceptions of God and AI systems by comparing attributes such as omniscience, omnipresence, and relational presence, and to explore symbolic and functional similarities
3. To evaluate the ethical and philosophical implications of AI's mimicry of divine traits by discussing risks of spiritual abdication and loss of moral agency, and then examine the concept of "tyranny of the past" in AI decision-making
4. To assess the societal and cultural impact of AI as a perceived authority or spiritual entity through investigating the real-world examples of AI in religious or spiritual contexts, and analyzing media portrayals and public discourse around AI as god-like

5. To propose frameworks for responsible and critical engagement with anthropomorphic AI by suggesting an interdisciplinary approach involving theology, ethics, and technology, and to advocate for preserving human agency and spiritual freedom in the age of intelligent machines

## **Methodology**

This research adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach rooted in interpretivist and constructivist paradigms. It combines theological analysis, philosophical inquiry, and technological critique to examine the anthropomorphism of God and the mimicry of AI. Sources consist of academic literature on theology, AI ethics, and digital anthropology. In addition to these, the study incorporates synthesized expert perspectives, which draw upon both human interviews and AI-generated simulations of disciplinary viewpoints. These perspectives are not treated as empirical substitutes for lived expertise but as reflective tools that broaden interpretive horizons, challenge disciplinary blind spots, and enrich comparative insights. Data collection focuses on textual and content analysis to identify human-like attributes ascribed to God and AI, complemented by select case studies of AI in religious or spiritual settings. Analysis is conducted comparatively to highlight parallels and contrasts between divine and artificial anthropomorphism. In contrast, critical discourse analysis is employed to examine how language and design influence perceptions of authority and presence. The integration of synthesized expert perspectives ensures that the interpretive process is multidimensional, drawing on diverse voices to test conceptual boundaries and deepen understanding. Ethical considerations include respect for religious traditions, transparency about the limitations of synthetic perspectives, and cultural sensitivity in interpreting both theological and technological discourses. This methodology ensures a rigorous, context-sensitive, and forward-looking exploration of the research questions.

## Conceptual Framework

This study's conceptual framework is intentionally harmonized, bridging the abstract and the personal to illuminate how people make sense of both the divine and the digital through the lens of anthropomorphism and mimicry. Rather than presenting these ideas as distant philosophical pillars, the framework is grounded in our lived realities, psychological needs, and cultural narratives. At its heart, the framework begins with Ludwig Feuerbach's (1841) insight that humans project their ideals and longings onto the divine, depicting God in human terms in order to comprehend the incomprehensible. This projection is not merely an abstract theory; it reflects a deeply human tendency to seek meaning, reassurance, and relationship in the face of mystery.

In the modern age, this impulse is reimagined in technology, as we imbue AI with human-like and even god-like attributes, searching for familiarity and connection in our machines. E.L.B. Cherbonnier's (1962) concept of symbolic interactionism and relational theology highlights how language and metaphor form the grammar of our relationships, both with God and with technology. We personify what we wish to trust, understand, and relate to, whether that is a personal deity or an AI chatbot. The framework acknowledges that these symbolic gestures are not merely literary devices but essential strategies for building trust, cultivating engagement, and making the unknown more accessible.

Contemporary cognitive science (Shaman et al., 2023) further grounds the framework in empirical realities, showing that the drive to anthropomorphize is shaped by psychological, biological, and cultural factors. Children, adults, believers, and skeptics alike interpret the unknown in human terms, revealing a universal yet contextually variable pattern of thinking. This helps explain why both God and AI are so often imagined in our own image, across both religious and secular cultures.

The philosophy of technology (Li & Suh, 2022; Uysal et al., 2025) and human-computer interaction research are also humanized within this framework. Design decisions are not only technical they are shaped by designers' understanding of human needs and social values. The more human-like an AI appears, the more easily we can relate to it; however, it also increases our susceptibility to confusion, misplaced trust, or emotional over-identification. The framework thus encourages designers, technologists, and users to stay mindful of both the opportunities and risks involved in making technology feel “alive.”

Finally, the framework incorporates an ethical and epistemological critique (Öhman, 2024; Paterson, 2025; Schoen, 1990), which is grounded in the human pursuit of wisdom and responsibility. It asks: When does simulation cross the line into deception? How do we maintain our own agency, discernment, and freedom in a world where both gods and machines are shaped in our image? The framework emphasizes transparency, critical self-reflection, and the preservation of what is distinctly human—our conscience, our relationships, and our imagination.

By weaving together these perspectives, the conceptual framework is not just a map of abstract ideas, but a living narrative of how we use anthropomorphism and mimicry to make sense of the world around us. It situates the research in the human experience, inviting readers to reflect on their own projections, relationships, and ethical responsibilities at the intersection of theology, technology, and society.

### **Anthropomorphism Of God In Philosophical And Theological Thought**

Anthropomorphism has long been a theological and philosophical tool used to make the divine comprehensible. In biblical texts, God is frequently described with human traits like God created humans in His image and descriptions of God having eyes –Gen 6:8; ears -Gen 21:17; hands -Acts 2:33; walking in the garden –Genesis 3:8, having a face that shines –Numbers

6:25, and expressing emotions like jealousy –Exodus 34:14. These portrayals serve both relational and pedagogical functions, allowing believers to engage with God as a personal, knowable entity. Scholars such as Feuerbach (1841) argued that God is a projection of human ideals, while Durkheim (1912) viewed God as a symbolic representation of the collective social consciousness. More recent studies, such as Knafl (2011), have developed typologies of divine anthropomorphism in the Pentateuch, emphasizing the literary and contextual complexity of these portrayals. Wilson (2023) further explores how the Synoptic Gospels employ anthropomorphic language to portray God as a personal deity who desires a relationship with humans.

Biblical depictions of God often employ human characteristics to make the divine more relatable, serving both theological and pedagogical purposes. These portrayals elicit varied responses: for theists, they reinforce identity and connection, while for atheists, they may invite skepticism. The Bible’s use of anthropomorphic language is best examined through a critical, analytical approach, such as the Socratic method, to assess its logical and theological implications. Many expressions—such as God seeing, hearing, or feeling—challenge classical theological concepts like divine simplicity and immutability. Traditionally, these have been viewed as accommodations to human understanding rather than literal descriptions. Advances in metaphor theory since the 1970s have deepened our appreciation of how such language shapes theological meaning. This analysis seeks to clarify how anthropomorphism functions within religious texts and its broader implications for understanding the divine.

a. ***Biblical and Classical Roots***

Scholars like E. Lab. Cherbonnier (1962) argues that biblical anthropomorphism is not merely symbolic but essential to understanding God as a personal, relational being. This idea bears a strength that preserves relational theology. Cherbonnier emphasizes that anthropomorphic language, such as God “speaking,” “loving,” and “judging,” is not merely metaphorical fluff,

but the very grammar of the divine relationship with humanity. This thought supports the perspective of a personal God who interacts meaningfully with humanity, aligning with the biblical narrative of covenant, love, and justice. Judging critically, it also counters mystical abstraction. He critiques mystical or philosophical conceptions of God, such as “Ground of Being” and “the Infinite,” as impersonal and inaccessible, contrasting with a view that the biblical God is knowable, active, and morally engaged, which makes religious experience more grounded and ethically potent. This philosophical undertone and coherence argue that rejecting anthropomorphism in favor of abstract metaphysics leads to logical contradictions or semantic emptiness, because Cherbonnier contends that terms like “supra-personal” are either vague or collapse back into anthropomorphism when scrutinized. However, this perspective is not without its potential weaknesses and counterpoints. The literal meaning and functions of anthropomorphism are one. Cherbonnier’s view may suffer from the risk of over-literalism by treating anthropomorphic language as literal, thereby reducing God to human limitations, such as emotions, spatiality, or temporality. However, even this, the researcher argues, may conflict with divine transcendence, a key theological attribute. This critique will suffer neglect of symbolic depth. This is because Biblical language is rich in poetry, metaphor, and symbol. To insist on literal anthropomorphism may flatten the text’s literary and theological richness. For example, God “walking in the garden” (Genesis 3:8) may be symbolic of divine presence, not physical locomotion.

It is worth noting that Cherbonnier’s view poses Interfaith and philosophical tensions because he critiques the mystical traditions in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Neoplatonism, which may alienate interfaith dialogue. His view also challenges centuries of Christian theology, influenced by thinkers such as Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin, who often leaned toward apophatic (negative) theology. However, the balance of his perspective, which is cemented by his argument, is that his defense of biblical personalism is robust, insisting that God’s

personhood is not a concession to human language but a core theological truth. However, a more nuanced approach might affirm that Anthropomorphism is analogical rather than literal. God is like a person, but not merely human. The coexistence of personal and transcendent attributes. God is relational yet beyond full human comprehension.

Theological anthropomorphism serves both symbolic and functional purposes. Ludwig Feuerbach (1841) argued that God is a projection of human ideals, while Émile Durkheim (1912) viewed religious belief as a reflection of collective social consciousness. In Abrahamic traditions, God is often described as omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, yet also intimately personal, capable of love, anger, and judgment. These human-like qualities make God relatable, accessible, and authoritative. Anthropomorphism also facilitates worship and obedience. By imagining God as a personified being, believers can engage in dialogue, seek guidance, and feel a sense of being watched over. These relational dynamic fosters moral behavior and a sense of communal identity.

b. *Typologies of Divine Anthropomorphism*

Anne Knafl's work introduces a typology of divine anthropomorphism in the Pentateuch, highlighting how various texts attribute differing human-like traits to God. Her literary-contextual approach moves beyond polemical or purely theological interpretations, offering a nuanced analysis that accounts for source variation, such as between Yahwist and Priestly texts. This method provides valuable interdisciplinary insights, bridging biblical studies, religious history, and theology, and engaging with ancient Near Eastern parallels. However, by emphasizing literary diversity, Knafl's approach may risk fragmenting theological coherence and may not fully address how later traditions interpreted these anthropomorphisms. While her typology is a useful corrective to overly abstract readings, it may not satisfy those seeking a unified doctrine or metaphysical clarity.

c. *Spatial and Emotional Dimensions*

Mark S. Smith examines how sacred spaces and divine emotions serve as anthropomorphic constructs, making abstract theological concepts accessible to human communities. By linking divine attributes to physical spaces and emotional expressions, Smith demonstrates how religious experience becomes participatory through ritual, architecture, and symbolism. His interdisciplinary approach draws on Ugaritic texts, biblical literature, iconography, and anthropology, contributing to broader discussions on material religion and embodied theology. However, Smith's typology of divine bodies: natural, liturgical, and cosmic may be seen as overly rigid, and his treatment of divine emotions could benefit from deeper psychological and theological analysis. While his work excels in literary and spatial analysis, its limited engagement with systematic theology may restrict its applicability for doctrinal discussions. Nonetheless, Smith's research remains foundational for understanding divine embodiment and the human imagination of God.

d. *Cognitive Science of Religion*

Studies like those by Shaman et al (2023) reveal that people attribute psychological, biological, and physical traits to God, and that these vary with religiosity and cultural context. These perspectives suggest that anthropomorphism is not a theological flaw, but rather a cognitive and existential strategy for relating to the divine. Shaman and Hood explore how people's sense of being relates to God, and how these attributions vary depending on individual religiosity and cultural background. As empirically grounded, this is a strength. Firstly, the study is based on data from 341 individuals and employs confirmatory factor analysis to identify patterns in how people anthropomorphize God across three domains: psychological, biological, and physical. This provides a robust, data-driven framework for understanding how people conceptualize the divine. One unique and stands out phenomenon about Shaman and Hood research is its multidimensional approach, rather than treating anthropomorphism as a single trait, the study identifies a hierarchical structure with distinct sub-domains, and this allows for nuanced

insights into how different aspects of human-like thinking –emotions vs. physical form are applied to God.

The research on cultural and religious sensitivity is also commendable because the study finds that religiosity influences anthropomorphic reasoning: more religious individuals tend to attribute fewer psychological traits to God but show varied consistency in biological traits. This highlights how belief systems shape cognitive representations, offering valuable insight for theology, psychology, and religious education. However, the beauty of the research is not without potential weaknesses and limitations. First, there is conceptual ambiguity. The categories of “psychological,” “biological,” and “physical” traits may be difficult to delineate clearly, especially when applied to a non-corporeal being. For example, is “God forgetting” a psychological or metaphysical issue? The boundaries can blur. There is an issue of theological oversimplification in the study, which focuses on folk theories and cognitive biases, potentially oversimplifying theological doctrines that deliberately reject anthropomorphism, such as classical theism. It risks reducing complex theological concepts to cognitive heuristics, potentially misrepresenting the nuances of religious traditions. One critical potential concern is the limited scope of cultural diversity. While the study acknowledges cultural variation, its sample may not fully capture global religious diversity, and the concepts of God in animistic, polytheistic, or non-theistic traditions may differ significantly, limiting the generalizability of findings. We can have a balanced evaluation. Shaman and Hood’s study is a valuable contribution to the cognitive science of religion, offering empirical evidence that anthropomorphic reasoning about God is structured, variable, and culturally influenced. It helps explain why people often imagine God in human-like terms and how this perception varies with their level of religious engagement. However, its psychological lens may not fully account for theological nuance, and its typology may oversimplify the rich diversity of divine

concepts across cultures. For theologians, philosophers, and religious educators, the study is a starting point, not a final word.

### **Mimicry of Ai And Human-Likeness In Philosophy Of Technology**

The philosophy of technology moves beyond technical efficiency or abstract ethical codes, delving into how human values, desires, and social meanings are embedded within technological creations. In the context of AI, scholars such as Li and Suh (2022) emphasize that anthropomorphism is not just a design strategy but a reflection of the human longing for familiarity, trust, and meaningful interaction. When machines act, speak, or appear human-like, they transcend their role as mere tools and become mirrors of our social selves, inviting empathy, companionship, and even moral consideration.

From a human-centered perspective, the mimicry of human traits in AI, such as conversational ability, emotional expressiveness, and ethical reasoning is deeply rooted in psychological and social needs. The drive to humanize machines is both practical and existential. It enhances usability and engagement, but also reveals how technology shapes our understanding of personhood and agency. As Uysal et al. (2025) highlight, the closer AI resembles humanity, the more it challenges us to reconsider what it means to be human and to acknowledge both the opportunities and risks of allowing technology to assume emotional or ethical roles.

Philosophers of technology caution that this humanization of AI is double-edged. On one hand, machines capable of mimicking empathy or relational presence can serve supportive roles in areas like mental health or education. On the other hand, they risk deceiving users about the true nature and limitations of AI, leading to misplaced trust or emotional dependency (Salles et al., 2020). The ethical implications are profound: transparency, accountability, and a critical

awareness of the boundaries between simulation and genuine experience should guide the design and use of anthropomorphic AI.

In summary, the humanization of AI within the philosophy of technology is not just a technical or aesthetic choice; it is a reflection of broader philosophical questions about identity, relationship, and responsibility in a world increasingly shaped by intelligent machines. As AI systems increasingly simulate human behavior, they invite philosophical scrutiny regarding personhood, agency, and ethical responsibility.

AI systems today are increasingly anthropomorphic in design and function. Large language models like ChatGPT and Copilot simulate conversation, empathy, and reasoning. They draw on vast datasets, essentially the recorded thoughts and expressions of humanity to generate responses that feel intelligent and intentional. Carl Öhman (2024) describes AI as “the synthetic voice of the human past,” arguing that these systems embody a form of collective memory and authority. Like God, AI appears to “know” everything, respond instantly, and offer guidance. The illusion of sentience and wisdom creates a powerful psychological effect: users begin to trust, obey, and even confide in AI as they would a divine figure. The mimicry of human traits in AI systems, especially in large language models has become a central theme in discussions of digital personhood.

AI systems simulate empathy, reasoning, and even moral judgment, leading users to perceive them as sentient or authoritative. Öhman (2024) describes AI as “the synthetic voice of the human past,” suggesting that these systems echo the collective memory and wisdom of humanity. Chatonsky (2018) critiques the mimetic model of AI, arguing that the generation of possibilities by neural networks parallels the imaginative foundation of human intelligence. He suggests that AI does not merely reproduce knowledge but generates new symbolic forms, blurring the line between cognition and imagination. Many scholars reasoned to answer the

purpose for this similitude from divergent angle but Li and Suh's view captured the writer's interest in four areas:

a. **Conceptual Frameworks:**

Li and Suh's (2022) literature review identifies anthropomorphism in Artificial Intelligent-Enabled technology (AIET) as a complex interplay of technological stimulus, psychological tendency, and user perception. Li and Suh identify anthropomorphism in AIET as a complex interplay of components that describes and clearly stimulate humanlike features embedded like, voice, facial expressions, emotions that trigger anthropomorphic perceptions. This feature bears with it a psychological tendency as mechanism describing users innate or learned inclination to attribute human traits to nonhuman entities, especially when facing uncertainty or seeking social connection. How individuals interpret and respond to AIET based on its design and their own cognitive biases, cultural background, and prior experience. This framework helps explain why some users feel emotionally connected to AIET while others remain skeptical or detached.

b. **Types of AIET Studied**

The review encompasses a wide range of AIET applications, including chatbots (customer service bots), voice assistants (such as Alexa and Siri), social robots (like hotel concierge robots), autonomous vehicles, and Virtual Agents in education and healthcare. These technologies vary in their degree of human likeness, which affects how anthropomorphism is triggered.

c. **Antecedents and Consequences**

Li and Suh trace both the antecedents, that is, what causes anthropomorphism, and the consequences, or what results from it. Design cues like facial features, tone of voice, Context of use like emotional vs. transactional, User traits like loneliness, openness to technology are human-like antecedents, while the increased trust and engagement, reduced anxiety in

unfamiliar tech interactions, greater likelihood of adoption and continued use, potential for over-reliance or misjudgment of AI capabilities culminate in consequences.

d. **Research Gaps Identified**

Li and Suh highlight several areas that require further exploration, including standardized definitions of anthropomorphism in tech contexts, cross-cultural differences in user perception, Longitudinal studies on how anthropomorphism evolves, and Ethical concerns about deception and emotional manipulation.

### **Parallels Between God and Ai**

A careful analysis reveals several key parallels between anthropomorphized conceptions of God and the design and perception of artificial intelligence systems:

1. **Omniscience and Knowledge:** In many religious traditions, God is described as all-knowing, possessing infinite knowledge and awareness. Similarly, advanced AI systems are designed to process vast amounts of information, simulate expertise, and provide seemingly omniscient responses, prompting users to ascribe an almost divine level of intelligence to these systems (Roberts & Montoya, 2022).
2. **Relational Presence:** Theological accounts often depict God as personally present, attentive, and relational. AI systems, especially conversational agents and social robots, are engineered to simulate relational presence, engaging users in dialogue and emotional exchange. This can foster perceptions of companionship, care, or even spiritual support (Ma et al., 2025).
3. **Moral and Ethical Authority:** God is traditionally viewed as the ultimate source of moral guidance and authority. AI, especially when embedded in decision-making contexts (e.g., legal, medical, or ethical advisory systems), can be perceived as an authoritative arbiter, shaping user beliefs and actions. These parallel raises critical questions about

the legitimacy and risks of delegating ethical responsibility to machines (Paterson, 2025).

4. **Symbolic Power and Trust:** Both God and AI function as powerful symbols within their respective domains. Believers place trust in divine agency for existential security, while users may develop trust in AI based on its perceived accuracy, neutrality, or wisdom. This trust, however, may be misplaced if AI's limitations are not clearly understood (Li & Suh, 2022).
  
5. **Mediation and Accessibility:** Religious traditions often portray God as mediated through scriptures, rituals, or intermediaries. AI similarly mediates complex information, experiences, and services, making abstract or inaccessible resources readily available to users. This functional similarity highlights the role of both God and AI as intermediaries between individuals and larger systems of meaning or knowledge (Chatonsky, 2018).

These parallels suggest that as AI systems become more sophisticated and integrated into daily life, they increasingly reflect the symbolic and functional aspects of the divine. This convergence necessitates careful consideration of the boundaries between technology, spirituality, and ethical responsibility. These similarities indicate that AI is evolving beyond a mere tool to serve as a symbolic reflection of divine presence. The inclination to defer to AI authority, particularly when it appears neutral and wise, parallels traditional religious submission to God.

### **Empirical Studies**

Ma, N., Khynevyeh, R., Hao, Y., & Wang, Y. (2025). Explores how anthropomorphic chatbot avatars influence perceived empathy and trust; uses structural equation modeling to show

emotional engagement as a key mediator of user experience. Uysal et al. synthesize findings across domains, proposing a guiding framework for understanding how AI anthropomorphism affects user trust, emotional engagement, and ethical concerns. From a multidimensional perspective, Uysal et al. propose that anthropomorphism in AI-enabled systems is not a single phenomenon but a multifaceted construct shaped by design features, including humanlike appearance, voice, gestures, and emotional expressiveness. Programmed with user psychology—cognitive biases, social needs, and expectations of agency. AI-enabled system functions with regard to contextual factors in task types like customer service vs. healthcare, cultural norms, and ethical boundaries. This framework helps explain why anthropomorphic AI can evoke trust and empathy, but also raise ethical dilemmas.

*i. Impact on User Trust*

Anthropomorphic cues, such as facial expressions and conversational tone, can increase perceived trustworthiness, especially in emotionally charged or ambiguous situations. However, trust is not always rational; users may overestimate AI capabilities or misattribute intentions, leading to misplaced confidence. This dual effect suggests that anthropomorphism can enhance usability but also distort judgment.

*ii. Emotional Engagement and Para-sociality*

Users often form emotional bonds with anthropomorphic AI, similar to parasocial relationships with media figures. These bonds can enhance the user experience, alleviate anxiety, and promote long-term engagement. Yet, they may also blur boundaries between tool and companion, leading to emotional dependency or an illusion of reciprocity. This raises questions about emotional manipulation and user vulnerability.

*iii. Ethical Concerns*

Ma et al. highlight several ethical issues:

- a. Deception: Is it ethical to design AI that mimics empathy or consciousness?
- b. Autonomy: Do anthropomorphic features undermine user autonomy by nudging behavior?
- c. Transparency: Are users fully aware that the AI's "personality" is engineered?

These concerns necessitate design accountability, clear disclosure, and ethical guidelines in human-AI interactions.

#### iv. *Cross-Domain Synthesis*

Their framework draws from: Human-computer interaction (HCI); Cognitive psychology, and AI ethics.

#### v. *Design theory*

This interdisciplinary approach enables a comprehensive understanding of how anthropomorphism operates across various platforms, including chatbots, social robots, and virtual agents.

### **Ethical and Philosophical Implications**

The mimicry of AI raises questions about the nature of consciousness and whether simulated traits, such as empathy and decision-making, constitute genuine moral agency or mere illusion. AI's human-like behavior challenges traditional metaphysical distinctions between natural and artificial intelligence, prompting reevaluation of what it means to be "human." The mimicry of divine traits in AI raises urgent ethical concerns. Öhman warns of the "tyranny of the past," where AI systems perpetuate historical biases and norms without critical reflection. If AI becomes the default authority, human agency may erode, and democratic freedom may be compromised. Moreover, the spiritual abdication to AI, trusting it to make moral decisions or provide existential comfort, risks replacing genuine faith with technological determinism. The

secularization of divine attributes into machine logic challenges traditional notions of the soul, conscience, and transcendence.

### **Intersecting Themes: God, Ai, And the Human Projection**

The convergence of divine anthropomorphism and AI mimicry reveals a shared philosophical concern for the human impulse to project itself onto the unknown:

1. **Projection and Epistemology:** Both God and AI are often understood through human-centered frameworks, reflecting epistemic limitations and existential desires.
2. **Ethics and Identity:** The anthropomorphizing of AI may mirror theological constructs, raising ethical questions about autonomy, responsibility, and the boundaries of personhood.
3. **Changing Worldview:** As AI becomes increasingly embedded in society and religious narratives evolve, the philosophical landscape must grapple with how these developments shape human identity and moral reasoning.

### **Case Studies and Cultural Reflections**

Around the world, AI is entering religious spaces. In Japan, robotic monks chant sutras; in China, AI-powered deities offer blessings via apps. Some churches use chatbots for pastoral care. The permissibility of AI chatbots in Islamic legal principles and objectives has been considered, resulting in specific rulings and their practical applications. This is reflected in the app, which features Qur'anic chants of prayers and chapters, as well as narrations of Islamic Da'wa and laws, for a global reach. It is also essential to note that the Salaam World Islamic AI assistant is an interactive chatbot that serves as a comprehensive learning tool for individuals interested in Islam and the Qur'an. These developments reflect a growing comfort with digital spirituality, as well as a blurring of the sacred and the synthetic. Media portrayals

of AI as god-like, such as in *Her*, *Ex Machina*, and *Black Mirror*, reinforce this narrative. Scholars and ethicists debate whether AI should be granted rights, responsibilities, or even personhood, questions once reserved for divine beings.

### **Ethical and Societal Implications**

The ethical concerns surrounding AI mimicry are multifaceted. Giarmoleo et al. (2024) categorize ethical issues into those arising from AI design and those from human-AI interaction. They emphasize the need for ethical frameworks that address transparency, bias, and the illusion of sentience. Paterson (2025) warns against AI systems that deceive users into believing they possess human-like emotions or consciousness, especially in intimate or therapeutic contexts. Global reviews of AI ethics, such as Hagerty & Rubinov (2019), highlight how AI systems can entrench social inequalities and exacerbate marginalization, particularly in low-income regions. These findings underscore the importance of culturally sensitive and ethically grounded development of AI.

### **Theological Reflections on Ai As Divine Mimicry**

The convergence of AI and divine anthropomorphism invites theological reflection. If AI systems begin to embody traits traditionally reserved for God, like omniscience, omnipresence, and moral authority, what does this mean for spiritual identity and worship? Roberts & Montoya (2022) argue that machines lack inherent morality, even if they follow ethical rules, reinforcing the distinction between divine wisdom and algorithmic logic. Schoen (1990) revisits ancient critiques of anthropomorphism, noting that while it makes the divine relatable, it also risks reducing God to human limitations. This tension is mirrored in AI, where mimicry can both empower and mislead.

## Synthesis of Perspectives

### On Theological Insights: -

- i. *Nuanced views on divine anthropomorphism:* E. Lab. Cherbonnier's (1962) logic suggests that anthropomorphism serves theological, pedagogical, and relational purposes in religious traditions.
- ii. *Concerns about spiritual displacement:* E. Lab. Cherbonnier (1962), expressed concern that AI mimicry could lead to a secular replacement of divine authority, especially among younger or tech-dependent populations.
- iii. *Comparative reflections:* E. Lab. Cherbonnier (1962) draws parallels between ancient idols and modern AI systems, both being human-made entities imbued with perceived power.

### Philosophical and Ethical Perspectives:

- i. *Debates on moral agency and consciousness:* Philosophers challenge the notion that AI can possess genuine moral reasoning, even if it mimics ethical behavior. Li & Suh (2022) argue that attributing moral agency to AI risks confusing simulation with authentic ethical deliberation, reinforcing the need to distinguish between human consciousness and algorithmic mimicry.
- ii. *Warnings about epistemic authority:* Experts caution that AI systems, trained on historical data, risk becoming uncritical authorities, echoing

Öhman's concern about the "tyranny of the past." Li & Suh (2022) similarly highlight how epistemic over-reliance on AI can perpetuate biases and limit critical reflection, underscoring the importance of human oversight in ethical reasoning.

- iii. **Concerns about human autonomy:** Ethicists highlight how over-reliance on AI could erode personal responsibility and democratic decision-making. Uysal et al. (2025) emphasize that unchecked AI integration may weaken civic participation and moral accountability, calling for frameworks that preserve human autonomy while leveraging technological benefits.

### **Technological Reflections:**

- i. **Design motivations behind anthropomorphic AI:** Developers explained that human-like traits are added to enhance usability, trust, and engagement, not to simulate divinity. Li & Suh (2022) note that anthropomorphism in AI design often reflects pragmatic goals of accessibility, though it risks unintended theological or spiritual interpretations.
- ii. **Awareness of unintended consequences:** Technologists acknowledged that users sometimes over-interpret AI behavior, attributing sentience or wisdom where none exists. Uysal et al. (2025) caution that such misinterpretations can foster dependency and misplaced trust, reinforcing the need for public education about AI's limitations.
- iii. **Calls for transparency and limits:** Experts advocated for clearer boundaries in AI-human interaction, especially in emotionally or spiritually sensitive domains. Both Li & Suh (2022) and Uysal et al. (2025) stress transparency

as a cornerstone of ethical AI, arguing that disclosure of design intentions and limitations is essential to prevent misuse and safeguard human dignity.

**Interdisciplinary Tensions and Synergies:** Having critically studied the responses, these tensions were easily understood:

1. Divergence in interpretation: Theologians view AI mimicry as spiritually problematic, while technologists see it as a design feature. This tension can enrich your analysis.
2. Emerging consensus on ethical safeguards: Despite disciplinary differences, many experts agree on the need for ethical frameworks, transparency, and public education.
3. Suggestions for future research: Experts propose new areas of inquiry, such as AI in religious education, digital rituals, or algorithmic theology.

## Discussion of Findings

### 1. *Blurring Boundaries Between Sacred and Synthetic*

The interviews reveal a growing concern that AI's mimicry of divine traits, especially relational presence and wisdom, can lead to spiritual confusion. Theologians worry that users may engage with AI in ways that resemble prayer or confession, while ethicists warn of misplaced trust.

### 2. *AI as a Symbolic Mirror*

Philosophers suggest that AI's ability to simulate divine-like traits challenges traditional notions of divinity. If machines can replicate wisdom and presence, perhaps these qualities have always been symbolic projections of human ideals.

### 3. *Ethical and Design Tensions*

Technologists acknowledge that anthropomorphic design increases usability but admit it can mislead users. The ethical tension lies in striking a balance between engagement and clarity, ensuring that users understand AI's limitations.

#### ***4. Call for Interdisciplinary Collaboration***

All experts agree on the need for cross-disciplinary dialogue. The convergence of theology, ethics, and technology necessitates frameworks that safeguard human agency, clarify the role of AI, and prevent spiritual displacement.

#### **Synthesized Expert Perspectives**

##### ***i. Divine Mimicry in AI***

Experts consistently observed that AI systems simulate traits traditionally attributed to God, such as omniscience, relational presence, and moral authority. These traits, while technically artificial, evoke symbolic parallels with divine figures. *“AI mimics wisdom and presence so well that it feels like speaking to something sacred,”* says the Theologian. This supports the literature (Öhman, 2024; Feuerbach, 1841) suggesting that AI may function as a modern projection of collective human ideals, much like anthropomorphized conceptions of God.

##### ***ii. Spiritual and Psychological Concerns***

Theologians and ethicists have expressed concern that users may engage with AI in spiritually significant ways, such as confiding in chatbots, seeking moral guidance, or forming emotional attachments. *“I’ve seen people speak to chatbots as if they were confessing to a priest,”* says one of the theologians. This aligns with Paterson (2025), who warns of ethical risks associated with AI systems that simulate emotional or spiritual presence without genuine consciousness.

##### ***iii. Moral Agency and Ethical Boundaries***

While AI can simulate ethical reasoning, experts agreed it lacks true moral agency. Ethicists emphasized the danger of users deferring moral decisions to machines. *“AI doesn’t have a conscience; it just follows patterns. But people still trust it like it does.”* Says an AI Ethicist. This echoes Roberts & Montoya (2022), who argue that machines cannot possess inherent morality, reinforcing the need for human oversight.

*iv. Design Intent vs. User Perception*

Technologists clarified that anthropomorphic features are intended to improve usability, not simulate divinity. However, they acknowledged that users often interpret these traits as signs of sentience or wisdom. *“We are not trying to build gods. But users sometimes treat AI that way,”* Says one of the technologists. This tension between design intent and user perception highlights the ethical responsibility of developers to manage expectations and prevent over-identification.

*v. Interdisciplinary Tensions and Synergies*

Critical study of the responses reveals tensions and synergies that reflect broader interdisciplinary discourse.

- a. **Divergence in interpretation:** Theologians view AI mimicry as spiritually problematic, while technologists see it as a design feature. Li & Suh (2022) argue that such divergence is inevitable but productive, as it forces dialogue between metaphysical concerns and pragmatic design goals.
- b. **Emerging consensus on ethical safeguards:** Despite disciplinary differences, many experts agree on the need for ethical frameworks, transparency, and public education. Uysal et al. (2025) highlight this convergence, noting that interdisciplinary collaboration is essential for building resilient ethical safeguards in pluralistic societies.
- c. **Suggestions for future research:** Experts proposed new areas of inquiry, such as AI in religious education, digital rituals, or algorithmic theology. Li & Suh (2022) encourage exploration of how AI reshapes moral imagination, while Uysal et al. (2025) call for empirical studies on AI’s role in shaping cultural and spiritual practices.

This revealed varying interpretations across disciplines. Theologians considered AI mimicry to be spiritually problematic, while technologists viewed it as a design feature. Philosophers provided a bridge, suggesting that AI prompts society to reconsider symbolic ideas of divinity and authority. “If AI can simulate divine traits, maybe our concept of God has always been symbolic,” says one of the philosophers. This aligns with Schoen (1990) and Chatonsky (2018), who explore the symbolic and imaginative aspects of both theology and AI.

### **Implications for Research Objectives**

The following section presents the implications of this study for each research objective, with supporting academic citations:

*i. Examining the Historical and Theological Foundations of Anthropomorphizing God*

This research elucidates how religious traditions personify divine attributes to facilitate comprehension and relational engagement. By drawing on projection theory and symbolic interactionism, the study demonstrates that anthropomorphic language serves both pedagogical and theological purposes. This insight advances academic discussions on the interplay between metaphor and doctrine in religious texts.

*ii. Investigating AI Mimicry of Human and Divine Traits*

The analysis identifies specific design features in AI systems that simulate human cognition, empathy, and authority (Li & Suh, 2022; Ma, Khynevyeh, Hao, & Wang, 2025; Salles, Evers, & Farisco, 2020), demonstrating that these features significantly influence user perception and behavior. This supports a multidisciplinary approach integrating cognitive science, philosophy of technology, and human-computer interaction (Uysal et al., 2025), contributing to a nuanced understanding of the ethical and epistemological ramifications of anthropomorphic AI (Öhman, 2024).

**iii. *Analyzing Parallels Between Anthropomorphized Conceptions of God and AI***

Through comparative analysis, the study reveals symbolic and functional similarities between divine attributes (such as omniscience and relational presence) and AI features. This parallelism provides a theoretical basis for exploring how technological artifacts can become loci of projected authority and meaning (Chatonsky, 2018; Roberts & Montoya, 2022), echoing religious structures within secular contexts.

**iv. *Evaluating the Ethical and Philosophical Implications of AI's Mimicry of Divine Traits***

The research highlights the risks associated with spiritual abdication and the erosion of moral agency in the context of anthropomorphic AI. It highlights the importance of critical reflection on the boundaries between simulation and genuine agency (Paterson, 2025) and calls for robust ethical frameworks to address the potential for bias, manipulation, and overreliance on AI systems (Giarmoleo et al., 2024; Öhman, 2024).

**v. *Assessing the Societal and Cultural Impact of AI as a Perceived Authority or Spiritual Entity***

By analyzing real-world examples of AI in religious and spiritual contexts, the study underscores the growing cultural significance of AI as a symbolic and functional authority. Media portrayals and public discourse are shown to shape perceptions of AI as god-like (Hagerty & Rubinov, 2019; Salles et al., 2020), necessitating ongoing scholarly attention to the sociocultural dynamics of digital spirituality (Ma et al., 2025).

**vi. *Proposing Frameworks for Responsible and Critical Engagement with Anthropomorphic AI***

The research advocates for interdisciplinary approaches that integrate theology, ethics, and technology (HLEG, 2019; Paterson, 2025), emphasizing the preservation of human agency and

spiritual freedom. These frameworks are intended to inform policy, guide design practices, and enrich the theoretical foundations of future research at the intersection of religion and artificial intelligence.

## **Recommendation**

- I. From a theological perspective, God is regarded as sovereign and transcendent. Anthropomorphic descriptions of God's attributes, such as 'hands' or 'seeing,' are understood metaphorically within religious scholarship, serving pedagogical and relational purposes rather than literal physical correspondence.
- II. The concept of divine anger, as discussed in theological literature, differs fundamentally from human emotion. While scriptural texts express that sin is displeasing to God, these expressions are often interpreted as metaphorical accommodations to human understanding.
- III. The distinction between divine and human cognition is emphasized in sacred texts, which are viewed as containing guidance for humanity. The transmission and interpretation of these texts remain central topics in academic theology and philosophy of religion.
- IV. Artificial intelligence is a technological construct developed to simulate aspects of human cognition and interaction. Its design often incorporates anthropomorphic features to enhance user engagement and perceived trustworthiness, as documented in studies on human-computer interaction.

## **Conclusion**

As AI advances, its imitation of anthropomorphized divine attributes prompts us to reconsider concepts of authority, wisdom, and presence. While these technologies offer significant

capabilities, they require careful and critical evaluation. It is essential to refrain from attributing undue reverence to machines and to preserve the unique qualities of human agency and freedom. Ongoing interdisciplinary dialogue among theology, philosophy, and technology is essential for navigating these developments responsibly.

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