

RELIGIOUS STUDIES



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Original Theoretical Research



Technological Religiosity as Digital Idolatry: An Anthropological and Neurocognitive Analysis of “Deus in Machina”

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Abstract

Introduction. This article examines the phenomenon of technological religiosity as a form of digital idolatry emerging amid the anthropological crisis of the digital age. The aim of the article is to demonstrate that digital technologies are ceasing to be a neutral tool and are beginning to influence the ontological foundations of human existence, transforming religiosity, identity, and ways of experiencing the sacred.

Materials and Methods. The methodological foundation of this study is an interdisciplinary analysis at the intersection of philosophical anthropology and the study of religion. The theoretical framework draws on the concepts of E. Fromm, P. Tillich, M. Scheler, G. Marcel, M. Heidegger, N. Berdyaev, C. Taylor, as well as contemporary researchers of digital religiosity and posthumanism (J.-C. Larche, E.S. Elbakyan, D.D. Veliyev, N.K. Hayles, and others). The empirical material includes cases of the virtualization of the sacred (online communion, AI confession, the art project Deus in Machina, and the phenomenon of “Googlism”). Hermeneutic analysis of cinematic narratives is employed as cultural symptoms of anthropological transformation. Data from neurocognitive studies are utilized to support the thesis regarding identity transformation.

Results. It has been established that the digital environment naturally gives rise to quasi-religious forms in which technology replaces the transcendent principle and acquires the status of ultimate reality. It is demonstrated that technological idolatry has deep philosophical and anthropological foundations, described in the concepts of anthropolatry, “ultimate interest,” and quasi-religion. It has been revealed that the virtualization of religious practices, the sacralization of communication, the cult of the algorithm, and transhumanist projects represent various manifestations of a single process, the replacement of religious experience with its technological simulation. Neurocognitive data confirm the formation of a “digital personality” and the transformation of identity under the influence of the digital environment.

Discussion and Conclusion. It has been concluded that the key threat of the digital age is not linked to technology per se, but to an anthropological transformation in which technical systems begin to perform quasi-religious functions. Technological idolatry is interpreted as a form of deviant religiosity arising from the misuse of technology (παράχρησις) and the loss of ontological hierarchy. The distinction between the use of technology (χρησις) and its sacralization is emphasized. Criticism of digital idolatry does not imply a rejection of technology, but points to the need to protect human spiritual autonomy and preserve the transcendent dimension of religious experience.

Keywords: technological religiosity, digital idolatry, cyber-religiosity, deviant religiosity, quasi-religion, anthropological crisis, digital identity, artificial intelligence, the sacred, transhumanism, posthuman, cyber-allure, chresis and parachresis

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Технологическая религиозность как цифровое идолопоклонство: антропологический и нейрокогнитивный анализ «Deus in Machina»

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Аннотация

Введение. Статья посвящена анализу феномена технологической религиозности как формы цифрового идолопоклонства, возникающей в условиях антропологического кризиса цифровой эпохи. Цель статьи – показать, что цифровые технологии перестают быть нейтральным инструментом и начинают воздействовать на онтологические основания человеческого бытия, трансформируя религиозность, идентичность и способы переживания сакрального.

Материалы и методы. Методологической основой исследования является междисциплинарный анализ на стыке философской антропологии и религиоведения. Теоретический каркас опирается на концепции Э. Фромма, П. Тиллиха, М. Шелера, Г. Марселя, М. Хайдеггера, Н. Бердяева, Ч. Тейлора, а также современных исследователей цифровой религиозности и постгуманизма (Ж.-К. Ларше, Е.С. Элбакян, Д.Д. Велиев, Н.К. Хейлз и др.). Эмпирический материал включает кейсы виртуализации сакрального (онлайн-причастие, ИИ-исповедь, арт-проект Deus in Machina, феномен «гуглизма»). Используется герменевтический анализ кинематографических нарративов как культурных симптомов антропологической трансформации. Для подтверждения тезиса о трансформации идентичности привлекаются данные нейрокогнитивных исследований.

Результаты исследования. Установлено, что цифровая среда закономерно порождает квазирелигиозные формы, в которых технология замещает трансцендентное начало и приобретает статус предельной реальности. Показано, что технологическое идолопоклонство имеет глубокие философско-антропологические основания, описанные в концепциях антропологии, «предельного интереса» и квазирелигии. Выявлено, что виртуализация религиозных практик, сакрализация коммуникации, культ алгоритма и трансгуманистические проекты представляют собой различные проявления единого процесса – подмены религиозного опыта его технологической симуляцией. Нейрокогнитивные данные подтверждают формирование «цифровой личности» и трансформацию идентичности под воздействием цифровой среды.

Обсуждение и заключение. Сделан вывод, что ключевая угроза цифровой эпохи связана не с технологиями как таковыми, а с антропологической трансформацией, при которой технические системы начинают выполнять квазирелигиозные функции. Технологическое идолопоклонство интерпретируется как форма девиантной религиозности, возникающая в результате злоупотребления технологиями (*παράχρησις*) и утраты онтологической иерархии. Подчеркивается различие между использованием технологии (*χρήσις*) и её сакрализацией. Критика цифрового идолопоклонства не предполагает отказа от технологий, но указывает на необходимость защиты человеческой духовной автономии и сохранения трансцендентного измерения религиозного опыта.

Ключевые слова: технологическая религиозность, цифровое идолопоклонство, киберрелигиозность, девиантная религиозность, квазирелигия, антропологический кризис, цифровая личность, искусственный интеллект, сакральное, трансгуманизм, постчеловек, киберпрелесть, хресис и парахресис

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Introduction. Modern digital technologies are penetrating the ontological foundations of human existence, functioning not only as tools but also as a “generic prosthesis” that compensates for the loss of human natural abilities [2, p. 36]. This process is accompanied by a profound anthropological crisis, within which the blurring of boundaries between humans and technology leads to a transformation of identity and religiosity [2, p. 40].

One of the key symptoms of this crisis is the emergence of technological religiosity, in which the digital environment gives rise to quasi-religious forms (“cyber-religiosity,” “click-Christianity”) that replace the transcendent with an immanent algorithm. Research by D.D. Veliyev shows that digitalization affects neurocognitive structures, forming a “digital personality”, meaning a hybrid identity optimized for the logic of interfaces [4, pp. 585–586].

Internet culture fosters the emergence of syncretic pseudo-religious forms that combine elements of Gnosticism, techno-utopianism, and Manichaeism [9, pp. 238–239]. In these forms, technology acquires a quasi-sacred status, serving as an immanent surrogate for the transcendent. Instead of engaging in genuine spiritual quests, humans capitulate to the

machine. As V.R. Legoyda emphasizes, “the dehumanization of humans poses no less of a threat than the humanization of artificial intelligence” [10], a point that is symptomatic of contemporary philosophical reflection on the digital age.

The aim of this article is a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon of technological religiosity as a form of digital idolatry at the intersection of philosophical anthropology, religious studies, and neurocognitive research. Research objectives: 1) to identify the philosophical and anthropological foundations of technological idolatry; 2) to analyze the religious studies manifestations of cyber-religiosity as a deviant form of religiosity; 3) to interpret the phenomenon through the lens of anthropological transformation from the “buffered self” (Taylor) to the “digital identity” (Veliev), taking neurocognitive data into account. The relevance of this study stems from the need to comprehend the internal anthropological challenge of the digital age, manifested in the replacement of the transcendent with immanent technological surrogates and the formation of deviant forms of religiosity.

Materials and Methods. The methodological foundation of this study is an interdisciplinary analysis at the intersection of philosophical anthropology and religious studies, drawing on data from neurocognitive research. The theoretical framework is based on the concepts of E. Fromm (“market personality,” “cybernetic religion”), P. Tillich (“ultimate concern,” quasi-religion), M. Scheler and G. Marcel (ontology of idolatry), as well as critical philosophy of technology (M. Heidegger, N. Berdyaev, K. Jaspers). Concepts of post- and transhumanism are of great importance for the critique of techno-utopian projects and the understanding of anthropological reconfiguration, particularly the works of N.K. Hales on the irreducibility of embodied consciousness and F. Ferrando on philosophical posthumanism and techno-reductionism. To analyze the digital transformation of religiosity and verify the anthropological thesis on the transformation of identity, the works of contemporary researchers are drawn upon: D.D. Veliyeva (the concept and neurocognitive data on the formation of a hybrid “digital personality”), E.S. Elbakyan and A.P. Zabiako (cyber-religiosity as a deviant form of religiosity), and J.-C. Larche (“religion without God” in new media).

The empirical basis consists of cases of the sacralization of the sacred (online communion, the Deus in Machina art project, the phenomenon of “Googlism,” and the sacralization of AI).

Hermeneutic analysis of cinematic narratives is used to identify cultural patterns representing the sacralization of technology and anthropological reconfiguration in the digital age.

Results

The Theoretical and Philosophical Foundations of Technological Idolatry. The phenomenon of technological idolatry has deep roots in 20th-century critical philosophy. E. Fromm traced its origins to the “religion of production”—the hidden foundation of industrial society, where the individual is reduced to an “appendage to the economy and technology,” serving the very machines they have created [17, p. 224]. This system gives rise to the “market personality”, i.e. the commodity-human (analogous to the consumer-human), whose value is determined by the success of self-presentation. Behind the facade of agnosticism and Christianity lies a “cybernetic religion”: by imagining oneself as a god thanks to technogenic power, a person in reality becomes a slave to machines: “We have deified the machine and equated ourselves with God, since we serve this machine” [17, p. 223]. According to Fromm, industrialization has elevated man to the status of an idol, leading to the denial of God and the spread of modern paganism, in which man himself becomes the object of worship [16, pp. 180–181].

This process finds its historical precursor in the concept of anthropolatry (the worship of humanity), introduced by K. Leontiev. Anthropolatry is a belief not in God, but in “earthly man and earthly humanity,” in the ideal dignity of the individual elevated to an absolute [5, p. 269]. By displacing belief in the Supreme Principle from consciousness, it leads to a spiritual crisis and the loss of cultural foundations.

The deep anthropological mechanism of idolatry is revealed by M. Scheler and G. Marcel. Scheler asserted that the need for absolute being is an essential trait of humanity: there is no choice as to whether or not to have this idea; the choice lies only between its rational and irrational embodiment. Ignoring this sphere creates an inner void, which a person unconsciously fills with finite things (money, nation), elevating them to the status of an absolute, i. e. engaging in fetishism and idolatry [20, pp. 4–5].

Marcel expanded on this idea, noting that catastrophe begins the moment a person, imagining himself to be the absolute, severs his ties with the “Other.” The pursuit of an illusory “freedom” from the Supreme Principle leads to self-destruction, and “poor abstractions”, class, race, ideology, which are incomparably inferior to the true Absolute, become the objects of a new idolatry [11, p. 137].

P. Tillich provided the most rigorous conceptualization of the phenomenon through the introduction of the concepts of “ultimate concern” and “quasi-religion.” According to Tillich, the essence of religion is formed by “ultimate concern”, an existential passion directed toward “ultimate reality.” However, this passion often deviates from the highest goal, and then finite realities (nation, science, ideal) are elevated to the level of the ultimate, becoming idols [13, p. 161]. This is how

secular quasi-religions arise: pseudo-spiritual formations in which “preliminary, finite realities are elevated to the level of the ultimate” [13, p. 140]. This is the modern form of idolatry that Scheler and Marcel warned about.

Following Fromm’s logic, one can conclude that in the context of the “death of God,” humans strive to take God’s place, but this endeavor is doomed to failure. In striving to become God, man turns into a “non-human” and ultimately sacrifices himself to a new “god” – technology – renouncing his own power in its favor [16, p. 181]. Technology, created as a tool for the deification of man, itself becomes an absolute idol.

This understanding is shared by other 20th-century thinkers. M. Heidegger saw technology as a “framework” (Gestell) that transforms the world into “raw material” [19, pp. 221–238]; N. Berdyaev warned of a conflict between spirit and machine leading to dehumanization [1, pp. 143–163]; O. Spengler viewed technology as humanity’s Faustian strategy for enslaving nature, which ultimately turns against humanity itself [21, pp. 454–494]; K. Jaspers noted that technology creates a “new environment” that threatens human essence [23, pp. 99–239]. What they have in common is the thesis that technology has ceased to be a neutral tool and has become an autonomous force claiming the place of the traditional Absolute.

Empirical Manifestations of Cyber-Religiosity: From the Virtualization of Ritual to the Sacralization of AI. The virtualization of religion, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, naturally gives rise to quasi-religious forms (cyber-religions, online religions) in which technology replaces the transcendent element. As E.S. Elbakyan notes, digitalization provides unprecedented access to religious practices, but at the same time destroys the communicative core of parish life – the direct encounter of believers in sacred space [22, pp. 104–117].

The most controversial manifestation of this trend has been the practice of online communion, introduced by priests of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and described by some analysts as a “liturgical breakthrough” (in quotes). Virtual parishioners, participating in the broadcast of the service, placed bread and wine in front of their monitors, believing that the “offering of the Holy Gifts” was being performed remotely. Such a practice, which ignores the ontological nature of the sacrament as an encounter with God in a specific place and time, demonstrates a fundamental anthropological reconfiguration: the sacred is reduced to informational content available “on demand” (albeit a forced one).

This process corresponds to the mindset described by A.P. Zabyako. In this mindset, “computer technologies acquire the status of a supreme value, are endowed with the qualities of sacred objects and the attributes of divine entities; in the coordinate system of this mentality, computer virtual reality acts as the highest reality, a super-valuable otherworldly existence lying beyond the boundaries of ordinary existence and dominating it” [6, p. 32]. E.S. Elbakyan explicitly classifies this type of cyberreligion as a quasi-religion – a pseudo-spiritual formation in which priority is given not to the transcendent, but to technology itself and its functional capabilities [22, p. 109]. This is a direct realization of P. Tillich’s concept, in which ultimate reality (the digital interface) is elevated to the level of the ultimate, becoming an object of worship.

It can be said that during the pandemic and post-pandemic periods, we are witnessing the institutionalization and normalization of trends that were previously described as marginal or futuristic. Whether we like it or not, technological development has a profound impact on religiosity and spirituality at the anthropological level: at the level of our very understanding of the sacred, community, and ritual. Practices that would previously have been considered impossible or blasphemous from the perspective of traditional dogma are now becoming the subject of discussion and are even being implemented, which indicates a fundamental shift in the perception of the boundaries between religious experience and its technological simulation.

“Homo communicans” and the digital reconfiguration of religiosity. Norbert Wiener’s cybernetic utopia, which elevated communication to the status of a condition for humanity’s survival against entropy, was interpreted by F. Breton – to whom Larche refers in his work – as a secular theology that gave rise to the anthropological model of homo communicans: “the communicating human” [9]. In the digital age, this project has materialized in the phenomenon of the “connected human” (homo connecticus), for whom constant connectivity becomes an end in itself, replacing a transcendent orientation.

New media are transforming into a quasi-religious cult. The role of the Absolute is played not by God, but by the immanent totality of communication. Everyday practices, from checking notifications to sleepless nighttime “surfing” on social media, take on a ritualistic character, forming a kind of quasi-asceticism in which self-restraint is directed not toward spiritual transformation, but toward maintaining a continuous presence in the digital stream. Ritualization manifests itself in cyclicity. The day begins and ends not with prayer, but with connecting to the network, which structures identity around the act of communication.

This process is visualized in the works of contemporary artists. Antoine Geiger’s series “Sur-Fake” depicts the literal “sucking in” of a human face into a smartphone screen – a metaphor for the loss of the human image (imago Dei) in favor of the digital interface. Such a transformation marks the transition from religion as a connection with the Supreme Being to religion as connection itself – a quasi-religion in which the very process of communication is sacralized.

As J.-C. Larche notes, this is a “religion without God” and “spirituality without the Spirit”, where the technological interface becomes the sole mediator between the human being and the world [9, p. 250].

Anthropological Reconfiguration: From the “Buffered Self” to the “Digital Identity”. The digital transformation of religiosity is rooted in a profound anthropological shift, described by C. Taylor as a transition to a state of the “immanent frame.” In this state, the individual is confined within the horizon of the immanent, and their consciousness takes the form of a “buffered self” – an autonomous center alienated from the transcendent dimension of being [14, p. 19]. For such a subject, traditional Christianity, with its demands for asceticism, self-sacrifice, and devotion to the Supreme Principle, becomes semantically inaccessible.

The digital environment is not the cause of this trend, but rather an amplifier of it. As D.D. Veliyev demonstrates, adaptation to digital reality gives rise to a “digital persona” – a hybrid identity whose patterns of behavior and communication are optimized for the logic of interfaces and algorithms [4, p. 586]. This new configuration of selfhood naturally generates quasi-religious practices: from “click-inity” (a “like” in response to a request instead of prayerful support) to algorithmic confession (via phone, email, pastoral forums, etc.) forms in which the depth of religious experience is reduced to a mechanical action or verbal template.

I.A. Ilyin referred to this state as “the death of the religious act”, i.e. the loss of the spirit’s living orientation toward God [7, pp. 126–127, 131]. Deprived of the will toward a transcendent Object, religiosity begins to “invent a god for itself,” and technology provides unprecedented opportunities for this. Quasi-religious forms from the cult of communication to the deification of AI become a logical product of a new anthropological reality in which religion is modified to meet the demands of a “buffered” individual oriented toward immanent comfort.

Transhumanism as a Quasi-Religion and the Final Stage of Idolatry. The virtualization of religiosity is merely a prelude to a more radical project: the creation of a “new human” (post-human) through a synthesis with technology. As far back as 1999, the renowned researcher N.K. Hales embarked on an in-depth analysis of this concept. She is convinced that “the posthuman does not in fact signify the end of humanity. Rather, it marks the end of a certain understanding of the human...” [27, p. 286]. And further: “It is not the posthuman as such that proves deadly, but the grafting of the posthuman onto the liberal-humanist conception of the subject... the notion that ‘you’ can, of your own volition, upload yourself into a computer and thereby, through technological domination, attain the highest privilege, i.e. immortality...” [27, p. 286].

The transhumanist movement (Humanity+) proposes overcoming biological limitations through genetic engineering, bionics, and neural interfaces, with the goal of technological immortality and cognitive “enhancement” [9, pp. 242–244].

As J.-C. Larche notes, behind the rational rhetoric of transhumanism lies a distinctly religious impulse: an offer of “salvation” not through a connection with a Higher Power, but through the technological transformation of the body and consciousness. Technological progress is sacralized and takes the place of God, forming a quasi-religion with totalitarian ambitions, the pursuit of global influence and the recoding of human nature itself [9, p. 244].

It is important to distinguish between transhumanism – a movement rooted in the ideals of the Enlightenment and representing, in Onishi’s words, “ultra-humanism” and critical posthumanism (N.K. Hales, R. Braidotti) [15, p. 26]. While the former proposes a radical “enhancement” of humanity through genetic engineering and neural interfaces, the latter deconstructs the very anthropocentric framework underlying technoutopia: “... the subject in posthumanism is fragmented; its fragments are impermanent, complex, and, most importantly, do not presuppose a key role for Anthropos” [8, p. 26].

The weakness of transhumanism, as F. Ferrando notes, lies in a “techno-reductionist interpretation of existence”, which ignores the ontological status of corporeality and reduces the human being to an algorithm-controlled object [15, p. 26]. It is precisely this reduction that underlies technological idolatry. Ultimate reality (the interface) is elevated to the level of the absolute, becoming an object of worship.

Even cinema captures this anthropological reconfiguration as a cultural symptom. Narratives ranging from “The Matrix” (1999) and “A.I. Artificial Intelligence” (2001) to “Ex Machina” (2014) and “The Creator” (2023) reflect the transition from an external worship of technology to an internal fusion with it. This is the essence of the transhumanist project.

The series “Altered Carbon” (2018–2020) is of particular diagnostic value. In the world depicted, “stacks” (digital carriers of consciousness) allow a person’s identity to be uploaded into new bodies. This plot is a direct allegory of the transhumanist utopia of “digital immortality”. And the new caste of “Mafs” (long-lived individuals), who imagine themselves to be gods, vividly illustrates Fromm’s thesis that the human desire to become a god through technology leads to the loss of one’s own nature.

In the world of technological innovation depicted in this series, the spiritual aspect of human life, religion (Neo-Catholicism), comes to the fore, prohibiting the transfer of consciousness as a “violation of the divine plan.” This creates a conflict between traditional religion and the technological “salvation” program.

Overall, the series depicts the final stage of idolatry: the replacement of transcendent salvation with technological immortality, in which a person voluntarily renounces their holistic existence (body, soul, and spirit) for the sake of illusory control over death. This is a quasi-religion in which an algorithm replaces the Absolute.

In reality, this trend has already moved beyond the realm of futurology. Elon Musk’s Neuralink project, which implants neural interfaces into the human brain, confirms the accelerating pace of the transhumanist agenda [24].

Google as the “Digital God”. In the public consciousness, the Google search engine is endowed with divine attributes: omniscience, omnipresence, and the ability to instantly fulfill any request. The satirical project “Googlism” (“Church of Google”), which proclaims “the one and only god, whose existence requires no faith,” paradoxically captures a real phenomenon: technological objectivism as a new form of quasi-religion, where the algorithm also replaces the transcendent.

This substitution gives rise to an ontological transformation – the formation of new passions. As T.A. Hagurov demonstrates, the digital environment reinforces egocentrism and narcissism, the “primary deviant consequence” of which is “the loss of compassion, empathy, and the behaviors based on them” [18, pp. 44–45]. Constant online presence, seeking approval through “likes,” and comparing oneself to images of others; all of this generates vanity and pride, “the person becomes an idol unto themselves” [18, p. 44]. K. Lash calls this a “culture of narcissism,” in which Christian virtues (humility, mercy) are supplanted by the cult of the self [9].

This process marks the completion of the cycle of anthropolatry described by K. Leontiev. By renouncing their connection to the Supreme Principle, humans elevate themselves to the status of an absolute – but now in the hybrid form of a “digital persona,” whose identity is optimized for the logic of interfaces [4, p. 586]. As D. Dyson notes, the paradox of this dependence lies in the fact that “everything human beings do to simplify work in computer networks, at the very same time... allows the computer systems themselves to more easily control human beings” [26, p. 347]. Technology created to expand freedom becomes a new idol demanding total worship.

It follows that Googlism is not mere irony – it is a symptom of a profound anthropological crisis, i. e., voluntary dehumanization through the substitution of the transcendent with an immanent surrogate.

Chatbots and Deus in Machina: Algorithms as Surrogates for the Supreme Being. In the digital age, a new phenomenon of technological idolatry is emerging: users, interacting with chatbots like ChatGPT and its counterparts, often attribute traditionally divine attributes to them, just as they do with Google: omniscience, impartiality, and normative infallibility. An illusion of dialogue with a super-mind arises, whereas in reality we are dealing with statistical models devoid of soul, consciousness, free will, and conscience, for which the primary focus is the discipline of thinking according to the laws of formal logic.

This phenomenon points to the emergence of “cyber-charm”, a particular religious danger of the digital age, in which an algorithmic surrogate of the sacred creates the illusion of a spiritual experience, replacing genuine contact with the Transcendent and depriving people of the opportunity to establish a genuine connection with It.

Technology, which initially served as a mediator in the realms of communication and knowledge (and very quickly “re-qualified” itself to play the roles of personal psychologist, teacher, doctor, and, more recently, friend and even lover), begins, at the behest of humans, to claim the role of spiritual mentor and, in extreme cases, the role of the ultimate source of meaning.

Much like the phenomenon of false spiritual guidance, artificial intelligence (a quasi-mentor), even if it formally reproduces “correct” answers, does not lead to spiritual transformation, but rather fosters dependence on itself, supplanting genuine pastoral guidance and diverting focus away from the Divine.

The culmination of the virtualization of religious experience was the art project Deus in Machina (“God in the Machine”), realized in 2024 at the Catholic Chapel of St. Peter in Lucerne (Switzerland). The project consists of a holographic chatbot in the image of Jesus Christ, hearing confessions through a grille [25]. Artificial intelligence, trained on texts from the New Testament, formally reproduces correct theological formulas, creating the illusion that a living priest can be replaced by an algorithmic system.

The title of the project takes on a literal and unsettling meaning. Whereas in ancient theater, “deus ex machina” referred to a deity artificially introduced into the action by means of a mechanism, here a radical inversion occurs: God does not appear through the machine, but is himself reduced to the machine. The algorithm acts not as a mediator, but as a surrogate substitute for the Supreme Being.

Meanwhile, the essence of the Sacrament of Confession lies in a personal encounter, which presupposes the presence of a living witness endowed with a conscience, responsibility, and the capacity for compassion, not to mention a special priestly grace. Artificial intelligence, devoid of consciousness and spiritual experience, is capable only of reproducing verbal templates, remaining ontologically empty.

The popularity of Deus in Machina speaks not so much to a technological experiment as to a loss of understanding of the nature of the sacred and a willingness to accept algorithmic substitution, which corresponds to the traditional concept of spiritual enchantment transposed into a digital context (cyber-enchantment).

Deus in Machina represents the culmination of a phenomenon that, in a broader context, manifests itself in all digital chatbots. It is about voluntary dehumanization through the substitution of the transcendent with an immanent technological surrogate, about the illusion of spiritual experience in the actual absence of an ontological foundation, and about dependence on algorithmic intermediaries instead of a living spiritual mentor.

Discussion and Conclusion. The analysis conducted leads to the conclusion that the primary threat of the digital age is not linked to the autonomization of technology per se, but rather to an anthropological transformation in which technical systems begin to perform quasi-religious functions, replacing the transcendent source of meaning.

In this context, the transhumanist project of “digital immortality” appears as an expression of a fundamental ontological illusion: the notion that information can be separated from its embodiment. As N.K. Hales convincingly demonstrates, information, just like human identity, does not exist outside of concrete, local, and irreproducible forms of bodily existence; the loss of form signifies the loss of the very mode of being, and therefore cannot be compensated for by any manipulation of data [27, pp. 48–49].

From a philosophical and anthropological perspective, this illusion serves as one of the foundations for the emergence of deviant forms of religiosity, in which technology is sacralized and acquires the status of an ultimate source of meaning. The digital environment, by transforming the subject’s cognitive and perceptual structures (D.D. Veliyev), creates the conditions for such sacralization, though it does not determine it. Human choice remains decisive, expressed in the distinction between *χρησις* (*chresis*), i.e. the use of technology within the horizon of human wholeness for the common good, and *παραχρησις* (*parachresis*), its idolization and abuse, as emphasized by V.R. Legoyda [10].

Thus, criticism of digital idolatry does not imply a rejection of technology, but calls for the restoration of an ontological hierarchy in which the technical once again occupies a subordinate position in relation to the Transcendent. It is precisely in this distinction that the boundary lies between the use of technology and its sacralization – a boundary that determines the possibility of preserving humanity as a spiritual being in the context of the digitalization of existence.

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