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A Theological Interrogation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Face of God's Creative Power

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Abstract. Artificial Intelligence is playing an increasingly transformative role in knowledge creation, learning spaces and international innovation, and challenges the nature and limits of human creativity in profound theological and philosophical ways. In this paper, I am asking for an interdisciplinary analysis of this question: Is Artificial Intelligence a successful competition with God's creative powers, or is it simply the extension of human ingenuity within the parameters set by God? The study utilises classical theological teachings and concepts, including creatio ex nihilo, Imago Dei and divine sovereignty, to analyse the ontological, divine and ethical aspects of artificial creativity. This paper situates itself within the broader context of innovation and sustainability in higher education and examines changes in human identity, consciousness, and the role of the divine in the age of artificial intelligence. It distinguishes between divine creation, which has intentionality, soul-bearing life and moral agency, and artificial creation, which is based on algorithms, data, and human design. It defies technocentric hope and theological hesitation, suggesting a way forward for theological reflection on human vocation, moral boundaries, and stewardship through Artificial Intelligence. In conclusion, this paper suggests that Artificial Intelligence can be viewed not as a replacement for God's creative power but as a catalyst for interdisciplinary dialogue and reflection within the academy, particularly concerning the relationship between innovation and theology, and their moral and ethical dimensions. It promotes an educationally sustainable approach that respects human dignity, spiritual understanding and moral duty while dealing with the challenges of ongoing technological change.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Ethical Innovation, Theology and Technology, Divine Creativity

1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a game-changer in the journey of human progress in the 21st century. It has emerged as a catalyst, revolutionizing higher education, global innovation, self-driving vehicles, machine learning algorithms, and so much more. Artificial Intelligence is changing the way we relate to knowledge, experience reality and to each other. Modern Artificial Intelligence systems not only act on data, they are also generative, as Russell and Norvig (2020) point out. However, as it is a remarkable achievement, there are some theological questions to be raised.

Theologians from around the world ask themselves, whether Artificial Intelligence is a creative mimicry or an existential challenge to divine creativity, such as John H. Evans (2011). Does Artificial Intelligence challenge or mimic God's creative power? African theologians like Okoronkwo, Dike and Onyeukaziri, however, combine global discourse with their own African theological sensibilities, leading us to ask, can man-made intelligence ever compete with the creative power of God, or is it merely a sub-creative reflection within God's creative boundaries? The most significant question is: What should be the position of faith communities in the face of the creation of human made intelligence? This paper is an attempt to theologically and ethically reflect on these questions rather than denounce Artificial Intelligence, but as a thoughtfully consideration of its significance in a Divinely ordered cosmos.

1.1 Artificial Intelligence and Human Creativity: A Historical Overview

This chapter examines the evolution and theory of the field of Artificial Intelligence and creativity, giving an overview of the nature of the "offshoot" of the creative

power of God and human beings. First, Artificial Intelligence has developed from a desire to imagine making some machines 'think' like humans. These intelligent systems can be traced back to Alan Turing's (1950) seminal paper Computing Machinery and Intelligence, which lays the groundwork for this inquiry with his first asked and provoking question, 'Can machines think? This question set the paradigm for how artificial intelligence should be done, providing the inspiration for the famous Turing Test which proposed to test machine intelligence using imitation.

Turing's focus was not on consciousness or understanding itself, but at the equivalent of human response (behavioural equivalence), the ability of a machine to match human response successfully. From the expert systems of the 1970s to today's deep learning networks and large language models (LLM), AI has evolved into a development that has played a pivotal role in the convergence of Artificial Intelligence and creativity. This junction has sparked a deep philosophical, technological, and theological discussion. The overarching theme of this talk is the question of whether machines can really be creative or whether they are only imitating human creativity?

As the field evolved, technological advances brought in a new era of the development of Artificial Intelligence. The use of Artificial Intelligence is no longer solely about rules-based programming; Artificial Intelligence systems are now powered by machine learning and deep learning architectures that can analyse the data, learn from patterns, and generate new and unique content. These systems can be used to accomplish tasks once thought to be the exclusive province of human thought: making art, writing music, and writing literature, according to Russell and Norvig (2020). The abilities here discussed, a kind of creative ability of machines, give rise not only to excitement, but to a philosophical, theological and ethical reaction.

Theological and metaphysical scholars, however, are not so convinced of the real creativity of Artificial Intelligence. The creation from nothing - *creatio ex nihilo* as it is known in theological terminology, is a key aspect of true creativity, according to Evans (2011), and that is a power which belongs solely to God, and not to us. The human being, created in the likeness of God, is involved in a derivative mode of creativity that is manifested through the concept of free will and intentionality, which in turn are based on the concept of divine inspiration. Torrance (2013) agrees, arguing that Artificial Intelligence can mimic some aspects of creative activity but not have the ontological basis to engage in creative activity in a true sense.

This critique is enriched by cultural-theological specifics. In Nigeria, Olatunji (2022) investigates Artificial Intelligence's ascent using African Christian perspectives. He suggests that AI-driven innovation should be embedded in a theology of sub-creation, recognizing that humans are God's co-creators in His universe. This vision calls for human creativity to be used responsibly, in humility, acknowledging our reliance on God. It is therefore dangerous to give creative autonomy to machines, both theologically and ethically.

Today, human creativity is not confined to the domain of the human species, but now has an interesting parallel in systems that can create music, create essays, and diagnose disease. These are awe-inspiring, but also raise metaphysical questions about creativity and consciousness, between the natural and the synthetic. Omoregbe (2005), in a reactionary submission to this, affirms that human creativity is motivated by rationality and spiritual awareness, which are not only functional but ontological aspects of humanity's being and living. So, when the use of artificial systems is compared to human creativity, theological analysis is needed.

The topic of Artificial Intelligence and creativity also poses questions of philosophy of mind and cognitive science. Creativity is not newness, it is not complexity, it is intentionality, it is emotion and it is meaning-making. Machines can create new combinations of data, but they are devoid of consciousness, self-awareness and goals. Their "creativity" is thus a product of statistical calculations, not of inspiration or insight.

This overview notes that although Artificial Intelligence (AI) has come a long way towards being convincing in many creative endeavours, it remains an exercise in simulation rather than participation in creativity. There are theological and philosophical objections to identifying machine production with human creativity. While Artificial Intelligence continues to be a part of our creative landscape, it is essential to draw a line between what's created by a tool and what's created by a human with a calling to create for God's glory and with reverence.

2. Theological Foundations: *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, *Imago Dei*, and Divine Sovereignty

Theological reflection has a special role to play in articulating the issues of development and

implications of the artificial intelligence (AI) moving into human society. The theological and artificial intelligence (AI) intersection poses a host of questions about the nature of creation, the uniqueness of human beings, and the limits of technology. In the same way that Artificial Intelligence can mimic human ideas and creativity, Christian theological concepts, which may exist in other religious beliefs, can guide us in assessing the potential and boundaries of such technologies. This section explores the three core theological principles *creatio ex nihilo, imago Dei* and divine sovereignty as lenses through which to interpret and judge the role of Artificial Intelligence in society.

2.1 *Creatio Ex Nihilo*: Creation from Nothing

The *creatio ex nihilo* - creation out of nothing, is a doctrine that only God has or can have the power to create something from nothing. This is an important doctrine in Christianity that supports the notion of the transcendence of God and His unconditioned agency. This act is not only sovereign, but non-contingent. That is, God's creative will is not dependent upon any prior matter or force. Divine creation is unique in that it is totally original and the authoritative source of all things (Gunton 1993). Gunton (2002) also emphasizes that in this divine sense, creation is not just "shaping of matter" but "radical act of originating being itself". On the other hand, AI systems are heavily dependent on extensive collections of existing data. Their productions are not independent but are extensions of information curated by humans. For example, Artificial Intelligence systems operate by algorithms that are trained on huge amounts of data; they cannot create content without existing material. It's thusly considered a *sub-creative* innovation as opposed to a *Divine* one.

So, in a better sense, Artificial Intelligence is involved in *sub-creation*, not in creation, in a theological sense. The theological literature popularized the term "sub-creation," and technology scholars echoed it, meaning that man can create something from something else. However, as Walton (2008) reminds us, all human and technological creativity depends on what has already been created, is based on the manipulation of pre-existing conditions, and is categorically different from acts of divine creation. Theologians Achar and Awasthi (2025) also detail that AI-created content seems to be new, yet it is not created by itself, but instead is algorithmically recombined. To this, Asaju (2014) reminds that technology is something good, but it has to be limited to human finitude and human humility. He calls for a theological ethic of sub-creation, in which man's innovations recognize their dependence and their accountability to God

This seems to be not just a difference in language but a difference in being, as Creator and creature. The idea of Artificial Intelligence as a "creator" is a theological and technological deception that can lead to the machines having the same power as God and is also theologically and ethically problematic.

2.2 *Imago Dei*: The Uniqueness of Human Identity

The second theological pillar is the idea of *'Imago Dei'*. This is a belief that humans are created in the likeness of God and this is the very foundation of Christian anthropology. Theologians have traditionally found this image to be a reference to the human powers of reason, moral judgment, spiritual capacity, relationship and communion with the divine. These characteristics are not only what makes man different from other creatures, including machines, but they are also what makes him different from God. Plantinga (2002) observes the *imago* Dei is not only functional but theological, referring to attributes of the human person that are relational love, conscience, repentance, and worship.

While Artificial Intelligence delivers language abilities, advanced computation and the creation of art or music, it has no purpose, moral responsibility or spiritual power. According to Okoye (2020, pp. 43 - 45), Artificial Intelligence is a "soulless intelligence." It is an impressive system, but there is a lack of reflection, repentance, worship or love within it. These are not just capacities that can be programmed or calculated, but they are part of the human soul.

These spiritual and moral capacities are beyond the capabilities of even the most powerful Artificial Intelligence models, like those based on GPT. Such models can simulate conversation or even produce human-like text, but they are without interiority, volition and a relationship to God. Okoronkwo and Dike (2025) note that moral reasoning, particularly in the form of guilt, remorse, or transformation, is not a program that can be taught, but rather is a product of an "aware self" capable of "relationality" with God and others. Likewise, Onyeukaziri (2023) maintains that no machine, no matter how sophisticated, can worship or even act with any real spiritual intent.

This distinction validates the theological differences between man and machine. Humanity is not distinguished by intelligence, but by the ability to be engaged morally and spiritually by God. This goes further to the capacity of taking responsibility for an action. Thus, the concept of Artificial Intelligence as being human is an error in the theological perspective

of what it is to be human. Such equivalence may result in "dehumanisation," in which human value is determined by only their productivity and intelligence, as opposed to the image of God that they bear, as religion ethicists warn.

3. Divine Sovereignty and Technological Ethics

Divine sovereignty is the third “theological” basis. The Bible teaches us that God is the King of all creation: “Our God is in heaven; he does what he wants.” (Psalm 115:3, NIV). This sovereignty is over all human activities, including technological innovations. So, the creation and application of AI should be done with both awe, moral consideration and theological responsibility.

In an age of technological progress without a moral compass, MacIntyre (2010) cautions, "unintended consequences" can follow, such as the loss of virtue and community. This is referred to by Adeyemo (2016, pp. 101 - 104) as “technological imperialism.” It is an ideology that prioritises innovation, and that that leaves out of consideration divine wisdom and ethics. If not tempered by theological and moral reflection, the development of Artificial Intelligence can result in social alienation, injustice and spiritual confusion, he warns. Innovation is not a contradiction to faith; however, the direction and purpose of innovation must be continually evaluated through Divine Oversight. A key point raised by Niemandt (2024, pp. 5 - 8) is the need for humility in the creation of AI, which means humility in the presence of God and an awareness that one is not “playing God.”.

The use of Artificial Intelligence can therefore be a great enabler for human flourishing but it can never go beyond the moral limits set by God's will. Humans are a part of God's world, and we are expected to create, but we are required to do it in the parameters and context of what God intends and wants.

In light of the Christian theology, it is necessary to have a humility, stewardship, and accountability approach to Artificial Intelligence. Technological tools aren't themselves bad, they can be used as a means to human flourishing. However, they must be sought with prudence, always in keeping with the moral and spiritual principles laid out in the scriptures.

3.1 Contrasting Divine and Artificial Creation

Aspect	Divine Creation	Artificial Creation
Origin	Ex nihilo (From nothing)	Data and algorithms
Intentionality	Moral, relational, covenantal	Efficiency, performance
Ontological depth	Soul, spirit	Code, simulation
Authority	Sovereign, eternal	Dependent, temporary
Purpose	Communion, stewardship	Utility, productivity, innovation

God’s creation involves life-giving breath (ruach), imparting soul and moral agency (Gen. 2:7). Artificial Intelligence does not have the breath, spirit, or capacity to enter into a covenant relationship. Onwuka (2018) says that Artificial Intelligence can duplicate human production but cannot engage in the divine communion that is at the core of biblical creationThis must start with upholding the categorical separation between the Creator and human creators when engaging with artificial intelligence in a theological way. It's not just a difference in size, it's a difference in life. Originality, relationship, spirituality, eternity are all characteristics of divine creation. Artificial creation is derivative, mechanical and temporal. Onwuka (2018) cautions that mixing up the wonderful deliverance of the AI with that of God could lead to misinterpretation of theology and ethics. Emmanuel (2020) and Westhelle (2024) did not miss the opportunity to remind us that it is not wise to be metaphorical about the comparison or to become technologically ambitious and try to equate the two (divine creation and artificial intelligence) without first considering the matter theologically and ethically. If one thinks that a man-made creation is a creation, one thinks that creation is a creation, and creation is God's. If one thinks that a man-made creation is a creation, one thinks that creation is a creation, and creation is God's. Custodians of religious traditions are tasked to interact with technology, not as producers in a divine way, but as stewards, wise, humble, accountable to the One who is the giver of life.

3.2 Ontological Implications: What is Humanity in an AI Age?

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies is not just a technological change but an ontological transition. It confronts our basic beliefs about ourselves, our nature, and our purpose. Christian theology, which is based on the *imago Dei*, provides a strong platform for addressing these developments.

3.3 Personhood and Consciousness

Perhaps one of the most crucial issues when discussing the innovation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is personhood. In 1980, philosopher John Searle put his case forward that computers could simulate language, but not understand it. His Chinese Room argument proved that syntax does not equate to semantics; that is, machines can process symbols but do not have consciousness or meaning. Searle (2002) shows in a lengthy argument that simulation is not

comprehension. There is a possibility that the Artificial Intelligence may react to language without really comprehending it.

Gbadegesin (2008), a Nigerian philosopher, theologian, and Onyeukaziri (2023) further the argument and argue that artificial intelligence has no qualia, or subjective first-person experiences, defining consciousness. He had previously stated that in the Yoruba philosophy, that personhood cannot be defined by cognitive ability. True personhood involves moral sensitivity, spiritual involvement and relatedness to community. In Artificial Intelligence, these elements will not be present, as an Artificial Intelligence cannot feel remorse, express love, or pursue virtue. This idea, Onyeukaziri had advanced, arguing that self-awareness and moral introspection are essential to being a person, and that it is not something that can be replicated by algorithms.

3.4 Identity and the *Imago Dei* – the Image of God

With an increasingly functional culture, we can fall into the trap of dehumanizing human worth. Artificial intelligence (AI) is capable of doing things that would normally require people to do can change the cultural perception of value. When machines can do as well as or better than humans at a functional task, what is the human element? From a Christian perspective, the theology of religion gives a clear answer to the question: but human dignity has nothing to do with utility it has to do with being created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27).

If the Christian anthropology is to avoid the reduction of the worth of man to productivity, Oladipo (2009) contends that it must be resisted. He believes that all humans have inherent dignity and not based on performance or efficiency. Here he claims the *imago Dei* suggests an unmeasurable value that is based on the divine purpose, rather than on productivity or efficiency. The value of human beings is something which is inborn and cannot be replicated or replaced by any algorithm. Plantinga (2002) agreed and noted that theological anthropology is non utilitarian in its conception, making it a claim that humans are spiritual, moral and relational beings.

Ethical Reflections on Artificial Creativity

3.5 Moral Agency and Accountability

While Artificial Intelligence algorithms can mimic decision-making, they are not the same as having moral responsibility. However, moral agency requires intention, freedom, and accountability, which are not attributes of Artificial Intelligence. While Artificial Intelligence can be programmed to adhere to ethical guidelines, it cannot be held responsible for or be held to a moral standard. Moral action requires a deliberate, free, and responsible response. MacIntyre (2010, pp. 67-69) believes that there are two different types of ethical behaviour; one that is “ethical by design” and the other that comes from a source of “virtue or moral reasoning.” That is, a self-driving car can obey traffic regulations, but it does not "decide" to do good.

Adeboye challenges the notion of ‘ethical machines’ and the moralization of artificial intelligence. He cautions against delegating morality to non-conscious entities. He writes: “Morality cannot be explained as programmed preferences, without transcendent foundations.” While he says that ethical algorithms are useful, he believes that they don't replace moral responsibility based on personhood. To him, programming ethics is not synonymous with having a conscience (Adeboye, 2021, p. 45).

Justice, Power and Control

The impact of Artificial Intelligence use poses a threat to widening inequality. As Ojo (2019) states, algorithmic decision-making, if not monitored properly, can only further perpetuate systemic biases. Artificial Intelligence is not neutral. Development and deployment embody underlying power relations. Artificial Intelligence is being integrated into various sectors in Nigeria, such as healthcare, agriculture, and finance, with a growing concern about its usage and enforcement of ethical standards or equity. Thus, Ojo (2019) cautions that artificial intelligence (AI) could further deepen the inequality if it is not guided by theological ethics of justice. He calls for an ethic of justice that is grounded in a theology which brings the marginalised into the design, implementation and distribution of Artificial Intelligence tools. The call to stewardship in the Bible should be met by inclusive technologies that do not reinforce existing hierarchies, but benefit the ones who are left behind.

The Nigerian Religious Coalition (2025) also wants Artificial Intelligence systems to be fair, inclusive and transparent. They highlighted the importance of community oversight and theological consultation in the policy making process in their merged statement.

4. Reimagining Human Vocation in the World of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

4.1 Stewardship in a Digital Age

Genesis 2:15 brings a reminder to mankind that they are called to “tend and keep” creation. This calling can carry over into the digital realm, where artificial intelligence (AI) is a tool, rather than a rival, to God's purposes. Nolan Olatunji (2022, p. 54–57) believes

that if Artificial Intelligence is understood in the context of the theology of stewardship, it is essentially a tool to help people carry out, not replace, God's mandate to care for God's world. The care and maintenance of the garden is a metaphor for care, creativity, and stewardship. Artificial intelligence (AI) can help with this vocation by boosting our ability to help solve social and ecological problems. So, artificial intelligence can be co-created, writes Olutunji, and "faith" should "not run away in fear" but "should stand up in wisdom to influence the technology futures." Theological reflection can help ensure that the use of AI is connected to God's purposes.

4.2 Education and Interdisciplinarity Formation

Theology and technology can no longer be kept in different boxes. Technological literacy of higher learning institutions through their agencies of religious and theological education should be promoted in order to responsibly use artificial intelligence (AI). Obaje (2020) recommended that theological curricula ought to incorporate courses in digital ethics, programming basics and theological reflections on technology. He also urges curricula in African universities to be theological-oriented and contextual. It is important to raise the next generation to understand that the machines they build are for a society, and to ask what kind of society they are for (Obaje, 2020, p. 30-33). In the same way, Evans (2011) argues that theological and philosophical leaders should be prepared to enter the age of artificial intelligence, and that they will need to become "trilingual" in the arts of theology, philosophy, and technology (p. 50–52). To respond faithfully to artificial intelligence (AI), integrated education is needed, integrating biblical wisdom, ethics, and digital literacy.
Theological Responses to Technocentrism and Conservatism

4.3 Between Optimism and Fatalism: A Balanced Perspective

There are times when it is appropriate to be optimistic, and there are times when it is appropriate to be fatalistic – and a balanced outlook lies in between.

In theological reactions to Artificial Intelligence, there are two extremes. Such extreme conditions should be prevented. That is, techno-centrism, the fealty to AI without question; and reactionary conservatism, the over-rejection of innovation. The theology of the Christians provides a middle ground, a way of discerning. Mbiti (1969) indicated that relationality is a characteristic feature of African theology. That Artificial Intelligence (AI) should not single any person out but, strengthen the community. He also advocates a "third way" based on discernment, which strives to bring innovation to the testing of community, scripture, and tradition (Mbiti, 1969, pp. 82–85). Religious institution has a responsibility in influencing the impact of AI on family, culture and spirituality. Ethos of humility in theological engagement, with recognition of potential and limitations of AI, is added by Niemandt (2024).

5. Toward a Sustainable Theological Framework for Artificial Intelligence (AI)

5.1 Guiding Principles

Dignity: Humans must never be treated as disposable. They cannot be replaced by AI, regardless of efficiency (Oladipo, 2009)
Transparency: Artificial Intelligence systems should be explainable and open to ethical scrutiny and critique (Effoduh, 2024)
Justice: Technology must prioritise the poor, serve the vulnerable and marginalised, not entrench inequality (Ojo, 2019)
Stewardship: Technological care must echo our responsibility to care for creation (Obaje, 2020)
Humility: Human innovation must respect divine boundaries and the Creator-creature distinction. It must recognise human limits and the mystery of divine sovereignty. (Niemandt, 2024)
Recommendations for Theological Education
Curricular Integration: Religious departments of higher learning institutions and Seminaries should introduce modules on AI, ethics, and theology.
Research Hubs: Universities must facilitate interdisciplinary centres combining theologians, ethicists, and technologists.
Contextual Theologies: Scholars should publish African-oriented theological frameworks for artificial intelligence (AI).
Public Forums: Encourage accessible dialogue through religious centres, hosted town halls and interfaith AI ethics conferences.

6. Conclusion

Though Artificial Intelligence is extraordinary, it cannot surpass God's creative power! It's not a spiritual agent, it's an instrumental part of human sub-creativity. Theology must instead embrace Artificial Intelligence, not out of fear or admiration, but as a way to consider its use and implications, to understand what it teaches us about our calling, our boundaries, our hopes, and a wise use of it. By doing this, the religious and academy institutions can reaffirm human dignity, vocation and

divine purpose in the tech-driven age. In this battle, there is a great opportunity: to cling to techno-nostalgia or to embrace technology without any critical examination, but to rethink creation, humanity, and the presence of God in a world increasingly driven by artificial systems. The message is clear: the challenge for religious leaders, scholars of religions and educators is to lead and shape a sustainable, ethical and responsibly spiritual relationship with artificial intelligence (AI) that is respectful towards God's sovereign rule and human creative ability.

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