Is Artificial Intelligence (AI) Redefining What It Means To Be Human? Interactions between AI, Religion and Society

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Abstract: - **Current controversial articles that reveal the prowess that Artificial Intelligence (AI) can play over humans have sent out panic in society among both believers and non-believers. The foundations of Artificial Intelligence dates back in the days of Aristotle (384 BC - 322 BC) with his syllogism work that entailed logic reasoning of machines about their environment. Today, it is evident that society is embracing the AI technology as robots are increasingly found in various human environments including homes, hotels, retail stores and hospitals. Using various existing studies and literature, this article attempted to discuss the interaction between Artificial intelligence, religion and society. Despite the embrace of the AI in the contemporary society, there are worries in society on the future of AI and humanity. A religious perspective seems to lack a wholesome opinion over this as no studies associate AI and religion. However, apocalyptic religion states that the conscience of man is being transferred to machines thus making the machines more relevant. The worries among believers is pegged on the scientific prediction that by 2040, robots could work much better and cheaper than man, of which compromise the biblical view that God made man on His own image giving man power over everything on earth. For the Islamic religion, everything created by God was meant for man. Religious perspective shows that God does not appreciate human advancements that would compromise His supremacy. The worries of the society as a whole rest in loss of job opportunities through replacement by robots and other AI technologies. The concern also manifests in the uncertainty of exhausting innovation in technology. All in all, adoption of AI is the fourth industrial revolution that the society can adopt to augment capacities to serve the growing population.**

Key Words: **Artificial Intelligence, Human Power, Religion, Society, Technology**

I. INTRODUCTION

Current controversial articles that reveal the prowess that Artificial Intelligence (AI) can play over humans have sent out panic in society among both believers and non-believers. Predictions such as the chief scientist's at Sun Microsystems that advances in nano-technology could replace human species by 2030, and Hans Moravec's (AI expert) that robots could perform better and cheaper than humans by 2040 (Herzfeld, 2003) are indeed frightening. It even creates more suspense in society when scientists like Stephen Hawking (Author of *Theory of Everything*) boldly warns that human beings may need to undergo genetic modification to remain superior to advances in computer technology (Walsh, 2001). While this popularity grows, believers are still optimistic that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is simply an integration of scientific research and apocalyptic religion (Saygin, Chaminade, Ishiguro, Driver and Frith, 2011). On the other hand, the society in the developing world feels that the AI technology is meant to bridge the gap of labor force in the developed countries which have much greater median ages.

Scientists define Artificial Intelligence (AI) as the use of machines to simulate human intelligence processes by letting computer systems perform the learning processes, problem-solving and reasoning (Saratchandran, 2019). The foundations of Artificial Intelligence dates back in the days of Aristotle (384 BC - 322 BC) with his syllogism work that entailed logic reasoning of machines about their environment. Through these traces, one of the earliest experiments was Alan Turing's (1912-1954) who set up a machine and a human in separate compartments to demonstrate that one could not differentiate between the work of the machine from that of the human (Dodd, Grant and Seruwagi, 2011). This has implication for definition of human and what they are able to do. In religion, believers have it that God created (hu)man in His own image and gave him power over everything under the sun (Genesis, 1:27-28) which implies that nothing on earth can compare ability to man.

Today, it is evident that society is embracing the AI technology as robots are increasingly found in various human environments including homes, hotels, retail stores and hospitals. A Nomura Research Institute (NRI) survey on AI and robots in Japan, the U.S. and Germany revealed that there exist differences among AI technology consumers in terms of knowledge, intention to use and acceptance (Nitto, Taniyama and Inagaki, 2017). The survey results put the U.S. as the most enthusiastic and highest robot users at home and in retail stores. For the Japan respondents, despite their highest level of familiarity with robots, they often associate robots with communication tasks while the Germany respondents showed the strongest tendency to use robots in industries with resistance to use in homes. However, the survey does not indicate association of the respondents' religious faiths and acceptance of the robots. These findings preset the course of society in understanding and using AI and the religious

perception of the AI technologies. Thus, this essay discusses the interactions between AI, religion and society with a focus on whether AI is redefining what is human.

II. SOCIETAL NEEDS AND APPLICATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Across the globe, Artificial Intelligence is redefining human resource department through incorporation of new data-driven tools. Automation of conversation between computer systems and human user has transformed the HR services to employees (Edathikunnel, 2018). Through the IBM Institute for Business Value, Edathikunnel surveyed New York and reported that half of the respondents appreciated cognitive computing in HR management by stimulating talent acquisition, improving efficiencies in operations and general talent development among employees. In a similar section, Hitachi, a Japanese electronics company, attributed its effectiveness and 8 percent efficiency achievement in providing adequate instructions to employees to use of AI (Hitachi News, 2015).

For consistent performance of a business, customer service is one of the concerns considered among many managers (Ilieska, 2013). Use of AI technology has transformed the techniques of monitoring, evaluating and improving customer service. A U.S. survey found nearly 85% of the customer interactions delivered in absence of a human agent (Saratchandran, 2019). This human-AI interaction popularity growth implies that by 2030-2040, robots will coexist with humans thus forming a "robotic society." While humans feel empathy and understanding towards robots, there is always an emotional worry that robots will soon look too human-like (Saygin, Chaminade, Ishiguro, Driver and Frith, 2011).

What about falls among the geriatric population in nursing homes and hospitals worldwide? This is a need that continue to pose a serious healthcare concern. Abraham and Cimino-Fiallos (2017) reported falls as the major cause of injury among the geriatric population. Adoption of AI technology in nursing care is one of the potential solutions to this human suffering. This is another illustration of AI interaction with society through application of the technology to alleviate human suffering.

For Africa, the youthful demographic boom and its trends call for innovative approaches like AI to address slower-paced governance growth (the 2018 Ibrahim Index of African Governance). Unlike China with a median age of 37.7, the US at 38.1, or Germany at 47.1, Africa is at 19.5 and this population is expected to double by 2055 (World Population Atlas, 2018). This has contributed to pressure in delivering services to society. With continued variety of studies and research to address these needs, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been thought as a potential solution (Besaw and Filitz, 2019). This justifies the views about AI being meant for developed countries which have lower labor force compared to the developing countries.

III. RELIGIOUS AND SOCIO-CULTURAL PERCEPTUAL IMPLICATIONS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Interaction of AI and religion in society is rather a unique construct as circumscribing religious dimensions in technological advancement is difficult. Religious dimensions are not fully considered into human social life. This seems to be the coherence on which the adoption and utilization of AI technology is manifesting on. No evidence exists to associate 'obvious religion' with AI and societies (Clipper et al., 2018). However, concerns arise when robots start becoming human-like (Saygin et. al., 2011) which create a paradox evoking what is known to define human especially from biblical understanding the man was created by God in His own image (Genesis 1:27). In relation to this, apocalyptic religion is of view that human consciousness has been transferred into machines. This actually redefines what is meant to be human as consciousness is key the unique aspect (Bidshahri, 2018).

What about the Muslim faith perspective? The Muslim principle about creations and power given to man is … *Anything is permissible, except what harms humanity.* The Quran says, "He's who (God) created all things and given for you (man)" (Q.2:29). This implies that human beings explore and use various components and technology around them because they have been bestowed upon them by God. Thus, no conflict on the Islamic faith and AI. However, the Quran in chapter 28 verse 38 indicates that when human beings feel that they have "sufficient" power and technology, they carry out activities that seem to compete and challenge God. Pharaoh called his ministers to build a tower to reach God of Moses. This is also corroborated by the Bible in Genesis 11 where the people felt that they had knowledge and technology to build a Tower of Babel to reach God. The eventualities through God (spread them by differentiating their languages) shows that as much as God is the giver of everything, He's not to be "competed" using human abilities and technologies.

Despite the socio-economic role played by robotics and AI technology, some worry about their negative effects is growing into a societal concern. Frey and Osborne (2013) predict reductions in employment opportunities as technology take over responsibilities. Scientific prediction that full utilization of artificial intelligence could make man redundant in human resources (Cellan-Jones, 2014) is indeed news not welcome by some societies. This is likely to cause social demean of humanity in regard to thinking. However, different interpretations take centre stage. Some biblical interpreters have no problem with this technology as they believe that this (AI technology) existed in the spiritual realm, and only awaited its time (time for everything, Ecclesiastes 3:1, KJV). In Buddhism religion, believing is entirely philosophical. This makes the society to reflect on the religion's (Buddhism) approach as to whether it is in any way associated with AI technology (Promta and Himma, 2008). This may bear some truths as the foundations of AI is traced in Aristotle's philosophy of logical thinking. However, there is no studies

associating types of religion and acceptance and intention to use AI products and services.

In a different perspective of religious concern over AI, Saygin et al., (2011) posit that the society has put preference in science to religious faith. In fact, evidence from NRI survey showed that over 55% of American respondents agreed that society is more dependent on technology than religious faith, with the Japanese and German respondents agreeing at 40% and 35% respectively. However, Kimura (2017) state that in order to place Robotics and AI technology in religion, both social and cultural aspects of the technology must be checked. He continues to illustrate that even the engineering designing traces its origin in cultural aesthetics. This argument goes beyond the technology itself to explain that extend of production, utilization and acceptance of AI is driven by economic and political boundaries i.e. more in developed countries compared to developing countries (Kimura, 2011).

Apparently, other social-cultural aspects of the application of AI concern is the competition of the technology and human labour which touches to the theoretical manifestation of Social Conflict theory. The theory states that human beings exist in an environment of scarce resources which makes men fight for the resources. The Kenyan cases included the demonstrations held in Kericho Tea growing zone in 2006 after the introduction of the proposed Tea harvesting machines. Due to this technological advancement, the locals had to protest against the machines as they (machines) had threatened their jobs and could have rendered them redundant. This led to social conflicts here the government had to intervene by minimizing the use of the machines.

In African context, AI may not be welcome as a man (husband) is expected to show his masculinity by basically working out tasks without mechanization. Men who tend to rely on machines (technology) to execute tasks are looked demeaned by women in society.

Developing nations have perceptual considerations of AI technology as a way of neocolonialism. The AI products including robots and moving pictures in form of cartoons from developed countries have copyrights for production while being fed to developing countries for consumption only. In another dimension of the AI and society is the increased costs for research and innovation related to the technology. While billions of money in dollars are spent to explore the space, inventions and related AI, a significant number of people around the world are dying from hunger(Huber, 2017). Space exploration using technology that have been consuming billions of money are yet to show significant benefits to the world. Through AI, war and terrorist acts have doubled in the recent past. Having a global view implies that this is a misplacement of priorities.

IV. CONCLUSION

This article attempted to discuss the interaction between Artificial intelligence, religion and society. The discussions illustrate that Artificial Intelligence is a concept dating back in the BC period with traces of origin entailing philosophers like Aristotle on logic thinking. The society is enthusiastically embracing the AI technology by use in homes, schools, industries, shopping stores among others. Despite the embrace of the AI, there are worries in society on the future of AI and humanity. A religious perspective seems to lack a wholesome opinion over this as no studies associate AI and religion. However, apocalyptic religion states that the conscience of man is being transferred to machines thus making the machines more relevant. The worries among believers is pegged on the scientific prediction that by 2040, robots could work much better and cheaper than man, of which compromise the biblical and Islamic tradition views that God created man on His own image giving man power over everything on earth. The worries of the society as a whole rest in loss of job opportunities through replacement by robots and other AI technologies. However, the question that lives on is the concern about possibilities of exhausting the technological advancement in what philosophers and theorists termed as Paradigm Shift. The highest level of technology may detract to diminish. The examples of these can be drawn from the changing of power over the world like the British Empire. Technological abilities have been swaying from the Britain, to US and now more popular in China.

This growth path may expose the world to brink of unknown precipice where man will be exposed to no further exploration. This will also be after several civilization brackets. All in all, adoption of AI is the fourth industrial revolution that the society can adopt to augment capacities to serve the growing population.

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