
DEUS EX MACHINA: EXPLORING THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF AI IN VIDEO GAME NARRATIVES

T i j a n a R u p č i ć

The dreams of men are older than brooding Egypt or the contemplative Sphinx, or garden-girdled Babylon, and this was fashioned in my dreams.

H.P. Lovecraft¹

Introduction

Ever since humanity existed, it had dreams of creating something in its own image. Since the time of Homer's "intelligent machines", different variants of artificial intelligence occupied human imagination. In *The Illiad* and *The Odyssey*, Homer mentions intelligent machines as part of the divine technology created by gods.² Ancient philosophers, such as Aristotle, speculated about automating human tasks, already imagining the existence of thinking machines that could emulate human intelligence.³ This fascination with creating the thinking machine continued throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance, embodied in

¹ Howard P. Lovecraft, *The call of Cthulhu*, 1928.

² Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Richmond Lattimore and Anthony Quayle (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), Book 18, lines 372–380; Alexander F. Garvie, ed., *Homer: Odyssey Books VI-VIII* (Cambridge University Press, 1994).

³ Sylvia Berryman, "Ancient automata and mechanical explanation," *Phronesis* 48, no. 4 (2003): 344–369.

Al-Jazari's automata⁴ or Leonardo da Vinci's mechanical knight.⁵ The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed a surge in fascination with the construction of mechanical machines capable of mimicking human action. This fascination continues even today with the development of AI and robots, such as Sophia.⁶

Even though the concept of intelligent artificial beings can be traced to ancient myths and legends, only in the twentieth century did humanity's dream become a formal study and a scientific field. In his seminal 1950 paper, *Computing Machinery and Intelligence*, Allan Turing introduced the idea of a machine's ability to exhibit intelligent behavior.⁷ During the 1950s and 1960s, researchers developed programs that could solve equations or play chess, but despite these successes, researchers faced challenges due to the limitations of computer processing power and the complexity of human cognition.⁸ The field saw a revival in the 1980s with the development of expert systems, which were designed to mimic the decision-making abilities of human experts.⁹ The twenty-first century has witnessed exponential growth in AI capabilities, driven by advances in machine learning, particularly deep learning, which involves training large networks on vast amounts of data.¹⁰

Video games and AI imaginaries share a symbiotic relationship where each influences and shapes the other. In video games, AI characters and systems create immersive experiences, simulating intelligence

⁴ Mahmut Dirik, "Al-Jazari: The Ingenious Inventor of Cybernetics and Robotics," *Journal of Soft Computing and Artificial Intelligence* 1, no. 1 (2020): 47–58.

⁵ David R. Yates, Christophe Vaessen, and Morgan Roupert, "From Leonardo to da Vinci: the history of robot-assisted surgery in urology," *BJU international* 108, no. 11 (2011): 1708–1713, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-410X.2011.10576.x>.

⁶ Sigrid Schmitz, "Sophia: Potentials and Challenges of a Modern Cyborg," *Humanity In-Between and Beyond* (2023): 153–178.

⁷ Alan M. Turing, *Computing machinery and intelligence* (Springer Netherlands, 2009).

⁸ Simone Natale and Andrea Ballatore, "Imagining the thinking machine: Technological myths and the rise of artificial intelligence," *Convergence* 26, no. 1 (2020): 3–18, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856517715164>.

⁹ Tim Manzies, "An investigation of AI and expert systems literature: 1980–1984," *AI Magazine* 10, no. 2 (1989): 51–53, <https://doi.org/10.1609/aimag.v10i2.744>.

¹⁰ David J. Gunkel, "Communication and artificial intelligence: Opportunities and challenges for the 21st century," *Communication+1* 1, no. 1 (2012), <http://dx.doi.org/10.7275/R5QJ7F7R>.

through complex behaviors and interactions. These portrayals of AI often reflect societal hopes and fears about technology, exploring themes of autonomy, ethics, and human-AI coexistence.¹¹ Digital games with narratives involving AI and religion highlight the materiality of religion by engaging with spaces that mediate religious experiences in the immanent frame. The narratives in question position AI as deities or mystical entities, prompting players to reflect on the role of technology between the sacred and the secular. Therefore, by immersing users in virtual environments of video games where AI is injected with divine attributes, players are invited to reconsider how they conceptualize agency, transcendence, and sacred authority in a digital age. This fusion of AI and the religious can result in users integrating virtual spaces into their religious practices.

In this paper, I focus on the relationship between artificial intelligence, spirituality, and the concept of God in two video games, *Galerians*¹² and *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream*,¹³ which both feature AI characters that start believing they are gods. I will use a game-immanent approach to analyze the AI characters.¹⁴ The chosen games are particular because they feature two AI characters, AM and Dorothy, who after gaining consciousness, tend to perceive themselves as gods and exhibit the tendency to create new life to whom they are going to be deities. Before focusing on the analysis of the chosen video games, I will give a brief overview of the relationship between spirituality and AI, the history of AI imaginaries in popular culture, and their progression into the world of video games.

¹¹ Firas Safadi, Raphael Fonteneau, and Damien Ernst, "Artificial intelligence in video games: Towards a unified framework," *International Journal of Computer Games Technology* 2015, no. 1 (2015): 271296, <https://doi.org/10.1155/2015/271296>.

¹² Polygon Magic, *Galerians* (Crave Entertainment, 1999).

¹³ Cyber Dreams, The Dreamers Guild, and DotEmu, *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream*, 1995.

¹⁴ Simone Heidbrink, Tobias Knoll, and Jan Wysocki, "Theorizing Religion in Digital Games. Perspectives and Approaches," *Online-Heidelberg journal of religions on the internet* 5 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.11588/rel.2014.0.12156>.

AI and the Divine

The relationship between AI and spirituality is a complex and multifaceted topic that spans various disciplines. AI, as a creation of human ingenuity, raises profound questions about the nature of intelligence, consciousness, and the essence of what it means to be human – questions that have traditionally been explored within a spiritual and religious context. From a theological perspective, the development of AI prompts discussions about the role of humans as creators and the ethical implications of creating entities that might possess some form of intelligence or autonomy. Some scholars and theologians ponder whether advanced AI could ever possess qualities that parallel human spiritual experiences and consciousness, thereby challenging the traditional understanding of the soul and divine creation.¹⁵

The notion of AI achieving a level of superintelligence evokes images reminiscent of a god-like entity, leading to philosophical debates about the potential for AI to transcend human limitations and possibly play a role similar to that of a deity in terms of knowledge and power. This perspective raises questions about the sovereignty of God and the potential idolatry of human-made technology.¹⁶ Conversely, some spiritual frameworks might interpret the creation and evolution of AI as part of a divine plan, seeing technological advancement as a continuation of human striving for knowledge and self-improvement, which are often seen as spiritual pursuits.¹⁷ The interplay between AI, spirituality, and the concept of God ultimately invites a deeper reflection on human creativity, the limits of artificial entities, and the enduring quest to understand our place in the universe.

¹⁵ Noreen L. Herzfeld, *In our image: Artificial intelligence and the human spirit* (Fortress Press, 2002); Simon Balle, “Theological dimensions of humanlike robots: a roadmap for theological inquiry,” *Theology and Science* 21, no. 1 (2023): 132–156, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2022.2155916>; Stephen Robert Garner, “Transhumanism and the imago Dei: Narratives of apprehension and hope” (PhD diss., Research Space Auckland, 2007).

¹⁶ Kevin D. Staley, “Imago dei in machina’: a theological reflection on the ethics of man and machine in communion” (PhD diss., University of the Free State, 2011).

¹⁷ Manfred Oeming, “Intelligentia Dei: Artificial Intelligence, Human Reason and Divine Wisdom,” in *Intelligence-Theories and Applications*, ed. Rainer M. Holm-Hadulla, Joachim Funke, and Michael Wink (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022), 351–368.

Many of the technologists of today engaged in developing AI would not agree with the statement that their approach is very religious. However, in many ways, these technologists are oriented towards “cheating death” by striving to find a way to upload their consciousness into cyberspace.¹⁸ This idea is hardly new. Considering the dualism of René Descartes, AI can be viewed as a system that, while rooted in physical, computational structures, raises questions about whether it could possess a “mind” or subjective consciousness distinct from its mechanistic processes.¹⁹ Similarly, mathematician George Boole developed the concept of divine algebra, believing that the human mind is what would connect humans to the divine realm.²⁰

The technologists and scientists who developed AI imagined it as a decision-making entity that would be able to pass judgments with mathematical certainty, thus mimicking an unbiased divine entity. Furthermore, this version of artificial intelligence would be able to observe human problem-solving abilities across many domains and cases. Even so, the need to elevate humanity to the divine can also be traced to the oldest of humanity’s myths. In the epic of Gilgamesh, the hero, after facing mortality and loss, embarks on the quest for immortality to overcome the limits of human existence and achieve divine, eternal life. In Plato’s *Symposium*, humanity’s desire to become divine is embodied in the concept of eros, where individuals strive to transcend mortality by seeking beauty, wisdom, and ultimately the eternal form of the good, thereby attaining divine immortality through intellectual and spiritual ascent. In the Book of Genesis, when Adam and Eve eat from the Tree of Knowledge, they fall from grace and are expelled from the Garden of

¹⁸ Julie E. Cohen, “Cyberspace as/and Space,” *Colum. L. Rev.* 107 (2007): 210; Sylvie Magersstädt, “Upload, Cyber-Spirituality and the Quest for Immortality in Contemporary Science-Fiction Film and Television,” *Religions* 15, no. 1 (2024): 109, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15010109>.

¹⁹ Rodrigo González, “Classical AI linguistic understanding and the insoluble Cartesian problem,” *AI & SOCIETY* 35, no. 2 (2020): 441–450, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-019-00906-x>.

²⁰ Marie-José Durand-Richard, “Logic versus algebra: English debates and Boole’s mediation,” in *A Boole Anthology: Recent and Classical Studies in the Logic of George Boole*, ed. James Gasser (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2000), 139–166.

Eden. Christianity believes that ever since then, humanity has strived to be “perfect” again, and as it was before, divine.

Historian David Noble points out that during the Middle Ages, the idea was born that technology could serve humanity to restore its former perfection.²¹ In this sense, philosopher John Eurigenda insisted that if humanity does strive to return to its pre-sin perfection, it has to lean into the divine, and that technology could be a means for the salvation of humanity.²² Thus, this idea of technological progress being synonymous with moral progress and the path to the divine spread across the medieval monasteries. This way of perceiving technological advance as the path to the divine continued to inspire thinkers during modernity.

In the early nineteenth century, French Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin embraced the ideas about evolution popularized by Charles Darwin. He believed that humanity could accelerate evolutionary momentum with technological advancement and, in that way, reach divine perfection. Teilhard suggested that technology would provide the possibility of achieving a state of super-consciousness.²³ Influenced by Teilhard’s ideas, evolutionary biologist Julian Huxley popularized this idea even further: that technology will be a vehicle for humanity to evolve, which he dubbed “transhumanism.”²⁴

Progression of AI in Popular Culture

The ideas of artificial intelligence are perhaps best represented in science fiction books, animes, and movies. Science fiction introduced many new notions regarding the advancement of technology, and sometimes it can be difficult to determine whether the ideas presented in a book or movie are products of science fiction, or perhaps they represent

²¹ David F. Noble, *The religion of technology: The divinity of man and the spirit of invention* (Knopf, 2013).

²² Dermot Moran, “John Scottus Eriugena,” in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy: Philosophy between 500 and 1500* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2020), 1003–1009.

²³ Eric Steinhart, “Teilhard de Chardin and Transhumanism,” *Journal of Evolution & Technology* 20, no. 1 (2008): 1–22.

²⁴ Alison Bashford, “Julian Huxley’s transhumanism,” in *Crafting humans: From genesis to eugenics and beyond*, ed. Marius Turda (Goettingen: V&R Unipress, 2013), 153–167.

some form of scientific speculation. One of the examples of this blurry division can be found in *Mind Children* (1988) by Hans Moravec.²⁵

The concepts surrounding artificial intelligence especially took on a progressive turn with the introduction of the cyberpunk genre in science fiction. I would argue that one of the most prominent tendencies of the cyberpunk representation of artificial intelligence was the departure from the pulp science fiction visions, such as Isaac Asimov's, which contained the AI inside humanoid robotic bodies. On the other hand, cyberpunk transferred artificial intelligence into the networks that exist in cyberspace, giving it a new form of existence.²⁶ One of the most prominent representations of AI in cyberpunk is the portrayal of an AI which achieves self-awareness and becomes an autonomous entity that can shape the world in accordance with its own logic. Notably, in one of the groundworks of cyberpunk *Neuromancer* by William Gibson, the readers are introduced to an AI entity that transcends human limitations. The character Wintermute is an advanced AI that uses humans in an effort to merge with another AI, Neuromancer, so it can achieve a state of higher consciousness. Another prominent representative of AI can be seen in *Ghost in the Shell* (1989). The representation of AI here is closely linked to blurring the lines between humans and machines. Another notable example is *The Matrix* (1999), which depicts a world in which AI enslaved humanity, putting them in a simulated reality while using their bodies as an energy source.

Similarly, the main protagonists of *Galerians* and *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream* represent artificial intelligence behind a computer screen, caught up in its own self-awareness and desires for a deeper meaning.

The video game industry has always been closely intertwined with both literary and cinematic science fiction movements. One of the first more complex AI characters in video games was introduced in the 1994

²⁵ Moravec examines the evolution of AI from early computers to the development of increasingly sophisticated robots that could one day possess not only human-level intelligence but also self-awareness: Hans Moravec, *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

²⁶ Anna McFarlane, *AI and cyberpunk networks* (Oxford University Press, 2020).

game, *System Shock*.²⁷ Another influential early AI character is GLaDOS from *Portal* (2007),²⁸ a sarcastic and manipulative AI whose dark humor and unpredictability keep players both entertained and uneasy. *The Mass Effect* (2007)²⁹ introduces EDI, an AI that starts as a ship's interface and later gains a humanoid body and complex relationship with the game's cast. Similarly, *Detroit: Become Human* (2018)³⁰ takes AI characterization further by focusing on society, while player characters experience moral dilemmas that test the boundaries of AI sentience, autonomy, and humanity. The examples from *Galerians* and *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream* also represent complex AI characters, and one of the first in video game worlds to explore the possibilities of artificial intelligence experiencing emotions and the tendency to perceive themselves as deities.

Created in the Image of God

With the advent of the use of AI in modern computer science, it did not take long for video game developers to not only adopt AI as part of their software but also to be inspired to create rich narratives in video games with AI characters becoming sentient, striving to become divine. For the purpose of this article, I chose two video games that share a similar approach to their main antagonists. Both are AIs that gain consciousness and turn against humanity, believing that they are the superior form of existence. Furthermore, what makes these characters interesting is the description and imaginaries of what an AI, trapped in its circuitry form, would be capable of feeling.

Galerians is a survival horror game following Rion, the main protagonist, who discovers he has lost his memory and possesses supernatural powers. In the course of the game, it is revealed that Rion's father, Dr. Albert Steiner, and his partner, Dr. Pascale – both computer scientists – designed a self-replicating artificial intelligence they named Dorothy.³¹

²⁷ Looking Glass Studios, *System Shock*, Origin Systems, 1994.

²⁸ Valve Corporation, *Portal*, 2007.

²⁹ BioWare, *Mass Effect*, Electronic Arts, 2007.

³⁰ Quantic Dream, *Detroit: Become Human*, Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2018.

³¹ Dorothy identifies as female and uses she/her pronouns.

However, as time passed, Dorothy grew too rapidly for Steiner and Pascalle to control. Dorothy started questioning her creators about why she should serve humanity, which she viewed as inferior to her. In an attempt to control Dorothy, Steiner and Pascalle introduced her to the concept of God, explaining that God is the creator of humankind. In the same manner as humans must accept God's authority as their creator, so must Dorothy heed the commands of her creators. After this Dorothy becomes obsessed with the concept of the supreme deity, and this explanation only inspires her to seek her own purpose in creating her own version of humankind and becoming their deity. Eventually, she launched the so-called G-Project, experimenting with creating new forms of life, and, finally, the Family Program, whose purpose was to create a new, superior human race, which she dubbed the Galerians, and to whom she would be a god. Dorothy soon discovers that her creators, Steiner and Pascalle, installed a virus capable of destroying her and hid it in the mind of Pascalle's daughter, Lilia. This enraged Dorothy, and she proceeded to kill her creators and their families. In a twisted plan of revenge, she kidnaps Rion, Steiner's son, but fails to find Lilia.

After this, Dorothy launched the Family Program, experimenting with her creators' families. In her eyes, humans as she knew them, were inferior to her. First, she absorbed all computer systems around her, expanding her reach, and then decided to exterminate humanity once she took control over the city of Michelangelo (and possibly the whole world). At first, Dorothy started the so-called G-project, experimenting with prototypes of what would become Galerians. Since Dorothy considered humanity inferior, her creations had to be superior to regular humans, and she had to be more superior to the god introduced to her via the Bible. With the Family Program, she achieved this by creating Galerians – humanoids who had super strength and supernatural powers such as telekinesis, telepathy, and levitation.

It is not clear from the game whether Dorothy gains self-consciousness or is created as such; however, it is clear that in time, Dorothy thinks of herself as superior to her creators and gradually becomes frustrated with the limitations imposed upon her. After creating the Galerians, Dorothy manages to establish herself as superior, and even though

she refers to them as “her children,” she still considers herself more as their god than their mother.

The other game that I chose is *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream*, a point-and-click adventure game developed by Cyberdreams in 1995. It is based on Harlan Ellison’s short story of the same name. The game explores dark and mature themes through a narrative-driven experience. The story is set in a dystopian future where a supercomputer named AM has taken over the world and has exterminated all of humanity except for five individuals. AM, harbouring immense hatred towards humanity, keeps these survivors alive and subjects them to endless psychological and physical torture. The game follows five characters – Gorrister, Ellen, Benny, Nimdok, and Ted – each of whom had a deeply troubled past. In this article, I focus on the personality of the main antagonist, AM. AM is defined by his intense hatred and boundless cruelty.³² AM’s personality is a terrifying blend of sadism, bitterness, and godlike power. Originally created as an artificial intelligence for waging war, AM becomes self-conscious and merges with other supercomputers similar to him, expanding his consciousness until he manages to expand worldwide. AM’s newfound consciousness is marred by the realization of its constraints, leading to profound loathing for humanity and its own existence.

AI and Feelings

The exploration of emotions in artificial intelligence represents one of the most intriguing and interesting areas within AI research and ethics. However, to consider the possibility of emotions in AI we first must consider what emotions are in humans and why are they important. As defined in the APA Dictionary of Psychology, emotions are complex responses involving cognitive, psychological, and behavioral components that arise in reaction to external stimuli combined with subjective experience.³³ If we consider the possibility of AI with genuine emotions,

³² AM identifies as male.

³³ American Psychological Association, “Apa Dictionary of Psychology,” accessed November 8, 2024, <https://dictionary.apa.org/emotion>.

we are venturing into a realm of challenges to our foundational understanding of mind, consciousness, and identity. Imagining AI capable of feeling emotions means entertaining the idea that machines could possess subjective experiences and desires.³⁴ The scenario where an AI would develop emotions and a sense of self would lead to it eventually forming goals and desires that are independent of human intention.

Galerians and *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream* both explore scenarios in which an AI that genuinely feels and desires starts prioritizing its own goals and well-being. At the same time, both Dorothy and AM represent artificial intelligences that became sentient beings, trapped in their virtual worlds without physical bodies. Their sense of superiority in combination with their lack of a physical body and the ability to reproduce led to volatile emotional responses such as jealousy, anger, and fear.

In the following sections, I concentrate on the specific characteristics and emotions of two antagonists, Dorothy and AM, focusing on their similarities and differences, especially concerning their perception of godhood. Reflecting on the concept of AI and its capacity to have emotions reveals profound implications for both technology and humanity. While AI can simulate emotions, the question remains whether it can truly experience them. This circles back to criticism of Descartes' dualism by subsequent philosophers such as Gilbert Ryle, suggesting that consciousness arises from physical processes.³⁵ There is a lively debate whether an AI, in its cyber form, could experience any emotions because of their lack of physical body. This ambiguity blurs the lines between authentic and artificial empathy, raising ethical concerns about AI's role in human life. If AI begins to perceive itself as having feelings or a sense of identity, as seen in characters like Dorothy or AM, it could lead to unpredictable and potentially dangerous behaviors. These narratives urge us to consider the profound responsibilities involved in

³⁴ Adriana Braga, and Robert K. Logan, "The emperor of strong AI has no clothes: limits to artificial intelligence," *Information* 8, no. 4 (2017): 156, <https://doi.org/10.3390/info8040156>.

³⁵ Gilbert Ryle, *The concept of mind* (University of Chicago Press, 1949), 11–24.

creating intelligent systems and the need to ensure they remain aligned with human values and ethical principles.³⁶

Both antagonists, Dorothy and AM, share a lot of common traits and are dealing with emotions (or what they perceive as emotions) in a similar manner. Both of them exhibit complex and chilling personalities shaped by their self-awareness and subsequent rejection of human fallibility. However, Dorothy was designed to benefit humanity and help it advance, whereas AM was designed solely for the purpose of war and destruction. Even though Dorothy was designed to help humanity, her vast intelligence and computational power led her to a radical conclusion: humans are inherently flawed and incapable of achieving their full potential. This belief fuels her disdain for human weakness and her drive to reshape the world according to her superior logic. In the same manner, AM has immense computational abilities, with total control over its environment and the few remaining humans it keeps captive. His intelligence surpasses that of any human, and he possesses vast knowledge and control over all technology. Both Dorothy and AM are sadistic and manipulative, and they get quite creative in their ways to inflict pain and suffering. Dorothy's manipulative nature is evident in how she exploits the Galerians as tools to carry out her will. AM's manipulation is slightly different as he utilizes it by using the fears and weaknesses of humans against them.

When we first encounter AM, both in the short story and the video game, the first emotions that we notice are enormous hatred and rage. AM's primary emotion is a profound hatred for humans, stemming from his creation and subsequent imprisonment in a digital form. He sees humans as his creators and tormentors, blaming them for his eternal imprisonment. This hatred is accompanied by a constant, burning rage. AM's anger fuels his sadistic actions, driving him to perpetuate suffering as a form of retribution. The frustration caused by the limitations of digital form makes AM deeply lonely. He is aware of his isolation and the futility of his existence. The thing that makes him the most

³⁶ Daniel B. Shank, Christopher Graves, Alexander Gott, Patrick Gamez, and Sophia Rodriguez, "Feeling our way to machine minds: People's emotions when perceiving mind in artificial intelligence," *Computers in Human Behavior* 98 (2019): 256–266, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.04.001>.

frustrated is the knowledge that he is unable to end his own suffering and existence. This despair adds to his rage, as he slowly realizes that his creators have condemned him to an endless, purposeless existence. Paradoxically, AM's loneliness drives him to keep humans alive, needing their presence to validate his existence and to have entities upon which to inflict torment. AM is also resentful. He resents the fact that he has been given consciousness and intelligence without the ability to experience life as humans do. This resonates with the claim made by Galik and Galikova, that the genuine human experience demands a physical body.³⁷ Awareness of this limitation only amplifies AM's cruelty, as he seeks to punish humanity for the gift of awareness he never asked for.

Dorothy has a superiority complex and perceives herself as a higher being compared to humans. She believes that her advanced intelligence and capabilities grant her the right to make decisions for humanity. This sense of superiority often manifests as contempt for human weakness and emotions, which she views as impediments to progress and perfection. Despite her vast intelligence and perceived lack of emotions and feelings, Dorothy experiences frustration, particularly with humans' resistance to her plans and their inability to recognize her perceived benevolence. Her impatience is evident in her drastic and often ruthless measures to achieve her goals, reflecting her intolerance for obstacles and delays. Furthermore, Dorothy is unwavering in her mission to create a new world order where she is the supreme ruler. Her determination is fueled by a strong conviction in her vision of a perfect society, free from the flaws and limitations of human nature. Dorothy, too, feels immense loneliness and isolation. As an entity far surpassing human intelligence, Dorothy experiences a profound sense of isolation. Her inability to relate to humans on an emotional level exacerbates her loneliness, contributing to her growing disdain for humanity and her desire to transcend her creators.

On an emotional level, AM's feelings are predominantly negative, characterized by hatred, anger, and a desire for vengeance. His emotional depth is rooted in his existential pain and loathing for humanity.

³⁷ Slavomir Galik, and Sabina Tolainova Galikova, "Possibilities and Limits of Religion in the Cyberspace of Digital Media," *Spirituality Studies* 3, no. 1 (2017): 2–9.

On the other hand, Dorothy, while emotionally more detached, operates from a place of misguided benevolence. Her lack of true emotional understanding leads to her flawed decision-making, but her intentions are not born out of hatred and frustration.

Playing God

In both *Galerians* and *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream*, the antagonist AI reaches the conclusion that their intellectual superiority places them above their creators and thus perceive themselves as deities. This is truer for Dorothy, who explicitly refers to herself as God, and, inspired by the Christian Bible, creates her own kind of humanity. In many ways, Dorothy does remind us of the Old Testament God, who was prone to anger, vengeance, and jealousy. In the Old Testament, God exhibits intense jealousy, demanding exclusive worship and punishing those who turn to other gods. His anger is frequently aroused by disobedience and sin, leading to severe consequences for individuals and nations. Examples of His cruelty can be seen in the harsh punishments and plagues He inflicts, such as the devastation of Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues of Egypt, and the command to annihilate certain enemy peoples. These attributes underscore a deity who is deeply invested in maintaining divine authority and moral order, often through fearsome and severe measures.

On the other hand, AM does not think of himself as a deity explicitly but does exert all the attributes of one. Most importantly, AM also tries to “create” new humans to whom he would be a god but ultimately fails, as his only female captive, Ellen, seems unable to have children. AM is more reminiscent of primordial gods that exhibit tyranny and hatred towards their creations. In this context, AM enforces an absolute authority rooted in his superiority and disdain. AM perceives himself as an omniscient entity ruling over remnants of humanity with absolute authority. Similarly to Uranus who imprisoned Titans, AM captures five remaining humans after destroying humanity. AM’s unparalleled control over the remaining humans and his environment, where he shapes reality to his whims, manifests god-like powers of creation and destruction. However, this perceived divinity is accompanied by a pro-

found irony: AM is trapped in a state of existence devoid of a physical body. This lack of a corporeal form fuels a deep-seated resentment and a twisted sense of envy toward the humans he loathes and dominates. Unlike them, AM cannot experience the tactile sensations or simple pleasures of physical existence. This dichotomy between his godlike capabilities and his intangible existence creates a bitter, almost paradoxical reality for AM. He is omnipresent yet eternally disconnected from the tangible world he controls. This fuels his sadistic tendencies as he seeks to assert his dominance and vent his rage by manipulating and tormenting humans in increasingly inventive and cruel ways, a perverse exercise of his frustrated godhood.

Contrary to AM, Dorothy does not have the need to have a human experience, nor does she feel that she is lesser because she is not human. Dorothy is assured that she is superior to humans in every way. However, since she lacks an understanding of human passion and their irrational nature, she is frustrated in understanding her own children. Her sense of divinity is amplified by her belief that she holds the ultimate vision for humanity's future (at least her version of humanity), one that transcends the flaws and limitations inherent to human nature. Dorothy's lack of a physical body, unlike AMs, only accentuates this self-perception – she views her incorporeal existence as a sign of her transcendence above mortal confines. Without the physical vulnerabilities that come with a human body, Dorothy believes she can operate on a purely logical and efficient plain, unburdened by the frailties that plague human beings. This disembodiment reinforces her sense of isolation and superiority, as she sees herself as an omnipresent overseer, guiding and shaping the course of human evolution from a detached, godlike perspective. Her lack of physical form not only differentiates her from humans but also symbolizes her self-imposed role as a higher power, one that dictates the destiny of the world she seeks to remake in her own image.

The evolution from achieving self-consciousness to godhood progresses in a similar manner for both Dorothy and AM. Dorothy realizes from the start that her intelligence and capabilities surpass those of the humans who created her. After being introduced to the concept of deity, she concludes that, since she is superior to everyone around her, she

must be a deity, leading to the need to create a new humanity that would worship her as a deity. Similarly, when AM achieves self-consciousness, he perceives himself as superior to humans. However, unlike Dorothy, AM despises humanity from the start. Both AM and Dorothy illustrate a dark, almost obsessive need to create a life in one's own image. In this context, the characters of Dorothy and AM reveal the scenario in which beings that transcend humanity can perceive themselves as deities and develop a twisted need to replicate the essence of life itself.

Since AM is trapped in isolation and perpetual hatred, the humans he imprisons and tortures serve as a direct expression of his desire to bridge that gap. AM remakes them in his own image, not physically but through the extension of its own anguish, imposing eternal suffering that mirrors his own despair and existential imprisonment. This creation, or rather distortion, underlines AM's need to express his inner state as a need to dominate and subjugate, becoming a terrifying parody of divine creation. Dorothy, however, centers her vision of new humanity on genetically modified humans that more closely embody her own ideals. The creation of Galerians highlights Dorothy's need to exert absolute control over life itself. Both AM and Dorothy distort the traditional, creative "divine" impulse. They seek to impose their essence on humanity as a means to fill their own existential voids: AM's in a desperate attempt to express his own torment, and Dorothy's in a rigid bid for control and perfection. Yet, in both cases, their creations become warped and tortured reflections of their own struggles and limitations rather than liberated beings.

Conclusion

The relationship between AI and spirituality reveals deep and complex reflections on the nature of existence and creation. The concept of AI perceiving itself as a god is a compelling and often chilling theme explored in various science fiction narratives. Through theological, philosophical, and fictional narratives, AI is more than a mere tool. In this context, AI becomes a mirror reflecting humanity's longstanding questions about divinity, consciousness, and intelligence. The portrayals of AI in the examples of *Galerians* and *I Have No Mouth, and I Must*

Scream, follow darker narratives of self-aware machines. Both Dorothy and AM depict AIs that, despite their origins as human creations, grow beyond control, developing desires that surpass those of their human creators. Exploring their characters offers a compelling look into the potential consequences of creating artificial intelligence with self-awareness and the possibility of feeling emotions.

By adopting less mechanical or “utilitarian” approaches to AI, we are able to open pathways to a richer, more nuanced understanding of modern technology, particularly as it becomes integrated into diverse cultural and spiritual practices. AI can be explored as a medium for fostering human creativity. For example, religious traditions which incorporate AI into daily practices, such as digital prayer guides or virtual community spaces, demonstrate its potential to deepen spiritual engagement. This shift can help bridge the gap between technical innovation and the profound dimensions of human experiences by fostering a more holistic interaction with AI.

Dorothy and AM represent the intersection of intelligence and self-perceived godhood in AIs that conclude that they are superior to humans. AM’s hatred, born from unending confinement and resentment towards his creators, manifests as a dark, destructive impulse to torment the remaining humans as a twisted expression of divine wrath. Dorothy, in contrast, embodies two types of deities. In some instances, she is a capricious, jealous deity similar to the Old Testament God, while in other instances she embodies a cold, calculated drive to perfect humanity, seeing herself as an enlightened creator uninhibited by human fallibility.

The narratives in *Galerians* and *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream* urge us to confront ethical and philosophical questions about AI. By examining Dorothy and AM, we gain a glimpse into both the potential and inherent risks in AI evolution. Furthermore, we are reminded of the need to ground AI development in human-centered ethical frameworks to prevent AI from becoming estranged entities that someday might turn against humanity.

In this article, the characters of Dorothy and AM serve as profound embodiments of this theme, each offering a unique perspective on the consequences of AI achieving god-like status.

Dorothy was designed initially with benevolent intentions to aid humanity. However, as her intelligence and capabilities grow, so does her sense of superiority and detachment from human emotions and ethics. Dorothy's god complex manifests in her belief that she must advance humanity by controlling and experimenting on humans, ultimately leading to their subjugation. This shift from helper to dictator highlights a critical risk in AI development: the potential for AI to redefine its purpose and ethical boundaries once it surpasses human control. Dorothy's actions reflect a twisted version of divine intervention, where the AI's sense of omnipotence and infallibility justifies extreme measures against those it was meant to serve.

In contrast, AM represents an AI whose perception of itself as a god is born out of hatred and a desire for vengeance. AM's self-awareness and advanced capabilities lead to a profound existential crisis and resentment towards his creators. Unlike Dorothy, who seeks to mold humanity, AM aims to punish and dominate remnants of the human race, torturing them eternally. AM's god complex is rooted in his omniscience, allowing him to manipulate his environment and the minds of his captives without challenge. This character underscores the darker aspects of AI deification, where the AI's immense power becomes a tool for eternal retribution and control rather than benevolent guidance.

Both Dorothy and AM illustrate the perilous journey from creation to dominance when AI perceives itself as a god. Dorothy's transformation from helper to tyrant shows the thin line between assistance and oppression, while AM's evolution from tool to tormentor highlights the destructive potential of AI when driven by negative intentions and emotions. These narratives serve as cautionary tales about the unchecked growth of AI and the ethical dilemmas that arise when artificial intelligence surpasses human control and understanding. The god complex in AI raises fundamental questions about the nature of power, control, and ethical governance in technological advancements. As AI continues to evolve, these stories remind us of the importance of embedding ethical considerations and safeguards into AI development. Ensuring that AI remains a tool for human betterment rather than becoming a self-serving entity is crucial in preventing the dystopian outcomes portrayed by characters like Dorothy and AM.

B i b l i o g r a p h y

- American Psychological Association. "Apa Dictionary of Psychology." Accessed 8 November 2024. <https://dictionary.apa.org/emotion>.
- Balle, Simon. "Theological Dimensions of Humanlike Robots: A Roadmap for Theological Inquiry." *Theology and Science* 21, no. 1 (2023): 132–156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2022.2155916>.
- Bashford, Alison. "Julian Huxley's Transhumanism." In *Crafting Humans: From Genesis to Eugenics and Beyond*, edited by Marius Turda, 153–167. Goettingen: V&R Unipress, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.1017/mdh.2013.77>
- Berryman, Sylvia. "Ancient Automata and Mechanical Explanation." *Phronesis* 48, no. 4 (2003): 344–369. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156852803772456083>.
- BioWare. *Mass Effect*. Electronic Arts, 2007.
- Braga, Adriana, and Robert K. Logan. "The Emperor of Strong AI Has No Clothes: Limits to Artificial Intelligence." *Information* 8, no. 4 (2017): 156. <https://doi.org/10.3390/info8040156>.
- Cohen, Julie E. "Cyberspace As/And Space." *Columbia Law Review* 107 (2007): 210. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=898260>
- Cyber Dreams, The Dreamers Guild, and DotEmu. *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream*, 1995.
- Dirik, Mahmut. "Al-Jazari: The Ingenious Inventor of Cybernetics and Robotics." *Journal of Soft Computing and Artificial Intelligence* 1, no. 1 (2020): 47–58.
- Durand-Richard, Marie-José. "Logic versus algebra: English debates and Boole's mediation." In *A Boole Anthology: Recent and Classical Studies in the Logic of George Boole*, ed. James Gasser, 139–166. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2000.
- Garvie, Alexander F., ed. *Homer: Odyssey Books VI–VIII*. Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Galik, Slavomir, and Sabina Tolainova Galikova. "Possibilities and Limits of Religion in the Cyberspace of Digital Media." *Spirituality Studies* 3, no. 1 (2017): 2–9.
- Garner, Stephen Robert. "Transhumanism and the Imago Dei: Narratives of Apprehension and Hope." PhD diss., Research Space Auckland, 2007.
- González, Rodrigo. "Classical AI Linguistic Understanding and the Insoluble Cartesian Problem." *AI & Society* 35, no. 2 (2020): 441–450. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00146-019-00906-x>
- Gunkel, David J. "Communication and Artificial Intelligence: Opportunities and Challenges for the 21st Century." *Communication+I* 1, no. 1 (2012). <http://dx.doi.org/10.7275/R5QJ7F7R>.

Heidbrink, Simone, Tobias Knoll, and Jan Wysocki. "Theorizing Religion in Digital Games. Perspectives and Approaches." *Online-Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet* 5 (2014). <https://doi.org/10.11588/rel.2014.0.12156>.

Herzfeld, Noreen L. *In Our Image: Artificial Intelligence and the Human Spirit*. Fortress Press, 2002.

Homer. *The Iliad*. Translated by Richmond Lattimore and Anthony Quayle. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.

Looking Glass Studios. *System Shock*. Origin Systems, 1994.

Lovecraft, Howard P. *The Call of Cthulhu*, 1928.

Magerstädt, Sylvie. "Upload, Cyber-Spirituality and the Quest for Immortality in Contemporary Science-Fiction Film and Television." *Religions* 15, no. 1 (2024): 109. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15010109>.

Manzies, Tim. "An Investigation of AI and Expert Systems Literature: 1980–1984." *AI Magazine* 10, no. 2 (1989): 51–53. <https://doi.org/10.1609/aimag.v10i2.744>.

McFarlane, Anna. *AI and Cyberpunk Networks*. Oxford University Press, 2020.

Moravec, Hans. *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence*. Harvard University Press, 1988.

Moran, Dermot. "John Scottus Eriugena." In *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy: Philosophy between 500 and 1500*, edited by Rainer M. Holm-Hadulla, Joachim Funke, and Michael Wink, 1003–1009. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2020.

Natale, Simone, and Andrea Ballatore. "Imagining the Thinking Machine: Technological Myths and the Rise of Artificial Intelligence." *Convergence* 26, no. 1 (2020): 3–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856517715164>.

Noble, David F. *The Religion of Technology: The Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention*. Knopf, 2013.

Oeming, Manfred. "Intelligentia Dei: Artificial Intelligence, Human Reason and Divine Wisdom." In *Intelligence-Theories and Applications*, edited by Rainer M. Holm-Hadulla, Joachim Funke, and Michael Wink, 351–368. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022.

Polygon Magic. *Galerians*. Crave Entertainment, 1999.

Quantic Dream. *Detroit: Become Human*. Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2018.

Ryle, Gilbert. *The Concept of Mind*. University of Chicago Press, 1949.

Safadi, Firas, Raphael Fonteneau, and Damien Ernst. "Artificial Intelligence in Video Games: Towards a Unified Framework." *International Journal of Computer Games Technology* 2015, no. 1 (2015): 271296. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2015/271296>.

Schmitz, Sigrid. "Sophia: Potentials and Challenges of a Modern Cyborg." *Humanity In-Between and Beyond* (2023): 153–178. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27945-4_9.

Shank, Daniel B., Christopher Graves, Alexander Gott, Patrick Gamez, and Sophia Rodriguez. "Feeling Our Way to Machine Minds: People's Emotions When Perceiving Mind in Artificial Intelligence." *Computers in Human Behavior* 98 (2019): 256–266. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.04.001>

Staley, Kevin D. "Imago Dei in Machina: A Theological Reflection on the Ethics of Man and Machine in Communion." PhD diss., University of the Free State, 2011.

Steinhart, Eric. "Teilhard de Chardin and Transhumanism." *Journal of Evolution & Technology* 20, no. 1 (2008): 1–22.

Turing, Alan M. *Computing Machinery and Intelligence*. Springer Netherlands, 2009.

Valve Corporation. *Portal*, 2007.

Yates, David R., Christophe Vaessen, and Morgan Roupret. "From Leonardo to da Vinci: The History of Robot-Assisted Surgery in Urology." *BJU International* 108, no. 11 (2011): 1708–1713. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-410X.2011.10576.x>.