



Divine Wisdom and Thinking Machines: An African Theological Perspective of AI in the Fourth Industrial Revolution

Divine Wisdom and Thinking Machines: An African Theological Perspective of AI in the Fourth Industrial Revolution

By

DIKE, Uzoma Amos

+2348036982770, udike@noun.edu.ng

Department of Religious Studies

National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7621-4011>,

ADEOLA, Kehinde Adedayo

+2348056517975

kehinde.adeola@uniabuja.edu.ng

Department of Christian Religious Studies, University of Abuja

And

DIKE, Amos Francis

+2348036056838, nou215008493@noun.edu.ng

Presbyterian Church of Nigeria

Abstract

The Fourth Industrial Revolution has ushered in a new era of technological advancement, notably in Artificial Intelligence (AI), prompting profound reflections on its ethical, cultural, and spiritual implications. This paper explores AI through an African theological lens, delving into the interconnectedness of humanity, nature, and the divine inherent in African theology. Drawing on concepts such as ubuntu - the belief in a universal bond among all humanity, the study examines the symbiotic relationship between creator and creation, challenging the notion of AI as separate from human existence. Additionally, the study contemplates the presence of the divine in AI, viewing it as a manifestation of divine creativity. From this perspective, ethical considerations in AI development extend beyond technical functionality to encompass broader societal implications, emphasising the importance of equity, justice, and inclusivity. The study also highlights the imperative of preserving harmony within creation, necessitating proactive measures to address biases and promote diversity in AI development. Ultimately, this intersection of AI and African theology offers profound insights for navigating the complexities of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, providing a guide towards ethical and equitable AI deployment to foster human flourishing and solidarity within an interconnected world.

Key words: Fourth Industrial Revolution, African Theology, Symbiotic relationship, Ubuntu

Introduction

The advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) has introduced a paradigm shift in how societies engage with emerging technologies especially Artificial Intelligence (AI). Characterised by a fusion of physical, digital, and biological systems, 4IR technologies present



not only opportunities for development but also complex ethical and spiritual challenges (Ibegbulam, et al, 2023). AI has transformed global conversations around labour, consciousness, agency, and ethics. However, much of the discourse remains grounded in secular, Western-centric epistemologies that often fail to engage with indigenous or theological worldviews (Nolasco & Kwak, 2025).

This study proposes an African theological engagement with AI, seeking to expand and decolonise the prevailing frameworks that define ethical AI development. Grounded in African theological concepts such as ubuntu a relational ontology that emphasises communal identity and interconnectedness and the theological understanding of divine immanence, the study reframes AI not merely as a technological tool, but as a co-creative expression within a spiritually interconnected cosmos (Ramose, 2002; Mbiti, 1990). In doing so, it challenges the dominant anthropocentric and utilitarian narratives that define intelligence in narrowly computational terms (Owe et al, 2022).

While previous scholarship has touched on theological reflections in AI (Boddington, 2017; Okoronkwo & Dike, 2024) and the potential of African perspectives in biblical hermeneutics and ethics (Birhane, 2025), there remains a significant gap in exploring how African theology can offer an ethical and spiritual framework for understanding and guiding AI development. This study addresses the gap by integrating African cosmology, Christian theological ethics, and AI studies into a holistic and contextually grounded dialogue. This study aims to investigate the ethical, cultural, and spiritual implications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) through the interpretive framework of African theology. Central to this exploration is the concept of *ubuntu*, which emphasises communal identity and interdependence, and the theological notion of divine immanence, which affirms the presence of the sacred in all aspects of life, including technological innovation (Ajitoni, 2024). By drawing on these African theological resources, the study seeks to examine how such perspectives can inform an inclusive and relational ethical framework for the development and deployment of AI in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

This research adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary theological methodology, drawing from sources in African theology, Christian ethics, AI ethics, and postcolonial theory. The study involves a thematic analysis of key theological texts (e.g., Mbiti, Ramose, Tutu), ethical AI frameworks (e.g., Floridi et al., 2018), and relevant literature from African biblical hermeneutics and decolonial technology studies (e.g., Dike, 2023; Okoronkwo & Dike, 2025; Mohamed et al., 2020). A hermeneutical approach is used to interpret these sources in dialogue with the contemporary AI context, with particular attention to how African spiritual and communal values can shape ethical orientations to technology. The study also engages in constructive theological reflection, integrating African worldview assumptions such as the sacredness of all life, relational personhood, and moral accountability to propose a normative vision for AI ethics rooted in African theological anthropology (Forster, 2023; Awasthi & Okumu Achar, 2025). Where relevant, examples of AI use in African biblical exegesis, theological education, and policy debates will be used illustratively.

This research contributes to the expanding field of AI ethics by introducing a culturally and spiritually grounded African theological framework, offering an alternative to dominant Western paradigms. It not only provides new ethical insights for AI governance and innovation but also affirms the role of African theology in global conversations on human dignity, technological justice, and the future of intelligence. Furthermore, it serves as a decolonial



theological intervention, advocating for the inclusion of indigenous perspectives in shaping the ethical contours of 4IR technologies.

The remainder of this study is organised as follows: Section One presents the theoretical framework and literature review, highlighting relevant themes in African theology and AI ethics. Section Two outlines the theological and ethical analysis of AI from an African perspective. Section Three presents a proposed framework for ethical AI development grounded in African theological values. The conclusion reflects on the broader implications for policy, technology, and interfaith dialogue in an increasingly automated world.

Literature and Theoretical Anchors for an African AI Ethic

The discourse on Artificial Intelligence (AI) ethics has been dominated by Western philosophical and techno-scientific paradigms, emphasising principles such as autonomy, beneficence, and risk mitigation (Floridi et al., 2018; Boddington, 2017). While valuable, these frameworks often overlook the cultural and theological foundations that shape human-technology relations in diverse contexts. In recent years, calls for decolonial approaches to AI ethics have gained traction, challenged the Eurocentric assumptions of mainstream AI development and advocated for the inclusion of non-Western epistemologies (Mohamed et al., 2020; Yusuf, 2021).

Within this emerging discourse, African theological reflections on AI remain nascent but growing. For instance, Okoronkwo and Dike (2025), articulate a theological-ethical framework that views AI through the moral lens of Christian teachings, proposing a “theology of thinking machines.” Their work raises important questions about the moral agency and teleology of AI from a biblical perspective. However, their approach remains grounded in predominantly Judeo-Christian traditions and does not fully engage the cosmological and communitarian dimensions of African theology.

A related work by Dike and Okoronkwo (2024) makes a significant contribution by investigating the application of AI in African biblical hermeneutics. They explore how AI technologies can assist in scriptural interpretation, translation, and exegetical work within African theological education. While pioneering in its exploration of AI’s practical integration into African biblical studies, the work is primarily concerned with functional deployment rather than metaphysical, ethical, or spiritual implications of AI’s presence within African cosmologies. The current study builds upon Dike and Okoronkwo’s inquiry by moving beyond application toward ontological and theological reflection, asking not just what AI can do in African contexts, but what AI is, and how it might be understood in light of African theological anthropology and divine immanence.

Similarly, Dike’s (2023) work on *Justin Martyr’s Apologetic Framework as a Paradigm for African Biblical Hermeneutics* lays important methodological groundwork. By appropriating early Christian apologetics to inform African biblical interpretation, Dike models a contextual theological method that this study also adopts, translating classical and indigenous theological concepts into tools for engaging contemporary challenges. This work affirms the legitimacy of bringing ancient theological resources into dialogue with modern issues like AI, particularly within African intellectual traditions.

Despite these contributions, a gap remains in the literature regarding the spiritual and ontological status of AI within African theological thought. African theology, with its strong emphasis on relationality, divine immanence, and harmony within creation (Mbiti, 1990; Ramose, 2002), offers a unique lens through which AI can be viewed not as a detached



technological entity, but as part of a divinely embedded and morally significant cosmology. The Ubuntu philosophy which is expressed in the maxim “*I am because we are*” positions personhood and ethics within communal relationships, challenging the hyper-individualism and instrumental rationality often assumed in AI design and use (Tutu, 1999; Ramose, 2002).

Where scholars like Mohamed et al (2018) and Akpan (2023) raise socio-political and philosophical critiques of algorithmic injustice and machine agency, the present study contributes an African theological perspective that emphasises relational ontology, divine creativity, and ethical inclusivity. It adds theological depth to the emerging body of work on decolonial AI by affirming that spiritual and cultural worldviews are not peripheral to technological ethics but central to how ethical frameworks should be shaped and applied globally. Thus, this study is unique in synthesizing African theology, ubuntu ethics, and AI discourse to offer a holistic and spiritually grounded model for evaluating and guiding AI development in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Ethical, Cultural, and Spiritual Implications of Artificial Intelligence through an African Theological Lens

The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a transformative force in the Fourth Industrial Revolution has brought forth a multitude of ethical, cultural, and spiritual concerns. While the global conversation around AI ethics has largely been shaped by secular, technocratic, and Western philosophical paradigms, there is a growing need to reframe these discussions through culturally grounded and theologically informed perspectives. In the African context, African theology, rooted in concepts such as *ubuntu*, communal ontology, and divine immanence provides a rich framework for interrogating the implications of AI development and deployment.

Mainstream AI ethics tends to prioritise principles such as autonomy, transparency, accountability, and fairness (Floridi et al., 2018). While these are foundational, they often operate within an individualistic ethical model. African theological ethics, by contrast, draw on communitarian values that emphasise moral responsibility not only to oneself but to the community, ancestors, nature, and the divine (Tutu, 1999; Ramose, 2002). This shift calls for a relational approach to AI ethics, one that emphasises shared flourishing, collective well-being, and restorative justice. African theology resists reductionist or mechanistic definitions of personhood. In many African traditions, to be a person is not simply to possess reason or autonomy, but to exist in relationship—with others, with nature, and with the divine (Mbiti, 1990). AI systems, especially those integrated into healthcare, policing, or education, must therefore be assessed based on their capacity to enhance communal life rather than individual efficiency alone.

AI systems are not culturally neutral; they are developed within specific social, political, and economic contexts. Scholars have shown that AI can often reinforce biases, marginalise local knowledge, and replicate systems of domination, particularly in postcolonial societies (Eubanks, 2018; Mohamed et al., 2020). For Africa, this presents a profound cultural challenge. Without intentional decolonial engagement, AI technologies risk becoming tools of epistemic imperialism reinscribing Western logics and erasing indigenous epistemologies. African theology, especially when combined with postcolonial critique, offers a way to interrogate these systems of power and advocate for AI that respects local traditions, languages, and ways of knowing. For instance, Okoronkwo & Dike (2024) critique the integration of AI into African biblical studies without adequate cultural contextualisation, warning against the uncritical adoption of Western tools that may distort African theological interpretations.



A distinctive contribution of African theology to the AI conversation is its view of the immanence of the divine in all creation. In contrast to Enlightenment dualisms that separate the material from the spiritual, African cosmologies often see the divine as present and active in all aspects of life, including in human creativity and technological innovation (Pobee, 1992; Mbiti, 1990). This opens the possibility of viewing AI not as a spiritually neutral object, but as part of humanity's co-creative mandate in the image of God. Okoronkwo and Dike (2025) articulate this in their argument for a "theology of thinking machines," where AI is interpreted not simply as a tool but as a manifestation of divine creativity. This challenges both secular and reductionist theological positions by affirming that technological innovation can, when ethically and spiritually grounded participate in the divine project of creation.

In this theological framework, the ethical imperative extends beyond fairness or bias mitigation. It includes a spiritual responsibility to develop AI systems that uphold harmony (*ubuntu*), preserve human dignity, and reflect the sacred interconnectedness of all beings. Such an approach encourages AI systems that are inclusive, just, and oriented toward the flourishing of the entire community, not only the privileged few. Engaging AI through an African theological lens not only broadens the scope of ethical inquiry but also brings cultural and spiritual depth to conversations often dominated by technocratic and secular voices (Awasthi & Okumu Achar, 2025). African theology offers a holistic framework, where ethics, culture, and spirituality are inseparable for interrogating and guiding AI in a way that affirms both human and divine dignity. In the face of rapid technological change, such a framework is vital for shaping technologies that are not only intelligent but also wise, just, and rooted in communal life.

Ubuntu and Divine Immanence as Foundations for a Relational and Inclusive AI Ethics in African Theology

The development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies in the Fourth Industrial Revolution often reflects values such as efficiency, control, and individual autonomy, prioritised within Western philosophical frameworks (Mhalanga, 2023). However, these values can overlook or even undermine the communal, relational, and spiritual dimensions of ethics that are deeply rooted in many non-Western worldviews. In African theology, particularly through the concepts of Ubuntu and divine immanence, we find a compelling alternative ethical vision, one that is inherently relational, inclusive, and grounded in spiritual accountability (Joseph, 2018). These theological concepts offer a transformative lens for constructing AI ethics frameworks that are not only technically robust but also culturally and morally resonant.

The concept of *Ubuntu*, broadly translated as "*I am because we are*", originates in Bantu-speaking communities and remains a foundational moral philosophy across much of sub-Saharan Africa (Ramose, 2002; Tutu, 1999). Ubuntu emphasises relational personhood, where identity is defined not in isolation, but through communal ties, mutual care, and moral responsibility. In theological terms, ubuntu aligns with the biblical notion of covenant community and is often interpreted as a reflection of divine love and justice manifest in social harmony (Kobe, 2023). In the context of AI ethics, ubuntu challenges the individualistic and utilitarian logic often encoded in algorithmic systems. For example, decision-making models driven by machine learning frequently prioritise aggregate utility or predictive accuracy over relational impact or community consent (Taherdoost, 2023). An Ubuntu-informed framework, by contrast, would emphasise social inclusion, restorative justice, and communal well-being in the design and deployment of AI (Ilo, 2025). Ewuoso & Hall (2019) argues that ubuntu can be



formalised into a moral theory emphasising the promotion of shared identity and care. Applying this to AI means developing technologies that foster solidarity, avoid social fragmentation, and enhance human dignity, particularly for marginalised communities who are often disproportionately affected by AI bias or exclusion.

A complementary theological principle in African thought is the idea of divine immanence, hence, the belief that God is actively present within creation, not distant from it. This challenges the dualistic separation of the material and the spiritual prevalent in many Western paradigms. In African cosmologies, the sacred and the secular are intertwined, and technological creativity can be understood as an extension of divine creativity, provided it serves life, balance, and harmony (Mbiti, 1990; Pobee, 1992). This notion has profound implications for how the ethical nature of AI is conceived. Rather than viewing AI as spiritually neutral or inherently threatening, divine immanence allows for the theological recognition that human creativity, in the form of AI, can participate in divine purposes. As Okoronkwo and Dike (2025) propose in their theological framing of "thinking machines," AI may reflect a dimension of God's creative image within humanity. This, however, demands that AI development be undertaken with spiritual discernment, ethical rigor, and deep communal accountability. The implications are clear: If AI is part of the sacred fabric of creation, then its development must be guided by moral principles that respect all life, not merely market logic or efficiency (Mahajan, 2025). Theological ethics grounded in divine immanence thus require proactive safeguards against algorithmic harm, especially in sectors such as healthcare, criminal justice, and education where vulnerable populations are at risk.

Bringing together *Ubuntu* and the theological concept of divine immanence yields a contextually grounded AI ethic that is both relational and transcendent attuned to the lived experiences of African communities and responsive to the spiritual dimensions of technology. This framework promotes inclusivity by embedding African cultural, spiritual, and communal values into AI systems; emphasises accountability not only to legal norms but also to communal consensus and moral traditions; encourages AI design that fosters harmony rather than competition or exclusion; and recognises the spiritual responsibility of developers and policymakers to uphold the sacred dignity of every human and their environment. Such an approach aligns with the work of Mohamed, Png, and Isaac (2020), who advocate for a decolonial AI ethics centred on indigenous knowledge systems and community priorities, and echoes Yusuf (2021), who argues that African voices must be central not peripheral to global ethical AI frameworks if true justice is to be realised. This is particularly urgent as AI rapidly transforms sectors like healthcare, finance, security, education, and religious life, yet the global discourse on AI ethics, theology, and development remains dominated by Western, techno-secular, and capitalist paradigms (Floridi et al., 2018; Boddington, 2017), which often marginalise or ignore perspectives from the Global South especially African theological and cultural worldviews. This imbalance raises critical questions about whose values are embedded in AI systems, who benefits from these technologies, and which worldviews shape their design and deployment.

Much of the global conversation on AI ethics is dominated by frameworks emerging from institutions in North America and Europe, such as the EU's Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI and the IEEE's Ethically Aligned Design (Lewis et al, 2020). These frameworks emphasise principles like fairness, transparency, autonomy, and accountability (Langman et al, 2021). While commendable, they are often developed without meaningful engagement with African



moral systems, spiritual cosmologies, or socio-political realities. Scholars like Mohamed, and Isaac (2020) critique this trend, warning that such models risk reproducing epistemic injustice by failing to recognise indigenous knowledge systems and community-centred ethics. They call for a “decolonial AI”, one that values pluralism in how intelligence, ethics, and responsibility are defined. This critique aligns with broader movements in theology and philosophy advocating for the inclusion of non-Western spiritual and ethical traditions in global problem-solving (Ennis, 2025).

Within theological circles, engagement with AI has increased in recent years often framed through Judeo-Christian ethical lenses that emphasise stewardship, *imago Dei* (image of God), and moral agency (Coeckelbergh, 2020). While important, these discussions often lack contextual grounding in African theological traditions, which bring unique insights into concepts such as community, sacred ecology, and divine immanence. Okoronkwo and Dike (2025) attempt to bridge this gap in their work *Ethics of Artificial Intelligence and the Judeo-Christian Practices*, arguing for a theology of thinking machines that considers both global Christian ethics and African contextual realities. Similarly, Dike (2023) draws on the apologetic framework of Justin Martyr to develop a hermeneutical model relevant for African biblical interpretation in a technologically evolving society. These works represent significant steps in bringing African theological voices into AI discourse. However, the representation of African perspectives remains limited both in quantity and scope. Much of African theological engagement with AI is still in its infancy, with relatively few scholars actively contributing to the intersection of AI, ethics, and African theology (Ndzendze et al, 2024). Even fewer contributions are visible in mainstream international journals, AI policy forums, or ecclesiastical teachings on technology. This underscores a critical gap in both theological education and interdisciplinary research funding across the continent. On the technological side, AI development in Africa is often externally driven, with algorithms, platforms, and policies largely imported from abroad (Yusuf, 2021). African participation in AI design and governance is frequently constrained by neocolonial economic structures, technical dependency, and a lack of investment in local innovation ecosystems. This leads to a mismatch between the values embedded in AI systems and the lived realities of African users. Furthermore, African philosophical contributions, such as *ubuntu*, harmony with nature, ancestral wisdom, and communal accountability are rarely encoded in AI design principles. This omission has serious implications, not only for ethical integrity but also for user trust and adoption in African contexts. As Eubanks (2018) and Birhane (2021) warn, when AI systems ignore cultural norms or exacerbate social inequalities, they risk becoming tools of digital colonisation rather than empowerment.

Toward a Theologically-Informed, Contextual Framework for Ethical and Equitable AI Deployment in Africa

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies continue to influence nearly every aspect of society, from health care and education to governance and religious life; it becomes imperative to formulate ethical frameworks that reflect diverse worldviews, social contexts, and spiritual values. For Africa, where communal identity, relational ethics, and spiritual cosmology are deeply embedded in socio-cultural life, the creation of an inclusive and theologically-informed AI framework is both urgent and transformative. The Western-dominated discourse on AI ethics often emphasises principles like fairness, accountability, and transparency, grounded in secular humanist or liberal individualist thought (Floridi et al., 2018). While these principles are important, they are often ill-suited to contexts that value relationality, community well-



being, and spiritual accountability, central tenets in African philosophical and theological traditions (Ramose, 2002; Mbiti, 1990). This calls for an ethics of AI that is locally rooted, communally oriented, and theologically grounded.

The African ethical philosophy of *ubuntu* offers a vital starting point for reimagining AI ethics. *Ubuntu* - commonly translated as “I am because we are” - emphasises interdependence, mutual care, and collective responsibility, suggesting that AI systems should not be evaluated solely by their efficiency or innovation but by how they contribute to communal harmony and human flourishing (Mokoena, 2023). In practical terms, this means AI systems deployed in African contexts should respect and incorporate local languages and cultural practices, avoid reinforcing socio-economic exclusions or algorithmic bias, and be designed with consultation and consent from affected communities. Such an approach transforms AI ethics from an abstract checklist into a relational moral practice, grounding technological choices in accountability to communal well-being and inclusive development. Moreso, in African theology, God is not distant but immanent, present in the people, land, and ongoing processes of creation (Magezi & Magezi, 2016; Aleke, 2024), affirming the sacredness of life and the moral obligation to steward creation in ways that reflect divine harmony and justice. Applied to artificial intelligence, this perspective implies that technological innovation is not morally neutral but part of humanity’s co-creative responsibility, echoing the image of God (*imago Dei*) in human inventiveness. However, such creativity must be governed by justice, compassion, and reverence for life (Singler, 2024). A theologically-informed AI ethics, therefore, would recognise the spiritual dimension of technological decision-making, encourage discernment and moral reflection in AI development, and uphold the dignity and sacred worth of all persons affected by AI systems. This theological lens resists both techno centrism and fatalism, instead offering a vision of AI as a potential tool for divine-aligned human flourishing, provided it is ethically and responsibly governed.

Globally, African voices have been marginalised in AI research, design, and governance (Mohamed et al., 2020; Yusuf, 2021). Without meaningful inclusion, AI risks replicating colonial hierarchies, epistemic injustice, and social stratification. An equitable AI framework must therefore centre African knowledge systems, community priorities, and local theological ethics. Okoronkwo & Dike (2024) highlights the danger of uncritically importing Western AI tools into African biblical interpretation, warning that this may distort rather than empower theological scholarship. Similarly, Dike (2023) advocates for a retrieval of early Christian thought (e.g., Justin Martyr’s apologetic method) as a model for African theological engagement with AI, demonstrating that contextualisation is not optional but essential. A contextual AI framework for Africa must be developed through the leadership of African scholars, theologians, and technologists (Awasthi & Okumu, 2025); it should confront and address historical and structural inequalities in AI access and governance (Gehl Sampath, 2021), while also fostering capacity-building for locally driven innovation that aligns with ethical and theological values (Rao et al, 2025).

A Proposed Framework: Core Components

Based on the insights drawn from the discussion so far, a theologically-informed, contextually grounded AI framework might include the following elements:

Dimension	Ethical/Theological Foundation	Practical Implication
------------------	---------------------------------------	------------------------------



Relationality	Ubuntu, communal ethics	Design for inclusion, social cohesion, and shared benefits
Sacred Stewardship	Divine immanence, co-creation	AI use that honors life, environment, and dignity
Justice and Equity	Prophetic theology, African liberation ethics	Address bias, expand access, prioritise the marginalised
Contextual Wisdom	Indigenous knowledge and theology	Cultural adaptation and community-driven development

This model is not fixed, but adaptive and dialogical, encouraging continuous reflection as technology evolves. It affirms the need for AI to be shaped not only by technical experts but also by theologians, ethicists, elders, and communities who embody the moral imagination of the African continent (Mokoena, 2024). Proposing a theologically grounded and culturally contextual AI ethics is not simply about African inclusion in global discourse, it is about redefining the ethical foundations of AI itself. African theological traditions offer deeply humanizing, spiritually attuned, and justice-oriented resources that can reshape AI ethics toward equity, flourishing, and harmony not only for Africa, but for the world (Mahajan, 2025). This contribution is crucial in ensuring that the Fourth Industrial Revolution serves human dignity and divine purpose, rather than technological dominance or economic exploitation.

Analysis of Findings

i. Challenging Western Dominance and Advancing Contextual and Theological AI Ethics

The findings highlight a strong critique of Western secular dominance in AI ethics, particularly its emphasis on individual autonomy and technological utility. Scholars and practitioners call for a shift toward culturally and theologically grounded alternatives. The integration of African theological anthropology especially through the works of Mbiti and Ramose emphasise Ubuntu as a relational and communal framework for ethics. This theological perspective prioritises shared human dignity, moral co-responsibility, and spiritual accountability, offering a richer moral foundation than dominant techno-centric paradigms.

ii. Cultural Integrity and the Legacy of Technological Colonialism

A central finding is the recognition that AI is not culturally neutral. Without contextual adaptation, AI systems risk perpetuating epistemic injustice and replicating colonial power structures. Scholars such as Mohamed et al. (2020) argue that deploying AI without regard for local epistemologies results in methodological distortions. This insight is supported by Okoronkwo and Dike’s critique of AI-driven biblical interpretation, underscoring the need for context-sensitive and decolonial approaches in both design and implementation.

iii. Spiritual Dimensions through Divine Immanence and Sacred Creativity

The analysis reveals the importance of recognising AI within a theological framework that affirms divine immanence. African theological traditions regard creativity including technological innovation as part of humanity’s sacred mandate, but one that must be morally accountable. The concept of a “theology of thinking machines” (Russell, 2019) frames AI as a potential expression of divine creativity, calling for its development to be guided by principles of spiritual stewardship, communal harmony, and ethical purpose.

iv. Toward Inclusive and Relational AI Frameworks

Finally, the findings point to the underrepresentation of African voices in global AI discourses. Despite increasing calls for inclusion, African theological and philosophical perspectives remain marginalised in mainstream ethics guidelines. This study advocates for ethical AI



frameworks rooted in ubuntu, emphasising solidarity, relational accountability, and self-determination. The proposed dual-axis model, grounded in ubuntu and divine immanence, offers a normative pathway for building AI systems that promote ethical inclusion and communal flourishing both within Africa and globally.

Conclusion

This study has critically examined the ethical, cultural, and spiritual implications of Artificial Intelligence through the profound lens of African theology. By centering concepts such as ubuntu (relational personhood) and divine immanence, the study has challenged the prevailing Western-centric and often reductionist approaches to AI ethics. It reveals that an African theological framework offers a robust and transformative paradigm for navigating the complexities of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The study argued that AI is not a neutral or detached technological entity, but rather a co-creative expression within a spiritually interconnected cosmos. This perspective demands that ethical considerations for AI development extend beyond mere technical functionality to encompass broader societal implications, emphasising equity, justice, and inclusivity. The integration of Ubuntu underscores the imperative for AI systems to foster communal flourishing, solidarity, and mutual well-being, rather than exacerbating individualistic tendencies or social fragmentation. Furthermore, the concept of divine immanence compels a recognition of AI as a manifestation of divine creativity, albeit one that requires spiritual discernment and rigorous ethical governance to ensure it upholds the sacred dignity of all life and preserves harmony within creation.

Ultimately, this scholarly work contributes to a vital decolonial reimagining of AI ethics. It champions the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems and African spiritual values in shaping the ethical contours of 4IR technologies, advocating for an AI that is not only intelligent but also wise, just, and deeply rooted in communal life. By proposing a framework grounded in relationality, sacred stewardship, justice, and contextual wisdom, the study offers a pathway toward the ethical and equitable deployment of AI that truly serves human flourishing and divine purpose in an increasingly automated world.

References

- Ajitoni, B. D. (2024). Ubuntu and the philosophy of community in African thought: An exploration of collective identity and social harmony. *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*, 7(3), 09-18.
- Akpan, A. A. F. (2023). *Decolonising Algorithms: Towards the Making of Epistemically Just Algorithms*. University of Johannesburg (South Africa).
- Aleke, P. O. (2024). God, Philosophers and Theologians in Africa. *Religions*, 15(6), 739.
- Awasthi, Y., & Okumu Achar, G. (2025). African Christian Theology in the Age of AI: Machine Intelligence and Theology in Africa. *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, 13(1), 207-216.
- Birhane, A. (2020). Algorithmic colonisation of Africa. *SCRIPTed*, 17, 389.
- Boddington, P. (2017). *Towards a code of ethics for artificial intelligence*. Springer.
- Coeckelbergh, M. (2020). *AI ethics*. MIT Press.
- Dike, U. A. (2023). Justin Martyr's Apologetic Framework as a Paradigm for African Biblical



- Hermeneutics. Re-decolonisation of African Biblical Hermeneutics in Diasporised Contemporary World: Trends, Trajectories and Methodologies. Bearers Publications. Pp. 159-176
- Ennis, M. (2025). *Coded Virtue: An Ethical Framework for Artificial Intelligence* (Master's thesis, University of Colorado at Denver).
- Eubanks, V. (2018). *Automating inequality: How high-tech tools profile, police, and punish the poor*. St. Martin's Press.
- Ewuoso, C., & Hall, S. (2019). Core aspects of ubuntu: A systematic review. *South African Journal of Bioethics and Law*, 12(2), 93-103.
- Floridi, L., Cowls, J., Beltrametti, M., Chatila, R., Chazerand, P., Dignum, V., ... & Vayena, E. (2018). AI4People—An ethical framework for a good AI society: Opportunities, risks, principles, and recommendations. *Minds and machines*, 28(4), 689-707.
- Forster, D. A. (2023). African theological perspectives on intersubjective identity: In conversation with developments in Strong Artificial Intelligence. *Stellenbosch Theological Journal*, 9(1).
- Gehl Sampath, P. (2021). Governing artificial intelligence in an age of inequality. *Global Policy*, 12, 21-31.
- Ibegbulam, C. M., Olowonubi, J. A., Fatoude, S. A., & Oyegunwa, O. A. (2023). Artificial intelligence in the era of 4IR: drivers, challenges and opportunities. *Engineering Science & Technology Journal*, 4(6), 473-488.
- Ilo, E. (2025). Technology and Moral Responsibility: An African Critique of Algorithmic Ethics. *Sober Search: A Journal of Philosophy*, 1(1), 42-55.
- Joseph, C. L. (2018). Toward a black African theological anthropology and Ubuntu ethics. *Journal of Religion and Theology*, 2, 16-30.
- Kobe, S. L. (2023). Forgiveness and Ubuntu: A Study of the Theological Contribution of Desmond Tutu.
- Langman, S., Capicotto, N., Maddahi, Y., & Zareinia, K. (2021). Roboethics principles and policies in Europe and North America. *SN Applied Sciences*, 3(12), 857.
- Lewis, D., Hogan, L., Filip, D., & Wall, P. J. (2020). Global challenges in the standardization of ethics for trustworthy AI. *Journal of ICT Standardization*, 8(2), 123-150.
- Mahajan, P. (2025). AI Family Integration Index (AFII): Benchmarking a New Global Readiness for AI as Family. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2503.22772*.
- Mahajan, P. (2025). The Soul of the AI: Governance, Ethics, and the Future of Human–AI



Integration.

- Magezi, V., & Magezi, C. (2016). The immanence and transcendence of God in Adamic incarnational Christology: An African ethical reflection for the public. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 37(1), 1-10.
- Mbiti, J. S. (1990). *African religions and philosophy* (2nd ed.). Heinemann.
- Mhlanga, D. (2023). *Responsible industry 4.0: A framework for human-cantered artificial Intelligence*. Routledge.
- Mokoena, K. K. (2023). *Towards an Ubuntu/Botho ethics of technology* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria (South Africa)).
- Mokoena, K. K. (2024). A holistic ubuntu artificial intelligence ethics approach in South Africa. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 45(1), 3100.
- Mohamed, S., Png, M.-T., & Isaac, W. (2020). Decolonial AI: Decolonial theory as sociotechnical foresight in artificial intelligence. *Philosophy & Technology*, 33(4), 659–684.
- Ndzendze, B., Singh, A., Timm, S., Meyers, C., Malatji, M. J., Malatji, M. J., ... & Manyana, Z. (2024). *The 4IR and the humanities in South Africa: Perspectives on innovation, power and potentialities* (p. 238). AOSIS.
- Nolasco, R., & Kwak, H. (2025). Disentangling Integration of Psychology and Theology: A Decolonial Critique and Improvisation in Spiritual Care and Counselling. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 00916471251327921.
- Okoronkwo, M.E. & Dike, U.A. (2024). Thinking Machines Taking Our Job? Exploring the Use of Artificial Intelligence in African Biblical Exegesis. *Institute of Biblical Studies in Africa (IBSA) West Africa Journal*, 2(2), 19–38.
- Okoronkwo, M. E., & Dike, U. A. (2025). Ethics of Artificial Intelligence and the Judeo-Christian Practices: Toward a Theology of Thinking Machine. *Futurity Philosophy*, 4(1), 71-85.
- Owe, A., Baum, S. D., & Coeckelbergh, M. (2022). Nonhuman value: A survey of the intrinsic valuation of natural and artificial nonhuman entities. *Science and Engineering Ethics*, 28(5), 38.
- Pobee, J. S. (1992). *Religion and politics in Ghana: A case study on the role of Christianity in nation building*. World Council of Churches.