

Artificial intelligence (AI) and the Anthropocentric Society: A Comparative Analysis Based on Pre-oriental Humanistic Concepts and Buddhist Mental Purification

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Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is one of the biggest technological advances of the 21st century. AI's presence in the sectors from healthcare to education, from business to transportation, and from governance to transportation has changed the way people interact with information and make decisions. The capabilities of AI technologies are constantly growing to be able to accomplish tasks that were once thought to be exclusive to human intelligence, including learning, reasoning, problem-solving and decision-making. As such, AI has emerged as a pivotal player in the transformation of today's societies and economies (Russell, 2019).

As AI makes a growing impact, there has been a lot of talk about the future of humankind and the ethical considerations of smart machines. The philosophies of anthropocentric consideration which make human beings the focus of moral worth and social development have a significant impact on contemporary societies. Anthropocentrism is the belief that man is rational, creative and autonomous, and that this difference is enough to give him a superior role in society. But the new developments in AI have made such assumptions seem increasingly ridiculous, because AI systems now have the ability to carry out cognitive functions with increasing complexity (Harari, 2017).

With the ongoing development of AI technologies, issues have arisen about maintaining human dignity, autonomy, and moral responsibility. There is an issue that needs to be addressed about the question of whether technological development is helping to achieve human flourishing or just increasing efficiency and productivity. Despite the immense possibilities of innovation that AI promises, there are also concerns about how it could be used in surveillance, social inequality, algorithmic bias, and potential for reducing human decision-making authority (Floridi and Cowls, 2019).

Buddhist philosophy offers a different approach to understanding intelligence, ethics, and human development than the views that are found in

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contemporary technology. Buddhist teachings highlight the importance of mental purification, wisdom, mindfulness, and compassion in the pursuit of human progress. Buddhism does not emphasise external success and achievements, but rather it calls upon people to develop their own insight and eliminate the negative mental states that bring about suffering. (Dhammananda, 2002). Thus, Buddhist philosophy is useful for assessing the ethical and social impacts of AI in modern anthropocentric societies.

Research Problem

While AI technologies have come a long way, there are still many questions about their potential effects on humanity in the future. The current AI systems are mainly used to maximize efficiency, optimize their performance, and achieve pre-defined goals. These, however, don't have moral awareness, empathy or moral sense. As AI infiltrates into social institutions, the question comes in about the extent to which human values could be kept alive in the technologically mediated environment (Russell, 2019).

Methodology

In this study, the research approach that is used is qualitative and comparative philosophical research. The secondary data were gathered from scholarly books, articles in journals and academic publications on the topics of AI, anthropocentrism, Buddhist ethics and mental purification. The study reviews some important works of Russell (2019), Bostrom (2014), Harari (2017), Floridi and Cowls (2019), Garfield (2011), and Dhammananda (2002). The research processes involve thematic comparison to highlight the similarities and differences between conceptions of progress based on Artificial Intelligence and conceptions of human flourishing based on Buddhism.

Findings and Discussion

The results show that the current advancement of AI actually centers around efficiency, optimization, and computational intelligence. The tasks of AI systems involve processing large amounts of data, recognising patterns and creating solutions for complicated problems. The applications of these capabilities have yielded important results for medical diagnosis, research, transportation and communications. However, there are significant ethical issues that emerge about human control and ethical responsibility (Russell, 2019).

Traditional design methods for AI are problematic because they assume that the aims of humans can be precisely encoded in machines, writes Russell (2019). But human values can be intricate, changing and situational. This can

lead to AI systems acting in a manner that is not aligned with the global will of humanity. As AI becomes more autonomous and substantial in social institutions, this becomes a growing concern.

Bostrom (2014) further develops the argument by defining superintelligence. A future system of AI with more intelligence than man may behave in ways that humans can't predict or control, Bostrom said. He calls the “control problem” one of the biggest problems for humankind. Superintelligent systems, if applied to systems that do not have human values, can produce results that are harmful to human welfare and social stability. The issues mentioned here reflect the shortcomings of intelligence being understood as a mere technical or computational ability.

Moreover, Harari (2017) proposes that, with technology, the basis of humanistic thinking could change. The rise of big data, machine learning and predictive algorithms has given rise to new forms of authority based not on human judgment, but information processing. Harari says societies may become more and more influenced by algorithmic systems in making decisions about employment, health, education and governance. These developments have proved to be a threat to the common-sense ideas of free will, individuality, and human autonomy.

The Buddhist philosophy of intelligence and progress, however, is very different. Buddhists believe that intellect is a part of wisdom and moral perception. The root cause of human suffering is greed, hatred and ignorance that cause harmful actions and create distorted perceptions. Thus, the real progress must be made by realising the purity of the mind by practising mindfulness, doing the right things, and meditating (Dhammananda, 2002).

The Buddhist idea of cleaning up the mind focuses on changing its internal state, instead of seeking to obtain external power. Practices like mindfulness and meditation create self-awareness, compassion and wisdom in people. They help people make decisions which lead to minimizing suffering and benefiting the community. Human wisdom is not a programmed wisdom, it is a moral reflection and ethical responsibility (Garfield, 2011).

According to Garfield (2011), Buddhist ethics would be based on the principle of interdependence. From this viewpoint, all life is related; the effects of actions are beyond the individual. So then, ethical decision making should take into account a wider social and environmental consideration. This is not a purely instrumental conception of intelligence that is focused on efficiency and goal achievement and does not take into account deeper ethical questions.

Interestingly, there are some parallels to be drawn between modern ethics of AI and the Buddhist moral philosophy. Floridi and Cowls (2019) have suggested five basic principles to follow when designing ethical AI: beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, justice, and explicability. These values align with Buddhist values of compassion, non-harming, fairness, moral responsibility and mindful awareness. The two frameworks focus on harm reduction and positive outcomes.

There are still wide disparities, however. The main concerns of AI ethics are over the external technologies and institutional practices. In contrast, the Buddhist ethics concerns the change of the human mind. The Buddhist view is that social ills cannot be addressed solely through technological control since the source of suffering lies with the human consciousness. Thus, to develop technology ethically, there is a need for external governance and internal moral cultivation.

The results accordingly indicate that Buddhist mental purification offers valuable insights in dealing with contemporary challenges associated with AI. AI might augment human abilities, but it can't supplant moral insight for making responsible choices. Technology and innovation must be balanced with compassion, mindfulness and morality in order to be sustainable.

Conclusion

The results of this research project conclude that the use of Artificial Intelligence and Buddhist purification of the mind are two different but complementary approaches to human development. While AI has played a crucial role in advancements of technology and in making societies more effective, it still has a limited ability to deal with moral, spiritual and existential issues. As AI systems grow more influential, contemporary anthropocentric societies are challenged concerning their autonomy, accountability and ethical governance.

These challenges can be met with the help of Buddhist philosophy, which emphasizes on cultivating wisdom, mindfulness, compassion, and virtue. The research shows how, by incorporating ethical principles from Buddhism into debates on the governance of AI, more human-centred and socially responsible technological development could be achieved. The development of moral intelligence goes hand in hand with the advancement of technology and the creation of artificial intelligence systems that can contribute to the well-being and alleviation of suffering.

Keywords - Artificial Intelligence (AI), Anthropocentrism, Buddhist Mental Purification, Humanism, AI Ethics, Wisdom, Mindfulness, Human Values

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