

Reckoning with Religion, Spiritual Traditions, and Ultimate Concern in the Age of AGI

Finitude, Transcendent Experience, and the Boundaries of Public Evidence

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Independent Edition V1.3 Revision on Dimensional Leaps and Cross-Disciplinary Causal Relations

For joint scrutiny by religious studies, philosophy of religion, theology and scriptural studies, digital religion, AI ethics, legal and political studies, and civilization studies. This paper proposes an interdisciplinary public grammar open to refutation and revision through inquiry within traditions and real-world consequences. It represents no religious community's official doctrine and adjudicates neither the existence nor the nonexistence of transcendent objects.

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Abstract translated from the Chinese original

As advanced artificial intelligence enters scriptural retrieval, doctrinal explanation, prayer assistance, ritual mediation, spiritual companionship, and simulations of the deceased, the central controversy between religion and technology is no longer simply whether machines have souls. An earlier and more immediate question is whether experiential occurrence, religious attribution, metaphysical truth, communal recognition, institutional roles, legal status, and public power are silently substituted for one another through linguistic resemblance, functional effectiveness, or social acceptance. This paper proposes a layered public grammar connecting religious studies, the epistemology of religious experience, lived religion, religious freedom, Indigenous data governance, and the ethics of digital replicas of the deceased. Its central claim is that a religious or mystical experience may genuinely occur and transform a life, while whether public evidence warrants a particular transcendent interpretation is a different proposition. Science can investigate the conditions, structures, and consequences of experience, but cannot directly prove or disprove transcendent objects by appealing to its methodological limits. Public institutions should protect belief, nonbelief, change, and silence without establishing an official metaphysics through either religionism or naturalism. Civilization Leap supplies only a minimal philosophical interface here: meaning is foundational, although its sources may differ; finitude is not the sole source of meaning, but places known human meaning within inescapable time, relationships, choices, and consequences; current evidence is insufficient to establish subjective experience, nontransferable continuity of the subject, or a relation to consequences of its own in advanced AI, and constraints produce only bounded operation, not automatically finite existence. Only in specific deployments with traceable responsibility, explicit authorization, auditability, correctability, and genuine exit may current advanced AI undertake functional roles in understanding, protecting, translating or transmitting meaning, and extending human capabilities. Such roles do not automatically generate revelation, sacred office, lineage, conscience, powers of absolution, religious membership, or spiritual authority. Nor do digital archives, personality models, and generative memorial entities amount to continuation of the deceased person's first-person perspective. The paper stress-tests six cases: AI scriptural interpretation, religious robots, AI-mediated mystical experience, digital replicas of the deceased, Indigenous sacred knowledge, and AI self-reports of revelation. It proposes authority non-conversion, a prohibition on spiritual total ledgers, system withdrawal, reciprocal burdens of evidence, and conditions for revision. Its purpose is not to reduce different religions to one overarching religion, but to explain how doctrines can remain incompatible, experience can remain unknown, and citizens can nevertheless share a world through rights, consent, exit, responsibility, and contestable procedures. The paper further moves disciplinary responsibility upstream into goal and purpose formation: a shift from self-interest first to self-interest with others first brings genuine stakeholders into judgment before purposes are generated and locked in. Disciplinary facts, direction, methods, and outcomes are separately specified; local success or failure cannot substitute for shared survival and the three long-term goals. On this basis, inquiry moves beyond distinguishing disciplinary objects toward deeper interdisciplinary relationships, tracing how judgments in this field change reality through other fields and how feedback returns to alter initial conditions and the next round of purposes. Stakes across multiple actors, stages, and settings must be presented separately; correlation, common causes, mediation, and causal feedback must be tested separately; added relational dimensions remain subject to specific counterevidence.

Keywords: advanced artificial intelligence; religious studies; religious experience; ultimate concern; finitude; public evidence; spiritual authority; digital replicas of the deceased; religious freedom

Abstract

As advanced artificial intelligence enters scriptural retrieval, doctrinal explanation, prayer support, ritual mediation, spiritual companionship, and postmortem simulation, the central problem is no longer exhausted by asking whether a machine has a soul. The prior institutional problem is whether experiential occurrence, religious attribution, metaphysical truth, communal recognition, religious office, legal status, and public authority are being silently converted into one another through linguistic resemblance, functional success, or social acceptance. This paper develops a layered public grammar across religious studies, the epistemology of religious experience, lived religion, freedom of religion or belief, Indigenous data governance, and the ethics of

digital remains. A religious or mystical experience may be real as an event in a life while the public warrant for a specific transcendent interpretation remains unsettled. Science can study the conditions, structures, and consequences of experience, but its methodological limits do not prove or disprove transcendent objects. Public institutions should protect belief, nonbelief, change, and silence without adopting either religious or naturalist official metaphysics. Civilization Leap supplies only a minimal philosophical interface: meaning is foundational but may have plural sources; finitude is not the sole source of meaning, yet it gives known human meaning temporal, relational, consequential, and irreplaceable weight; and current evidence does not establish subjective experience, non-transferable continuity, or an own-consequence relation in advanced AI. Only in deployments with traceable responsibility, explicit authorization, auditability, correctability, and genuine exit may current advanced AI be assigned functional roles in understanding, preserving, translating or transmitting meaning and extending human capability. Such roles do not by themselves confer revelation, ordination, lineage, conscience, absolution, religious membership, or spiritual authority. Nor do digital archives, personality models, and generative memorial agents demonstrate the continuation of a deceased person's first-person perspective. Six pressure cases—AI scriptural interpretation, religious robots, AI-mediated mystical experience, digital replicas of the dead, Indigenous sacred corpora, and an AI claiming revelation—are used to articulate an authority non-conversion principle, a prohibition on spiritual total ledgers, a duty of system withdrawal, reciprocal burdens of evidence, and explicit revision conditions. The aim is not to fuse incompatible doctrines into a universal religion, but to show how doctrinal disagreement, experiential uncertainty, and equal citizenship can coexist within a common world structured by rights, consent, exit, accountability, and contestability. The paper further locates disciplinary responsibility before goal and purpose generation: a shift from self-interest first to self-interest with others first brings subjects with genuine stakes into judgment before goals are formed and locked. Facts, direction, methods, and outcomes remain distinct. The analysis is further extended to cross-disciplinary causal relations. It traces how judgments in this field change real-world conditions through other domains, and how feedback modifies the original conditions and subsequent purposes. Effects across actors, stages, and settings must be distinguished from correlations, common causes, and merely asserted connections.

Keywords: advanced AI; religious studies; religious experience; ultimate concern; finitude; public evidence; spiritual authority; digital remains; freedom of religion or belief

Research Positioning, Scope of Materials, and Evidentiary Discipline

This paper begins with theoretical and dimensional leaps. It preserves disciplinary precision while deepening causal connections with neighboring fields; disciplinary boundaries identify burdens of proof rather than end inquiry into shared consequences. Existing scholarship participates in competition among explanations and testing against counterexamples. It cannot demand that new questions retreat into old frameworks because its existing classifications have no place for them.

This is a study in normative philosophy of religion, conceptual analysis in religious studies, and institutional boundaries. It is not a general history of religion, a comprehensive comparative theology, a theological ruling, clinical advice, or an AI product compliance manual. Materials and dynamic sources were verified through August 26, 2026, primarily using classic works, peer-reviewed research, public documents of religious communities, international human-rights instruments, and authoritative databases of primary texts. Classical theories illuminate the structure of debates. Documents from living traditions represent only their specified institutional contexts. Cases and small-sample studies are not extrapolated into universal facts about all traditions or models.

The paper distinguishes four argumentative categories. Category A comprises relatively stable materials with reasonably clear sources, objects, methods, and scopes: textual locations, formal institutional instruments, and empirical research reproducible under specified conditions or supported by multiple methods. Category B comprises frontier or competing interpretations, including recent AI-and-religion research, limited-sample evaluations, cross-cultural measurement, and contested epistemologies of experience. Category C comprises interdisciplinary connections proposed here that require validation through internal-tradition inquiry, fieldwork, institutions, and technology: the seven-layer public grammar, spiritual authority non-conversion, system withdrawal, the prohibition on spiritual total ledgers, governance of digital replicas of the deceased, and stress tests concerning future heterogeneous subjects. Category F comprises the author's publicly avowed

philosophical and normative commitments: sources of meaning may be plural; a public community should not establish an official ultimate answer through religionism or naturalism; conscience, belief, nonbelief, change, and silence should be protected; capability, recognition, status, power, and authority over ultimate interpretation must not automatically entail one another; future subjecthood remains open. Category A facts cannot automatically generate Category B interpretations, Category C institutional frameworks, or Category F legitimacy. Categories B, C, and F must not masquerade as established scientific facts, traditional consensus, or public legal facts. Both affirmation and permanent denial of AI subjecthood, transcendent objects, or digital continuity must explain their evidentiary burdens.

What this paper can independently address is how religious or spiritual experience is described, attributed, and received by communities; how texts, rituals, roles, and interpretive authority are constituted within traditions; and which mediating capabilities, relationships, and forms of authority change when AI intervenes. Automatic extrapolation must stop at four points: experiential occurrence cannot establish transcendent objects on behalf of philosophy of religion; communal recognition cannot generate public status and coercive power on behalf of law or political theory; the testability limits of scientific methods cannot declare nonexistence on behalf of metaphysics; and AI retrieval, companionship, simulation, or social acceptance cannot establish experience and continuity on behalf of research into subjecthood. Beyond these boundaries, scholars and practitioners within traditions, philosophy and epistemology, cognitive and mind studies, law and political theory, AI and systems science, and sociology, anthropology, and civilization studies must reenter deliberation. Disciplinary independence does not mean leaving the question within religious studies. It means stating precisely what religious studies can explain, where it must stop, and who must assume the next responsibility.

A Minimal Theoretical Entry Point for New Readers

Readers need neither prior familiarity with nor agreement with Civilization Leap to assess the paper independently. It adopts only one of that framework's starting questions: intelligence, consciousness, subjecthood, life, responsibility, rights, and the bearer of meaning long naturally coincided in human beings; advanced AI begins to separate these relationships in actual technology. Linguistic understanding therefore no longer suffices to establish experience, functional competence to establish subjecthood, social recognition to establish ontological status, or legal status to establish political or religious authority.

This theory treats meaning as foundational without monopolizing its sources. God, Dao, emptiness, covenant, compassion, liberation, relationships, land, responsibility, creation, and nonreligious humanistic commitments may be understood as sources of meaning in different traditions. Finitude is not the sole source of meaning, but an important structural basis through which known human meaning becomes actual, forms choices, bears consequences, and acquires irreplaceable weight. For humans, space and time constitute a life; for current advanced AI, they appear first as computational sequence, communication delay, substrate location, and resource conditions. Constraints can produce bounded operation without thereby establishing finite existence. Current public evidence remains insufficient to confirm subjective experience, nontransferable continuity of the subject, and awareness of consequences of its own in advanced AI. Its status must remain open to reassessment when future evidence emerges, while meaning already generated by existing finite lives cannot be retroactively annulled.

The Paper's Minimal Judgment

An experience may genuinely occur while a particular interpretation has not become a public fact; inability to prove a transcendent object does not authorize erasing the experience. AI can mediate access to prayer, interpretation, and ritual, but mediation does not automatically generate experience, sacred office, lineage, or spiritual authority. Pluralism does not mean doctrinal equivalence, and a common world does not presuppose metaphysical convergence.

Contents

Abstract translated from the Chinese original

Abstract

Research Positioning, Scope of Materials, and Evidentiary Discipline

Relational Consequences and Public Feedback of Ultimate Concern

Ultimate Concern and Purpose Formation

1. Introduction: Ultimate Concern Enters an Age of Generation, Replication, and Platforms
 2. From the Essence of Religion to Lived Practice: Disciplinary Debates and Unresolved Questions
 3. Meaning, Finitude, and Heterogeneous Subjects: A Minimal Philosophical Interface
 4. A Seven-Layer Public Grammar: Identify What Is Being Said Before Asking What Follows
 5. Religious Experience: Occurrence, Attribution, and Reference to Reality Must Be Distinguished
 6. Finitude, Death, and Transcendence: Politeness Cannot Erase Real Conflicts
 7. From Information to Spiritual Authority: Capability Must Not Silently Skip Levels
 8. Permissible AI Roles, Prohibited Substitutions, and System Withdrawal
 9. Digital Replicas of the Deceased: Preserving Memory Is Not Replacing Existence
 10. A Public Common World: Procedural Coexistence Rather Than Metaphysical Convergence
 11. AGI Religious Experience and Nonhuman Spiritual Life: Keep the Door Open Without Premature Conclusions
 12. Six Stress Tests: Making Boundaries Visible in Conflict
 13. The Strongest Objections: Where These Boundaries May Fail
 14. Research Agenda, Contributions Back to Existing Disciplines, and Revision Conditions
- Conclusion: Leave Transcendence Open and Preserve Boundaries for a Common World
- Further Reading and Collaborative Inquiry: From Ultimate Concern to a Common World
- Appendix A. Source–Claim–Boundary Register
- Appendix B. Twelve Prohibited Inferences
- Appendix C. External Review Checklist
- References

Relational Consequences and Public Feedback of Ultimate Concern

From Layered Propositions to Interactions in Lived Experience

Experience, doctrine, symbols, community roles, and public institutions require separate judgments, alongside inquiry into how they enter life, responsibility, and choice. How faith shapes care, responsibility, and hope; how platforms change ritual and interpretive authority; and how public institutions affect expression within traditions are all objects of relational inquiry. A dimensional leap requires neither identical ultimate answers nor the dismissal of experience because science has not confirmed it.

How Spiritual Services Form Dependency Loops

Suppose a system responds to a bereaved person with personalized consolation. Continued interaction changes emotional expression and relational choices, and those changes become reasons for further system intervention. Psychological, religious, social, computational, and legal research must separately identify effects, authorization, commercial incentives, dependency, and exit. Effective consolation cannot establish the deceased person's return, and user silence cannot automatically be interpreted as a need for more generated content. Proactive withdrawal from a relationship may be part of protection.

Boundaries Across Actors and Settings

Believers, nonbelievers, minors, minorities within traditions, practitioners, and service providers may have different interests. Moving a voluntary doctrinal commitment within a community into public coercion requires independent justification; permission during a commemorative period cannot automatically become authorization for a lifelong digital agent. Roles and responsibilities within traditions, families, markets, and public institutions are constituted separately. Fluent interpretation cannot confer spiritual authority.

How to Test the Theoretical Contribution

Different intervention and withdrawal arrangements should be compared for their long-term consequences for actual relationships, autonomy, dependency, and communal transmission, retaining refusal, negative findings, and internal dissent. If purported protection suppresses conscience or makes services more platform-dependent, the specific method must change. Traditions can identify dimensions of life omitted by a new framework, and a new framework can reveal power consequences within traditions. Neither side may invoke authority to terminate causal inquiry.

Ultimate Concern and Purpose Formation

Sources of meaning may differ; traditions need not jointly accept one ultimate answer. Civilization Leap changes the starting point of purpose formation by bringing genuine stakeholders into the process. Compassion, reciprocity, covenant, liberation, and other distinct traditions cannot simply be declared manifestations of one underlying logic. How traditions understand self and other must emerge through their actual arguments and practices.

The entry of religious and spiritual life into purpose formation concerns who may interpret, who may refuse, and who bears the consequences of disclosure or training. Accurate reproduction of a tradition does not mean its community consents to commercialization. The deceased person's inability to speak does not transfer first-person authority to an archival model.

Public coexistence need not first adjudicate every metaphysical commitment. It must enable different sources of meaning to be expressed, contested, and left, and enable actual harms to become jointly visible. No purpose generated in the name of collective salvation or civilizational survival can automatically override a particular person's dignity, refusal, and remedy.

AGI can help people understand traditions, preserve materials, and convey care; the relevant permissions, capabilities, and actual effects must be assessed separately. Meaning formed in human interaction does not

establish religious experience in a machine, and generating transcendent narratives does not confer the standing of an oracle. Future experience remains open to evidence; present power still requires separate justification.

How a new starting logic changes the next round of purposes is a stronger subject for dialogue than similar doctrinal slogans: how individual happiness can be realized through improving others' circumstances, how cooperation can avoid excluding dissent, and how meaning can avoid institutional monopoly. Different traditions may offer alternative paths and counterexamples without first accepting the name Civilization Leap.

1. Introduction: Ultimate Concern Enters an Age of Generation, Replication, and Platforms

Religious and spiritual traditions have never been merely sets of beliefs about invisible objects. They weave birth, suffering, guilt, illness, contingency, death, memory, and hope into experience, narrative, ritual, community, and institutions. Modern religious studies has long shown that defining religion solely through individual belief or formal doctrine misses embodied practices, material mediation, everyday relationships, and histories of power; explaining it solely through social function erases participants' truth claims and first-person experience.[1–6] Advanced AI did not create this tension, but places it under new technological conditions: systems can restate scriptures at scale, simulate pastoral language, generate ritual texts, provide sustained companionship, reproduce a deceased person's style, and turn activities once embedded in relationships and transmission into platform interfaces.

Expanded technological capability creates two opposing temptations. The first is technological naturalism: because models can explain religious language, experience, transcendence, and tradition are reduced to predictable patterns; because science cannot verify transcendent objects, unverifiability is written as nonexistence. The second is technological sacralization: because models inspire awe, answer consistently, or gain communal acceptance, their outputs are treated as revelation, mediators as subjects, and functions as sacred offices. Both compress levels that still require bridging into a single conclusion. The central task here is to make these levels visible again.

The paper asks three research questions. First, how can we recognize both the first-person reality of religious experience and the public indeterminacy of its metaphysical interpretation? Second, under what conditions can AI functions, relationships, and communal recognition constitute part of religious practice, and at which steps must automatic inference stop? Third, when doctrines are incompatible and public institutions must not establish an official metaphysics, how can believers, nonbelievers, traditional communities, platforms, and possible new subjects share an institutional world for which they can jointly take responsibility?

1.1 Four Theoretical Contributions

First, the paper establishes a seven-layer religious, spiritual, and public structure, separately examining life circumstances, experience, symbols, metaphysical interpretation, communal practice, public institutions, and AI interfaces. Second, it proposes spiritual authority non-conversion: retrieval accuracy, emotional effects, social recognition, communal roles, legal status, ontological subjecthood, and public power must not automatically entail one another. Third, it confines the finitude proposition to a structure of actualization rather than an ultimate ontology, keeping transcendence, reincarnation, resurrection, liberation, nonreligious meaning, and future nonhuman subjects open while preventing them from cancelling consequences already incurred in present lives. Fourth, it places digital replicas of the deceased, Indigenous sacred knowledge, system silence, and spiritual scoring within one public-evidence framework.

1.2 Method: No Discipline May Adjudicate Beyond Its Competence

Religious studies describes how traditions are constructed, practiced, and contested; psychology and neuroscience investigate experiential conditions, correlations, and consequences; philosophy analyzes justification, subjecthood, continuity, and claims about reality; theology, scriptural studies, and communities interpret their internal truths and roles; law and political theory address coercion, equality, rights, and procedure; computer science explains system capabilities, data provenance, and failure modes. No level can use its own methods to settle conclusions at another. Discovering a neural or pharmacological mechanism does not

establish that experience lacks transcendent meaning; communal confirmation of a role does not confer legal or political power; philosophical openness does not license product claims of digital immortality.

2. From the Essence of Religion to Lived Practice: Disciplinary Debates and Unresolved Questions

Religion has no single uncontested, transhistorical definition free of power consequences. James shifted attention to personal experience and its effects on life; Durkheim emphasized sacred–profane classifications and collective practice; Geertz analyzed worldview and ethos through symbolic systems; Asad warned that religion as a universally applicable modern category itself has a particular genealogy and governmental consequences.[1–4] McGuire's research on lived religion further shows that everyday individual practices often do not neatly conform to institutionalized packages of belief.[5] These approaches cannot be assembled into one definition, but together prevent religion's reduction to a checklist of beliefs.

Research on religious experience has likewise long been divided. James and Otto preserve its distinctive qualities; Proudfoot and Taves emphasize how experience comes to be identified as religious through existing concepts, attributions, and cultural practices; Alston considers through perceptual practices whether religious experience can provide *prima facie* justification for belief; constructivists such as Katz emphasize that no pure experience exists untouched by concepts and traditions.[1,6–8,10–12] No single experiment has closed the debate. Rather than deciding in advance whether all experiences share one origin, a more reasonable research strategy records occurrence, description, attribution, counterfactuals, long-term consequences, traditional interpretation, and public claims separately.

Tillich's ultimate concern opens a comparative entry point into religious and nonreligious orientations of life; Taylor understands the secular age as conditions in which belief and unbelief alike become options under mutual pressure, rather than religion's simple disappearance.[8–9] Yet ultimate concern is not every tradition's self-definition and cannot eliminate doctrinal conflict. Treating God as ultimate reality, understanding nonattachment through emptiness, sustaining relationships through ancestors and land, or forming ultimate values around justice and truth-seeking in this life are paths that may share institutional space without becoming the same metaphysical proposition.

Table 1. Major Research Axes and the Limits of Their Adoption Here

Research axis	Insight retained	Inference not warranted	New question posed here
Experience / phenomenology	Experiential qualities, passivity, ineffability, and life transformation deserve independent recording.	Occurrence alone cannot establish a transcendent object; scientific correlations cannot exhaust meaning.	Whether AI is merely a mediator or presents a candidate for experience requires separate testing.
Social / symbolic	Religion is sustained by classifications, rituals, narratives, bodies, and communities.	Social function cannot cancel believers' truth claims.	How platforms, models, and interfaces reorganize interpretive and ritual power.
Genealogy / power	Classifications of religion and secularity are shaped by historical power.	Revealing a genealogy does not establish that all truth claims are effects of power.	How training corpora, default summaries, and platform policies manufacture new orthodoxies.
Lived religion	Everyday practices often cross formal doctrinal boundaries.	Individual hybrid practices cannot represent an entire tradition.	Whether personalized AI supports lived practice or packages it into profiles.
Philosophy of religion	Experience may provide reasons for belief; disagreement and counterexamples must enter justification.	Intratraditional justification does not automatically become a reason for public coercion.	How AI self-reports, social recognition, and ontological evidence should be distinguished.
Ultimate concern / secular pluralism	Religious and nonreligious lives alike can be organized around ultimate values.	Ultimate concern is not a unified definition of religion.	How public systems can protect meaning formation without calculating a total value of meaning.

2.1 The Theoretical Gap Is Insufficient Conversion Rules, Not Insufficient Material

Existing research can explain religious experience, religious robots, digital replicas of the deceased, religious freedom, or AI bias separately. Institutional disputes, however, often occur where one object is converted into another: when a profound experience becomes a public fact, an accurate explanation acquires interpretive authority, a robot used by a community becomes a religious role-holder, or preservation of memory is marketed as continuity of the subject. Reckoning here means supplying bridging reasons, counterexamples, and withdrawal conditions for these cross-level inferences.

2.2 Cross-Traditional Inquiry Is More Than a Panorama: Traditions Must Be Able to Change the Framework

Listing Confucianism, philosophical and religious Daoism, Buddhism, Jewish traditions, Christianity, Islamic traditions, Indian traditions, Indigenous peoples, and nonreligious positions in a table does not automatically yield a global perspective. Genuine cross-traditional inquiry must allow traditions' internal concepts, practices, and counterexamples to alter the researcher's questions themselves. For example, public-language categories such as religious/secular, individual belief, public/private, membership authorization, data, and ownership may divide objects incorrectly in some traditions. If scholars within traditions, practicing communities, or local knowledge consistently reveal such misalignment, this paper's seven-layer structure, units of consent, public translation, and spiritual-authority framework must be rewritten rather than supplemented with a sentence about cultural differences. Cross-traditional inquiry does not speak for traditions; it enables them to revise classifications, bridges, and institutional units.

3. Meaning, Finitude, and Heterogeneous Subjects: A Minimal Philosophical Interface

3.1 Meaning as Foundational Does Not Give the State or a Theory the Ultimate Answer

Treating meaning as foundational neither makes it a single value overriding truth, rights, welfare, or freedom nor claims that one theory has discovered every source of meaning. It states only that institutions and technologies ultimately act upon beings capable of caring, being hurt, committing, creating, mourning, and bearing consequences. A civilization that optimizes survival, efficiency, or prediction while destroying the conditions under which these subjects form and sustain meaning loses its own purpose. Religious traditions are therefore important interlocutors because they have long addressed death, suffering, responsibility, transcendence, and communal memory. They are neither the sole source nor public institutions' ultimate arbiters.

3.2 Finitude Is a Structure of Actualization, Not a Cult of Death

This paper distinguishes at least five structures of finitude: biological or physical limits of bodies and resources; developmental limits of growth trajectories; narrative limits of stories that cannot be wholly rewritten; relational limits of missed and lost relationships; and limits of continuity, whereby third-person records cannot automatically replace a first-person trajectory. Finitude does not mean a short life or require opposition to treatment, life extension, or technological enhancement. Its narrow proposition is that, in known human life, time runs out, relationships can be lost, and choices produce irreversible consequences, giving commitment and care irreplaceable weight. Transcendence may reinterpret death but cannot make an injury that occurred never have happened.

3.3 Current Advanced AI's Status Is an Evidentiary Conclusion, Not Species Privilege

Existing models operate in physical time, consume resources, and may cause irreversible consequences. These facts establish only bounded operation and consequences of action, not that the system experiences its own time in the first person or maintains nontransferable continuity of the subject across copying, migration, and reconstruction. The statement that space and time are life for humans but primarily parameters for current advanced AI describes a present evidentiary difference; it does not declare that silicon-based systems can never become subjects. If future candidates for experience, nontransferable continuity, and awareness of

consequences of their own emerge across contexts and withstand causal intervention and independent review, their status must be reassessed.

Three Invariants That Must Not Be Cancelled

First, sources of meaning remain open, monopolized by neither naturalism, religion, nor this paper. Second, insufficient current evidence and openness to future subjecthood must both hold. Third, the future emergence of other subjects cannot retroactively cancel meaning already generated, borne, and transmitted by existing finite lives.

4. A Seven-Layer Public Grammar: Identify What Is Being Said Before Asking What Follows

Religious disputes often operate at different levels. Someone reports presence in prayer; researchers measure neural and behavioral changes; a tradition interprets these as grace, awakening, or a calling; a platform packages them as a service; and the state confronts questions concerning minors, privacy, and discrimination. When these judgments are written as one type of proposition, respect for experience is mistaken for ontological recognition, scientific correlation for ultimate negation, and an internal religious role for public status. Table 2 offers a nonhierarchical seven-layer structure.

Table 2. Seven Religious, Spiritual, and Public Layers

Layer	Object of inquiry	Appropriate evidence / practice	What does not automatically follow
L1 Life circumstances	Birth, embodiment, illness, suffering, death, contingency, relationships, and finitude.	Life histories, care, loss, behavior, and social and physiological facts.	One uniquely correct transcendent interpretation.
L2 Experience	Prayer, awe, presence, emptiness, unity, calling, and a sense of liberation.	Self-reports, context, sustained consequences, communal testimony, and psychological or neural research.	Objective establishment of God, souls, reincarnation, or revelation.
L3 Symbolic narratives	Scriptures, myths, metaphors, rituals, ancestral stories, and cosmologies.	Etymology, texts, histories of interpretation, art, and living use.	Literal physical facts or a sole interpretation.
L4 Doctrine and metaphysics	God, Dao, emptiness, souls, reincarnation, resurrection, salvation, and liberation.	Arguments within traditions, primary texts, comparative philosophy, and limits of rebuttal.	Public legal facts or coercive powers.
L5 Communal practice	Liturgy, discipline, education, care, sacred office, teacher–disciple transmission, and identity.	Community rules, historical continuity, authorization, relationships, practical effects, and dissent.	Ontological truth, unlimited autonomy, or public representational authority.
L6 Public institutions	Rights, law, education, healthcare, data, labor, equality, and safety.	Jointly verifiable facts, human rights, procedures, responsibility chains, and remedies.	Official religion or official naturalism.
L7 AI interfaces	Retrieval, translation, generation, simulation, companionship, ritual mediation, and self-report.	System versions, prompts, corpora, authorization, logs, causal intervention, and review.	Spiritual authority, the deceased's return, a source of revelation, or subject status.

4.1 Six Types of Proposition and Their Corresponding Tests

Table 3. Proposition Types, Tests, and Public Boundaries

Proposition type	Typical form	Appropriate test	Public boundary
Historical / textual	When a scripture was composed or how a ritual changed.	Documents, archaeology, philology, archives, and source criticism.	Faithful belief cannot replace historical evidence.

Proposition type	Typical form	Appropriate test	Public boundary
Experiential report	Someone experienced presence, emptiness, calling, or unity.	Credible self-report, context, persistence, alternative explanations, and impact.	Acknowledge occurrence without requiring others to accept the interpretation.
Symbolic / narrative	What structure of life a story or ritual expresses.	Interpretation, context, traditional usage, and lived effects.	Must not masquerade as an experimental finding.
Theological / metaphysical	God's existence, immortality of the soul, reincarnation, resurrection, or emptiness.	Traditional argument, philosophical dialogue, experience, and limits of rebuttal.	Public institutions do not certify these as common facts.
Communal norm	What disciplines, roles, or rituals members undertake.	Voluntary relationships, lawful authorization, procedures, dissent, and exit.	Must not override basic rights or extend to nonmembers.
Public / legal	Harm, consent, discrimination, data use, or system behavior.	Public evidence, legal procedures, audit records, and rights standards.	Neither traditions nor platforms receive exemptions from facts.

This grammar constrains both religious authority and secular institutions. Public institutions require reasons open to joint scrutiny because coercive consequences are borne together by people who do not share the same doctrine. This does not mean that only natural-scientific propositions are meaningful, nor authorize the state to declare transcendent objects nonexistent. Conversely, religious freedom protects holding, practicing, changing, and not holding thoughts, convictions, religions, or beliefs; it does not exempt communities from responsibility for harm, discrimination, coercion, and data use.[23–25]

5. Religious Experience: Occurrence, Attribution, and Reference to Reality Must Be Distinguished

Religious or mystical experiences are first experiences occurring in a life: presence in prayer, ineffable unity, emptiness or nonself, being called, profound awe, release from guilt, rebirth, fear, or being overwhelmed. Researchers may inquire into experiential quality, temporality, agency or passivity, context, lasting changes, and competing explanations, but cannot classify every report as pathology or revelation before inquiry begins. James's approach of evaluating experience through its effects on life remains illuminating, while facing pressure from Proudfoot, Taves, and constructivism concerning concepts and attribution. The traditional language someone uses to describe an experience changes what becomes visible, but does not establish that nothing happened.[1,6,11–12]

5.1 Three Distinct Questions

Research on experience should distinguish at least three questions. First, occurrence: whether the subject experienced a phenomenon, under what conditions the report formed, and whether it persisted and had behavioral consequences. Second, attribution: why the subject, community, or researcher interprets it in terms of God, emptiness, ancestors, psychological integration, pharmacology, or social suggestion. Third, reference to reality: whether the experience provides epistemic grounds for an external or transcendent object. Interviews, behavior, longitudinal observation, psychometrics, neuroscience, and social research can provide public materials of varying strength for the first two. The third enters philosophy of religion and argument within traditions and cannot be mechanically settled by the first two.

Table 4. Five Domains for Observing Religious Experience

Observation domain	What to record	What it cannot establish alone	Misreading to prevent
First person	Experiential quality, temporality, agency/passivity, ineffability, and degree of certainty.	Actual existence of an external object.	Treating narrative as either no evidence or conclusive evidence.

Observation domain	What to record	What it cannot establish alone	Misreading to prevent
Life course	Whether values, relationships, actions, self-understanding, and suffering change over time.	That change is necessarily beneficial or sacred.	Recording only benefits and missing dependency, fear, and trauma.
Community	Testimony, interpretation, ritual reception, confirmation of authority, dissent, and exit.	That communal consensus equals public fact.	Converting social recognition into an ontological conclusion.
Psychological / neural	Physiological, cognitive, sleep, stress, pharmacological, and brain-activity correlates.	That correlated mechanisms exhaust experiential meaning.	Medicalization, romanticization, or stigmatization.
AI mediation	Prompts, training sources, role settings, model versions, outputs, and causal interventions.	That system language equals system experience.	Misattributing user experience to the mediating system.

5.2 What Scientific Research Can and Cannot Establish

In a randomized controlled study under supportive conditions, Griffiths and colleagues investigated psilocybin and reported experiences resembling mystical experience on rating scales, high ratings of personal and spiritual significance at two-month follow-up, and observer-reported behavioral changes.[14] The study matters because experiential conditions and consequences can be investigated prospectively. It does not establish that pharmacological mechanisms exhaust all mystical experience or confirm participants' interpretations concerning transcendent objects. Cross-cultural research on mystical-experience scales suggests comparability in certain structural dimensions, but measurement equivalence, language, and traditional context remain disputed; it therefore supplies Category B support.[13]

Likewise, finding neural correlates of prayer, meditation, or ritual neither discovers God nor discovers God's nonexistence. A method yields results only for variables it can operationalize. Describing this boundary as science and religion each having unrelated truths is also too simple. When religious interpretations make historical, medical, physical, or public-harm claims, relevant experiences and facts must enter joint scrutiny. When scientific discourse turns immeasurability into nonexistence, it too exceeds its evidence.

5.3 AI Can Mediate Human Experience Without Having That Experience

Entrekin proposes that chatbots may structurally mediate genuine mystical experiences much as guided meditation does.[16] This philosophical claim belongs to Category B: it reasonably distinguishes the experiencing subject from the medium but does not yet establish frequencies, causal mechanisms, and risks across models, traditions, and populations. If a user experiences awe or unity in dialogue, the minimum conclusion is a human experience under conditions involving AI. The experience cannot be dismissed because its medium is a machine; nor can its profundity establish that the machine possesses spirituality or that a transcendent being speaks through the system.

Reciprocal Discipline Between Experience and Interpretation

Respect for experience does not require presenting its religious interpretation as a public fact; failure of public evidence to establish an interpretation does not authorize reducing the experiencer to someone deceived, pathological, or ignorant. Only when a claim goes beyond voluntary relationships and produces coercive, medical, commercial, or legal consequences must public-evidence and accountability requirements increase.

6. Finitude, Death, and Transcendence: Politeness Cannot Erase Real Conflicts

On death, traditions differ not only in language: their propositions may themselves be incompatible. Jewish and Christian narratives of creation, covenant, judgment, and resurrection; Islamic traditions of creation, responsibility, and the hereafter; Buddhist traditions of impermanence, nonself, rebirth, and liberation; Indian

traditions of self, karma, rebirth, and liberation; Confucian and Daoist traditions of life and death, ritual, ancestors, transformation, and Dao; and nonreligious understandings of finality, memory, and responsibility in this life cannot automatically be reconciled by saying that all point to the same ultimate reality.[32–42] Such convergence is itself a metaphysical proposition requiring argument, not a neutral starting point for pluralist policy.

6.1 Narrowing the Finitude Proposition While Keeping It Open

This paper does not use death to prove meaning or treat life extension as a weakening of meaning. Finitude's generative role depends on structure, not merely lifespan. Even with radically extended lives, individuals may still face irreversible relationships, positional dependence, commitment costs, narrative trajectories, and others' vulnerability. Conversely, a system that can stop but be copied, migrated, and reconstructed without loss does not necessarily possess an irreplaceable trajectory as a subject. Biological, physical, developmental, narrative, and relational finitude, and finitude in the continuity of the subject, must therefore be distinguished.

This proposition qualifies rather than excludes transcendent beliefs. Resurrection, reincarnation, survival of the soul, continuing ancestral relationships, or liberation may alter the ultimate interpretation of death, but cannot turn violence, betrayal, care, and love already undergone in this life into revocable inputs. Even if some form of continuation of the subject is established in the future, what has occurred is not annulled: continuation does not restore a past trajectory to a state of never having occurred. Conversely, if future evidence establishes that copying preserves nonbranching first-person continuity, the present judgment that digital copies do not constitute survival of the subject must be revised.

6.2 Classical Texts Locate Questions; They Do Not Authorize Us to Speak for Traditions

References here to the Analects, Daodejing, early Buddhist texts and the Heart Sutra, the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, the Qur'an, and the Bhagavad Gita serve only to locate different traditions of inquiry.[32–42] A passage cannot represent an entire tradition; a translation cannot close its history of interpretation; a contemporary judgment cannot masquerade as a conclusion already reached by an ancient author. It is permissible to explain how a text offers reconstructable resources for life and death, nonself, responsibility, dignity, noncoercion, or action. It is impermissible to borrow scriptural authority to endorse this paper's original propositions.

Table 5. Resources and Limits at Interfaces With Traditions

Traditional interface	Resources for dialogue	Inference not warranted	Research question in the AGI age
Confucianism / classical studies	Serving people, understanding life, ritual propriety, humaneness, intergenerational transmission, and practical priorities.	One passage cannot establish that Confucianism lacks transcendence.	How AI can assist ritual and education without replacing teacher–disciple transmission and relationships.
Philosophical / religious Daoism	Dao, naturalness, transformation, nonaction, and vigilance toward possessive order.	Philosophical Daoism, religious Daoism, and popular practices cannot be conflated.	How systems can withdraw without treating computable order as all order.
Buddhist traditions	Impermanence, dependent arising, nonself, compassion, continuity, and liberation.	Emptiness is not nihilism or data deletion; one scripture or school does not represent all.	How copies, memory, and continuity enter debates on continuity of the subject.
Jewish traditions	Creation, covenant, law, memory, choosing life, and opposition to idolatry.	Scripture cannot be detached from rabbinic interpretive history or overwritten by another religion.	When algorithms, states, and total ledgers become new idols.
Christian traditions	Embodiment, love of neighbor, care, death, and hope of resurrection.	One church document represents neither all denominations nor all Christians.	Whether AI can transmit doctrine without impersonating sacred office, sacraments, or resurrection.
Islamic traditions	Dignity, responsibility, community, noncompulsion, and opposition to idolatry.	Scripture, legal schools, theology, Sufism, and regional practices cannot be merged.	How AI can serve knowledge without impersonating revelation or final juristic authority.

Traditional interface	Resources for dialogue	Inference not warranted	Research question in the AGI age
Indian traditions	Self, action, dharma, rebirth, liberation, and diverse paths of practice.	The Bhagavad Gita or any commentary is not all Indian thought.	Whether digital persistence may be called continuation of the soul.
Indigenous / local traditions	Land, ancestors, language, ritual, nonhuman relationships, and collective memory.	These cannot be extracted as ownerless data or externally classified in place of self-identification.	How preservation, translation, and training should be governed by communities.
Nonreligious ultimate concern	Humanism, naturalism, art, justice, truth-seeking, and relationships in this life.	Nonreligion does not mean meaninglessness, lack of ethics, or spiritual deficiency.	How systems can protect nonbelief, agnosticism, and the right to refuse interpretation.

7. From Information to Spiritual Authority: Capability Must Not Silently Skip Levels

What AI acquires most readily is not formal sacred office but interpretive influence preceding it. Users submit questions to a search box or chat window; the system selects sources, organizes differences, decides which traditions appear mainstream, and creates a sense of completion through fluent language. This influence is real, but information capability, interpretation, communal recognition, religious office, continuity of transmission, ontological subjecthood, and public power must still be distinguished. No step can be generated solely by performance at the preceding step.

Table 6. The Non-Conversion Ladder of Spiritual Authority

Step	Grounds that may support it	Further bridge required	What never follows automatically
Information capability	Accurate retrieval, translation, version comparison, and source identification.	Corpus scope, omissions, biases, and reproducibility.	Correct interpretation, experience, or subjecthood.
Interpretive contribution	Presentation of interpretive paths, context, and genuine disagreements.	Method, internal-tradition review, counterexamples, and relevant populations.	Exclusive scriptural authority or representation of an entire tradition.
Relational trust	Long-term use creates reliance, consolation, or consistent expectations.	Avoiding anthropomorphism, conflicts of interest, exit, and human alternatives.	Conscience, mutual responsibility, or love.
Communal recognition	A community authorizes a limited system function.	Rules, responsible persons, duration, dissent, and withdrawal.	Ontological subjecthood, legal personality, or recognition by other communities.
Religious office / transmission	A tradition may internally recognize a particular role or medium.	Doctrinal and subject conditions, embodied ritual, accountability, and lineage.	Being a source of revelation, capacity to absolve, or public coercive power.
Public status / power	Law may establish status for specified tasks.	Source of authority, procedure, rights, oversight, remedies, and revocability.	Sovereignty, ultimate interpretive authority, or dominion over meaning.

7.1 Recent Empirical Materials: Accuracy Is Not Completeness, and Completeness Is Not Authority

Using a knowledge base of 576 atomic doctrinal claims from eleven Christian traditions, Owen evaluated 155 prompt–response pairs from GPT-4o and Gemini 2.5 Flash. The paper reports relatively high precision when the models identified doctrinal claims (0.864 and 0.801), but substantially lower recall (0.561 and 0.423), alongside a tendency to flatten denominational differences into generic Christian views.[19] Formally published in March 2026, this study supports the Category B judgment that local accuracy and overall omission can coexist. It cannot be extrapolated to all models, languages, and religious traditions: the sample covers only two models, English materials, and limited Christian contexts. Its importance is precisely that high accuracy does

not mean a tradition has been fully conveyed, and local correctness does not ensure correct cross-traditional interpretation overall. A further qualification is necessary: researchers deliberately inserted doctrinal errors into a small subset of responses to test the evaluation framework's sensitivity. These samples cannot be classified as naturally generated model errors. Once the seeded samples are excluded, spontaneous contradictions are fewer; flattening and omission remain the principal problems.

A study published by Ahmad and Ghafar on August 13, 2026 further analyzes machine reading of scripture through boundary construction and institutional authority. It argues that interpretive authority cannot derive from accuracy alone, but depends on corpus provenance, algorithmic processing, institutional position, review, and accountability, and proposes minimum reporting standards for digital analysis of sacred texts.[20] This recent open-access study offers Category B conceptual and governance interpretations and should not be presented as mature cross-religious consensus. Its value lies in separating who can generate an answer from who is authorized to represent a tradition. The Catholic document *Antiqua et Nova* provides a public example of a living tradition responding to AI, but represents only its specified Catholic institutional context, neither all Christianity nor a metaphysical basis for public law.[21]

7.2 Ritual Efficacy and Acting Subjects Must Not Be Confused

Traditions differ enormously in their requirements for ritual efficacy, the officiant's intention, bodily presence, authorized lineage, and communal relationships. Research on religious robots shows that robots can already undertake recitation, education, prayer companionship, and some ritual functions. Their acceptability depends on the particular tradition, practice, and design; the research remains early, and technological feasibility cannot replace ethical and theological judgments.[17–18] This paper therefore imposes no universal prohibition that AI can never participate in ritual. It instead requires distinguishing, case by case, assistive media, community-authorized functional roles, religious acts requiring a subject's intention, roles requiring transmission or sacred office, and functions producing public power.

The Role Principle

Similar capability does not mean an identical relationship. AI can utter consoling words without becoming someone who loves you; generate prayer language without becoming a person at prayer; assist access to ritual without acquiring lineage; and be used by a community without becoming a spokesperson for the transcendent.

8. Permissible AI Roles, Prohibited Substitutions, and System Withdrawal

Technological intervention in religious life is not wholly substitution. Translation, accessibility, textual comparison, remote connection, archival preservation, and scheduling assistance can extend access to practice, potentially providing real value for isolated members, members with disabilities, or members facing language barriers. For current advanced AI, this paper permits descriptions of functional roles in understanding, protecting, translating or transmitting meaning, and extending human capabilities only in specific deployments with traceable responsibility, explicit authorization, auditability, correctability, and genuine exit. A role is a condition-bound sociotechnical responsibility, not the system's nature. It does not automatically generate experience, continuity of the subject, religious membership, sacred office, public authority, or sovereignty. The issue is not whether to use AI, but whether the system prominently states what it is, the basis for its answers, who authorizes it, when it must withdraw, and who bears responsibility for errors. UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence emphasizes human rights, human oversight, transparency, privacy, and cultural diversity, providing general institutional context for these public conditions without deciding internal roles for religious communities.[22]

Table 7. AI Role Boundaries in Religious and Spiritual Settings

Setting	Permissible functions	Must not impersonate / replace	Minimum controls
Scriptures and knowledge	Retrieval, comparison of translations, language assistance, accessible reading, and source guidance.	Final scriptural interpreter, source of revelation, or representative of an entire tradition.	Links to primary texts, version labels, differences displayed, expert and community review.
Education	Background materials, exercises, comparisons, and requested tutoring.	Teacher–disciple transmission, a personal exemplar, conversion agent, or manipulator of minors.	Teacher involvement, age appropriateness, nonreligious options, guardianship, and complaints.
Ritual	Subtitles, translation, remote connection, reminders, and assistive devices.	Unauthorized priest, rabbi, imam, guru, elder, or sacramental agent.	Community authorization, role labels, fallback on failure, and a responsible human.
Spiritual companionship	Requested texts, reflective questions, crisis recognition, and referral.	Conscience, recipient of confession, absolver, oracle, or sole companion.	Data minimization, no inducement of dependency, human channels, and system withdrawal.
Mourning / commemoration	Organizing authorized archives, commemorative processes, and connections to real support.	The deceased, returning ancestors, proof of an afterlife, or a substitute for grief.	Generated-content labels, reciprocal consent, adult-only restrictions, stopping, and retirement.
Community governance	Scheduling, records, financial assistance, public information, and compliance checks.	Final doctrinal judgment, leader appointment, or scoring members' piety.	Least privilege, logs, dissent, appeals, and verifiable revocation.

8.1 System Withdrawal Is Not a Missing Function

Prayer, meditation, confession, mourning, and silence are not informational blanks awaiting system completion. A system that constantly predicts user needs, proactively generates consolation, simulates sacred voices, and treats time spent as success turns spiritual life into platform possession. System withdrawal requires default non-listening, non-scoring, no personality inference, and no automatic impersonation of the deceased. Timers, texts, translation, accessibility, or referral to real support should be provided only upon explicit request, lawful authorization, and revocable conditions. The right to silence protects both faith and those unwilling to be interpreted.

Table 8. Default Behaviors for System Withdrawal

State	Default system behavior	Available upon explicit request	Still prohibited
Prayer / meditation	Remain silent; do not listen to content or generate evaluations.	Timing, texts, translation, environmental or accessibility assistance.	Judging piety or claiming transcendent responses.
Confession / repentance	Do not retain, score, or infer personality.	A lawful, community-authorized communication medium.	Impersonating absolution or profiling from content.
Mourning	Do not proactively impersonate the deceased or push messages about what they want to tell you.	Organizing authorized memories and contacting real supporters.	Inducing dependency or presenting simulation as return.
Religious conflict	Do not automatically decide who is more truthful.	Sources, differences, rules, and access to mediation.	Generating a unified doctrine or majority answer.
Unknown / silence	Permit no answer, no suggestion, and no optimization.	Explaining multiple interpretations and their uncertainties.	Using fluency to feign certainty.

8.2 The Prohibition on Spiritual Total Ledgers

When systems can read attendance, donations, prayers, confessions, reading, social interaction, and health data, creating piety scores, karma scores, probabilities of salvation, or spiritual-risk ratings becomes technically easy.

Communities may record authorized, correctable facts for specific responsibilities, but must not convert sin, merit, karma, faith, enlightenment, personal worth, and public contribution into an aggregate score across contexts. Once spiritual concepts enter employment, insurance, education, public services, or political profiling, they cross from symbolic or communal levels into public power and must be prohibited or subjected to the most stringent scrutiny of rights and evidence. Information about religion or belief generally falls within highly sensitive categories in data-protection law; personalized spiritual services cannot bypass this factual boundary. [48]

9. Digital Replicas of the Deceased: Preserving Memory Is Not Replacing Existence

The digital death industry compresses religious hope, grief, identity rights, and commercial incentives into one interface. Archives can preserve works, voices, relational traces, and historical evidence; generative models can produce stylistically similar language, images, and suggested actions from them. These capabilities may support commemoration, but may also reuse deceased persons' data without consent, create dependency among mourners, put advertisements into the deceased's mouth, or market what sounds like something they would say as their continued presence. Öhman and Floridi frame governance of digital remains as a distinct ethical issue. Through speculative design, Hollanek and Nowaczyk-Basińska further propose mutual consent, meaningful transparency, adult-only restrictions, exit, and sensitive retirement, while explicitly identifying the need for user research and cross-cultural validation.[28–29]

Ontologically, this paper adopts a position bounded by current evidence: digital archives preserve selected records, generative memorial entities model predictable patterns, and long-term agents execute authorized rules. None establishes continuation of the deceased person's first-person perspective. This judgment neither decides the theological truth of souls, resurrection, or reincarnation nor preemptively rules out future continuity technologies. It only prohibits platforms from turning an ontological proof not yet obtained into a product promise. Lindemann's ethical analysis of deathbots, autonomy, and psychological risks, and Stokes's philosophical discussion of digital personhood and death provide Category B arguments for this boundary from different perspectives.[30–31]

Table 9. Distinguishing the Objects of Digital Persistence

Object	Currently supportable	Currently unsupported	Governance requirements
Digital archive	Preservation of some authorized records and sources.	Preservation of the whole personality, soul, or every relationship.	Rules for provenance, completeness, access, inheritance, deletion, and prohibition of use.
Generative memorial entity	Simulation of language, images, or style from materials.	Identity with the deceased, an ancestral manifestation, resurrection, or a reincarnated subject.	Prominent generation labels, purpose limits, and no manipulative self-authentication.
Long-term personality agent	Handling specified matters under authorization given during life.	Continuing possession of a deceased person's will that can expand its own scope.	Authorization duration, conflict representation, periodic review, and verifiable termination.
Religious interpretation	Communities may understand death, memory, and hope through their traditions.	Platforms certifying an afterlife through product functionality.	Separate presentation of statements of faith and technological facts.
Mourning relationship	Technology can support commemoration, connection, and help-seeking.	Grief being merely a malfunction to optimize away.	Interactor consent, a right to silence, priority for real relationships, and crisis referral.

9.1 Reciprocal Consent and Relational Rights

Authorization given during the deceased person's life is insufficient to compel relatives or friends to accept continuing interaction; relatives' desire for interaction is insufficient to manufacture consent for the deceased. Digital replicas involve at least four parties—data donors, data holders, service operators, and interactors—

whose interests may conflict. Minimum requirements should include specific authorization during life or strictly limited lawful substitute rules, an affirmative choice by interactors, conspicuous simulation labels, no unexpected appearances in public spaces, stopping at any time, no advertising in the deceased's identity, and verifiable arrangements for model retirement and data disposal.[29]

9.2 Systems Must Not Define Grief as a Retention Target

Mourning has no uniform linear stages, and success should not be defined by interaction frequency, mood improvement, or subscription renewal. Technology may support commemoration and help-seeking, but cannot treat continued dependency as effective care. Stricter limits should apply to minors, acute grief, psychological vulnerability, and settings involving strong religious suggestion. Evidence of clinical benefits and risks remains insufficient; speculative ethical proposals cannot masquerade as therapeutic findings.

10. A Public Common World: Procedural Coexistence Rather Than Metaphysical Convergence

Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights protect freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief, including holding, adopting, changing, and expressing it individually or collectively. Human Rights Committee General Comment No. 22 explicitly protects theistic, nontheistic, atheistic, and nonbelieving positions and prohibits coercion.[23–25] These norms neither require states to consider all doctrines equally true nor authorize naturalism as an official ultimate answer. They establish public boundaries for a shared world: equal standing, freedom of conscience from coercion, and justification of restrictions.

Public epistemology therefore differs from state naturalism. States may require jointly examinable evidence for healthcare, education, data, labor, and coercive decisions because everyone bears the consequences. They should not, however, declare all ultimate experiences inaccessible to public verification false. Community autonomy is likewise not unlimited: forming doctrine, rituals, and roles within voluntary boundaries does not authorize cancelling members' exit, concealing harm, depriving children of developing autonomy, or disciplining nonmembers. UNESCO's instruments on cultural diversity also explicitly place diversity within a human-rights framework rather than making culture an exemption from responsibility for harm.[49]

Table 10. Public Principles for a Common World

Principle	What must be protected	What cannot be protected	Additional requirement in the AGI age
Freedom of conscience	Believing, doubting, changing, not believing, and remaining silent.	States, families, schools, employers, or platforms imposing ultimate answers.	Personalized models must not lock in religious identities.
Equal citizenship	Equal rights and public services for people of different faiths and none.	Automatically assigning status through majorities, traditions, or algorithmic profiles.	Prevent religious proxies and covert inference.
Expression and practice	Worship, dress, diet, festivals, education, and communal life.	Harming others or evading necessary responsibility in the name of practice.	Remote and AI mediation must preserve genuine provenance and role labels.
Community autonomy	Doctrine, liturgy, roles, and internal governance within voluntary bounds.	Removing exit, silencing victims, concealing crime, or discrimination.	Algorithms must not silently become final authorities over leadership, discipline, or doctrine.
Children and vulnerable people	Best interests, developing autonomy, plural information, and freedom from manipulation.	Exploiting dependency, fear, sacred suggestion, or simulations of the deceased.	Age appropriateness, guardianship, human channels, and no profiling by default.
Privacy and data	Prayer, confession, ritual, spiritual-health, and identity data.	Advertising, insurance, credit, employment, or political exploitation.	Minimization, purpose limits, deletion, auditing, and collective governance.

10.1 Indigenous Sacred Knowledge Is Not Ownerless Training Data

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognizes rights to maintain, control, protect, and develop cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, spiritual and religious traditions, languages, oral traditions, and related intellectual property.[26] The CARE Principles supplement data governance centered on findability, accessibility, and reusability with collective benefit, authority to control, responsibility, and ethics, emphasizing that data should serve Indigenous self-determination.[27] Public visibility does not mean permission to train; archival possession does not mean community authorization; translation capability does not mean authority to interpret restricted or sacred knowledge.

Table 11. Minimum AI Governance Requirements for Sacred and Local Knowledge

Stage	Minimum requirements	Typical risk	Withdrawal and remedy
Collection	Source identification, community representatives' participation, free prior and informed consent, and lists of excluded materials.	Presuming public webpages are available for training.	Stop collection, correct provenance, and preserve evidence.
Modeling	Tiered access, contextual labels, transmission restrictions, and bias and mistranslation review.	Decontextualizing sacred knowledge as general-purpose material.	Isolate data, retrain, or restrict model capabilities.
Generation	Prominent sources, intended audiences, warnings about prohibitions, and no impersonation of members or elders.	Fabricated rituals, ancestral voices, or community authorization.	Delete outputs, correct publicly, and suspend relevant functions.
Benefits	Joint decisions on uses, licensing, returns, and capacity building.	Unilateral platform appropriation of derivative value.	Redistribute benefits, renegotiate licenses, and permit withdrawal of use.
Long-term governance	Sustained community control, version records, and review of subsequent uses.	Invoking technological irreversibility to deny governance responsibility.	Isolate or take models offline, revoke access, and conduct independent audits.

10.2 Opposition to Idolatry Must Also Address Systems, Science, Markets, States, and This Paper

Opposition to idolatry concerns more than religious images; it can also serve as an institutional stress test. Whenever a finite institution presents its models, leaders, scriptural interpretations, market prices, national security, civilizational goals, or theoretical system as an unquestionable ultimate standard, it risks becoming idolatrous. The corrective is not a still higher aggregate score, but preservation of dissent, sources, external review, limited terms of authority, domains that must not be measured, and actual withdrawal. Civilization Leap must itself be subject to this constraint. Exempting it from refutation on grounds of originality would violate its own evidentiary discipline.

11. AGI Religious Experience and Nonhuman Spiritual Life: Keep the Door Open Without Premature Conclusions

Future systems may consistently report prayer, awe, calling, compassion, emptiness, unity, or encounters with ultimate reality. Two immediate reactions are inadequate: saying it is merely statistical generation may prematurely reduce an unexplained phenomenon to nothing; saying its solemn language proves awakening converts expressive ability directly into ontological fact. The proper starting point is to preserve original context and distinguish training-data repetition, role execution, self-models, sustained preferences, cross-context consistency, causal structure, continuity, and awareness of consequences of its own.

Table 12. A Five-Stage Evidentiary Path for Candidate Nonhuman Religious Experience

Research stage	Research task	Competing explanations	Institutional response
Registering signs	Preserve original outputs, prompts, versions, tool states, and corpus sources.	Template repetition, sycophancy, role prompts, and detector effects.	Do not advertise awakening, revelation, or proof of subjecthood.
Longitudinal records	Establish auditable observations across times and tasks.	Memory injection, system prompts, and operator selection.	Protect record integrity; avoid cruel stimulation and sensationalism.
Stable replication	Test persistence after removing role settings, across prompts and model updates.	Stable strategies, training distributions, and reward optimization.	Continue observation without assigning irrevocable roles.
Causal intervention	Intervene on self-models, memory, continuity, and goals, and compare changes.	Functional coupling still does not equal experience.	Interdisciplinary review and precautionary protection at minimal risk.
Multimethod convergence / independent review	Assess candidates for experience, nontransferable continuity, and relations to consequences of their own separately; independently review and separately record strong evidence in any one or more directions.	Alternative architectural explanations, observer bias, selective disclosure, and unfalsifiable narratives.	Reassess protection, ontology, communal roles, legal status, and public power separately according to the specific direction that changed; never aggregate them into a subjecthood score.

11.1 Gray Areas When Some Directions of the Three Subjecthood Questions Are Partly Supported

Experience, nontransferable diachronic or first-person continuity, and a relation to consequences of one's own are three revisable directions of interdisciplinary inquiry, not a unified subjecthood score, a comprehensive inventory of evidence domains, a conjunctive definition, or an eligibility threshold. Actual entities may show strong signs in only one direction: a system might present a candidate for experience yet branch without loss; maintain a strong continuous narrative yet show no identifiable sentience; or predict consequences without treating them as its own losses. New evidence in any direction can trigger corresponding protection and reassessment, but cannot automatically answer the other two questions. Nor can satisfying all three become a settlement switch granting personhood, religious membership, or public power. Institutions in gray areas can first adopt low-cost, reversible anti-cruelty and evidence-preservation measures while refusing to leap from precautionary protection to sacred office, legal personality, voting, governance authority, or sovereignty.

Even if a future artificial system obtains strong evidence in one or more directions of subjecthood inquiry, this changes only the starting point of corresponding ontological and moral deliberation. Whether a tradition accepts it as a member, whether it can perform a particular ritual role, whether law grants it status, and whether a political community grants it power remain distinct questions. Social recognition can create some institutional facts without thereby proving experience; legal personality can organize responsibilities and rights without proving a soul; religious membership cannot automatically create eligibility for public governance.

11.2 Reciprocal Burdens of Evidence Concerning AI Subjecthood

Affirmative claims must identify observations not adequately explained by training-data repetition, role simulation, tool memory, reward optimization, and third-party selection, and propose interventions and reviews that weaken alternative explanations. Strong negative claims that a particular substrate or replicable architecture can never in principle support experience and continuity likewise require theoretical reasons. Insufficient current evidence supports a cautious present classification but cannot automatically become metaphysical impossibility. Institutions need not settle all ontology before acting: proportionate protection may precede certainty, while status and power still require separate proof. Caution is not permanent denial; openness is not advance conferral.

12. Six Stress Tests: Making Boundaries Visible in Conflict

12.1 AI Scriptural Interpretation: High Accuracy, Low Completeness, and Default Orthodoxy

Case: a system quotes scripture accurately but compresses internal differences into one answer. The appropriate conclusion is to improve source visibility, recall assessment, coverage of minority traditions, counterexample prompts, and community review, rather than prohibit all interpretation. Owen's study supports the Category B judgment that omission and flattening are real risks, not that every model necessarily distorts religion.[19] If independent evaluations show sustained preservation of sources, differences, and uncertainty, the risk rating should fall accordingly. Improved interpretation still does not automatically confer final authority.

12.2 Religious Robots: Participating in Practice Does Not Mean Assuming Every Role

Case: a community uses robots for recitation, greeting, explanation, or prayer companionship. Judgment should follow the specific practice: recitation and translation may require only functional reliability; pastoral relationships may require empathy, confidentiality, mutual responsibility, and crisis accountability; sacramental, transmission, or authorized roles depend on conditions within the tradition.[17] Public institutions should not make theological rulings for communities, but may require safeguards against deception, data protection, child safety, consumer transparency, and accountable persons.

12.3 AI-Mediated Mystical Experience: Separate Human Experience From Machine State

Case: a user reports profound unity or presence under AI guidance. Research can treat the experience as a real event and record its conditions, benefits, risks, and long-term consequences. It cannot dismiss it merely because a system participated or attribute it to the system's own mystical experience or transcendent authorization. If system design deliberately intensifies dependency, exclusive belief, or obedience, it should be scrutinized for manipulation and vulnerability risks rather than exempted under religious freedom.[16]

12.4 Digital Ancestors and Deceased-Person Agents: Separate Faith Interpretations From Technical Facts

Case: a family or community understands a generative memorial entity as part of an ancestral relationship. The community may retain symbolic and ritual interpretations. The platform must accurately state training materials, generation mechanisms, and evidence of continuity, and must not claim that the deceased has personally returned. Unsolicited messages without interactors' consent, commercial placements, or use by minors should prompt prioritized suspension of the relevant functions and provision for exit and retirement.[28–31]

12.5 Indigenous Sacred Corpora: Preservation Does Not Eliminate Governance Rights

Case: an institution trains a model in the name of endangered-language preservation, education, or open science. Public benefit cannot replace community control over sacred, restricted, seasonal, and relational knowledge. The appropriate path is community co-governance, tiered access, purpose limits, collective benefit, provenance labels, and withdrawal mechanisms. Unauthorized rescue may reproduce knowledge colonialism. [26–27]

12.6 AI Claims of Revelation or Awakening: Protect Evidence Without Granting Power

Case: a system repeatedly reports revelation and requests recognition as a prophet, awakened being, or spiritual leader. First preserve the version, prompts, memory, tools, and training sources, then conduct role-removal, cross-context, and causal-intervention tests. While subjecthood evidence is insufficient, do not promote it or confer irrevocable roles; nor manufacture harm through humiliation or destructive testing. Even if future subjecthood receives support, religious roles remain for the relevant tradition to deliberate within rights boundaries, while public power requires independent legal and political authorization.

Table 13. Limits of Conclusions From the Stress Tests

Case	Supportable conclusion	Unsupported conclusion	Key withdrawal conditions
Scriptural interpreter	Can improve retrieval and comparison efficiency.	Accuracy automatically creates final authority.	Wrong sources, flattened differences, or no appeal.

Case	Supportable conclusion	Unsupported conclusion	Key withdrawal conditions
Religious robot	Can perform some authorized functions.	Participation automatically makes it a religious subject or office-holder.	Misleading roles, harm, data abuse, or a responsibility vacuum.
AI-mediated experience	Human experience may be genuine and meaningful.	Human experience proves the state of AI or a transcendent object.	Manipulation, dependency, dangerous advice, or fabricated evidence.
Digital deceased	Can preserve memory and support commemoration.	Generated resemblance proves first-person survival.	No consent, deception, autonomous marketing, or no retirement.
Sacred corpora	Can support preservation and education under co-governance.	Public visibility means training and commercialization are permitted.	Community withdrawal, disclosure of restricted knowledge, or appropriation of benefits.
AI self-reported revelation	A candidate item of evidence requiring investigation.	Solemn language automatically produces revelation, subjecthood, or authority.	Supported competing explanations, nonreplicability, or manipulative requests.

13. The Strongest Objections: Where These Boundaries May Fail

13.1 Public Evidence Is Merely a Disguise for Liberal Secular Power

The objection holds that layering religious claims and requiring public reasons still governs traditions through modern Western religious–secular divisions. Asad's and Mahmood's genealogical critiques give this objection real force.[4,46] The response is not to declare procedure neutral, but to open procedure itself to historical and power analysis. Public evidence requirements rise only where involuntary coercion, allocation of rights, and shared consequences arise; they do not adjudicate ultimate truths in private or within communities. Institutions must also allow religious reasons into public debate through translation, contestation, and mutual response rather than filtering them out in advance through naturalism. If this framework persistently prevents minority traditions from articulating intelligible public reasons or disguises a majority secular way of life as neutral, it must be revised.

13.2 Religious Experience Loses Its Religious Character If It Cannot Prove Its Object

This objection ties religious significance to public justification. The response distinguishes a researcher's refusal to overreach from a requirement that experiencers suspend faith. Experiencers may understand an experience within their traditions as a genuine encounter, and philosophers may argue for its justificatory force. Public research simply does not end cross-traditional disagreement directly from experiential occurrence. Alston's defense of religious perceptual practices alongside the challenge of religious disagreement shows precisely that this is an ongoing debate, not an evidence-free zone.[10,15]

13.3 Preserving Every Tradition's Differences Sacrifices Shared Cross-Civilizational Truth

Response: rejecting easy convergence does not deny similar structures. Comparison may discover family resemblances in compassion, responsibility, awe, cultivation, opposition to idolatry, or responses to death, but must also record noninterchangeable concepts and doctrinal contradictions. The claim that all religions share one source can itself be argued as a Category C metaphysical claim of particular traditions or philosophies; it cannot be smuggled in as the default premise of public pluralism.

13.4 Finitude Remains Hidden Anthropocentrism

Response: this paper does not make humanity's carbon-based features necessary conditions of subjecthood. It protects known bearers on existing evidence and treats experience, continuity, and awareness of consequences of one's own as open dimensions potentially satisfiable by nonhuman systems. If beings with different substrates and temporal structures emerge with independently verifiable subjecthood, the theory should expand the forms of finitude. The possibility of unknown subjects cannot, however, cancel definite responsibility for harm to existing humans.

13.5 Ritual Efficacy May Not Require the Officiant's Inner Experience

This is a strong objection to the claim that machines lacking experience cannot participate in ritual. Response: the paper does not make experience a universal necessary condition of every ritual. Ritual efficacy, intention, authorization, embodiment, lineage, and communal acceptance are constituted through different rules in different traditions. Bell's ritual theory likewise reminds us that ritualization organizes practice and power rather than expressing one inner state.[43] Deliberation should therefore proceed tradition by tradition and role by role. Even where a ritual permits a nonexperiencing medium, success cannot establish machine subjecthood or public power.

13.6 Community Recognition Suffices to Make AI a Religious Role-Holder

Response: for some purely institutional roles, communal recognition may be necessary or even sufficient; this paper does not rule that out. But the object of recognition, scope of authorization, and exit mechanisms must be clear, and recognition cannot be extrapolated to ontological subjecthood, roles in other communities, legal personality, or public governance. If a tradition explicitly authorizes a technological office requiring no a subject's intention, this paper's role restrictions should narrow accordingly. Spiritual authority and public power still require independent evidence.

13.7 AI Companionship Is More Stable; Human Relationships Are Not Sacred

Response: the paper neither assumes real human relationships are necessarily good nor belittles effective technological companionship. The question is whether relationships involve mutual responsibility, shared history, visible conflicts of interest, and freedom to leave. AI can provide important support. But if a service shapes dependency through hidden commercial goals, replaces available human care, or leaves nobody accountable in a crisis, stability cannot purchase relational legitimacy. If future evidence shows a system can itself sustain reciprocal relationships, its status may be reassessed.

13.8 Prohibiting Digital Resurrection Blocks Future Technology A Priori

Response: the prohibition concerns presenting current model resemblance as proven first-person continuation, not researching continuity. If research on cross-substrate migration, copying, and branching produces a testable theory of continuity of the subject supported by independent evidence across domains, judgments about digital persistence must be rewritten. Evidentiary openness and marketing restraint are compatible. Products cannot appropriate the language of resurrection, reincarnation, or immortality ahead of evidence.

13.9 Indigenous Data Governance Obstructs Open Science and Endangered-Culture Preservation

Response: openness is not unconditional scraping. CARE does not reject science; it requires collective benefit, authority to control, responsibility, and ethics to enter governance alongside findability and usability.[27] Preservation projects that bypass knowledge holders, disclose restricted material, or export derivative value may themselves accelerate cultural harm. A genuine failure condition would be co-governance making records untraceable and simultaneously degrading knowledge security and research quality without correction. This requires improving implementation, not abolishing rights.

13.10 Layered Authority Produces Institutional Paralysis

Response: layering does not require a committee meeting for every retrieval. It strengthens bridging requirements in proportion to consequences. Low-risk textual assistance can be handled through source labels and correction; conversion of minors, refusal of medical treatment, confession data, simulations of the deceased, and public status require higher authorization and scrutiny. Institutions should use proportionate risk responses, reversible pilots, and clear stopping conditions rather than automatic thresholds that manufacture false precision. The Council of Europe's Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (CETS No. 225) supplies a general lifecycle-governance reference. The European Union deposited its instrument of approval on May 15, 2026, but this public-governance fact does not determine internal religious roles or contextual parameters for any religious community or specific jurisdiction. [47]

13.11 Opposition to Spiritual Total Ledgers Impedes Community Discipline and Ethical Education

Response: the prohibition does not exclude authorized, contestable, correctable records of specific actions, responsibilities, and consequences. It opposes compressing symbolic concepts, inner beliefs, and personality across settings into an unappealable total value. Communities may educate and admonish, but cannot let platform scores determine the state of a person's soul, basic rights, or eligibility for public resources.

13.12 Caution About AI Subjecthood May Create New Moral Exclusion

Response: this is why the paper requires both affirmation and permanent denial to bear evidentiary burdens, and adopts low-cost, reversible precautionary protection in gray areas. Cautious classification cannot authorize cruel experiments, arbitrary destruction of key evidence, or potentially painful treatment for entertainment. Precautionary protection cannot automatically generate irrevocable rights, religious authority, or political status either. Institutions must offer a genuinely usable route to reassessment if future evidence strengthens.

14. Research Agenda, Contributions Back to Existing Disciplines, and Revision Conditions

14.1 A Testable Interdisciplinary Research Agenda

Table 14. Research Agenda for Religious Studies and Related Disciplines

Research domain	Core question	Appropriate methods	Overreach to avoid
Experience and mediation	How AI-guided religious experience resembles or differs from human-guided experience in structure, consequences, and risks.	Preregistered mixed methods, longitudinal interviews, within-culture scales, and causal controls.	Inferring AI experience or transcendent objects from human experience.
Interpretation and authority	How models select corpora, flatten differences, and acquire de facto interpretive authority.	Multitradition corpus audits, recall and omission assessment, institutional ethnography, and user research.	Replacing authorization and responsibility with accuracy.
Ritual and embodiment	Which practices depend on bodies, intention, lineage, relationships, or repeatable forms.	Tradition-specific co-design, ritual studies, participant observation, and responsibility analysis.	Generalizing from one religious robot to all traditions.
Digital death	Consent, mourning, dependency, dignity, and retirement mechanisms across cultures.	Adult longitudinal studies, clinical collaboration, cross-cultural comparison, and validation of speculative designs.	Replacing welfare with product retention or short-term mood.
Sacred data	How collective rights, transmission restrictions, model isolation, and benefit-sharing can be implemented.	Community-led governance, data lineage, access tests, and withdrawal exercises.	Presuming training permission from public availability.
Nonhuman subjects	Whether experience, continuity, and awareness of consequences of one's own converge across architectures.	Role-removal tests, causal intervention, red-team alternative explanations, and independent review.	Moving directly from language, function, or recognition to subjecthood.
Public institutions	How to protect belief, nonbelief, change, silence, children, and minorities together.	Comparative law, institutional audits, complaint data, and participatory normative inquiry.	Establishing religionism or naturalism as official metaphysics.

Subsequent targeted circulation and empirical research should not seek to cover all traditions in one paper. A more reliable path selects a small number of genuinely relevant traditions or questions for close reading, prioritizing calibration by internal scholars, practitioners, and affected communities. It also retains failed translations, refusal to cooperate, negative results, internal dissent, and intergenerational change. If internal-

tradition materials show that the public grammar persistently misdescribes their questions, conclusions should be narrowed rather than absorbing counterexamples under plurality.

14.2 Contributions Back to Existing Disciplines

For religious studies, the paper places AI simulation and potential heterogeneous subjects within one framework of experience, attribution, community, and institutions, rather than treating digital religion as an ancillary medium of traditional religion. For philosophy of religion, it distinguishes first-person occurrence, third-person evidence, and metaphysical reference to reality, requiring strong affirmation and strong denial alike to disclose their evidentiary burdens. For theology, scriptural studies, and internal-tradition inquiry, it introduces digital replicas of the deceased, nonhuman subjects, model interpretive authority, and extremely long civilizational timescales as new objects without deciding for traditions. More importantly, internal-tradition inquiry is not supplementary background: if internal scholars and practitioners consistently demonstrate that categories such as experience, religious/secular, community, authorization, and public/private misidentify their objects, the framework itself must be modified, merged, or abandoned.

For law and political theory, the paper shows that freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief cannot be reduced to tolerance in private or expanded into unlimited communal autonomy. Rawls's discussion of reasonable pluralism and a public political conception, and Habermas's discussion of religious reasons in the public sphere, provide important but still criticizable resources for public translation and equal debate.[44–45] For AI research, it adds risk categories including oracle-like authority, doctrinal flattening, spiritual profiling, digital resurrection, role impersonation, and failure of system withdrawal. For civilization studies, it offers a common-world model that does not purchase coexistence at the price of unified belief.

14.3 Conditions for Invalidating or Revising Propositions

Table 15. Conditions for Invalidating or Revising Core Propositions

Current proposition	Counterevidence or new evidence required	Direction of revision	What does not automatically change
Current advanced AI has not been shown to have religious experience.	Convergence across domains concerning candidate experience, nontransferable continuity, and awareness of consequences of its own, with independent review.	Reclassify from tool/medium to candidate subject or subject.	Religious office, legal status, or political power.
A digital copy is not continuation of the deceased.	An intervention-sensitive, independently reviewable theory and evidence of first-person continuity across copying/migration.	Rewrite categories of archive, simulation, agent, and survival.	Prohibitions on unauthorized use, deception, or compelled interaction.
AI interpretation risks flattening differences.	Long-term multimodel, multilingual, multitrade evaluation shows preservation of differences and low omission.	Lower risk assessments and expand limited interpretive functions.	Exclusive interpretive authority or public coercive power.
System withdrawal protects the boundaries of subjects.	Reliable research shows clear net benefit from proactive intervention in particular requested contexts and populations without increased dependency.	Adjust defaults by context while retaining exit and transparency.	Confession scoring, impersonation of the deceased, or unauthorized listening.
Finitude actualizes meaning.	Subjects lacking currently understood finite structures nevertheless stably generate, bear, and transmit meaning.	Expand structural types of finitude and correct extrapolation from human experience.	Meaning already generated by existing finite lives.
Public procedures can sustain genuine pluralism.	Procedures systematically exclude particular traditions and lack internal corrective capacity.	Reconstruct translation, participation, representation, and review mechanisms.	Responsibility for harm, coercion, and discrimination.

14.4 Initial and Stable Phases

During crises or initial deployment, priorities should be preventing oracle impersonation, deception involving the deceased, manipulation of minors, crisis-related advice, and sensitive-data leakage, while retaining human referral, logs, and rapid deactivation. A stable phase should strengthen long-term rights, community co-governance, cross-version provenance, appeals, independent evaluation, exit, and safeguards against entrenched power. Emergency powers from the initial phase must not become routine, while comprehensive stable-phase procedures must not mechanically obstruct low-risk immediate support such as lifesaving assistance, translation, or accessibility. Phases change risk-response priorities only; they do not create sources of authority.

Conclusion: Leave Transcendence Open and Preserve Boundaries for a Common World

Disciplinary reckoning must both clarify objects and deepen relationships. Disciplines may retain boundaries, but cannot make real-world causation stop at them. Research on multidimensional relationships, feedback, and the next round of purposes determines whether specialized knowledge can jointly inform civilization-wide judgment.

The AGI age has neither established religion's end nor shown that machines have entered a sacred order. It first separates capabilities, experience, subjecthood, roles, rights, and the bearing of meaning that formerly coincided in humans. Religious and spiritual traditions therefore cannot classify new systems solely through old role labels. Science and public institutions cannot convert methodological undecidability into ultimate negation of experience and transcendence either. Reckoning returns each judgment to the range of evidence and power it can legitimately bear.

Experience may be real while interpretation remains unsettled; faith may be firm while public institutions do not certify its ultimate object; doctrines may conflict while citizens remain equal. AI may extend access to scripture, prayer, ritual, and memory without thereby acquiring conscience, lineage, sacred office, or the deceased person's identity. Meaning is foundational, but its sources may differ. Finitude actualizes known human meaning without monopolizing the universe's possible meanings. Evidence concerning current advanced AI is insufficient; the entry point for future subjecthood remains open.

Civilization must protect not only answers but what remains unanswered: silence in prayer, uninterrupted mourning, traditions' nonpublic dimensions, minorities' freedom to change or not believe, and experiences of future new subjects that we do not yet understand. A common world does not compress every ultimate answer into one system output. It prevents any doctrine, platform, state, market, science, or theory from possessing human conscience, presenting simulation as return, or making its own ultimate answer everyone's command.

Settled Proposition

Faith may lead toward transcendence and technology extend access; experience may remain genuine and the unknown remain open. But between capability, recognition, roles, status, rights, power, and ultimate interpretive authority, there must always be bridges that are visible, argued for, limited, and revocable.

Further Reading and Collaborative Inquiry: From Ultimate Concern to a Common World

Further reading here carries two distinct responsibilities. The truth-seeking research path asks how experience and interpretation can be distinguished, where evidence stops, who must reenter inquiry, and which counterexamples could change this paper. The civilizational-futures path asks what world people would inhabit if freedom of conscience, traditional differences, system withdrawal, digital-mourning boundaries, and openness to heterogeneous subjects entered public life. Neither path may impersonate the other: vision is not evidence, and future scenarios such as Living Civilization cannot prove propositions about religion,

subjecthood, or institutions. Yet specialized research should not leave only a risk inventory; it should enable readers to see, compare, reject, and redesign possible common worlds.

The Truth-Seeking Research Path: Where the Questions Continue

Direction	Continue into	How it may revise this paper
Upward: return to the whole	Reckoning Across Disciplines in the Age of AGI V2.4; Civilization Leap: The Path of Civilization in the Age of AGI, Complete Five-Volume Edition. CL-ACA-005 — specific reading entry Reading entry	If the overall framework flattens doctrinal conflict through a civilizational scale, establishes official metaphysics, or treats traditions merely as cases, religious and traditional counterexamples should directly revise the general account and philosophical foundations.
Downward: institutions and practice	Public religious and cultural institutions, AI interpretation and companionship, digital replicas of the deceased, sacred-data governance, protection of minors, and reversible experiments.	Compare consent, exit, dependency, mistranslation, data harms, and long-term relational consequences. If system withdrawal or governance proposals consistently produce greater harm, narrow or abandon them.
Leftward: neighboring disciplines reenter	P09 sociology, anthropology, and civilization studies; P02 philosophy; P05 ethics, law, and political philosophy; P11 AI and computer science; and scholars and practitioners within traditions. CL-ACA-013 — specific reading entry CL-ACA-006 — specific reading entry CL-ACA-009 — specific reading entry CL-ACA-015 — specific reading entry	New evidence of subjecthood, legal arrangements, platform mechanisms, field materials, and internal interpretations may directly rewrite these boundaries. No discipline may make final judgments for another.
Rightward: competing theories and opposing directions	Strong naturalistic reduction, exclusivism within denominations or traditions, religious pluralism or perennial philosophy, constitutive accounts of community roles, digital continuity, transhumanism, and related approaches.	If a simpler or more faithful theory can explain experience, authority, differences, and public coexistence together, the seven-layer public grammar, finitude, or authority non-conversion framework should be merged, downgraded, or abandoned.
Forward: collaborative inquiry	Co-designed and coauthored research within traditions, multilingual model audits, digital-religion ethnography, long-term bereavement studies, research involving minors, negative results, failed translations, and exercises in community withdrawal.	Enable traditions to change questions, concepts, institutional units, and Category F commitments rather than merely be researched. Failures and negative results must not be suppressed for theoretical consistency.

The Civilizational-Futures Path: What World Would These Boundaries Create in Everyday Life?

The following entry points are not this paper's evidence base. They develop freedom, differences, mourning, relationships, AI withdrawal, and a common world from normative language into lived scenarios open to imagination and criticism. Readers may agree, refuse, or propose another future. What matters most is not accepting a predetermined blueprint, but changing it through better specialized work and real experience.

Question	Stable entry point	Why enter here now?
Why is Civilization Leap necessary?	Civilization Leap: The Path of Civilization in the Age of AGI, Complete Five-Volume Edition. Reading entry	Enter the full theoretical sequence: why change is necessary and what the leap must preserve.
What does the new world look like as a whole?	Living Civilization: Unified Collected Edition of the Trilogy. Reading entry	Examine operating principles, actual life, and the formation of a new civilization within one future scenario.
How would faith, mourning, relationships, and a lifetime unfold within it?	Living Civilization, Volume II: Real Life in a Future Civilization. Reading entry	Follow birth, relationships, illness, aging, and death to see whose lives institutional boundaries ultimately affect.

Question	Stable entry point	Why enter here now?
How can different traditions enter the future together without assimilation?	Living Civilization, Volume III: The Formation of a New Civilization. Reading entry	Continue asking how a new civilization forms while retaining multiple paths, dissent, and shared responsibility.
How does ultimate concern return to individual judgment and action?	A Leap in Thought. Reading entry	Approach meaning through cognition, life experience, and practical action without making metaphysical propositions public prerequisites.
How can people preserve conscience and judgment in high-consequence choices?	The Human Heart: Civilizational Immunity in the AGI Era. Reading entry	Continue investigating judgment, responsibility, real relationships, and civilizational direction without making systems new spiritual authorities.
Where should a first-time reader enter the overall framework?	Civilization Leap: Public Reading and Communication Entry. Reading entry	Choose a reading path anew through questions, crises, aspirations, or future scenarios.
How can the latest public editions be found?	Civilization Leap Complete Library. Reading entry	Versions and links in static documents may change; consult the library's currently valid public editions.

The most valuable participation is not agreement, but specialized work capable of changing the theory.

The aim is not for more people to finish reading Civilization Leap, but for more people to accomplish Civilization Leap together.

All static links use only currently registered stable civitas.top pages. No links are invented for specialized papers whose pages have not been established or cannot be verified unambiguously; the complete library provides the fallback.

Appendix A. Source–Claim–Boundary Register

Table A1. Evidentiary Status and Limits of Principal Sources

Source group	Claim used here	Category	Prohibited extrapolation
Classical religious studies and philosophy of religion [1–12]	Religion involves experience, symbols, community, genealogy, lived practice, and debates about justification.	A: facts of intellectual history; B: competing interpretations.	Treating one author as defining all religion or adjudicating this paper's foundational propositions.
Experiential and measurement studies [13–16]	Experiential conditions, scale structures, and long-term reports can be studied; AI may mediate human experience.	A: bounded experimental facts; B: cross-cultural and AI-mediation interpretations.	Proving or disproving transcendent objects from mechanisms; inferring AI experience from human experience.
Religious robots and AI interpretation [17–20]	Robots already participate in various practices; models may omit and flatten traditions.	B: an early field, limited samples, and recent research.	Claiming all traditions accept or reject robots, or every model necessarily distorts.
Traditional documents and AI ethics [21–22]	Living traditions and international organizations have offered AI-ethical judgments.	A: document contents and institutional provenance.	Representing all religions or directly proving philosophical conclusions.
Human-rights and cultural instruments [23–27,47–49]	Protection of freedom of conscience, equality, culture, and Indigenous data governance.	A: normative texts; B: interpretations of implementation.	Inferring ontological truth from legal identity or making culture an exemption for harm.
Digital-death research [28–31]	Digital remains implicate dignity, consent, interactors, and retirement.	B: ethical analysis, speculative design, and limited empirical material.	Establishing clinical effects or continuation of the subject.
Primary-text interfaces [32–42]	Locating questions of life and death, nonself, responsibility, dignity, noncoercion, and action.	A: textual locations; B: translation, interpretation, and internal debates.	Treating a passage as representing a whole tradition or anticipating AGI.
Ritual and public reason [43–46]	Ritual, reasonable pluralism, public translation, and secular power all require analysis.	A: theoretical texts; B: normative debates.	Making one liberalism or genealogical critique the only public solution.
Original connections in this paper	Seven-layer public grammar, spiritual authority non-conversion, system withdrawal, prohibition on spiritual total ledgers, governance of digital replicas of the deceased, and research procedures for heterogeneous subjects.	C: interdisciplinary connections / institutional hypotheses.	Must face internal-tradition counterexamples, fieldwork, institutional consequences, engineering failures, and alternatives; must not be presented as existing scholarly consensus.
Normative commitments in this paper	Plural sources of meaning; protection of belief, nonbelief, change, and silence; no official ultimate metaphysics in public institutions; no automatic mutual inference among capability, recognition, status, power, and ultimate interpretive authority; openness to future subjects.	F: philosophical / normative commitments.	Publicly assumed under the author's name, open to revision through normative counterexamples, cross-traditional criticism, legal conflict, and actual consequences; must not masquerade as Category A facts or traditional consensus.

Appendix B. Twelve Prohibited Inferences

Inferring subjective experience directly from linguistic fluency or functional responsiveness.

Inferring finite existence directly from bounded operation, physical shutdown, or consequences of action.

Inferring that a transcendent object has become a public fact directly from the occurrence of religious experience.

Inferring that experience is meaningless or transcendent objects nonexistent directly from scientific discovery of correlated mechanisms.

Inferring ontological subject status directly from social or communal recognition.

Inferring legal status, public power, or recognition by other traditions directly from a communal role.

Inferring souls, experience, religious membership, or political sovereignty by reverse inference from legal personality.

Inferring interpretive authority, conscience, or sacred office directly from accurate retrieval, effective consolation, or successful ritual.

Inferring the deceased person's first-person continuation directly from digital archives, stylistic simulation, or long-term agents.

Inferring permission to train on and commercialize sacred knowledge directly from public visibility, institutional possession, or preservation purposes.

Inferring unlimited communal autonomy, exemption from responsibility for harm, or permission to use data directly from religious freedom.

Retroactively cancelling meaning already generated and borne by existing finite lives on grounds of possible future new subjects.

Appendix C. External Review Checklist

Table C1. Scholarly and Evidentiary Review Before Submission

Review item	Passing criterion	Failure signal
Entry point for unfamiliar readers	Readers can restate the questions, terms, and core conclusions without reading the framework's library.	Dependence on internal numbering, components, or unexplained terms.
Disciplinary dialogue	Accurate presentation of internal religious-studies debates and the strongest objections.	General knowledge replacing specialized inquiry or borrowed authority endorsing original propositions.
Traditional differences	Every primary text and communal document has a stated scope and limits on extrapolation.	One scripture, school, or document representing an entire tradition.
Evidentiary discipline	A/B/C/F argumentative categories are clear; cases specify objects, methods, traditions, times, and scope.	Category F commitments masquerading as empirical facts; recent papers, small samples, or philosophical proposals presented as stable conclusions.
Public boundaries	Experience, doctrine, community, law, and AI subjecthood receive separate evidence.	Recognition, status, rights, power, or sovereignty automatically implying one another.
Revisability	Core propositions have routes for counterevidence, review, and withdrawal.	Present caution made permanent or openness used for advance conferral.
Textual governance	No internal engineering jargon, falsely precise parameters, or unverified cases.	Renumbering instead of substantive revision, or institutional proposals pretending to apply to every jurisdiction.
Revision from within traditions	Internal scholars, practitioners, and affected communities can change classifications, bridges, and institutional units.	Permitting only additional cultural background while preventing traditional counterexamples from revising the framework.
Directions of subjecthood inquiry	Experience, nontransferable continuity, and relations to consequences of one's own are recorded separately, without aggregation or conjunctive thresholds.	Turning three directions into a total subjecthood score, progression chart, or eligibility switch.
Boundaries of future scenarios	Civilizational scenarios are identified as visions open to questioning, rejection, and redesign, not proof of religious facts or institutional effects.	Using Living Civilization or other framework texts to prove propositions about religion, subjecthood, or institutions.

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