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'No place like home?': Artificial intelligence-ecology within religious sacred stewardship and the digital Anthropocene

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This article examines the 'religious paradox of home' within major religious traditions to construct a theologically grounded ethical framework for artificial intelligence (AI). Against the backdrop of the global ecological crisis, this article argues for steering AI development away from technological domination towards sacred stewardship in the digital Anthropocene. Using a qualitative desktop methodology, data were gathered from Christianity, Buddhism, Indigenous Traditions, Islam and Hinduism perspectives and used 'home' as a conceptual framework. The analysis shows that these traditions, despite their differences, collectively foster a double consciousness of the earth as both a physical dwelling and spiritual destined home. The article concludes that this paradox fosters a robust ethic of hopeful responsibility, providing an essential moral foundation for technology geared to correct both exploitative domination and escapist indifference towards our planetary home.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: This study uniquely proposes a sacred stewardship by design using theology, environmental ethics and postcolonial studies. The study fosters that ecology and social responsibility must be at the core, not ancillary to technological innovation. The study challenges that AI development should integrate theology and spiritual wisdom.

Keywords: artificial intelligence; digital Anthropocene; ecology; home; non-idolatry; religion; stewardship.

Introduction

The nature of the ongoing ecological crisis demands strategic actors such as religion, which has a long history of providing meaning and guidance for humanity. Thus, the discourse of ecology is permeating every discipline, and the main religious traditions have a lot to offer in this Anthropocene. Paul Crutzen describes the Anthropocene as an epoch or geological age where 'human activities have become so pervasive and profound that they rival the great forces of Nature' (Crutzen 2002). It is essential from the outset to recognise that the Anthropocene is not a monolithic force, but it is impacted and driven by historical and economic systems. Departing from the words 'Anthropocene' and 'Capitalocene', Moore (ed. 2016) favours the term 'capitalocene' as best to describe the source of ecological disruption caused by three things, namely firstly, patterns of capital accumulation; secondly, commodification and thirdly, cheap nature that originated with colonisation. The distinction of these two terms not only brings clarity but also brings the problem of belonging. For instance, the politics of belonging in the Anthropocene is directly entangled with the politics of economic distribution and the value of historical responsibility. Added to the mix, the sacred responsibility of humanity is being taken away from human moral responsibility to artificial intelligence (AI). According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2019), AI is a machine-based system that can predict, recommend or make decisions influencing real or virtual environments. It is essential to confront a fundamental contradiction: the creation and implementation of extensive AI systems require substantial energy and material resources, exacerbating the ecological crisis they aim to resolve (Bender et al. 2021). While there is a great appreciation of AI, however, the danger comes when AI becomes a dominant force shaping the planetary future.

Earth is our home, and a gap exists in understanding an appropriate AI-ecology that does not merely manage a generic human impact but ascertains the reality that 'there is no place like home'. The triad, Anthropocene, Capitalocene and AI, disrupts the fundamental concept of home.

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The battleground is making the earth a habitable home, not as a mere resource to be optimised but as a living home to be cherished with a deep longing and sacred responsibility.

This article starts with the premise that revisiting and analysing the theological concept of home provides building blocks that can shape an ethic of ecological stewardship and technological development to manage the current digital Anthropocene. Broadly, the digital Anthropocene is a way of examining the digital technologies that have caused the current global crisis.

According to McLean (2020), digital relations must be real through the 'deepening reach of the digital in everyday life', paradoxically 'reworking spatial connections and disconnections'. This article seeks to fill this gap by excavating the 'religious paradox of home' to propose a 'stewardship-by-design' framework for AI development. To provide scope, this study does not claim an exhaustive in-depth study of every religion, which requires internal merit and independent scholarly attention. However, this study seeks to identify theological patterns among Christianity, Buddhism, Indigenous Traditions, Islam and Hinduism to construct a preliminary synthetic framework for AI ethics. Accordingly, this synthetic approach is a generative first, which will be followed by in-depth analysis of individual religions. The contribution is to demonstrate a cross-traditional convergence on key ethical principles for AI-ecology, not in comprehensive doctrinal coverage.

Conceptual framework: Paradoxes of 'home'

Addressing the planetary crisis requires viewing it through specific conceptual lenses. This study uses home as a conceptual framework to outline how religious beliefs impact ecological crises and environmental stewardship. The word 'home' is used or spoken often, but it is deeply complex. Further, 'home' is defined and loaded with concepts from religion, spirituality, politics and even culture. Home portrays an image of and a sense of stability. It connotes fixity to a geographical space and even acts as a symbol of belonging. Security and identity are at times used to refer to home. According to Mallett (2004), home is not a single-dimensional physical space but an 'aggregation of social relations', reflecting its construction across multiple dimensions such as space, emotion and culture. Mallett's assertion of relations suggests that there is a feeling of being 'at home', which is cultivated more by networks and connection than the existence of a physical shelter. Thus, it is this deeper, relational quality that makes the concept of home so powerful and its potential loss in the Anthropocene so devastating to humanity.

Home has a sense of mobility. The movement of people, globalisation and transnational flows bring new insights about the meaning of home. Migrant people and those in diaspora view home as here and there. The diaspora refers to a group whose ethnic community has been dispersed outside their country of origin for historical, social or economic reasons (Brah 1996). In this context, diaspora does not mean a complete loss of 'home' but rather the creation of a new social space where the concept of home is constantly redefined by the interaction between memory and reality. In a broader sense, the diaspora gives a new meaning to the concept of home, from a fixed location to a fluid, multi-layered and often pluralistic concept, challenging monolithic national or cultural identities. From an ecological crisis perspective, this is instructive in the sense that it demonstrates that belonging does not depend on a perfect, unchanging nature, but on the ability of humanity to cultivate meaningful relationships within a dynamic environment, even one that is wounded or changing.

Further, Antonsich (2010) propounds that home is shaped by 'place-belongingness' and the 'politics of belonging'. Put in other words, place-belonging elaborates an individual's subjective sense of where one has a sense of attachment to a certain place. However, this can be contrasted with the politics of belonging, which focuses on how societies determine 'who can belong'. The politics of belonging uses delineation of boundaries and the exclusion of others. This conceptualisation is critical for the Anthropocene, where the 'politics of belonging' determines which species and ecosystems are valued and which are expendable. In a way, a purely utilitarian view of nature enacts a violent politics of belonging that excludes non-human life and future generations.

It is important to acknowledge that the concept of 'home' functions differently across religious worldviews. For instance, some religion's view of home is primarily a sacramental space mediating divine presence. Also, other religions view home as a temporary waystation to ultimate reality. Further, in other religions, home is a web of kinship relations requiring reciprocity. As such, this study does not impose a single definition of home. However, this study traces how each religion's unique concept of home generates specific implications for AI ecology. The study acknowledges that what unites the concept of home within the five major religions is not identical but a shared structural function. This shared function can be described as a grounding moral orientation towards the earth and a rejection of both exploitative domination and escapist indifference.

A sacred stewardship, conversely, expands the circle of belonging to include the entire community of creation. Home, therefore, evokes feelings of connection and belonging. On the downside, Freud ([1927] 1961) dismisses the longing for home as infantile, relating it psychically to a longing to return to the mother's womb. Freud's position can be understood as reductionist because it does not capture the profound theology and ecological dimensions of home, a gap this study is filling. The theological conceptualisations of home are essential tools for constructing a viable planetary ethic. To put Freud's proposition in a theological dimension, yearning for home when properly understood is not infantile or a regression but nonetheless a deep, insightful orientation

toward relationality, responsibility and ultimately, the sacred, an orientation desperately needed to guide our technological power.

By studying the breadth of religion, it serves to demonstrate that the 'paradox of home' is not idiosyncratic to one view; rather, it is a recurring moral structure across diverse religions. Focusing on cross-religion areas of convergence is critical to examine the relevance to global AI ethics. However, the way religions articulate the concept of home is respected before synthesis is attempted to give each religion a distinctive voice. Thus, this study's analysis is indicative and not comprehensive; for instance, each religion is presented using canonical texts, and lived experiences and practices may show contestations within. Therefore, the goal of this study is to identify identifiable patterns critical to AI ecology. The study does not seek to reduce complex traditions to single positions. Where possible, each tradition's own categories are used to frame its contribution.

Christian sacramental homemaking

For Christianity, home is fundamentally about sacramental anticipation, a dwelling that is both real residence and pointer towards ultimate renewal. Christianity views the earth as a temporal home, as believers long for an eternal home. This waiting period is what Wright (2008) calls 'life after life after death' – the resurrection of the body and the renewal of all creation.

Theologically, the Christian tradition views this as 'already and not yet' eschatology. To a larger extent, this creates a distinctive ecological home ethic. God will redeem rather than abandon creation; our earthly stewardship actively participates in God's ultimate renewal (Bauckham 2010). This position by Bauckham, on one hand, contradicts Gnostic escapism, which views the earth as a resource for the material world; on the other hand, it challenges utilitarian pragmatism, which views the earth as merely a resource to be consumed. Treating the earth as a home destined for transfiguration transforms it from a disposable container for the soul into an extension of eucharistic thanksgiving, a gift to be received with gratitude and care. This sacramental worldview sees material reality as charged with the grandeur of God, a means through which divine grace is mediated.

The book of Philippians 2:7 provides the concept of *kenosis* [self-emptying] of Christ. The *kenosis* provides a theological foundation that homemaking is an act of humility. The examples of humility and care by Jesus Christ are opposed to domination. Approaching the ecological crisis with a humble and caring mindset counters the excessive pride or self-confidence behind much technological development, suggesting that AI should be designed for service, not supremacy. Thus, an AI informed by *kenosis* ethics would be built not with the idea of not maximising efficiency at all costs, but with the trust to empower the vulnerable (humanity and ecosystems), embodying a posture of service. Pope Francis (2015) emphasises in *Laudato Si' that* our care for our common home prepares the earth for its ultimate fulfilment. He explicitly warns against a 'technocratic paradigm' that sees nature as an insensate order to be dominated, a view that AI, if improperly guided, could dangerously amplify.

The Christian tradition, therefore, is calling for a sacramental approach to the application of technology to ecological crises. For instance, tools such as AI should be used to perceive and enhance the sacredness of creation, participating in God's ongoing work of redemption.

Positively, AI can be deployed not only for optimising deforestation but also for modelling and providing improved agro-ecological practices that can restore soil health and biodiversity. This has the potential to see the earth as a participation in the created order that God called 'very good' (Gn 1:31).

This transforms AI from a tool of extraction into an instrument of sacramental homemaking, tending to a creation that is both our temporary residence and the future site of God's glorious renewal. Furthermore, theologian Celia Deane-Drummond advocates for a 'theology of wonder' in the face of creation's complexity, which can be augmented, not replaced, by AI's analytical power. She suggests that AI could help map ecological networks that 'evoke a sense of wonder and praise', thereby reinforcing the sacramental view of nature (Deane-Drummond 2017). Thus, the Christian tradition upholds the concept of sacramental homemaking.

Buddhism: Impermanent homemaking

For Buddhism, home is fundamentally about compassionate non-attachment, a dwelling to be cherished without clinging. Buddhist philosophy places ecological ethics within the framework of impermanence [*anicca*] of all earthly dwellings. The Buddhist theology creates and cultivates the notion of compassionate connection to all beings sharing this temporary home. According to The Four Noble Truths, clinging to impermanent things is identified as a source of suffering [*dukkha*]. As such, one should not have excessive attachment to the Earth as a permanent possession.

However, this non-attachment does not mean indifference. According to Macy (1991), Buddhists employ 'loving detachment', a state that enables clearer seeing and more compassionate, effective action. From an ecological perspective, the crisis represents a failure to understand the interconnectedness of all life, a central tenet known as *pratītyasamutpāda* [dependent origination]. *Pratītyasamutpāda*, the principle, argues that all phenomena arise in dependence on a vast, intricate web of causes and conditions. Nothing exists independently; the rainforest, the climate and human consciousness are all mutually constitutive.

The Earth, therefore, must be treated not as a separate, external object to be used but as our very body. According to

Hanh (2013), 'the Earth is not merely the environment we live in. We are the Earth'. The idea that the Buddhist impermanence home is non-dualistic proffers a radical foundation for AI ecology. For instance, the focus can move beyond creating systems that objectify and optimise nature to developing AI that models and fosters interdependence. The advantage of having an AI designed using this perspective helps humanity not to see a forest as a mere carbon sink but as a complex, sentient community to which we belong. Such a technology developed would focus on healing relationships and minimising harm, embodying the Bodhisattva's vow to liberate all beings, reflecting an active, compassionate engagement with a world understood to be in constant, sacred flux. For example, a Buddhist-inspired AI for urban planning would not simply optimise traffic flow but would model the well-being of all beings, human, animal and plant, prioritising quiet parks over new highways and clean air over convenience, understanding that the suffering of one is the suffering of all.

Employing *pratītyasamutpāda*, visible and actionable in society, would make subtle interconnections viable and guide humanity towards decisions that minimise systemic harm and foster collective flourishing. Accordingly, this approach rejects the illusion of a separate self-exploiting a separate environment and instead uses technology to deepen our realisation of and responsibility within the seamless web of life. This resonates with the position of Loy (2019), a contemporary Buddhist ecologist who opines that the ecological crisis is a 'crisis of relationship', and technology must be repurposed to heal our 'disconnection' from the natural world. An AI grounded in the Buddhist impermanence homemaking perspective would function as a 'relational mirror', revealing the karmic consequences of our actions across the global ecosystem.

Indigenous traditional religions: Reciprocal homemaking

The term Indigenous Traditional Religions in this study refers to diverse cultures and cosmologies using contexts like North American, African and Australian contexts as illustrative, not representative of all Indigenous peoples. For Indigenous Traditional Religions, home is fundamentally about kinship reciprocity, a living entity to whom one is related, not a resource to be managed. Indigenous traditional religions, regardless of their geographical setting, exude a theology of reciprocal homemaking. Indigenous traditional religions view it not as a passive location or a piece of land but as a living organism. Home is a living entity, a sacred place where the spiritual and physical realms continuously intersect. As Kimmerer (2013) writes, 'to become native to this place, if we are to survive here, and our neighbours too, our work is to learn to be here'. Kimmerer further propounds that 'becoming native' involves the 'grammar of animacy', which recognises the personhood of all beings who share our home, from rivers and rocks to animals and ancestors. To this, Deloria (1999) argues that home is a web of relationships, with specific places containing spiritual significance and power. In the Indigenous Tradition Religion, theology and wisdom, inanimate objects have life. For example, a mountain is not an object but a relative; a river is a sacred person, signifying a reciprocal relationship. Suitably, this reciprocal homemaking fundamentally redefines stewardship from management to kinship, requiring constant acts of reciprocity and gratitude.

The Indigenous Traditional Religions' theology of home promotes ecological stewardship as maintaining right relationships with all members of the cosmic community. This position stands in sharp contrast to the extractive logic of the Anthropocene and offers a profound corrective for AI development. In a way, an AI informed by the Indigenous Traditional Religion goes beyond being a tool used for resource management and becomes an instrumental mediator of kinship, designed to listen to the land and uphold reciprocal responsibilities. The study done by Whyte (2018) discusses how Indigenous science fiction explores ancestral imagery of societies with widespread suffering, injustices and oppression that are already realities. As such, Whyte highlights the need for technologies that support collective continuance. Using technology in such a way opens room for deepening relationality, ensuring that our digital tools reinforce, rather than sever, the sacred bonds that make a place a true home.

Reciprocal homemaking goes beyond imagining an AI that is designed to look for the most effective way to log a forest but to provide information and monitor the health of that forest in a way that people monitor the health of our elderly. Using the local Indigenous Knowledge wisdom, the AI could indicate ecosystem vitality, make use of bird songs as indicators of balance and, in a contemporary sense, alert the community when ceremonies of gratitude or restoration are needed.

With a reciprocal homemaking perspective, success of the AI would not be measured in profit but in the extent to which humanity is able to sustain the land and support its diverse communities and persons. The strength of such an AI would be its ability to enhance the circle of gift exchange by assisting to revitalise endangered Indigenous languages that hold specific ecological knowledge, thereby giving back to the community that guides it. This approach is a departure from viewing AI as a colonising force to an essential digital participant in the traditional work of reciprocal homemaking. According to Mercier (2021), for technology to be ethical in the context of Indigenous traditional religions, its development must be through 'relationship-based protocols', ensuring it serves to 'strengthen, not supplant, the transmission of intergenerational knowledge'.

Islam: Balancing homemaking

For Islam, home is fundamentally about balanced trusteeship, a sacred trust [*amanah*] held under divine accountability. The Islamic home ethic is about balance. In the Quran (2:30), the

earth is regarded as *Amanah* [a sacred trust] from God; humanity has a divine role as a caretaker of the earth [*khalifah*]. The world is *dar al-imtihan* [the abode of test], where humanity's stewardship is continuously assessed. The Quranic concept of *mīzān* [balance] points to a precise ecological equilibrium that makes the Earth a habitable home (Quran 55:7–9). Balance is pivotal, and any disruption to it is a theological and ethical failure. It can also be viewed as a violation of the trust that the Creator has given humanity. The advance of the concept of *mīzān* is that it applies to all systems. Correspondingly, this suggests that a healthy society and a healthy ecosystem deserve healthy technology. For smooth working, all these systems must operate within divinely ordained limits and harmonies.

The promise of *Jannah* [paradise] is also pivotal to this balance, as it provides the ultimate context for earthly action. Earthly life is a preparation [*tahdhir*] for the final return to God. The Islam divine trust is activated by appropriate preparation. Thus, ecological disruption is a sign of violating the divine trust (Khalid 2019). So, an Islamic view of AI-ecology would look at technology through the *mīzān* and *amanah* lenses. Artificial intelligence systems would be built to keep the environment in balance and respect the trust that God has put in people, not to make the most money in the short term. Artificial intelligence systems can help to keep track of how resources are being used, allowing humanity to leave the home we were given in good health and balance for future generations, which is what faithful *khalifahs* do. For instance, an AI designed to manage water resources in dry areas keeping a *mīzān*. This approach proffers fair distribution, making sure ecosystems get enough water and stop over-extraction. It would see water as a shared trust [*amanah*] instead of a commodity. Its algorithms would include the Islamic rule against waste [*israf*], which means they would focus on saving resources instead of using them. Islamic eschatology argues that everything in creation will give a testimony on the 'Day of Judgement'.

An AI based on this faith encourages people to leave a record of responsibleness and balanced stewardship. Technology, in a way, will help humanity to fulfil their sacred role as people exercising delegated power on behalf of God. Ozdemir (2022), a modern Islamic environmentalist, argues that the goal of an Islamic ecology is to teach adab, or right behaviour, in all our interactions, even with technology. He argues that AI must be developed with *adab* to ensure it 'acts with courtesy and respect towards all of God's creation'.

Hinduism: Cosmic order homemaking

For Hinduism, home is fundamentally about cosmic order participation, a divine dwelling where dharma maintains universal harmony. The Hindu concept of home is patterned around the cosmic order. The Hindu tradition has a complex ecological view of the universe. It sees the Earth not just as a resource, but as a sacred, conscious and divine home. Theologically, the Hindu views the world through *dharma* [cosmic order and duty]. Hinduism teaches that nature is sacred and about the oneness of life. These views from Hinduism are powerful counters to the Capitalocene's extractive logic. An AI-ecology approach based on Hinduism would see technology uphold dharma and develop a respectful relationship with a living planet.

The Hindu ecology teaches that the natural world is full of divinity and consciousness. The *Pancha Mahabhutas* [five great elements], *prithvi* [earth], *apas* [water], *tejas* [fire], *vayu* [air] and *akasha* [space], are thought to be the basic building blocks of all physical and spiritual life. These elements are not lifeless; they are holy and deserving of respect. *Bhumi Devi,* or *Prithvi Mata,* is the goddess who represents the Earth. She is a divine mother who feeds and supports all life. The *Bhumi Sukta* of the *Atharva Veda* powerfully expresses this devotional relationship by saying, 'The Earth is the mother, and I am her son' (Atharva Veda Book 12, Hymn 1, Verse 12, as cited in Chapple (2000). The hymn calls the Earth 'unageing', 'universal mother' and 'foundation of all', which sets up a relational ethic of gratitude and respect instead of ownership and domination (Chapple 2000). This anthropomorphism indicates that ecological damage is not solely a technical deficiency but a sacrilegious act against a deity.

This sacred view of nature leads to an ecological ethic based on the idea of dharma. Dharma, in its most general sense, means the cosmic law that keeps the universe in order, harmony, and balance. For people, it is a network of moral duties [*svadharma*] that are meant to keep this balance. The most important ecological extension of dharma is the idea of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, which means 'the world is one family'. This statement comes from the *Maha Upanishad* (Chapter 3, Verses 10–13) and radically expands the circle of moral concern to include all living things on Earth, including humans, animals, plants and elements (Kumar & Kumar 2008). An AI-ecology based on this idea would not be made to benefit one species or company but to model and promote the health of the whole family network. Its algorithms would be designed to keep the health of the whole group, which is an example of an inclusive, systems-level intelligence.

The idea of *yajna* [sacrifice or giving back] is what keeps this dharmic balance going. The Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 3, Verses 10–13) says that the Creator made life possible through yajna, a cycle of mutual support in which all beings depend on each other. Because humans have a higher level of consciousness, it is their duty to take part in this cycle by doing selfless things and giving back. The Gita says, 'All beings are nourished by food, and food is nourished by rain; rain itself is the *yajna* of the gods, and yajna is born of righteous action' (Easwaran 2007).

When this cycle is broken by greed [*lobha*] and harmful action [*himsa*], it causes adharma, which is cosmic and ecological disorder. When applied to technology, this means that AI

systems should be made to be tools of *yajna*, which means that they should help people take care of each other instead of just taking things from others. For example, an AI for managing farms would put soil health (the body of *Bhumi Devi*), water purity and biodiversity first. This would make sure that people do things that help the ecosystems they depend on.

Also, important Hindu philosophical ideas give a metaphysical reason for limiting technological arrogance. *Maya* and *Lila*, which are often translated as 'the world is a divine, dynamic play', encourage a way of thinking that is more about being involved than being in charge. The world is real and holy, but its true source is God. This stops people from worshipping either the material world or human technological skill. A Hindu ecologist would contend that our present crisis originates from the prakriti-purusha duality, the erroneous belief that the conscious self [*purusha*] exists independently from the material world [*prakriti*] (Dwivedi 2000). This duality facilitates the objectification and exploitation of nature.

An AI based on Hindu non-dualism would work to heal this perceived separation by using its computational power to show how everything in the web of life is connected. This would make it easier for people to see the unity that lies beneath the surface of diversity.

Modern Hindu environmental thought strongly connects these old ideas to problems we face today. According to Dwivedi (2000), protecting the environment is a spiritual duty and a form of worship [*seva*] in Hinduism. Further, 'the Earth's preservation is a dharmic duty'.

Further, the *Bhumi Sukta* and other texts require a 'covenant with the Earth', a relationship of mutual loyalty that people today have broken (Chapple 2000). From this perspective, an AI for the Anthropocene should embody karma yoga, a selfless instrument for action that upholds the dharma of the entire Earth community. It would be successful if it helped people do their duty as humble but responsible members of the *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, making sure that our technological power helps, not hurts, our sacred role as guardians of a conscious and divine universe.

Table 1 provides diverse meanings of home across major religions.

The idolatry of artificial intelligence: From tool to false god

Before constructing a positive ethical framework, this study provides a succinct danger for wanting to treat AI itself as a quasi-divine force. Firstly, there is a need to understand the attempt to come up with AI-salvationism. The concept of AI-salvationism is defined as believing in the superintelligent AI to resolve ecological challenges by the use of complicated calculations, making human actions and efforts secondary.

Secondly is the danger of AI-animism, where there is excessive attribution of autonomous agency and intentionality to algorithmic systems. This includes attributing personhood to algorithmic systems. This approach either defers or brings fearful postures towards technology.

Analysing the premise of AI-salvationism and AI-animism, religions are guilty of committing this error of idolatry. According to Francis (2015), Christianity is a critique of technocratic paradigm arguing that believers must not make technology an object of ultimate concern. Such an approach to cling to technology is a source of *dukkha* [suffering] according to Buddhism. Indigenous traditions may view AI-animism as relational protocols keeping technology subordinate to kinship obligations. The approach of Islam to prohibit shirk (associating partners with God) helps to comprehend any claim that a human artifact calls for independent divine-like authority. Also, Hinduism's concept of maya helps to fight against mistaking human technical skill for ultimate reality.

Thus, non-idolatry in AI calls for focuses on transparency mandates that view algorithms as something useful to affect communities but not opaque oracles. Non-idolatry approach must put human actions in the loop, as responsible for their consequences. In essence, AI must not be viewed as being a substitute for behavioural, political and spiritual transformation. Artificial intelligence remains a tool for sacred stewardship, never a god to be worshipped nor a saviour to be awaited.

Towards a sacred stewardship by design: An ethical framework for the Anthropocene

Although each tradition provides a unique pathway, a synthetic perspective uncovers significant synergies. Christian kenosis and Buddhist *pratītyasamutpāda* both ask

TABLE 1: Meanings of 'home'.

Religious tradition	Concept of home	The role of human	Primary virtue	AI design implication
Christianity	Sacramental expectation	Stewardship participant	Indebtedness	AI is a tool for sacramental repair
Buddhism	Compassionate non-attachment	Interdependent being	Loving detachment	AI is a tool of relational mirror
Indigenous traditions	Kinship reciprocity	A caretaker	Reciprocity	AI is a tool to provide kinship mediator
Islam	Balanced trusteeship	*Khalifah* [vicegerent]	*Adab* [right conduct]	AI helps to keep balance
Hinduism	Cosmic order participation	*Dharma* [bearer]	*Seva* [selfless service]	AI as *yajna* [gift-cycle] tool

AI, artificial intelligence.

people to give up their powerful, controlling selves in favour of a life that is more relational and service orientated. Thus, the non-idolatry principle is critical towards viewing AI not as a substitute for human moral agency, spiritual discernment or communal decision-making. The overview of the five major religions reveal that AI is a human artifact and must not be confused to be a god, a moral agent or a source of ultimate meaning. This assertion show that AI cannot be granted autonomous authority over life and death ecological decisions. Both communities and religious practices must be transparent and prevent permanent delegation of moral responsibility to AI. Moreover, AI development should refrain from salvation narratives that put technology as an ultimate solution to ecological crisis. The role of AI should be to preserve and enhance, not replace, human and communal ecological discernment.

The religious paradox of home, valuing the Earth as a dwelling while seeing it as a pointer towards a transcendent home, creates a distinctive and robust ethical framework for ecological action. The analysis of this 'double consciousness' across traditions provides pillars for correcting two common errors: biocentric absolutism, which can idolise the earth, and escapism, which justifies exploitation for otherworldly ends. The notion of home embodies a 'double consciousness', an awareness of a terrestrial, physical residence and a spiritual dimension transcending temporal existence (Sheldrake 2001).

Jenkins (2013) suggests a balanced stance termed 'eschatological restraint', which restricts technological usage by acknowledging that Earth is God's creation rather than human possession. This principle, which is important for all religions, is necessary for controlling AI. It sets a 'stop rule' against technology going too far, like geoengineering plans that try to play God or AI systems that want to control, not help, complex ecosystems.

This contradictory view protects against both despair on Earth and escapism in other worlds, encouraging what Bouma-Prediger (2010) calls 'hopeful responsibility'. It is a hope that is not naive given the size of the crisis, and it is a responsibility that is not crushed by despair because it is based on a reality that goes beyond the immediate struggle. In AI-ecology, this means making systems that are both practically useful for healing the planet and humbly aware of their small, participatory role in a creation that is ultimately sacred and supported by a higher reality. The paradox of home creates a 'sacred stewardship' that is both deeply devoted to the health of our planet and free from the false belief that we alone are responsible for its future. This gives us the mental and spiritual space we need to do the long, hard work of fixing the environment. It also lets us use powerful tools like AI without becoming either a technocrat or an apocalyptic. We act as if everything depends on us being responsible, but we trust that the final homecoming of all creation is in the hands of people who are wiser and stronger than we are.

Conclusion

This article has shown through theological analysis how major religious traditions offer deep insights for dealing with the ecological crisis of the Anthropocene. From different perspectives, religious traditions view the earth as home. Christianity calls it sacramental homemaking, Buddhists view it as compassionate interdependence, Indigenous Traditions call it reciprocal kinship, Islam made it a balanced trusteeship, and Hinduism accords it as cosmic order. Such paradoxes of home establish humans as dual citizens, dwelling on earth while orientated towards a heavenly reality. From a religious point of view, home is very important spiritually because it stands for holiness, hope for the end of the world and a final resting place. The religious theology of home provides a moral architecture, fostering a 'hopeful responsibility' in the age of technological power and ecological crisis. The main religious traditions view the planet as home, a resource and a destination. Thus, technological tools, including AI, should respect the inherent value of the earth while recognising that it is only temporary.

Thus, the future of the earth, our common home, depends on people's ability to harness the theological wisdom and weave it within the newest technology, making sure that they are not dominating but dignified in repair and reverent care. In the digital Anthropocene, there is no place like home unless people focus on what it means to be a home. Artificial intelligence remains a tool, never a god, never a moral agent, never a source of ultimate meaning. Its value is instrumental and subordinate to the sacred relationships that constitute home. The 'stewardship-by-design' model proposed here rests on this non-negotiable foundation. Therefore, home is not a mere occupancy but a sacred, responsible and loving relationship. This study proposes a 'stewardship-by-design' model, arguing that AI systems must be architected from the ground up to embody sacred principles such as service, reciprocity and balance, transforming them from tools of extraction into instruments of sacramental repair. Future studies should focus on co-designing relational-based protocols with communities.

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CRediT authorship contribution

Nomatter Sande: Conceptualisation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Project administration, Writing – review & editing. The author confirms that this work is entirely their own, has reviewed the article, approved the final version for submission and publication and takes full responsibility for the integrity of its findings.

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Data availability

The author confirms that the data supporting this study and its findings are available within the article and its listed references.

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