

## **Cyberreligion: The Spiritual Paradox of Digital Technology**

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**Abstrack**

The existence of cyberspace has not only changed human views on spirituality, religion, rituals, houses of worship, scriptures, spiritual teachers, beliefs, divinity, and even the view of god itself. Cyberspace opens up the possibility to carry out various religious activities in a new way that is artificial or virtual. Literature review, as part of the scientific approach, focuses on the literature of journal articles, books, monographs that discuss themes based on keywords related to the research conducted. A new cyber vision of God is developing, which is now seen as a projection or incarnation of humanity (mind, intelligence, power) in the form of computer simulations that are considered to have power close to god's power. This is the vision of man as his own god developed by cyberists, a man who is no longer willing to submit to the authority of power beyond his own power - god man.

**INTRODUCTION**

There is a question if God only created the real and supernatural worlds. Where is God in the new world, the digital world? In simple terms, cyberreligion can be understood as the relationship between the world of spirituality and the world of cyberspace.<sup>1</sup> In the context of new media, cyberspace is utilised as a means to spread religious understanding. With the use of cyberspace in spreading religious teachings and communication between believers, it can effectively have a positive impact on improving the quality of religion in a global society if viewed through a technological perspective.<sup>2</sup>

However, in another perspective, anxiety arises with the emergence of the digital world and the development of technology in cyberspace.<sup>3</sup> Talking about cyberspace spirituality cannot be separated from talking about the thoughts, ideas, visions, scenarios, or ideological visions behind the new world developed by cyberists, cyber religionists, or cyber-programmers with their various paradoxes. These cyberists, on the one hand, have great optimism towards the new reality produced by cyberspace, which is considered to be able to replace the existing reality; in which a kind of new religion, new spirituality, or even a new God is developed.<sup>4</sup>

Spirituality or the term spirit is used in the sense of something that moves and lives. Spiritual cyberspace in Piliang's perspective means the existence of a driving spirit behind cyberspace. Among the spirits that drive cyberspace are the spirit of body denial, God denial,

<sup>1</sup> Muria Khusnun Nisa and others, 'Moderasi Beragama: Landasan Moderasi Dalam Tradisi Berbagai Agama Dan Implementasi Di Era Disrupsi Digital', *Jurnal Riset Agama*, 1.3 (2021), 79–96 <<https://doi.org/10.15575/jra.v1i3.15100>>.

<sup>2</sup> Mohamad Nurul Hafiz and others, 'Application of The Concept of Dakwah Bi Al-Hal in Facing The Cyber World among The Muslim Community', *BITARA International Journal of Civilizational Studies and Human Sciences*, 5.3 (2022), 80–93 <<http://www.bitarajournal.com>>.

<sup>3</sup> Rulli Nasrullah and dan Dudi Rustandi, 'Meme Dan Islam: Simulakra Bahasa Agama Di Media Sosial', *Ilmu Dakwa: Academic Journal for Homiletic Studies*, 10.Juni (2016), 113–28.

<sup>4</sup> Kambali Kambali and others, 'Religion in Cyberspace: Islamic Religious Education in Social Media', *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 12.01 (2023), 129–42 <<https://doi.org/10.30868/ei.v12i01.3886>>.

wanting to be God, death denial, self-navigation, single anti-authority, and the spirit of rejecting reality. It is this spirit that flatters the cyberist/cyberpunk into a world that is beyond the body, beyond God, beyond death, beyond authority, and beyond reality.<sup>5</sup> A world that transcends borders, Anthony Giddens formulates in a metaphor the runaway world - a world that runs. The terminology used to describe the speed of the world's growth that is not in line with the growth of humanity. The world that runs at an uncontrolled speed is not balanced with the human ability to accept and digest its speed so that humans are faced with various psychological, moral and spiritual pressures.<sup>6</sup>

The relevant study in this research is Jeff Zaleski's book entitled *Cyberspace Spirituality; How Computer Technology Affects Human Religious Life* published by Mizan. Jeff Zaleski's research in this book seeks to explore a strange religious phenomenon and tries to show the new technological face of religion. To see this phenomenon, Zaleski conducted a search of the web and religious sites and conducted interviews with a number of Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, Catholic and Jewish religious figures.<sup>7</sup> Alongside Zaleski also conducts interviews with cyberists such as John Perry Barlow, Jaron Lanier, and Mark Pesce. Zaleski shows how technology is changing our vision of human civilisation in understanding spirituality, worship, and the sanctity of religion.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, Yasraf Amir Piliang's book entitled *Dunia Yang Berlari: Looking for Digital Gods* published by Grasindo Publisher in 2004. As a philosopher, and cultural thinker, Yasraf Amir Piliang tries to connect the phenomenon of technology and diversity through the term cyberreligion.<sup>9</sup> In this book Yasraf criticises and reflects sharply on his view of today's human civilisation that is trapped in the frame of capitalism, post-modernism, and cyberspace. These three things spur a world that runs away from God and a panorama of panic, madness that sooner or later, human civilisation will be destroyed. All of this is explained comprehensively by borrowing Jean Baullidard's terminology, catastrophe or catastrophic destruction marked by the destruction of the boundaries of reality/simulation, feminine/masculine, original/imitation, authentic/artificial.<sup>10</sup>

Another relevant research is a study conducted by M. Hatta entitled *Religion and Media Culture* in the journal *Communicatus*. This paper wants to answer how to bridge religious interests (God, sacred, and ceremonial) with the interests of media culture as a capitalistic industry. What implications arise and are caused by this relationship. In his writing, M. Hatta suggests that there are positive and negative impacts. The positive impact is that the

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<sup>5</sup> Shaheen Amid Whyte, 'Islamic Religious Authority in Cyberspace: A Qualitative Study of Muslim Religious Actors in Australia', *Religions*, 13.1 (2022), 1–16 <<https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13010069>>.

<sup>6</sup> Annisa Mardatillah and others, 'Riau Malay Food Culture in Pekanbaru, Riau Indonesia: Commodification, Authenticity, and Sustainability in a Global Business Era', *Journal of Ethnic Foods*, 6.1 (2019), 1–10 <<https://doi.org/10.1186/s42779-019-0005-7>>.

<sup>7</sup> Ridwan Rustandi, 'Cyberdakwah: Internet Sebagai Media Baru Dalam Sistem Komunikasi Dakwah Islam', *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban Dan Pemikiran Islam*, 3.2 (2020), 84–95 <<https://doi.org/10.23971/njppi.v3i2.1678>>.

<sup>8</sup> Abraham Zakky Zuhazmi and Dewi Ayu Sri Hastuti, 'Da'wa, Muslim Millennials and Social Media', *Lentera*, 2.2 (2018), 121–38 <<https://doi.org/10.21093/lentera.v2i2.1235>>.

<sup>9</sup> Sumartono Sumartono, 'Komodifikasi Media Dan Budaya Kohe', *Jurnal The Messenger*, 8.2 (2016), 43 <<https://doi.org/10.26623/themessenger.v8i2.342>>.

<sup>10</sup> Ulil Abshor, 'Peran Sufisme Dalam Mengatasi Paham Islam Radikal Di Indonesia', *Al-Banjari : Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman*, 18.1 (2019), 153 <<https://doi.org/10.18592/al-banjari.v18i1.2540>>.

information obtained becomes faster, including the need for religious information. The negative impact is that all kinds of information on immorality that is contrary to religious values is available in a globalised media culture. There is even the potential for clashes related to religious information due to differences in understanding, misinterpretation, and so on.<sup>11</sup>

Then, research conducted by Asep Muhammad Iqbal with the title *When Religion Meets The Internet (Cyber-Religion and The Secularization Thesis)*. In his writing, Iqbal argues that the internet is a tool that serves the needs of religious communities.<sup>12</sup> Cyberreligion is a space where people can express religious views and share spiritual experiences.<sup>13</sup> In addition, the internet is a space where religious communities can perform religious activities online such as praying and visiting a temple in a different way than in the real world. In this context, the emergence of religious websites represents the perception of the internet as a sacred space.<sup>14</sup>

The spiritual phenomenon of cyberspace that the author wants to discuss is in the context of cyberreligion terminology. To facilitate the writing and reading of the article topic, the discussion will be explained sequentially starting from computers and the internet. These two things are important because cyberspace cannot be accessed without a physical computer device and a connecting bridge called the internet.

The next discussion is the meeting point between science, technology, and the spiritual paradoxes of cyber scientists whose views are driven by the views of the Jesuit, Teilhard de Chardin in cosmic evolution and the omega point of cyberspace. Next is cyberreligion; awaiting the birth of the digital god, where in this article we will discuss more about the motives behind the emergence of cyberreligion and its impact on human civilisation today and in the future. Which if we refer to today's civilisation, the digital God will really exist. The discussion on cosmic evolution and the omega point of cyberspace as well as cyberreligion; waiting for the birth of digital god refers a lot to Jeff Zaleski and Yasraf Amir Piliang's book to describe a more concrete picture of the strange phenomenon of religion and cyberspace.

## METHOD

In order to answer the research question that has been presented, this paper will analyse cyberreligion as a spiritual paradox of digital technology in the form of a literature review. Literature review, as part of a scientific approach, focuses on the literature of journal articles, books, monographs that discuss themes based on keywords related to the research conducted. The literature review systematically seeks to collect and combine all available references in order to obtain answers to the research questions. In practice, literature-based research uses a

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<sup>11</sup> Sari Hernawati, 'Attempts on Deradicalisation of Religious Generation of Millenials Through the Utilization of Institutional Website or Social Media Account BT - Proceedings of the 3rd Annual International Seminar and Conference on Global Issues (ISCoGI 2017)' (Atlantis Press, 2019), pp. 34–40 <<https://www.atlantis-press.com/article/55916178>>.

<sup>12</sup> Rini Setiawati and others, 'Da'wah Among Urban Muslims in Indonesia', *Akademika: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, 27.2 (2022), 219 <<https://doi.org/10.32332/akademika.v27i2.5505>>.

<sup>13</sup> Andriyani and others, 'Discourse of Fiqh and Sufism Scholars: A Story of Indonesian Islamic Intellectual History', *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6.5 (2022), 6910–17.

<sup>14</sup> B. D. (2021). Wiryananta, K., Safitri, R., & Prasetyo, 'A New Decade for Social Changes', *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, 7 (2020), 312–20 <<https://techniumscience.com/index.php/socialsciences/article/view/332/124>>.

methodology that can be explicitly reused to minimise bias in the identification, selection and summarisation of existing research.<sup>15</sup>

In order to assist this literature research, the researcher also used the content analysis method following the model developed by Chad Nelson and Robert H. Woods.<sup>16</sup> Here, the content analysis method is particularly useful because it is a method of textual analysis used to describe and explain the characteristics of messages embedded in texts. As a method that can be used in both quantitative and qualitative research, content analysis allows researchers to manage and summarise large amounts of information while triangulating with other research methods. The content analysis method will process the selection of relevant literature, synthesise the message units contained in the sources, and then explain the results obtained. Ideally, the content analysis method also carries out coding of texts based on certain classifications, which was not used in this study.<sup>17</sup>

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### The Origin of Species: The Creation of Computers, The Internet and Cyberspace

As an opening chapter before entering the topic of cyberreligion in this article, we need to know the history and development of the evolution of technology related to computers, the internet, and cyberspace from time to time. These three things are a series of tangled threads that if not unravelled we will not find the connection between the three. The anatomy of computers, the Internet, and cyberspace is composed of complex components and knowledge. Each is interconnected, forming a detailed and intricate "symbiosis". This is the importance of understanding computers, the internet and cyberspace, even the smallest things that live in the digital world.

Computer is a word derived from Latin *computare* which means to calculate. This is inseparable from the history of computer development as a machine that functions to perform calculation or computation tasks. In 1880 during the industrial revolution in England, Charles Babbage pioneered the idea of making a machine capable of calculating measurably to reduce the error of mathematical tables that at that time only relied on human labour.<sup>18</sup> When the Second World War broke out between the Allies and the Nazis. The computer began to find its "nature", it was Alan Turing who made the most important evolutionary cycle for a machine through the hypothesis of a machine capable of thinking like a human being. Alan Turing is the father of the modern computer we know today.

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<sup>15</sup> Claire Wagner, Barbara Kawulich, and Mark Garner, 'A Mixed Research Synthesis of Literature on Teaching Qualitative Research Methods', *SAGE Open*, 9.3 (2019), 2158244019861488 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019861488>>.

<sup>16</sup> Britt-Marie Lindgren, Berit Lundman, and Ulla H Graneheim, 'Abstraction and Interpretation during the Qualitative Content Analysis Process', *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 108 (2020), 103632 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2020.103632>>.

<sup>17</sup> Maemonah Maemonah and others, 'Contestation of Islamic Educational Institutions in Indonesia: Content Analysis on Social Media', *Cogent Education*, 10.1 (2023), 2164019 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2022.2164019>>.

<sup>18</sup> R Rojas, 'The Computer Programs of Charles Babbage', *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing*, 43.1 (2021), 6–18 <<https://doi.org/10.1109/MAHC.2020.3045717>>.

Besides the evolution of how computers work, an equally important cycle is the physical evolution of computers. If the early generations of computers consisted of various large components that took up too much space, then in the following years computers underwent many physical changes. Such as the invention of Integrated Circuit (IC) that allows large components into a chip and the use of operating system that allows the machine to run various programs simultaneously with a main program that monitors and coordinates computer memory. The peak was when the Intel company introduced the microprocessor as the "artificial brain" that controls all component functions in 1971.<sup>19</sup> Computers became public since the development of personal computers by Steve Jobs and Wozniak before IBM (International Business Machines) and Microsoft managed to dominate personal computer sales. This is an important chapter in the evolution of calculating machines to eventually become computers used by millions and even billions of people in the world.

A look at the evolution of the computer over time proves to us that it is an iconic product of the progress of human civilisation. Believe it or not, the future evolution of computers will depend heavily on its creator, science. Through the process of streamlining the working principles of computers, we can see that science can change things. The machine as a primitive form of computer "body" undergoes many changes, adding, subtracting, and replacing some "organs" so that it can function and work properly. Or at least, a creature called a computer can be used to help human needs in terms of processing data.

The next chapter in the evolutionary journey of computers was the implementation of computer communication functions through the internet. In 1969, along with man's first steps on the moon, Leonard Kleinrock, an American engineer, pioneered an important step in the creation of the internet.<sup>20</sup> Kleinrock was inspired by Samuel Morse's telegraph machine and Alexander Graham Bell's working principle of the telephone using wire and copper as a link. While telegraph and telephone machines only involve communication between two machines, the communication network designed by Kleinrock can connect nine machines in one unified network.<sup>21</sup> In 1973, Vint Cref and Bob Khan continued the idea by creating a protocol that computer programmes could understand. This development was initiated by the number of computers connected through telephone cable networks and satellite radio networks. The protocol created by Cref and Khan could allow computers to communicate with each other without having to worry about their communications being mixed with other machines. At this point, the internet was born.<sup>22</sup>

Another name that also marks the emergence of the information technology era is Timothy Berners Lee, the creator of the World Wide Web (www). Lee started with hypertext

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<sup>19</sup> Resi Ikhwan Nugraha and Agus Ramadhani Nugraha, 'Simulasi Smart Home Berbasis Arduino', *Jurnal Manajemen Dan Teknik Informatika*, 01.01 (2018), 241–50.

<sup>20</sup> Morten Bay, 'Hot Potatoes and Postmen: How Packet Switching Became ARPANET's Greatest Legacy', *Internet Histories*, 3.1 (2019), 15–30 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/24701475.2018.1544726>>.

<sup>21</sup> Okhwan Lee and Sunghyun Choi, 'Multimedia Wireless Networking Lab .', 2667, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Kevin Giang Barrera and Denish Shah, 'Marketing in the Metaverse: Conceptual Understanding, Framework, and Research Agenda', *Journal of Business Research*, 155 (2023), 113420 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.113420>>.

markup language (HTML) and universal resource locator (URL).<sup>23</sup> HTML is a language that any computer with any operating system can understand. It creates text documents and creates hyperlinks with other texts in various possibilities. As a supporting tool, a programme known as a browser ensures the correct search of html documents on the computer. As the name suggests, the second function of the browser is to browse or comb the network to find and retrieve the required information.

In order for any information to be easily found, each document needs a specific address that can be found by a URL. A URL starts with the letters (www) then comes the name of the computer where the requested data is stored, this is usually referred to as the server. By 1994, internet sites had grown to 3000 page addresses and for the first time virtual-shopping or electronic retail appeared on the internet. The face of the world was changing through information technology. In the same year, Yahoo! and social media pioneer netscape navigator 1.0 were founded as well as the beginning of the birth of a new world, the digital world, cyberspace.

The term cyberspace (from cybernetics and space) was first recognised by the public through William Gibson's science fiction novel *Neuromancer* in 1984.<sup>24</sup> This metaphor of space becomes more relevant when there is communication between more than two people and each of them is located in places scattered across the earth because space now not only mediates, but actually encompasses communicators in computer networks. And when it's not just two or many people communicating, but also information machines, aka computers, the metaphor of space is even more relevant. With computers, information can actually not only be conveyed to other people, but can also be stored as data in computer memory.

The stored information can then be retrieved when needed, and can even be processed and transformed by a microprocessor, the heart of the computer. Data processing in the computer is done by the microprocessor in accordance with commands or programmes. These information processing programmes are also stored in memory. And the information that can be stored and processed is not only sound, but also writing, pictures, photos, and videos. Thus, we can think of the various data and processing programmes as virtual or virtual goods and tools in cyberspace. Cyberspace not only surrounds us, but is also inhabited by virtual objects, which in reality are increasingly accumulating.

In cyberspace, information is so widespread that counting the number may be like counting the number of stars in the wilderness of galaxies. In cyberspace there is a single book called the World Wide Web (www) which contains millions of pages, spread all over the world. These web pages are linked to each other through so-called hyperlinks, which are text or images on each page that refer to other web pages. While a book is made up of chapters, the web is made up of sites that are a collection of web pages on a single computer-an internet network

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<sup>23</sup> Christian Bizer, Tom Heath, and Tim Berners-Lee, 'Linked Data - The Story so Far', *International Journal on Semantic Web and Information Systems*, 5.3 (2009), 1–22 <<https://doi.org/10.4018/jswis.2009081901>>.

<sup>24</sup> T R R HASSAN and M SAFEL, 'Cabaran Teknologi Dan Peranan Khalifah Dalam Novel Ruang Perjalanan', *Jurnal Melayu*, 1989, 2020, 503–16 <<https://ejournal.ukm.my/jmelayu/article/view/44402%0Ahttps://ejournal.ukm.my/jmelayu/article/download/44402/11408>>.

node that reference each other through hyperlinks and also reference other sites on other computers in other countries.

Viewed from any angle, the internet is a promising space of information and cultural communication that transcends national boundaries, and accelerates the spread and exchange of knowledge and ideas for every human being in the world. It is no wonder that some cyberists think that the means of communication and information created therein will accelerate the process of cerebralisation of the earth. As a result, all human beings will be pushed into a large organic unity. This unity of humanity is expected to be the ultimate spiritual terminal as predicted in the '30s by paleontologist and French Jesuit priest Teilhard De Chardin as the omega point, the end point of the evolutionary process of the universe.<sup>25</sup>

### **Cosmic Evolution and the Omega Point of Cyberspace**

Through the theory of the evolution of the universe, Teilhard De Chardin sought to show that the eternal values of religion can be preserved after integrating with modern science's view of cosmic evolution. Cosmic evolution is essentially the tendency of things to combine to form more complex and unified systems. Starting from atoms, molecules, cells, organ systems, and finally the human body that has complex nerves. The human brain as the centre of a fairly complex nervous system allows for the ability to think, self-awareness, and moral responsibility. In the end, all human consciousness will unite with the omega point which is none other than God himself.

Of course, Teilhard De Chardin's teachings were so controversial that they were banned by the Catholic Church. But the optimistic notion of evolutionism was popular with the flower generation of the '60s who sought shortcuts to mystical realms by escaping technology, returning to nature, and taking psychotropic drugs for mystical spiritual experiences. History records the failure of the flower generation, but a small number of them pioneered the birth of the internet. While De Chardin's theological evolutionary insights were being secularised, Valentin Turchin - a computer physicist from the Soviet Union who fled to the United States - refined the Jesuit's evolutionary views with the theory of cybernetics.<sup>26</sup>

According to Turchin, the evolutionary process is characterised by the occurrence of a number of metasystem transition processes. In a metasystem transition, a system that was an independent entity at one stage of evolution merges into a multicellular organism. This is also the case with human society. Society as a whole can be thought of as a superbeing that is a metasystem made up of systems with humans as its cells.

The body of this new type of creature is nothing but the entire physical body of the human member and its entire technological system. On the internet, Turchin has a follower in Francis Heylighen, a Belgian systems physicist. Heylighen is convinced that there is a new metasystem transition that will transform the superorganism of human civilisation into an

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<sup>25</sup> Michael S Burdett, 'Review Reviewer : Steve Knowles , University of Chester ( UK )', 5.2 (2016), 383–85.

<sup>26</sup> Abdullah Sumrahadi, 'Arus Teknologi Global: Tantangan Eksistensi Agama Dalam Ruang Sosial Kapitalisme Data', *Jurnal MAARIF*, 13.1 (2019), 9–25.



intelligent one with the formation of a superbrain.<sup>27</sup> This adi-brain consists of a collection of human brains fused together by the development of the World Wide Web on the internet. Biologist Gregory Stock supports this assertion through a biological perspective, arguing that contemporary technological society is undergoing a metamorphosis into something he calls metaman, a superorganism whose capabilities exceed those of individual humans.<sup>28</sup>

To realise his theory, Heylighen, together with his colleague John Bollen, experimented with internet programs that could make the World Wide Web smarter by making its links more adaptive, just like the connecting veins between nerve cells in the human brain.<sup>29</sup> In this way, the web network more closely resembles the associative memory of the human brain. The link between two web documents is similar to the association between two concepts. When a human adds new links to his website according to his search in a search engine, the web will become smarter. If the search and additions are automated, the web will have self-learning intelligence.<sup>30</sup>

A revolutionary step is being initiated by Ben Goertzel, an American mathematician-psychologist in an attempt to realise the evolution of the world wide web into the world wide brain. Ben envisions the internet as an intelligent "society" made up of local networks of organised computers, usually called intranets that are first intelligentised.<sup>31</sup> Each is augmented with a piece of software called webmind. This augmented intranet web has the ability to learn from the process of filling and retrieving information or data, by its users, to form patterns of abstract networks of meaning and then organise itself into a number of understandings which in turn increase its abstraction ability. These webminds are known as information agents. These agents work like human minds interacting with each other to form new useful thoughts and discard old useless thoughts.

As these intranets communicate with each other through the global network of the internet, so too will the information agents within them exchange ideas to form an intelligent global information "society". This global "society" of information agents will then evolve to recognise itself. In other words, there will be a digital global self-awareness on the internet so that it becomes intelligent and self-aware. Thus, the internet, the vast collective human brain or world brain will have intelligence and self-awareness that is part of the overall human self-awareness. The world brain and consciousness is the omega point, the God who rules the world and its contents.

This is the spiritual paradox, cyberreligion. While the rest of the world sees computers as mere machines that can be told what to do, cyberists see the potential of computers, the Internet, and cyberspace as a wetland for their religion and science. Cyberspace as one of the

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<sup>27</sup> Roberto Santiago Vassolo and others, 'Hospital Investment Decisions in Healthcare 4.0 Technologies: Scoping Review and Framework for Exploring Challenges, Trends, and Research Directions', *J Med Internet Res*, 23.8 (2021), e27571 <<https://doi.org/10.2196/27571>>.

<sup>28</sup> Anita Ariani, 'Peran Dan Posisi Informasi Teknologi (IT) Dalam Dakwah Dan Komunikasi', *Alhadharah: Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah*, 13.25 (2017), 27–36 <<http://jurnal.uin-antasari.ac.id/index.php/alhadharah/article/view/1714/1242>>.

<sup>29</sup> Bustanul Arifin, 'Dakwah Cybermedia', *Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman*, 26.1 (2016), 201–19 <<https://doi.org/10.33367/tribakti.v26i1.215>>.

<sup>30</sup> Ariani.

<sup>31</sup> Muhammad Pasha Nur Fauzan and others, 'Wandering With Artificial Intelligence and Its Obscure Legal Liability', *Indonesia Law Review*, 11.2 (2021), 169–89 <<https://doi.org/10.15742/ilrev.v11n2.4>>.

driving elements of today's accelerated world has radically changed human understanding of space, community, body, reality, and fantasy.<sup>32</sup> A global community united by digital space and interaction (virtual community) is formed, there is a radical mixing between machines (cybernetics) and humans (organisms) in a cyborg container; there is a denial of God (cyberreligion) and instead makes technology a substitute for God. It is this technology of denial (of body, god, reality) and the worship of technology that might be called the technological madness of cyberspace.<sup>33</sup> This phenomenon is the background to the emergence of critical discourse on the development of cyberspace by technology thinkers and critics.

### **Cyberreligion: Awaiting the Birth of a Digital God**

As written in the introductory chapter at the beginning of this article, cyberreligion is a term that describes the phenomenon of spiritual paradox in cyberspace. The existence of cyberspace has not only changed human views on spirituality, religion, rituals, houses of worship, scriptures, spiritual teachers, beliefs, divinity, and even the view of god itself. Cyberspace opens up the possibility to carry out various religious activities in a new way that is artificial or virtual. Jeff Slouka's research has conducted a search of websites and in-depth interviews about forms of religious spirituality in cyberspace. One of the highlights was when he visited a Buddhist Monastery and met John Diado Loori who runs Zen Mountain Monastery. Cybermonk, was the first icon that caught his attention. It identifies a senior monk who is willing to answer your dharma questions via email.<sup>34</sup> Rahib Loori calls it Dharma Combat online. To quote Jeff Zaleski in his book:

*Dharma Combat is an unprepared dialogue in which zen followers can test and sharpen their understanding of zen truth. With the tools provided by the internet, it is possible to have meetings between people who are in different geographical locations. On this particular occasion, Internet Relay Chat (IRC) was conducted through a channel on the rrv.dal.net server. The koan chosen for this dharma combat was posted to the zmm website and also emailed to registered participants at 3.00 pm.*<sup>35</sup>

This kind of phenomenon also occurs in Indonesia, if we look at the controversy of religious trends in the cyber world in Indonesia today. We can easily find the phenomenon of "online ustadz", "dakwah content" and "millennial mad'u" who are actively involved in the process of spreading religious teachings. Thousands or even millions of religious accounts are

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<sup>32</sup> Rizki Dian Nursita, 'Cyberspace: Perdebatan, Problematika, Serta Pendekatan Baru Dalam Tata Kelola Global', *Journal of Islamic and International Affairs*, 4.1 (2019), 80–99 <<https://ejournal.unida.gontor.ac.id/index.php/dauliyah/article/view/2934>>.

<sup>33</sup> Rifi Rivani Radiansyah, 'Konsumerisme Hingga Hiper-Realitas Politik Di Ruang Publik Baru Era Cyberspace (Antara Kemunduran Atau Kemajuan Bagi Pembangunan Negara Indonesia Yang Demokratis)', *JISIPOL: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik*, 3.1892 (2019), 30–47.

<sup>34</sup> Syed Wajeeh-ul-Husnain, Jie Shen, and John Benson, 'HRM Practices in South Asia: Convergence, Divergence, and Intra-Regional Differences', *Asian Business & Management*, 21.5 (2022), 780–801 <<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41291-020-00129-9>>.

<sup>35</sup> Helen Parish, 'The Absence of Presence and the Presence of Absence: Social Distancing, Sacraments, and the Virtual Religious Community during the Covid-19 Pandemic', *Religions*, 11.6 (2020), 1–13 <<https://doi.org/10.3390/re11060276>>.

scattered in cyberspace.<sup>36</sup> This is where the potential for cyberspace "madness" arises, namely when the virtual form meets the spiritual religion.

The development of cyberspace has coincided with the development of new visions of various aspects of spirituality and religion, such as visions of spirit, spirituality, religion and God. There is a new cyber vision of spirit, which now tends to be defined as "bits of electronic information" that are abstract, alive and multiplying. There is a new cyber vision of god, which is now seen as a projection or incarnation of humanity (mind, intelligence, power) in the form of computer simulations that are considered to have power approaching the power of god. This is the vision of man as his own god developed by cyberists, a man who is no longer willing to submit to the authority of power outside his own power - god man.

A new cyber-vision of the sanctuary is emerging, which is no longer a real, material mosque, church, temple or synagogue, but a cyber-mosque, visual altar, virtual temple or cyber-synagogue that is artificial and exists only in the form of computer bits. These cyber-visions and their realisation in cyberspace certainly challenge traditional understandings of various aspects of religious life. In practical terms, cyberspace as articulated by various clergy, priests, spiritual teachers and monks is a global human-to-human or spiritual-to-human channel that can communicate religious teachings and spirits.

However, in its more essential or ideological sense, cyberspace is no longer just a channel for spiritual and religious communication between people but is now seen as a religion itself. Cyberreligion. This kind of optimism is certainly not excessive for a true cyberist like Timothy Leary, Mark Pesce, or John Perry Barlow who believes that in cyberspace a substitute or version of what has been known as God can be developed. A cyber-religionist John Perry Barlow in an interview with Jeff Zaleski confirmed this. Barlow's thinking is heavily influenced by the thinking of Teilhard De Chardin. Barlow describes his first experience using the internet as a religious experience. Through the computer, he felt a global nervous system that was biological and organic.

John Perry Barlow likens this global network called the internet to the human brain which has the same basic structure, the same architecture. The way it grows, adapts and sends messages through itself seems very similar to how the brain works. Barlow likens it to "even though we are in our own bodies, our minds communicate with each other through the super brain."<sup>37</sup> Barlow is also obsessed with Samuel Morse's famous 1850 phrase, "I see no reason why intelligence cannot be disseminated throughout the planet by electricity." Intelligence is disseminated throughout the planet by electricity. And this is nothing more than network expansion. So instead of resembling nodes confined within a human cranium, they are more like axons or nerve trunks, within a larger nervous system. Barlow has been looking at the internet and he's working towards what he wants, which is consciousness or the soul.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Putri Wulansari, Nurul Khotimah, 'Membumikan Ilmu Sosial Profetik: Reaktualisasi Gagasan Profetik Kuntowijoyo Dalam Tradisi Keilmuan Di Indonesia', *Jurnal PROGRESS: Wahana Kreativitas Dan Intelektualitas*, 7.2 (2019), 431–35 <<https://doi.org/10.31942/pgrs.v7i2.3116>>.

<sup>37</sup> Igor Calzada, 'The Right to Have Digital Rights in Smart Cities', *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 13.20 (2021), 1–28 <<https://doi.org/10.3390/su132011438>>.

<sup>38</sup> LINCOLN DAHLBERG, 'Democracy via Cyberspace: Mapping the Rhetorics and Practices of Three Prominent Camps', *New Media & Society*, 3.2 (2001), 157–77 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/14614440122226038>>.

Another equally ambitious name is Mark Pesce, which refers to the Ontos Gaia formulated in 1970 by British biochemist James Lovelock while working with NASA to detect life on Mars. According to this hypothesis, the Earth, or Gaia, is an enormous, self-organising living organism. Since humans are one of the many elements that make up the earth, and as we think, according to the Gaia hypothesis it can be said that the earth itself thinks, through us.

In terms of spirituality, Mark Pesce believes that the World Wide Web is the physical manifestation, or awakening, of the ajna chakra. Inspired by the yogic tradition, the culmination of the World Wide Web for Mark Pesce is the opening of the seventh chakra, the Unio Mystica consciousness called Nirvana in Hindu Yoga, Satori in Zen Buddhism, or Ma'rifat in Sufi Islam.<sup>39</sup> On this basis, Mark Pesce - also known as a world-class scientist - developed vrm (virtual reality modelling language), a protocol that transforms the web from a flat plane into a three-dimensional realm. Through the vrm application, users can see how mathematical representations work; from three-dimensional Japanese-era street scenes to virtual worlds such as the Las Vegas virtual entertainment complex.

One of the visions also developed by the cyberneticists behind cyberspace technology in addition to "soul" and "consciousness" is the vision of "immortality" immortality, as well as the vision of the denial of death. The denial of death is in fact a legacy of the tradition of gnosticism in western religious discourse, which ignores the body or flesh in favour of the pursuit of spiritual attainment. In the Hindu-Javanese tradition we recognise this as mukhsa. This legacy is what cyberists are referring to, which is the desire to separate the spirit from the body, by developing a purely spiritual world. This concept begins by simulating the mind into a computer and is then used to explain the mechanism of "immortality". That is, if a space can be created in which the human soul and mind can continue to live and develop without a physical body, then the soul and mind will avoid death and live forever.

In late 1997, a team of Scottish scientists announced that they had successfully cloned an adult sheep. A vigorous debate about the ethics of cloning, particularly attempts to clone humans, soon ensued. The Pope denounced it as a dangerous experiment. While president Clinton froze, for ninety days. It is a scientific fact that Ian Wilmut's Dolly the ewe looked just like any other sheep, but her shady eyes conveyed a chilling message: apparently, if one is willing to do it, and if it can be done, then it can be done. The variables are want and can. The can - actualised through technology - is out of control. It starts with cloning, then a completely pseudo-world full of pseudo-life. It is possible that cyberspace will lead us to a form of global spiritual transformation envisaged by Teilhard De Chardin.

## CONCLUSION

In closing, I will quote a few verses from the Qur'an in Surah al-Qori'ah, where Allah swt describes to Muslims how the Day of Judgement will be. In the 4th verse, Allah swt says; "on that day people will be like a scattered lotus," people are described as lotus or larvae, stupid flying animals that fall into a fire or lamp. Animals that are too dazzled, crazy, panicked, and unprepared for the glitter of the world. Fire, lamps, and other artificial light sources are

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<sup>39</sup> Dave Catlin and others, 'EduRobot Taxonomy BT - Smart Learning with Educational Robotics: Using Robots to Scaffold Learning Outcomes', ed. by Linda Daniela (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), pp. 333-38 <[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-19913-5\\_15](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-19913-5_15)>.

illusions, they are paradoxical, false, and unreal. This verse is enough to describe the future of human civilisation, in the end we will only be the strands surrounding the glittering lights. Hypnotised, moving irregularly, colliding, then scattering to death. Before this happens, there is no harm in following two wise steps from Java, namely *eling* and *waspodo*.

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