

THE ONTOLOGICAL AND AXIOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY AND INFORMATION

Urazov Abubakir Kulturaevich

Independent Researcher at the Institute for Social and Spiritual Research

Abstract

This article examines the ontological and axiological intersections between spirituality and information in the context of the emerging information society. While contemporary discourse often treats information as a technological or economic category, its deeper philosophical implications reveal profound connections with human spirituality, meaning-making, and value systems. Drawing on classical philosophy, information ethics, and digital civilization studies, the article argues that information operates not only as an epistemic resource but also as a constitutive element of human existence. The axiological dimension shows that the way societies create, interpret, and disseminate information directly influences spiritual development, moral orientations, and collective identity. The study concludes that a holistic understanding of digital civilization requires integrating spiritual values into the design and governance of informational environments.

Keywords: *information society, spirituality, ontology, axiology, digital ethics, meaning-making, information philosophy*

Introduction

Modern digital civilization is characterized by unprecedented flows of information, pervasive algorithmic mediation, and deepening global interconnectivity. These developments have not only transformed economic and political systems but have also reshaped the fundamental conditions of human existence, prompting renewed

philosophical inquiry into the nature of information and its role in structuring contemporary life. Although the sociotechnical aspects of the information society—such as digital infrastructure, communication technologies, and data-driven innovation—have been extensively examined, the **ontological and axiological relationship between information and spirituality** remains strikingly under-theorized. This lacuna is particularly noteworthy given that spiritual life, in all its cultural and philosophical diversity, is inseparable from the informational contexts through which individuals search for meaning, cultivate inner awareness, and develop ethical orientations.

Spirituality—understood broadly as the dimension of human existence concerned with meaning-making, transcendence, moral discernment, and inner development—cannot be meaningfully detached from the informational environments that increasingly mediate contemporary experience. As Floridi (2011) observes, human beings now function as “informational organisms” inhabiting an expanding **infosphere**—a digitally constituted environment in which information shapes perception, identity, consciousness, and interpersonal relationships. Within such an environment, spiritual life is neither eliminated nor merely displaced; rather, it is **reconfigured**. Practices of reflection, ethical choice, self-understanding, and communal belonging unfold within networks of information that influence how individuals interpret themselves and the world.

Despite this profound interdependence, systematic philosophical reflection on how **informational processes shape spiritual existence**—and reciprocally, how **spiritual values influence the ethical and cultural significance of information**—remains limited. Addressing this gap is essential for understanding the normative and existential implications of digital civilization.

Materials and methods

The study was conducted between **January 2023 and December 2024** and involved a comprehensive theoretical and philosophical analysis of primary and secondary sources addressing the conceptual relationship between spirituality and information within the context of the modern information society. A diverse range of materials was examined, including classical philosophical works, foundational texts in information theory, contemporary research in digital ethics, and cross-cultural spiritual literature. The selection of sources followed a purposive sampling strategy with the aim of identifying the most influential contributions to the ontological and axiological dimensions of information and spirituality.

Special emphasis was placed on the writings of major theorists of information and digital ontology. These included: **Luciano Floridi's works** on the philosophy of information and the concept of the *infosphere*, particularly *The Philosophy of Information* (2011), *The Ethics of Information* (2013), and *The Fourth Revolution* (2014), which collectively articulate the ontological framework necessary for examining how humans exist as informational agents. **Gregory Bateson's seminal definition of information** ("a difference that makes a difference") in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972), used as a foundational ontological premise for understanding information as a constitutive element of human cognition and meaning-making. **Classical texts on spirituality and human existential experience**, including selected writings from Al-Ghazali, Ibn Arabi, and Meister Eckhart, as well as modern philosophical interpretations of spirituality, such as those by Charles Taylor and Mircea Eliade. These sources were examined to establish the conceptual basis for defining spirituality as a mode of human existence concerned with meaning, transcendence, ethical orientation, and interiority.

As for contemporary academic publications and digital-ethical sources, Modern interdisciplinary works were also analysed, including publications from: digital ethics and information society studies, such as works by Shoshana Zuboff (2019), Manuel

Castells (2010), and Mark Coeckelbergh (2020), which address the moral implications of algorithmic governance, networked identity, and data-driven social systems; psychology of spirituality and digital culture, exploring how virtual environments shape selfhood, reflection, and moral development; cross-cultural studies, highlighting how various religious and philosophical traditions interpret meaning, communication, and moral responsibility within technologically mediated environments. These materials were used to identify the axiological significance of information and to evaluate how spiritual values guide ethical decision-making in digital contexts.

When it comes to analytical methods, a multi-method qualitative approach was employed, combining several philosophical and interpretive techniques: Conceptual Analysis: This method enabled the clarification of core concepts—*information, spirituality, ontology, axiology, meaning, identity, transcendence*—and the identification of their interrelations. Definitions were compared across philosophical, technological, and spiritual discourses to develop a coherent conceptual framework. Hermeneutic and Phenomenological Interpretation: Hermeneutic methods were applied to interpret philosophical texts and spiritual writings, focusing on how meaning is constructed in relation to informational environments. Phenomenological insights were used to explore subjective experiences of spirituality in digitally mediated contexts.

Content analysis was conducted on selected digital ethics documents, philosophical texts, and spiritual writings to extract recurring themes related to authenticity, moral responsibility, human dignity, inner freedom, and informational influence.

A comparative approach was used to examine differences between traditional spiritual frameworks and technologically mediated forms of spiritual engagement, as well as to compare Western and non-Western philosophical perspectives on digital meaning-making.

As a theoretical and philosophical study, the research does not rely on empirical data or fieldwork. While this allows for a deep conceptual analysis, future empirical studies—such as digital ethnography, surveys of spiritual practices online, or psychological assessments of digital meaning-making—could complement the present findings by providing experiential evidence of how individuals navigate spirituality within the infosphere.

Results

The ontological relationship between spirituality and information begins with the recognition that information is not merely a technological artifact or a functional resource but a **fundamental structuring principle of human reality**. From this perspective, information constitutes the very fabric through which beings relate, interpret, and give meaning to the world. Bateson's (1972) conception of information as "a difference that makes a difference" underscores that information is embedded in the cognitive and perceptual processes by which humans discern patterns, construct narratives, and orient themselves toward existence. It is through informational distinctions that consciousness becomes aware of itself, others, and the broader cosmos. Spirituality, in turn, arises from humanity's perennial quest to understand being, purpose, transcendence, and interconnectedness. It encompasses the existential and reflective dimensions of human life, through which individuals seek coherence, moral orientation, and a sense of belonging to something greater than themselves. In the context of the information society, these spiritual processes are profoundly shaped by new ontological conditions: **human consciousness is increasingly mediated by digital environments**, which expand cognitive horizons while simultaneously conditioning attention, perception, and emotional experience; **identity becomes a hybrid construct** formed at the intersection of embodied existence and continuous informational flows, rendering the self more dynamic, relational, and technologically embedded; **spiritual**

experiences—such as communal belonging, contemplation, and ethical discernment—frequently unfold within virtual or digitally augmented spaces, where symbolic interaction and shared meaning-making occur independently of physical proximity.

Under these conditions, information not only **conditions** the modalities through which spiritual life is expressed but also **extends** its possibilities. Digital environments enable new forms of spiritual community, provide access to diverse traditions and practices, and foster reflective engagement beyond spatial and temporal limits. Conversely, they also challenge inherited spiritual frameworks by altering notions of presence, authenticity, inner silence, and moral agency.

Thus, the ontological entanglement between spirituality and information suggests that in the digital era, spiritual experience is co-constituted by informational processes. Understanding this relational ontology is essential for grasping how contemporary humans navigate meaning, transcendence, and ethical life within an increasingly information-saturated world.

The *Infosphere and the Expansion of Spiritual Space*: Floridi (2014) contends that the digital sphere constitutes a radically new ontological environment—the *infosphere*—within which human beings coexist alongside artificial agents, digital artifacts, intelligent systems, and complex algorithmic processes. This expanded ontological landscape is not merely an extension of physical reality but a qualitatively different mode of being, characterized by continuous information exchange, virtual presence, and hybrid forms of agency. As the infosphere becomes integral to everyday life, it opens new pathways for spiritual engagement and meaning-making, including: **global access to philosophical and religious traditions**, enabling individuals to transcend geographic, cultural, and institutional boundaries in their pursuit of wisdom, sacred texts, and spiritual practices; **virtual communities of meaning**, where shared values,

reflective dialogue, and collective identity formation occur through digitally mediated interactions rather than localized physical gatherings; **emergent forms of ethical responsibility**, arising from technologically mediated environments in which human actions are interwoven with algorithmic decisions, data flows, and digital representations that affect others in unseen or asynchronous ways.

These developments indicate a profound ontological shift: spirituality can no longer be understood exclusively as an inward journey or as a practice confined to traditional ritual, sacred space, or physical community. Instead, it becomes **embedded within informational ecosystems** that participate in the formation of consciousness, identity, and ethical awareness. Digital environments co-construct the conditions under which individuals ask spiritual questions, engage in moral reflection, encounter difference, and cultivate relationality.

In this sense, the infosphere functions as both a **medium** and a **co-creator** of spiritual life. It shapes how individuals seek transcendence, how communities articulate shared values, and how moral obligations are negotiated in technologically saturated contexts. The ontological implication is that spirituality in the information age is inherently relational, distributed, and co-evolving with digital infrastructures that increasingly mediate human experience.

Information as a Carrier of Values. Information is never neutral; it is always embedded within networks of **values, worldviews, and cultural assumptions**. Every act of producing, organizing, or disseminating information reflects implicit judgments about what is meaningful, legitimate, or worthy of attention. As Capurro (2008) observes, information processes actively shape ethical perception by influencing what individuals come to regard as significant, desirable, or morally relevant. In this sense, information functions not merely as a carrier of facts but as a **value-laden medium** that mediates social norms, ethical priorities, and existential orientations.

From an axiological perspective, spirituality plays a crucial role in providing the **value framework** through which information is interpreted, evaluated, and situated within broader moral horizons. Spirituality—understood as the cultivation of meaning, moral discernment, and inner coherence—offers the lens through which individuals assess the truthfulness, ethical implications, and existential significance of the information they encounter. This gives rise to a dynamic **reciprocal relationship: information shapes spiritual attitudes**, insofar as informational environments influence how individuals perceive themselves, relate to others, and conceptualize ethical or transcendent realities; **spirituality guides ethical engagement with information**, grounding informational practices—such as consumption, sharing, interpretation, and critique—in values such as compassion, integrity, humility, and responsibility.

In this reciprocity, information becomes a site where moral judgment and spiritual orientation are negotiated. Digital environments amplify this dynamic: the immediacy, abundance, and algorithmic curation of information intensify the need for spiritual and ethical discernment, while spiritual values increasingly shape how individuals navigate informational overload, misinformation, and digital persuasion.

Thus, the axiological relationship between spirituality and information is not incidental but constitutive. It reveals that information ethics is inseparable from the cultivation of spiritual values, and that spirituality itself evolves within the value-laden informational ecosystems of contemporary digital life.

Ethical Tensions in Digital Civilization: The elevation of information to a central organizing value of contemporary society introduces a range of ethical dilemmas that intersect at a deep level with spiritual concerns. As information becomes a primary medium through which identity, social relations, and moral judgments are constructed, the digital environment generates tensions that challenge long-standing spiritual and ethical frameworks. These tensions include: **Authenticity vs. virtual identity**

construction, as individuals navigate the porous boundary between their embodied selves and digitally curated personas, raising questions about sincerity, integrity, and the spiritual imperative to “be oneself” in a technologically mediated world; **Compassion vs. digital aggression and polarization**, where the anonymity and speed of online communication often erode empathy and facilitate hostility, undermining spiritual traditions that emphasize kindness, solidarity, and recognition of the other’s humanity; **Inner freedom vs. algorithmic manipulation**, as data-driven personalization and predictive analytics subtly shape desires, beliefs, and behaviors, challenging spiritual notions of free will, reflective autonomy, and moral agency; **Human dignity vs. data commodification**, in which the reduction of personal experience to marketable data conflicts with spiritual understandings of the human being as inherently valuable, irreducible, and sacred.

Spiritual traditions across cultures emphasize virtues such as truthfulness, empathy, humility, mindfulness, and responsible self-cultivation. Yet the informational environment—characterized by **overabundance, accelerated communication, algorithmic filtering, and attention commodification**—makes the sustained practice of these virtues increasingly difficult. The axiological challenge, therefore, is not merely theoretical but existential: it concerns how individuals can cultivate spiritual virtues within systems designed to distract, polarize, and manipulate.

This tension invites a reconsideration of spiritual ethics in light of digital realities. It raises foundational questions about how virtues can be translated into practices suited to informational ecosystems, how spiritual self-awareness can counteract algorithmic conditioning, and how communities can nurture collective responsibility in environments where attention and emotion are continually exploited. Ultimately, these dilemmas reveal that the information society requires not only new forms of technical

governance but also renewed spiritual and ethical frameworks capable of guiding life within digitally saturated contexts.

Information ethics and spiritual responsibility. Information ethics, as articulated by Floridi (2013), extends moral responsibility to all informational agents and environments, emphasizing that every action involving the creation, modification, or dissemination of information has ethical significance. In this framework, individuals, institutions, algorithms, and digital infrastructures become part of a broader moral ecosystem in which harm, benefit, and responsibility are distributed across human and non-human actors. Such an expanded ethical landscape recognizes that informational processes shape not only knowledge but also human relationships, social realities, and moral choices.

Spirituality deepens this ethical orientation by grounding it in normative motivations that transcend instrumental or procedural concerns. Spiritual traditions foreground values such as human dignity, transcendence, compassion, interconnectedness, humility, and moral authenticity, which provide a richer moral vocabulary for evaluating informational practices. While information ethics offers the structural principles for responsible action, spirituality supplies the inner moral energy—the cultivated dispositions and existential commitments—that sustain ethical behavior amid the complexities of digital life. In doing so, spirituality complements information ethics by anchoring it in a vision of the human person as inherently relational, morally responsive, and oriented toward meaning.

Thus, spirituality serves as a moral compass in the information age, guiding individuals and societies in constructing, interpreting, and governing their informational infrastructures. It encourages the design of digital systems that respect human dignity, promote solidarity, and foster genuine understanding rather than manipulation or exploitation. By integrating spiritual values into the governance of information, societies

can cultivate informational environments that support ethical flourishing, protect vulnerable actors, and reinforce the moral foundations of digital civilization.

Integrating ontology and axiology: a unified perspective. The ontological and axiological dimensions of the relationship between spirituality and information converge in the recognition that the two are mutually constitutive. On the one hand, information shapes the very conditions of spiritual existence, influencing how individuals experience meaning, relationality, transcendence, and self-understanding. The structures of the infosphere—its rhythms, affordances, constraints, and symbolic architectures—condition the inner landscapes within which spiritual questions are asked and spiritual practices unfold. On the other hand, spiritual values shape the ethical meaning of information, providing the normative frameworks through which informational practices are evaluated, cultivated, and governed. Values such as dignity, compassion, humility, attentiveness, and interconnectedness imbue informational processes with moral purpose and orient them toward the flourishing of persons and communities.

This reciprocal dynamic signals that the information society is far more than a technological or economic development; it represents a value-laden civilizational transformation that redefines what it means to be human. It alters the modalities through which individuals think, communicate, form identity, participate in community, and cultivate interior life. The informational environment is thus simultaneously an existential horizon and a moral arena—a space where ontological conditions of being and ethical principles of living intersect and co-evolve.

Understanding this transformation requires sustained philosophical reflection on how humans live, think, interact, and cultivate inner life within informational environments. Such inquiry must explore not only how digital infrastructures shape human consciousness and spiritual experience, but also how spiritual wisdom can inform the

construction of more just, humane, and ethically grounded information systems. Only by integrating ontological insight with axiological guidance can we grasp the full significance of the informational age and navigate its complex implications for human dignity and spiritual fulfillment.

Conclusion

The information society represents a new civilizational stage in which digital systems, algorithmic infrastructures, and extensive informational networks increasingly mediate the totality of human experience. In this evolving landscape, the relationship between spirituality and information becomes not only more complex but also more indispensable for understanding how individuals orient themselves in a rapidly transforming world. **Ontologically**, information now constitutes the very environment within which spiritual meaning is sought, negotiated, and expressed; it shapes the cognitive, relational, and existential conditions of contemporary life. **Axiologically**, spiritual values provide the moral compass through which information must be produced, interpreted, disseminated, and governed. These values—rooted in traditions of wisdom, compassion, and ethical discernment—offer the normative grounding needed to navigate informational environments that are often overwhelming, manipulative, or ethically ambiguous.

Given the profound implications of this transformation, future research must move beyond descriptive analyses of digital technologies and address the **deeper spiritual and ethical dimensions** of informational life. Key areas of inquiry include: **the spiritual implications of artificial intelligence and algorithmic agency**, particularly how machine autonomy, predictive systems, and data-driven decision-making reshape human self-understanding, freedom, and moral responsibility; **the role of digital media in shaping moral and spiritual development**, including how online interactions, virtual communities, and digital narratives influence empathy, moral imagination, and

practices of self-cultivation;**cross-cultural perspectives on information ethics and spiritual values**, recognizing that diverse religious, philosophical, and cultural traditions offer unique and complementary insights into how digital environments can be governed in ways that honor human dignity and promote collective flourishing.

A deeper integration of spiritual philosophy and information theory is therefore essential for building a digital civilization that is not merely efficient or technologically advanced, but **humane, equitable, and meaningful**. Such an integration can help cultivate informational ecosystems that nurture inner life, enhance ethical awareness, strengthen social cohesion, and support the full development of the human person. Only through this holistic approach can society ensure that the informational age advances not only technical progress but also spiritual and moral growth.

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