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ISLAMIC LEGAL AND MYSTICAL THOUGHT IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE:BETWEEN DATA,DEEN,AND DIGNITY

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Abstract

This article explores the intersection of Islamic legal and mystical thought with the emerging realities of Artificial Intelligence (AI), situating the discourse within the broader tension between data, dīn (religion), and human dignity. Drawing on classical sources of Islamic jurisprudence Qur'an, Sunnah, ijmāʿ, and qiyās as well as the juristic traditions of fiqh al-muʿāmalāt and fiqh al-nawāzil, the study examines how Shariah principles can provide ethical frameworks for AI development, deployment, and governance. At the same time, it engages with the mystical dimensions of Islam, especially the concepts of insān al-kāmil (the Perfect Human), rūḥ (soul), ʿaql (intellect), and ihsān (spiritual excellence), in order to highlight the spiritual anthropology that resists the reduction of human beings to mere data points.The analysis proceeds in two parallel trajectories: the legal trajectory, which emphasizes justice, maṣlaḥa (public interest), and maqāṣid al-sharīʿa (higher objectives of law) as guiding principles in evaluating AI applications in finance, medicine, and governance; and the mystical trajectory, which underscores the primacy of human dignity, the sanctity of the soul, and the ethical imperative of ihsān in an age increasingly dominated by surveillance, automation, and algorithmic control. By bringing these two trajectories into dialogue, the article argues for an integrated Islamic framework of AI ethics that is both normatively grounded in revelation and spiritually enriched by Sufi insights.

Ultimately, the study contends that the future of AI in Muslim societies must neither be technophobic nor uncritically adopt secular paradigms. Instead, it must embody the Qur'anic call to balance—a middle path that safeguards faith, preserves human autonomy, and affirms dignity in the face of technological determinism.

Keywords

Islamic Law; Artificial Intelligence; Fiqh al-Nawāzil; Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿa; Sufism; Human Dignity; Data Ethics; Insān al-Kāmil

Islamic Legal Thought in the Context of AI

Foundations of Islamic Law (Qur'an, Sunnah, Ijmaʿ, Qiyas)

The encounter between Islamic law and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) cannot be understood without grounding the discussion in the very foundational sources of Shariah. Islamic law is not a frozen system; rather, it is an intellectual tradition built upon revelation while simultaneously open to reasoning, consensus, and analogy. These four primary sources Qur'an, Sunnah, Ijmaʿ, and Qiyas establish a methodological framework that allows Muslims to respond to new realities without betraying divine guidance. In the age of AI, these foundations not only help in assessing the permissibility of technological applications but also in safeguarding deeper values such as human dignity, accountability, and justice.

The Qur'an as the Supreme Source

The Qur'an remains the primary and most authoritative source of Islamic law. It does not merely provide ritual obligations but outlines ethical and legal maxims which remain relevant in all epochs. For instance, the Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes justice as the central pillar of law and governance:

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"إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ" [1]

"Indeed, Allah commands justice and excellence".

This verse establishes ʿadl (justice) not only as a theological principle but as a practical standard for all forms of social regulation. In the context of AI, this raises important questions: Can algorithmic decision-making ensure fairness? Can automated systems avoid reproducing social biases? The Qur'anic command for justice implies that any use of AI in courts, healthcare, or economics must be evaluated against whether it preserves justice as understood by Shariah.

As al-Shāṭibī observes in his al-Muwāfaqāt:

"إن الشريعة إنما وضعت لمصالح العباد في العاجل والآجل" [2]

"The Shariah has been instituted for the welfare of humanity, both in this world and the hereafter".

Al-Shāṭibī clarifies that divine law is teleological it is aimed at human well-being. This principle is indispensable when addressing AI, since the technology must be judged not by its novelty but by whether it serves or harms humanity's worldly and spiritual welfare.

The Sunnah as Living Application of Revelation

The Sunnah complements the Qur'an by offering embodied examples of prophetic practice. The Prophet ﷺ demonstrated how divine principles could be actualized in real social contexts. One well-known hadith captures the ethical spirit of the Sunnah:

"إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأُتَمِّمَ مَكَارِمَ الْأَخْلَاقِ" [3]

"I was only sent to perfect noble character".

The legal and ethical philosophy of Islam cannot be divorced from character formation. Thus, even if AI introduces efficiency and precision, its acceptability in Islamic law depends on whether it aligns with the moral trajectory of the Sunnah—compassion, fairness, and dignity. For example, an AI-powered medical tool may be permissible if it enhances patient care with mercy and integrity; however, if it commodifies human life or reduces patients to data points, it conflicts with the prophetic mission of perfecting ethical living.

Ijmaʿ (Consensus) as Collective Reasoning

Ijmaʿ embodies the communal authority of the scholarly class. It reflects how the Muslim community, through its jurists, has historically adapted to changing circumstances. Al-Juwaynī defines it in his seminal work al-Burhān fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh:

"هو اتفاق مجتهدي الأمة في عصر من العصور على حكم شرعي" [4]

"It is the agreement of the mujtahids of the ummah, in any given era, upon a ruling of the Shariah".

In the AI age, no single scholar can claim to address the full range of ethical, technical, and legal implications. Issues such as autonomous weapons, AI-driven judicial rulings, and genetic data analysis require ijmaʿa transnational scholarly consensus combining expertise in both Shariah and modern sciences. This is not a break with tradition but its continuation, since the very purpose of ijmaʿ is to ensure the community speaks with one voice in times of new challenges.

Qiyas (Analogical Reasoning) and Technological Application

Qiyas, or analogical reasoning, extends the law from known cases to novel issues by identifying a common underlying cause (ʿillah). It represents the intellectual dynamism of Islamic jurisprudence. Ibn al-Qayyim explains:

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[1] النحل 16:90

[2] al-Shāṭibī, al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharīʿa, Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Tijārīyah, 1968, vol. 2, p. 7.

[3] Mālik ibn Anas, al-Muwaṭṭaʾ, Cairo: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, 1951, vol. 2, p. 904.

[4] al-Juwaynī, al-Burhān fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1997, vol. 2, p. 786.

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"القياس الصحيح هو من العدل الذي أنزل الله به كتابه وهو الميزان الذي أنزله"[5]

"Sound analogy is part of the justice with which God revealed His Book; it is the balance He has sent down".

This principle means that AI-related phenomena such as AI-generated fatwas, digital currencies, or algorithmic surveillance can be addressed by extending analogies from classical jurisprudence. For instance, the debate on whether AI can issue fatwas could be analogized with the prohibition against unqualified persons delivering legal opinions in classical times. In both cases, the underlying cause (ʿillah) is the necessity of sound scholarship and moral accountability in issuing rulings.

The foundational sources of Islamic law Qur'an, Sunnah, Ijmaʿ, and Qiyas do not merely provide rigid rules but rather constitute a comprehensive framework of divine guidance and human reasoning. They safeguard the eternal principles of justice, dignity, and welfare while granting Muslims the methodological tools to confront unprecedented realities. In the age of artificial intelligence, these sources are not obsolete but more relevant than ever, for they remind us that technology must be evaluated not by its efficiency alone but by whether it aligns with the divine objectives of Shariah.

Classical Fiqh and Technological Challenges

The history of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) demonstrates that Muslim jurists were never confined to a static set of rulings. Instead, they continuously engaged with new circumstances, cultural changes, and even technological advancements of their times. The printing press, paper-making, navigational tools, military technologies, and later financial instruments all raised legal and ethical debates. These debates reflect a juristic methodology that combined textual fidelity with pragmatic adaptation.

Classical jurists worked within the parameters of revelation but developed sophisticated methods to address novel issues. For instance, Imām al-Sarakhsī (d. 1090 CE), in his monumental al-Mabsūt, emphasizes that legal reasoning must engage with human realities as they evolve:

"الأحكام لا تُفْهَمُ إلا بمعرفة أحوال الناس"[6]

"Legal rulings cannot be understood without knowledge of the conditions of people".

This maxim underlines that law cannot be separated from the lived context of human beings. When applied to AI, it implies that jurists must understand not only the abstract ethical dilemmas but also the technical operations of algorithms, data structures, and machine learning before issuing judgments. Just as jurists once examined contracts in commerce or instruments in warfare, today they must interrogate AI-driven systems that affect finance, health, education, and justice.

A similar approach is found in Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328 CE), who argued that jurists must evaluate customs and innovations in light of their ethical and legal consequences:

"العادات معتبرة في الشرع، فإذا تغيرت الأحوال والأزمان تغيرت الأحكام"[7]

"Customs are recognized in Shariah; thus, when circumstances and times change, rulings also change".

Ibn Taymiyyah's insight foreshadows the necessity of legal dynamism in confronting AI. For example, algorithmic surveillance might resemble historical concerns about espionage (tajassus), but the scale and scope of data monitoring today demand renewed juristic deliberation.

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[5]Ibn al-Qayyim, Iʿlām al-Muwaqqiʿīn, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1996, vol. 1, p. 196.

[6]al-Sarakhsī, al-Mabsūt, Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1993, vol. 10, p. 145.

[7]Ibn Taymiyyah, Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā, Riyadh: King Fahd Complex, 1995, vol. 32, p. 267.

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Therefore, classical fiqh is not irrelevant to AI but provides a juristic precedent for adaptation: jurists analyzed the implications of technology in their times, and today the same methodology can be extended to artificial intelligence.

Shariah Principles of Maslaha (Public Interest) and Maqasid al-Shariah in AI Ethics

Among the most profound contributions of Islamic jurisprudence is the articulation of maslaha (public interest) and maqasid al-shariah (objectives of Shariah). These principles enable the law to transcend literalism and address the higher purposes of revelation. In the field of AI ethics, these principles become particularly crucial since they provide evaluative criteria that balance innovation with human dignity and spiritual well-being.

Al-Ghazālī (d. 1111 CE), in his al-Mustaṣfā, provides a foundational definition of maslaha:

"المصلحة هي المحافظة على مقصود الشرع"[8]

"Maslaha is the preservation of the objectives of the Shariah".

According to al-Ghazālī, maslaha is not subjective benefit but one rooted in divine intention. In the realm of AI, this requires distinguishing between technologies that serve genuine welfare (e.g., AI in medical diagnostics) and those that undermine dignity or justice (e.g., biased predictive policing).

The later jurist al-Shāṭibī (d. 1388 CE) systematized the doctrine of maqasid al-shariah, identifying five core objectives: protection of religion (ḥifẓ al-dīn), life (ḥifẓ al-nafs), intellect (ḥifẓ al-ʿaql), lineage (ḥifẓ al-nasl), and property (ḥifẓ al-māl). He states:

"إن وضع الشرائع إنما هو لمصالح العباد في العاجل والآجل معاً"[9]

"The purpose of the Shariah is none other than the welfare of humanity in both the immediate and the eternal".

This framework offers a robust criterion for AI ethics. For instance:

- Does AI in warfare endanger life (ḥifẓ al-nafs)?
- Does algorithmic misinformation corrupt intellect (ḥifẓ al-ʿaql)?
- Does AI-driven commodification of human data undermine dignity and family privacy (ḥifẓ al-nasl)?

Thus, maqasid al-shariah does not merely tolerate AI but critically engages it, ensuring that technological progress remains subordinate to the preservation of essential human and spiritual values.

The dual legacy of classical fiqh methodology and the principles of maslaha and maqasid al-shariah provides a profound intellectual toolkit for addressing artificial intelligence. Classical jurists modeled how law must evolve in response to changing conditions, while maqasid thinking secures the higher ethical horizon of Shariah. Together, they prevent AI from becoming a purely utilitarian enterprise, grounding its evaluation instead in justice, dignity, and the ultimate welfare of humanity.

Case Studies: AI in Finance, Medical Ethics, and Legal Judgments

Artificial Intelligence (AI) does not operate in a vacuum but enters directly into the lived realities of Muslim societies, particularly in domains where ethical, legal, and spiritual considerations are indispensable. The interaction of AI with Islamic law (fiqh) becomes most vivid in practical arenas such as finance, medical ethics, and judicial reasoning. Each of these fields engages directly with core principles of Sharīʿah: the prohibition of riba (usury) and gharar (excessive uncertainty) in finance, the sanctity of life and human dignity in medicine, and the pursuit of justice and equity in legal judgments.

Islamic legal and mystical thought provides a unique framework for interpreting these

[8]al-Ghazālī, al-Mustaṣfā min ʿIlm al-Uṣūl, Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Tijārīyah, 1937, vol. 1, p. 286.

[9]al-Shāṭibī, al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharīʿa, Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Tijārīyah, 1968, vol. 2, p. 5

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challenges. As al-Ghazālī reminds us, "The very objective of the Sharīʿah is to secure benefits and repel harms" (maqāṣid al-sharīʿah) (al-Ghazālī, al-Mustaṣfā, 1993, 174). Thus, examining AI through these three domains allows us to see how the balance between data, dīn, and dignity is negotiated.

1.AI in Finance

Islamic finance is premised on the principles of fairness, transparency, and prohibition of unjust enrichment. The use of AI in this sector whether in algorithmic trading, risk assessment, or credit scoring raises significant questions.

2.Classical Anchor

The Qurʾān commands:

"وَأَحَلَّ اللَّهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبَا"[10]

"Allah has permitted trade and has forbidden usury."

This verse establishes the moral distinction between legitimate profit through trade and the exploitation inherent in riba.

AI-driven financial systems, when deployed for automated lending, may inadvertently reproduce structural biases or encourage speculative transactions that resemble gharar. Islamic law would demand that such systems be carefully scrutinized to ensure they do not lead to financial injustice.

As Mufti Taqi Usmani notes:

> "The essence of Islamic finance lies not only in formal compliance but in actualizing justice and fairness in financial dealings" [11].

Interpretation

Thus, AI tools must be programmed in ways that ensure compliance with Sharīʿah not merely avoiding explicit riba, but also safeguarding equity and preventing exploitation. For example, an AI credit-scoring model must not create unjust exclusion of vulnerable groups, as this would violate the Qurʾānic principle of fairness (ʿadl).

AI in Medical Ethics

Medicine in Islam is inseparable from the sacred trust (amānah) of preserving life. AI applications—such as diagnostic algorithms, robotic surgery, or predictive genetic testing enhance human capacity but simultaneously challenge theological boundaries.

Classical Anchor

The Qurʾān declares:

"وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ"[12]

"Do not kill the soul which Allah has made sacred, except by right."

This establishes the sanctity of life as a fundamental principle.

Al-Shāṭibī extends this principle in his theory of maqāṣid, where ḥifẓ al-nafs (protection of life) is one of the five supreme objectives of Sharīʿah (al-Shāṭibī, al-Muwāfaqāt, 1997, 2:10).

Application to AI

AI-driven medical technologies must be evaluated in light of this objective. For instance, AI systems that assist in early detection of cancer uphold ḥifẓ al-nafs. Yet, dilemmas arise in cases like end-of-life decision-making. Should an AI system be allowed to recommend withdrawal of life support based on statistical probabilities of survival? From an Islamic legal-ethical perspective, such decisions cannot be left solely to data models but must be informed

[10]Qurʾān 2:275

[11]Usmani, An Introduction to Islamic Finance, 2002, 24

[12]Qurʾān 17:33

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by principles of dignity (karāmah) and divine will (qadar).

Scholarly Position

As Gamal Serour, a leading scholar in Islamic bioethics, observes:

> "Technology is a tool, but the compass of ethics must remain in the hands of the Sharīʿah. Any medical advancement must be tested against the principles of sanctity of life and human dignity." [13]

AI in Legal Judgments

Perhaps the most delicate issue is the role of AI in judicial reasoning. Can algorithms be trusted to make or even advise on legal rulings in Islamic contexts?

Classical Anchor

The Qurʾān commands:

> "إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ"[14]
>
> "Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice."

Justice (ʿadl) is the core requirement of any legal system. Classical jurists such as Ibn al-Qayyim emphasized that "Sharīʿah is all justice, mercy, wisdom, and benefit. Any ruling that replaces justice with injustice, mercy with cruelty, or wisdom with folly is not from the Sharīʿah".

Application to AI

AI in legal settings such as predictive policing, sentencing algorithms, or Sharīʿah compliance verification—presents opportunities for efficiency but also grave risks of dehumanization and bias. If an algorithm is trained on flawed or biased data, its judgments may perpetuate injustice.

Interpretation

Islamic law requires that qāḍīs (judges) not only apply legal rules but also exercise ijtihād (reasoned interpretation) in the pursuit of justice. Delegating this moral responsibility entirely to machines would be impermissible, as machines lack moral accountability (taklīf).

These case studies illustrate the tension between AI's efficiency and Islamic law's emphasis on justice, dignity, and divine accountability. In finance, AI must avoid structural injustice; in medicine, it must serve the sanctity of life; in law, it cannot replace the moral agency of human judges. The key is not rejecting technology, but embedding it within the theological and ethical architecture of Sharīʿah.

Islamic Mystical (Sufi) Thought in the Context of AI

Concept of Insān al-Kāmil (The Perfect Human) and Machine Intelligence

Within Sufi metaphysics, the concept of Insān al-Kāmil (the Perfect Human) occupies a central role. It represents not merely a moral or spiritual ideal, but a cosmological reality that bridges the divine and the created worlds. This doctrine, elaborated most fully by Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 1240) and further refined by later Sufis such as ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. 1424), situates the human being as the microcosm (al-ʿālam al-ṣaghīr) reflecting the macrocosm (al-ʿālam al-kabīr).

By contrast, artificial intelligence operates as a technological simulation of human rationality, created from data and algorithms rather than divine breath (nafkh al-rūḥ). The juxtaposition of Insān al-Kāmil with AI highlights the limits of machine intelligence in

[13]Serour, Islamic Perspectives in Human Reproduction Ethics, 2000, 88

[14]Qurʾān 4:58

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replicating the spiritual, ethical, and metaphysical dimensions of the human person.

The Sufi Conception of Insān al-Kāmil

Ibn al-ʿArabī defines the Perfect Human as:

"فَإِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ الْكَامِلَ هُوَ الْمَرْآةُ الْمُجَلِّيَةُ لِلْحَقِّ فِي الْخَلْقِ، وَبِهِ يَظْهَرُ الْأَمْرُ وَيَتَحَقَّقُ الْعَالَمُ."[15]

> "The Perfect Human is the mirror through which the Real (al-Ḥaqq) is manifested within creation; through him the divine command is made visible, and the world comes to true realization".

This statement highlights that the Insān al-Kāmil is not simply a morally righteous person but the ontological locus of God's self-disclosure (tajallī). Unlike machines, which merely process inputs, the Perfect Human reflects divine attributes such as mercy (raḥma), knowledge (ʿilm), and justice (ʿadl).

ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī deepens this notion:

"الإِنسَانُ الكَامِلُ هُوَ القُطْبُ الَّذِي تَدُورُ عَلَيْهِ أَفْلَاكُ الوُجُودِ مِنْ أَوَّلِهَا إِلَى آخِرِهَا، وَهُوَ وَاحِدُ الزَّمَانِ، لَا يَكُونُ فِي الوُجُودِ فِي وَقْتٍ إِلَّا وَاحِدٌ."[16]

> "The Perfect Human is the Pole upon which the spheres of existence revolve, from beginning to end. In every age, there can be but one such human".

The uniqueness of the Insān al-Kāmil demonstrates that perfection is not reducible to computational intelligence or even to collective data-processing. Rather, it is rooted in divine election, spiritual realization, and metaphysical centrality. AI, no matter how advanced, cannot assume the role of the quṭb (axis of existence), for it lacks a soul (rūḥ) and accountability (taklīf).

Machine Intelligence and the Question of Human Likeness

Modern AI seeks to replicate human faculties reasoning, learning, decision-making but remains fundamentally a simulation of cognitive processes. It lacks intentionality, consciousness, and spiritual depth.

From a Sufi perspective, consciousness (shuʿūr) is inseparable from divine imprint. The Qurʾān reminds us:

"فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ"[17]

> "When I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down before him in prostration."

This verse affirms that what elevates humanity above other beings is the infusion of divine spirit, not mere cognitive capacity. AI, while capable of surpassing humans in speed and data-handling, cannot be said to possess rūḥ, and thus cannot qualify as Insān al-Kāmil.

Mystical Anthropology vs. AI Ontology

1.Human Ontology: In Sufism, the human being is a barzakh (intermediary) between the divine and the created.

2.Machine Ontology: AI is an artifact of human engineering, grounded in material causality, without metaphysical depth.

3.Epistemology: While AI derives knowledge from datasets, the Insān al-Kāmil embodies knowledge through maʿrifa (gnosis), a direct unveiling of divine reality.

Thus, the danger of conflating AI with human intelligence lies in reducing the human being to a mechanistic entity. The Sufi path reminds us that dignity (karāmah) flows from divine

[15]Ibn al-ʿArabī, Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam, 1980, 52

[16]al-Jīlī, al-Insān al-Kāmil fī Maʿrifat al-Awākhir wa-l-Awāʾil, 1997, 1:4

[17]Qurʾān 15:29

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proximity, not algorithmic power.

Contemporary Implications

In the age of AI, the concept of Insān al-Kāmil provides a critical counter-narrative to technocentric anthropologies. While Silicon Valley discourse often imagines "post-human" or "transhuman" futures, Sufi thought insists on a fundamentally theocentric anthropology, where perfection is realized not by surpassing biological limits but by aligning with divine will.

As Seyyed Hossein Nasr argues:

> "The danger of modern technology is not merely its power, but its ability to redefine the human being in reductionist terms, stripped of his sacred center."[18]

Here, the doctrine of Insān al-Kāmil functions as a safeguard, reminding us that the human being's true perfection cannot be engineered, coded, or uploaded it can only be realized through spiritual transformation.

The Sufi concept of Insān al-Kāmil demonstrates the profound difference between machine intelligence and human perfection. While AI can model aspects of rationality, it cannot mirror the metaphysical function of humanity as the bearer of divine spirit and the mirror of God's names. In this sense, AI's rise underscores the need to recover a sacred anthropology that situates human dignity in divine reflection rather than computational mimicry.

Spiritual Anthropology: Rūḥ (Soul), ʿAql (Intellect), and Nafs (Self) in Dialogue with AI

In Sufi metaphysics, the human being is not reducible to biological or psychological functions but is constituted by multiple ontological layers: the rūḥ (soul/spirit), the ʿaql (intellect/reason), and the nafs (self/ego). These dimensions collectively form the sacred anthropology that underpins Islamic spirituality.

Artificial Intelligence, by contrast, is built upon the logic of computational models, statistical learning, and algorithmic prediction. It simulates aspects of human ʿaql but remains devoid of rūḥ and experiences no moral struggle of nafs. The dialogue between these categories reveals the limits of AI in embodying human subjectivity as understood in Sufi thought.

The Concept of Rūḥ (Soul)

The Qurʾān explicitly distinguishes between the created body and the divinely infused rūḥ:

> "فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ"[19]
>
> "When I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down to him in prostration."

This verse establishes the sacred origin of human life. Unlike machines, which are animated by electricity and code, the human being is animated by divine breath (nafkh ilāhī).

Al-Qushayrī (d. 1072) explains:

> "الرُّوحُ سِرُّ الحَيَاةِ وَمَجْلَىٰ التَّجَلِّي، بِهِ يَصِيرُ الإِنْسَانُ خَاصَّةَ الخَلْقِ."[20]
>
> "The soul is the secret of life and the locus of divine manifestation; through it, man becomes the most distinguished of creation".

Thus, the rūḥ is not reducible to data-processing. AI lacks this divine spark and, therefore, cannot share in humanity's unique ontological dignity.

The Concept of ʿAql (Intellect)

In Islamic thought, the ʿaql is both a rational faculty and a spiritual light. The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

[18]Nasr, Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man, 1997, 78

[19]Qurʾān 15:29

[20]al-Qushayrī, al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya, 2002, 1:45

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"مَا قَسَمَ اللَّهُ لِلْعِبَادِ شَيْئًا أَفْضَلَ مِنَ الْعَقْلِ، فَنَوْمُ الْعَاقِلِ أَفْضَلُ مِنْ سَهَرِ الْجَاهِلِ، وَإِقَامَةُ الْعَاقِلِ أَفْضَلُ مِنْ شُخُوصِ الْجَاهِلِ."[21]

> "Allah has not distributed to His servants anything better than intellect. The sleep of the intelligent is better than the wakefulness of the ignorant, and the standing of the intelligent is better than the movement of the ignorant".

While AI may imitate rational processes through algorithms, the ʿaql in Sufi cosmology is more than reason—it is an inner light (nūr) that guides the soul towards truth.Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) distinguishes between the "material intellect" (al-ʿaql al-hayūlānī) that processes sensory data and the "active intellect" (al-ʿaql al-faʿʿāl) that connects to the higher order of reality.

AI functions analogously to the lower intellect: it processes inputs and outputs. But it lacks access to the transcendent dimension of the active intellect, which in Sufi terms is tied to unveiling (kashf) and gnosis (maʿrifa).

The Concept of Nafs (Self/Ego)

The Qurʾān categorizes the nafs into stages:

1.al-nafs al-ammārah (the commanding self inclined to evil) (Qurʾān 12:53),

2.al-nafs al-lawwāmah (the self-reproaching self) (Qurʾān 75:2),

3.al-nafs al-muṭmaʾinnah (the tranquil self at peace) (Qurʾān 89:27).

Rūmī elaborates this inner struggle:

"نَفْسْتْ اَژدَهاست او کِی مُرده است
اَز غَم و بی آلَت اژدَها مُرده است."[22]

> "Your ego is a dragon; how could it be dead?
> It only appears so when it is sorrowful and without means".

This moral-psychological battle is essential to human perfection. The nafs is both a source of temptation and a vehicle for transformation. AI, however, is devoid of moral struggle. It does not wrestle with desire, regret, or repentance. Thus, while AI may simulate decision-making, it cannot participate in the ethical drama of the human self.

Comparative Dialogue with AI

1.Rūḥ vs. Code: Human life is animated by divine breath, AI by programming.

2.ʿAql vs. Algorithm: Human intellect is a luminous faculty linked to transcendence, AI processes remain within immanent computation.

3.Nafs vs. Neutrality: Human self undergoes moral struggle and transformation, AI lacks affective and ethical consciousness.

Contemporary Implications

The Sufi tripartite anthropology resists reductionist definitions of humanity. Modern technologists sometimes argue that consciousness could "emerge" from sufficiently complex neural networks. Yet, from an Islamic mystical perspective, rūḥ is not emergent but divinely bestowed.

As William Chittick notes:

> "The human spirit is not a by-product of material complexity but a gift of the divine, an echo of God's own reality placed within man."[23]

This framing provides a corrective to secular AI discourses: no matter how sophisticated, machines cannot attain the ontological depth of human beings.Placing rūḥ, ʿaql,

[21]al-Daylamī, Musnad al-Firdaws, 1997, 3:112

[22]Rūmī, Mathnawī, Book I, verse 2845

[23]Chittick, The Sufi Path of Knowledge, 1989, 95

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and nafs in dialogue with AI underscores the irreducibility of human existence. AI may model rational processes (ʿaql in its lower sense), but it lacks the divine spirit (rūḥ) and the ethical dynamism of the self (nafs). Sufi anthropology thus highlights the limits of machine intelligence and reaffirms the dignity of the human being as a bearer of divine trust (amānah).

The Role of Iḥsān in the Digital Age

In the Prophetic ḥadīth of Jibrīl, Islam is defined through three interconnected dimensions: Islām (submission through action), Īmān (faith through belief), and Iḥsān (spiritual excellence through inner consciousness). The Prophet ﷺ said:

أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ[24]

> "That you worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you cannot see Him, know that He sees you".

This definition situates iḥsān as a perpetual state of God-consciousness (murāqaba). In the age of AI and digital surveillance, where human actions are increasingly mediated and monitored by algorithms, iḥsān acquires renewed relevance as an ethical and spiritual counterbalance.

Classical Understanding of Iḥsān

Al-Ghazālī describes iḥsān as the heart's constant awareness of divine presence:

"الإحسان هو أن تعبد الله على وجه الحضور والمراقبة، كأنك تراه، فإن لم تكن تراه فإنه يراك."[25]

> "Iḥsān is to worship Allah in a state of presence and vigilance, as though you see Him; and if you do not see Him, surely He sees you".

In this sense, iḥsān transcends outward compliance with law (fiqh) and penetrates the inner dimension of sincerity (ikhlāṣ).

Iḥsān and Digital Surveillance

In the digital age, human actions are increasingly recorded, stored, and analyzed. Every online transaction, social media post, and medical record contributes to an expanding "digital self." AI intensifies this phenomenon through predictive analytics and algorithmic profiling. From a mystical standpoint, however, divine surveillance supersedes digital monitoring. As the Qurʾān states:

"مَا يَكُونُ مِن نَّجْوَىٰ ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ رَابِعُهُمْ وَلَا خَمْسَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ"[26]

> "No private conversation takes place among three but that He is their fourth, nor among five but that He is their sixth."

Whereas AI surveillance operates externally and mechanically, iḥsān cultivates internal vigilance rooted in awareness of God's omnipresence. Thus, while modern individuals may regulate behavior due to fear of digital monitoring, the Sufi insists on a higher standard: self-regulation before God.

Iḥsān as a Corrective to Algorithmic Ethics

Contemporary AI ethics often focuses on fairness, accountability, and transparency (FAT). These frameworks, though important, remain secular and procedural. In contrast, iḥsān introduces an interior dimension: ethics as lived sincerity before the Divine.

ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī reminds:

"كُنْ عِنْدَ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ بِلاَ نَفْسٍ وَلاَ هَوًى، تَكُنْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الإِحْسَانِ."[27]

> "Be before God's command without ego and without desire, and you will be among the people of iḥsān".

---

[24]al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb al-Īmān, 50

[25]al-Ghazālī, Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn, 2004, 4:345

[26]Qurʾān 58:7

[27]al-Jīlānī, Fatḥ al-Rabbānī, 1995, 1:213

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This inward discipline cannot be mechanized by algorithms; it is a uniquely human response to divine presence.

Iḥsān and Digital Identity

In the digital age, individuals often curate online personas that differ from their authentic selves. AI-driven systems amplify this by predicting, categorizing, and sometimes misrepresenting human identities.

The Sufi vision of iḥsān resists fragmentation of the self, insisting on harmony between outward action (ẓāhir) and inward reality (bāṭin). As Rūmī says:

"ظاهر تو چو قشر بادام است
باطن تو چو مغز آن دانم است."[28]

"Your outer self is like the shell of an almon
your inner self is its kernel, the essence I know".

Thus, in contrast to the performative identities constructed online, iḥsān anchors the human being in sincerity before God, harmonizing digital expression with spiritual authenticity.

Contemporary Implications

1.Against Surveillance Capitalism: Iḥsān challenges the reduction of human beings to data points by reasserting their sacred subjectivity.

2.Ethical AI Use: Professionals guided by iḥsān will prioritize transparency, fairness, and above all, sincerity in designing and deploying AI.

3.Digital Spirituality: The cultivation of God-consciousness becomes even more urgent in environments of constant monitoring, ensuring that believers regulate their actions not only by external oversight but by inner presence.

As Seyyed Hossein Nasr observes:

"True ethics is inseparable from the remembrance of God; once ethics is cut off from its divine root, it becomes relative, fragile, and manipulable[29]".

The doctrine of iḥsān provides a spiritual framework to navigate the digital age. While AI and algorithms extend external surveillance, iḥsān grounds the believer in inner vigilance before God. It serves as a corrective to secular AI ethics, re-centering the human person not as a "data subject" but as a servant of God (ʿabd Allāh) whose dignity lies in sincerity, not surveillance.

Mystical Writings and Reflections on Human Dignity

Human dignity (karāmah al-insān) lies at the heart of Islamic theology and mystical thought. The Qurʾān declares:

"وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ"[30]

"And We have certainly honored the children of Adam."

This verse establishes dignity not as a privilege contingent on social or technological status but as an ontological gift from God, inherent in all human beings. In the age of AI, where human identity risks reduction to algorithms, Sufi writings remind us that dignity is rooted in the soul (rūḥ), not data.

Sufi Understanding of Human Dignity

Sufis often interpret human dignity through the lens of the divine image (ṣūrat Allāh) in which humanity was created. Ibn ʿArabī writes:

[28]Rūmī, Mathnawī, Book II, verse 355

[29]Nasr, Islam and the Plight of Modern Man, 1975, 143

[30]Qurʾān 17:70

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"فالإنسان خُلق على صورة الرحمن، فهو الجامع بين الحق والخلق."[31]

"Man was created upon the form of the All-Merciful; he is the locus that gathers both the Divine and the created".

Interpretation

Human dignity, for Ibn ʿArabī, arises from the human capacity to reflect divine attributes mercy, knowledge, creativity in a finite manner. This status cannot be replicated by machines, no matter how intelligent, because it stems from the divine breath within humans (Qurʾān 15:29).

Human Dignity and the Soul (Rūḥ)

The Qurʾān affirms:

"وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي"[32]

"And I breathed into him of My Spirit."

Al-Rūmī interprets this divine breath as the mark of inalienable dignity:

"ای جان تو زان دم خدایی دمی
کی بی‌قدری تو، تو سلطانی."[33]

"O soul, from that divine breath you came;
How could you be without worth, when you are a king"?

Here, dignity is not contingent upon material productivity but on the divine element breathed into the human being. AI, however sophisticated, lacks this divine infusion and thus remains qualitatively distinct from humans.

Dignity as Freedom from Instrumentalization

In Sufi writings, dignity is closely tied to the refusal of reducing human beings to instruments. Al-Ghazālī stresses:

"الإنسان ليس وسيلةً لغيره، بل هو غاية في ذاته لأنه مخلوق لله."[34]

"The human being is not a means to another end but an end in himself, for he is created for God".

This resonates with modern critiques of AI-driven economies, where individuals risk being treated as mere data producers. Sufism insists that dignity is inherent and cannot be subordinated to utilitarian or commercial aims.

Mystical Reflections and the Limits of AI

1.Ontological Superiority of the Human Soul: AI, however advanced, remains without rūḥ and cannot partake in the divine image.

2.Moral Responsibility: Human dignity entails accountability before God, something absent in machines.

3.Depth of Consciousness: Mystical experience (dhawq) cannot be quantified by data; it is a qualitative encounter with the Divine.

Ibn al-ʿAjība, commenting on Qurʾān 17:70, states:

"كرامة الإنسان في معرفته لربه، فمن فقد المعرفة فقد الكرامة."[35]

"The dignity of man lies in his knowledge of his Lord; whoever loses this knowledge loses dignity".

This mystical insight implies that dignity is not only inherent but also cultivated through maʿrifa (gnosis). AI may simulate intelligence, but it cannot attain gnosis.

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[31]Ibn ʿArabī, Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam, 1946, 48

[32]Qurʾān 15:29

[33]Rūmī, Mathnawī, Book IV, verse 1256

[34]al-Ghazālī, Mīzān al-ʿAmal, 1328 AH, 121

[35]Ibn al-ʿAjība, al-Baḥr al-Madīd, 2002, 6:213

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Human Dignity in the Digital Age

In contemporary discourse, human dignity is often framed in legalistic or human-rights terms. While essential, such approaches risk secularizing dignity into contractual rights. The Sufi perspective offers a deeper metaphysical grounding: dignity is not negotiable because it is divinely bestowed.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr echoes this:

> "In a world dominated by technology, the sacredness of man must be remembered; otherwise, man will be reduced to an object among objects[36]".

Thus, Sufi reflections provide a framework to resist the dehumanization implicit in algorithmic reductionism, reaffirming that every human remains a bearer of divine honor.

Mystical writings remind us that human dignity transcends data, algorithms, and material productivity. Rooted in divine creation, dignity is inseparable from the rūḥ and the human capacity to reflect divine attributes. While AI may challenge notions of identity and agency, it cannot diminish the essential honor bestowed upon humanity. In the digital age, Sufi thought becomes a vital resource for reasserting the sacredness of the human being amidst technological reductionism.

Datafication of Human Existence and its Ethical Consequences

The 21st century is characterized by the datafication of human life the transformation of social, biological, and psychological aspects of human existence into quantifiable data. Every online action, biometric scan, health record, and even emotional expression becomes stored, analyzed, and commodified through algorithms. This reduction of the human being to streams of data presents profound ethical consequences for identity, privacy, autonomy, and dignity.

From an Islamic perspective, the datafication of existence raises theological and spiritual questions: if every thought and act can be digitized, what remains of the human soul (rūḥ) and divine accountability (taklīf)? More importantly, how does the Qurʾān's vision of human dignity (karāmah) resist the commodification of life?

Datafication and Reductionism

Datafication risks collapsing the complexity of human existence into numerical representations. Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier define it as:

> "The transformation of social action into online quantified data, thus allowing for real-time tracking and predictive analysis[37]".

While powerful for decision-making, this reduction strips away the ineffable dimensions of the human being. The Qurʾān reminds us that man is more than mere material:

> "فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ"[38]
>
> "And when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My Spirit, fall down to him in prostration."

Interpretation

No dataset can capture the rūḥ the divine breath that constitutes the essence of humanity. Datafication thus risks obscuring the most sacred element of human existence.

Ethical Consequences in Islamic Perspective

1.Erosion of Privacy (ḥurma)

[36]Nasr, Man and Nature, 1968, 87

[37]Viktor Mayer-Schönberger and Kenneth Cukier, Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think, 2013, 78

[38]Qurʾān 15:29

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In Islam, privacy is a sacred right. The Qurʾān warns:

"وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا"[39]

"Do not spy on one another."

Datafication, however, normalizes surveillance from state monitoring to corporate data mining challenging the Islamic ethic of guarding the sanctity of personal life.

2.Instrumentalization of Human Beings

Al-Ghazālī warned against treating humans as mere means:

"الإنسان غاية في ذاته لأنه مخلوق لله."[40]

"The human being is an end in himself, for he is created for God".

By commodifying human activity into data for profit, datafication undermines this principle.

3.Loss of Moral Accountability

In the Islamic worldview, humans are accountable before God:

"فَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ، وَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ."[41]

"So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it."

When morality is outsourced to algorithms predictive policing, automated credit scores responsibility becomes diffused, weakening the Qurʾānic principle of personal accountability.

4.Threats to Human Dignity (karāmah)

Ibn ʿArabī stressed that dignity derives from divine reflection:

"فالإنسان خُلق على صورة الرحمن."[42]

"Man was created upon the form of the All-Merciful".

Datafication, by treating humans as datasets, risks stripping them of this metaphysical dignity.

Mystical Critique: Beyond Quantification

Sufi thought challenges the very epistemology of datafication. For the mystic, the truth of the human being is not reducible to measurable categories. Rūmī writes:

"در معنی انسانی کسی را خبر نشد
جز در دل اهل دل که جان را نظر نشد."[43]

"The reality of the human being none has grasped,
Except those of the heart, whose souls perceive beyond measure".

This suggests that reducing humans to quantifiable information neglects the experiential and ineffable aspects of existence, which can only be accessed through spiritual knowledge (maʿrifa).

Contemporary Ethical Consequences

1. **Surveillance Capitalism:** Corporations profit from data extraction, treating individuals as resources rather than moral beings.
2. **Bias and Discrimination:** Algorithmic profiling may perpetuate injustice, violating the Qurʾānic injunction to justice (ʿadl) (Qurʾān 16:90). 1. Erosion of Freedom: When predictive systems dictate choices, human free will (ikhtiyār) risks being undermined.
3. **Alienation from the Self:** The constant quantification of life can lead to spiritual

[39]Qurʾān 49:12

[40]al-Ghazālī, Mīzān al-ʿAmal, 1328 AH, 121

[41]Qurʾān 99:7–8

[42]Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam, 1946, 48

[43]Mathnawī, Book I, verse 1795

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alienation, reducing self-worth to metrics rather than inner virtues.

The datafication of human existence, while offering unprecedented tools for governance and commerce, poses grave ethical consequences when viewed through Islamic legal and mystical lenses. Islam insists that human beings are more than data points — they are bearers of divine breath and dignity. The challenge of our age is to resist reductionism and to affirm the holistic vision of the human found in Qurʾān, fiqh, and Sufi metaphysics.

Privacy, Surveillance, and Human Freedom in Light of Sharīʿah

In contemporary societies, digital technologies and artificial intelligence have expanded the reach of surveillance to unprecedented levels. Human movements, communications, financial activities, and even emotions are tracked, analyzed, and stored as data. This transformation challenges fundamental ethical principles regarding privacy and freedom. From the Islamic legal and mystical perspectives, however, privacy (ḥurma), dignity (karāmah), and freedom (ikhtiyār) are sacred trusts that cannot be compromised without just cause.

Sharīʿah establishes clear guidelines about the sanctity of human life, home, and communication. Surveillance, when unjustified, not only violates individual rights but also undermines the God-given dignity of human beings.

Qurʾānic Foundations of Privacy

The Qurʾān directly prohibits invasive surveillance:

"يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَب بَّعْضُكُم بَعْضًا"[44]

> "O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion, for indeed some suspicion is sin. And do not spy, nor backbite one another."

This verse establishes that unwarranted surveillance (tajassus) is a moral and legal violation. Modern mass surveillance, by collecting personal information without consent, mirrors precisely what the Qurʾān prohibits.

Sanctity of the Home

The Qurʾān also emphasizes the inviolability of private spaces:

"يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ بُيُوتِكُمْ حَتَّى تَسْتَأْنِسُوا وَتُسَلِّمُوا عَلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا"[45]

> "O you who believe! Do not enter houses other than your own until you have asked permission and greeted their inhabitants."

By analogy, Islamic jurists argue that a person's data, communications, and digital records are part of their private domain, protected under the same principle of sanctity. Unauthorized access thus constitutes a violation of Sharīʿah principles.

Prophetic Teachings on Privacy

The Prophet ﷺ reinforced the Qurʾānic ethic of non-intrusion. He said:

مَنْ اسْتَمَعَ إِلَى حَدِيثِ قَوْمٍ وَهُمْ لَهُ كَارِهُونَ صُبَّ فِي أُذُنِهِ الآنُكُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ[46]

> "Whoever listens to the conversation of people who dislike it being heard, molten lead will be poured into his ears on the Day of Judgment."

This ḥadīth equates spying with a grave moral crime, underscoring the seriousness of protecting privacy in Islamic law.

Human Freedom and Divine Accountability

In Islam, human freedom (ḥurriyyah) is directly tied to moral accountability (taklīf). The Qurʾān teaches:

[44]Qurʾān 49:12, trans. Saheeh International, Riyadh: Dar Abul-Qasim, 1997

[45]Qurʾān 24:27, trans. Saheeh International, Riyadh: Dar Abul-Qasim, 1997

[46]al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Adab, 7042, Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2001

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"فَمَن شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَن شَاءَ فَلْيَكْفُرْ"[47]

"So whoever wills, let him believe; and whoever wills, let him disbelieve."

Here, freedom of choice is presented as a divine gift, with consequences borne in the Hereafter. Excessive surveillance, by manipulating behavior or coercing conformity, undermines this divinely granted autonomy.

Classical Jurists on Privacy

Imām al-Ghazālī emphasized the inviolability of human dignity:

"حرمة الإنسان أعظم من حرمة المال والدار، فإن الإنسان خليفة الله في الأرض."[48]

"The sanctity of the human being is greater than that of property or dwelling, for man is God's vicegerent on earth."

This principle extends naturally into the digital realm. Just as one may not enter a home without permission, one may not intrude into a person's private data without their consent.

Mystical Insights on Surveillance and Inner Freedom

Sufi writers warned against external control that suppresses the soul's freedom. Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī observes:

"بنده آزاد است اندر بند حق
زآن که در تسلیم او دارد سبق."[49]

"The servant is free within the bonds of God,
For in surrender to Him, he surpasses all."

Here, true freedom comes not from escaping all oversight but from aligning oneself with divine presence. By contrast, AI-driven surveillance binds individuals to external control, reducing spiritual autonomy.

Ethical Consequences Today

1.Normalization of Mass Surveillance : States and corporations justify surveillance for security or profit, but from an Islamic lens, this mirrors tajassus, explicitly forbidden in Qurʾān 49:12.

2.Manipulation of Choice : Predictive algorithms limit genuine ikhtiyār (freedom of choice), contradicting Qurʾān 18:29's emphasis on free will.

3.Violation of Dignity : Treating individuals as data undermines the Sharīʿah principle of karāmah al-insān (human dignity).

4.Spiritual Alienation : Constant surveillance fosters fear of human authority rather than consciousness of divine oversight, thereby eroding iḥsān.

Sharīʿah offers a comprehensive framework for safeguarding privacy and freedom in the age of surveillance. Both Qurʾānic and Prophetic texts establish that privacy is not merely a social convenience but a sacred right. Classical jurists and mystics affirm that freedom and dignity are inseparable from divine accountability. Thus, in light of Islamic teachings, AI-driven mass surveillance poses not only political and ethical risks but also spiritual dangers, by replacing divine oversight with mechanized control.

AI and the Question of Accountability (Taklīf and Ikhtiyār)

One of the central questions raised by artificial intelligence in Islamic thought is the problem of accountability: who is morally and legally responsible for the actions produced by intelligent machines? In classical Islamic jurisprudence, accountability is tied to the notions of taklīf (legal and moral responsibility) and ikhtiyār (free choice or volition). These two principles define the human subject as a moral agent capable of understanding divine

[47]Qurʾān 18:29, trans. Saheeh International, Riyadh: Dar Abul-Qasim, 1997

[48]al-Ghazālī, Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn, Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 2004, 2:245

[49]Rūmī, Mathnawī, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson, London: Luzac, 1925, Book I, verse 2975

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injunctions and responsible for his or her choices. Without taklīf, the concept of sin and reward collapses, and without ikhtiyār, the moral weight of human action loses its meaning.

The Qur'an emphasizes that accountability is intrinsically tied to intentionality, knowledge, and volition. God says:

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا[50]

"Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity".

This verse shows that taklīf is conditioned upon human capacity and the possession of reason. Machines, regardless of their computational sophistication, lack this existential and spiritual dimension of capacity because their "choices" are algorithmically determined. They cannot bear moral responsibility in the way humans do.

Classical jurists such as al-Juwaynī (d. 1085) and al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) placed great emphasis on ʿaql (reason) and qudra (capacity) as prerequisites for accountability. Al-Ghazālī writes:

فإن العقل هو مناط التكليف، وبه يعرف الخطاب، ويميز بين الحسن والقبيح[51]

"For reason is the basis of accountability; through it one understands divine address and distinguishes between the good and the evil.

Here, al-Ghazālī is clear: accountability is inseparable from rational discernment. Artificial intelligence may simulate rational processes but does not embody the metaphysical reason that jurists link with divine address (khiṭāb sharʿī). Thus, while machines may "perform" actions, they are not mukallaf (legally accountable agents) in Islamic law.

This problem becomes sharper when AI is deployed in fields such as autonomous warfare or legal decision-making. If an autonomous drone commits an unlawful killing, can responsibility be shifted to the machine? The answer in Islamic legal thought is a decisive no: responsibility must fall upon the human agents who designed, programmed, and deployed the machine. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

كلكم راعٍ وكلكم مسؤول عن رعيته[52]

"Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you will be held accountable for his flock".

This prophetic statement underscores the relational and distributive nature of accountability in Islam: those in positions of control and authority are responsible for the outcomes of their domains. Applied to AI, this hadith implies that the creators, regulators, and operators of AI systems bear responsibility for their consequences.

Islamic theology also adds another layer through the concept of ikhtiyār, free will. Unlike deterministic processes in machines, human beings are given a sphere of choice. The Ashʿarite school, for instance, reconciles divine omnipotence with human responsibility through the doctrine of kasb (acquisition). Al-Ashʿarī (d. 936) explains:

والأفعال كلها من خلق الله تعالى، والعبد هو الكاسب لها[53]

"All actions are created by God Most High, yet the servant is the one who acquires them".

This theological nuance shows that human beings, despite divine determination, are morally accountable because they "acquire" acts through volition. In contrast, AI systems do

[50]Qur'an 2:286, trans. Saheeh International [Riyadh: Dar Abul-Qasim, 1997

[51]Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, al-Mustasfā min ʿIlm al-Uṣūl, ed. Ḥamzah Zayn [Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1993], 1:75

[52]Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Aḥkām, 893; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-Imārah, 1829, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan Riyadh: Darussalam, 1997

[53]Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, al-Ibānah ʿan Uṣūl al-Diyānah, ed. Fawqiyyah Ḥusayn Maḥmūd Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyyāt al-Azhariyyah, 1977

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not "acquire" their outputs; they simply execute instructions within programmed constraints. Thus, their actions cannot be the subject of taklīf or moral evaluation in the same way.

Modern Muslim ethicists, such as Mohammad Hashim Kamali, stress that legal responsibility in Islam is inseparable from intentionality. Kamali writes:

> "Liability in Islamic law presupposes human agency, conscious choice, and the will to act. An automated system, no matter how advanced, cannot be treated as a bearer of legal or moral responsibility[54]".

This reinforces that in the age of AI, Islamic thought cannot extend taklīf to machines. Instead, accountability must remain with the human actors who stand behind these systems.

Therefore, the framework of taklīf and ikhtiyār in Islamic law presents a critical lens for evaluating AI ethics. It prevents the diffusion of responsibility onto non-human agents and upholds the sanctity of human dignity as moral subjects. AI may alter the modalities of action, but the locus of accountability, in the Islamic worldview, remains firmly anchored in human volition and stewardship.

The Ontology of Knowledge: Revelation vs. Machine Learning

The contemporary rise of artificial intelligence, particularly machine learning, has reopened fundamental questions about the ontology of knowledge. Machine learning claims to "learn" by detecting patterns in vast datasets and adjusting its outputs accordingly. Revelation (waḥy), however, as understood in Islamic thought, is not the product of accumulated data but a divinely mediated disclosure of truth that transcends empirical and probabilistic reasoning. The juxtaposition of revelation and machine learning thus forces us to interrogate the very foundations of what it means to "know" and how different epistemologies establish legitimacy.

The Qur'an defines knowledge not merely as information but as a divine trust. God declares:

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا[55]

> "And He taught Adam the names all of them".

This verse situates human knowledge in a metaphysical relationship with God, where the act of teaching originates from the Divine and establishes the human as a conscious, responsible knower. By contrast, machine learning is not "taught" in this metaphysical sense; it is trained through algorithms that correlate inputs and outputs. The difference here is between knowledge as a divine illumination and data as statistical association.

Classical scholars such as al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1108) drew a distinction between mere information (maʿlūmāt) and true knowledge (ʿilm). He writes:

العلم إدراك الشيء بحقيقته، وذلك يختص بالإنسان[56]

> "Knowledge is to apprehend a thing in its reality, and this is unique to the human being".

Here, al-Iṣfahānī clarifies that true knowledge is an apprehension of essence, not just pattern recognition. AI systems, no matter how sophisticated, do not apprehend reality; they approximate correlations. Their outputs may simulate knowledge, but ontologically they remain data-driven artifacts rather than bearers of ʿilm.

In Islamic mystical thought, knowledge is further divided into levels: ʿilm al-yaqīn (knowledge by inference), ʿayn al-yaqīn (knowledge by direct witnessing), and ḥaqq al-yaqīn

[54]Mohammad Hashim Kamali, Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2003, 245

[55]Qur'an 2:31,

[56]al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qurʾān, ed. Ṣafwān ʿAdnān Dāwūdī Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 2009, 606

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(knowledge by existential realization). The Qur'an says:

كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ[57]

> "No! If you were to know with certainty of knowledge, you would surely see the Hellfire".

Machine learning operates only at the level of probabilistic inference, analogous at best to ẓann (conjecture) in Islamic epistemology. Revelation, by contrast, embodies yaqīn (certainty), a quality inaccessible to machines because it arises from divine disclosure, not empirical approximation.

Al-Ghazālī, in Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn, elaborates on this distinction when discussing the hierarchy of knowledge:

فالعلم ثلاثة: علم اليقين، وعين اليقين، وحق اليقين. الأول للعلماء، والثاني للأولياء، والثالث للأنبياء[58]

> "Knowledge is of three kinds: knowledge of certainty, vision of certainty, and truth of certainty. The first belongs to scholars, the second to saints, and the third to prophets".

By this schema, even human scholarship is limited compared to prophetic revelation. Machine intelligence, which cannot move beyond statistical generalizations, cannot partake in these ontological levels of certainty.Modern Muslim philosophers like Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas reinforce that Islamic epistemology begins with taʿrīf (proper definition of reality as disclosed through revelation), not with probabilistic models:

> "In Islam, knowledge is not information but recognition of the proper place of things in the order of creation, as taught by God"[59].

Thus, while machine learning is powerful in processing and classifying information, it cannot recognize the ontological "place" of things. Revelation discloses meaning; machine learning only reconfigures data.This distinction has profound ethical consequences. If societies conflate revelation with data-driven systems, they risk reducing truth to probability, justice to efficiency, and morality to algorithmic optimization. Revelation anchors knowledge in divine wisdom (ḥikmah), while machine learning can only optimize for human-defined goals, often shaped by market or political interests.

Therefore, the ontology of knowledge in Islamic thought preserves revelation as a transcendent and non-reducible source of certainty, guiding humanity beyond the empirical limits of machine learning. Artificial intelligence, despite its computational sophistication, cannot become a substitute for revelation because it lacks intentionality, spiritual awareness, and divine origin. The epistemic hierarchy in Islam safeguards human dignity against the reduction of meaning to mere data.

Human Dignity (Karamah al-Insān) in the Qur'an and Hadith

The concept of human dignity (karāmah al-insān) lies at the heart of Islamic anthropology. Unlike secular accounts that often ground dignity in rationality or social contract, the Qur'anic perspective roots dignity in God's creative act and His conferment of honor upon humanity. The Qur'an declares:

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَىٰ

[57]Qur'an 102:5–6, trans. Saheeh International Riyadh: Dar Abul-Qasim, 1997

[58]Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn, ed. Badawī Ṭabānah Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2004, 3:17

[59]Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, Islam and Secularism Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1993, 66

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كَثِيرٍ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا[60]

"We have indeed honored the children of Adam, and carried them on land and sea, and provided them with good things, and favored them above many of those We created, with a marked preference".

This verse is foundational: it establishes dignity not as earned but bestowed by God, prior to distinctions of race, wealth, or status. The ontological basis of dignity is divine, making it inalienable and universal.The Hadith corpus reinforces this vision. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺemphasized that all human beings are equal in dignity regardless of their lineage or ethnicity. In his Farewell Sermon, he proclaimed:

يا أيها الناس، ألا إن ربكم واحد، وإن أباكم واحد، ألا لا فضل لعربي على أعجمي ولا لأعجمي على عربي، ولا لأحمر على أسود ولا لأسود على أحمر إلا بالتقوى[61]

"O people! Verily your Lord is One, and your father is one. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over an Arab; neither a red-skinned person over a black-skinned person, nor a black-skinned person over a red-skinned person except in piety".

The Prophet's words dismantle every socio-ethnic hierarchy and affirm that dignity is tied only to taqwā (piety), not material or technological markers.

In the age of artificial intelligence, this doctrine acquires renewed urgency. Technological systems increasingly classify, rank, and evaluate human beings through data-driven metrics. If human value is assessed by productivity scores, predictive analytics, or surveillance indexes, the Qur'anic vision of karāmah risks being eclipsed. The Islamic tradition insists that dignity cannot be reduced to an algorithmic function. It is a sacred endowment that must govern how societies design, deploy, and regulate technologies.

Preservation of Human Autonomy against Technological Determinism

One of the pressing philosophical and ethical concerns of AI is technological determinism: the belief that human lives, choices, and futures are shaped and constrained by technological systems beyond individual control. Islamic thought, however, places strong emphasis on the preservation of human autonomy, rooted in the principles of taklīf (moral responsibility) and ikhtiyār (free choice). Without autonomy, the very structure of accountability in Islam collapses.

The Qur'an declares:

وَهَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ[62]

"And We guided him to the two ways of right and wrong".

This verse asserts that human beings are endowed with the ability to choose between moral alternatives. Autonomy, then, is not merely a social construct but a divine gift central to human existence.

Al-Māturīdī (d. 944), a major theologian, stressed that freedom of choice is essential to human responsibility:

إن العبد لا يصح أن يُكلّف إلا وهو قادر على الفعل والترك[63]

"A servant cannot be subject to obligation unless he is capable of both action and abstention".

This principle places human autonomy as a precondition of moral accountability. If AI systems

[60]Qur'an 17:70, trans. Saheeh International Riyadh: Dar Abul-Qasim, 1997

[61]Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Musnad, ed. Aḥmad Shākir Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1995, 23434

[62]Qur'an 90:10, trans. Saheeh International Riyadh: Dar Abul-Qasim, 1997

[63]Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī, Kitāb al-Tawḥīd, ed. Fathallah Khulayf Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1970307

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begin to override or predetermine human choices for instance, through predictive policing, credit scoring, or automated sentencing they risk undermining the very conditions of accountability in Islamic law.

The Prophet ﷺ further underlined human moral agency when he said:

إذا أمرتكم بأمر فأتوا منه ما استطعتم[64]

> "When I command you to do something, do of it as much as you are able".

This hadith affirms that human responsibility is proportional to capacity, which presupposes freedom of choice. The imposition of technological determinism threatens to erode this prophetic principle by placing individuals in environments where choices are algorithmically constrained.

From an ethical perspective, Islamic jurisprudence develops safeguards through the maqāṣid al-sharīʿah (objectives of the law), among which preservation of intellect (ḥifẓ al-ʿaql) and preservation of religion (ḥifẓ al-dīn) are paramount. These objectives collectively ensure that human autonomy remains protected against forces including technological ones that attempt to reduce human beings to passive entities.

Thus, while technology can be a tool for empowerment, Islamic thought resists any determinism that strips humans of their God-given freedom. To preserve human dignity in the age of AI, Islamic ethics must insist that human autonomy remains inviolable, ensuring that technological systems serve as instruments rather than masters.

Mystical Dimensions of Dignity: Honor of the Soul vs. Reduction to Data

Islamic mysticism (taṣawwuf) approaches dignity not only as an external social recognition but as an inward reality rooted in the honor of the soul (karāmat al-rūḥ). The Qur'an distinguishes the human being by the infusion of the divine spirit:

فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ[65]

> "So when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My Spirit, fall down before him in prostration".

This verse elevates human dignity above material constitution; the human being's worth lies in the divine breath, a metaphysical gift that no machine can replicate. The mystics emphasized that this rūḥānīyah (spiritual essence) is what makes humans vicegerents (khulafāʾ) of God on earth.Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240), the great Andalusian Sufi, stressed the uniqueness of the human soul in his Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam:

فالإنسان الكامل هو المظهر الجامع لجميع الحقائق الإلهية والكونية[66]

> "The Perfect Human is the locus that gathers together all the divine and cosmic realities".

By this account, human dignity is tied to the ability of the soul to reflect divine realities. AI, however sophisticated, reduces the human being to data points behaviors tracked, preferences predicted, and identities commodified. Such reductionism strips the karāmah of its spiritual depth and risks obscuring the very metaphysical honor upon which Islam grounds human uniqueness.

Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273) further illustrates this in the Mathnawī:

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[64]Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Iʿtiṣām, 7288; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-Ḥajj, 1337, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan Riyadh: Darussalam, 1997

[65]Qur'an 15:29, trans. Saheeh International Riyadh: Dar Abul-Qasim, 1997

[66]Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī, Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam, ed. Abū al-ʿAlāʾ ʿAfīfī Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1946,85

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إنك روحٌ لا جسد، فابحث عن نفسك في الملكوت لا في الطين[67]

> "You are spirit, not body. Seek your essence in the kingdom of the unseen, not in the clay".

Rūmī's words remind us that human dignity lies in transcending materialist reduction. AI's datafication of existence, while useful, risks tethering human identity exclusively to the material, ignoring the luminous reality of the soul. Islamic mysticism, therefore, insists that to preserve human dignity, one must recognize the soul's divine origin a reality inaccessible to machine learning or data analytics.

Contemporary Muslim Philosophers and Their Reflections

Modern Muslim philosophers and ethicists have grappled with the question of how human dignity should be preserved in an age increasingly governed by technology. Their reflections integrate classical Islamic principles with contemporary challenges posed by artificial intelligence, surveillance capitalism, and bio-digital convergence.

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas emphasizes that the Islamic conception of knowledge (ʿilm) inherently protects human dignity by situating knowledge within a sacred hierarchy. He writes:

> "The loss of adab (proper recognition of things in their rightful place) is the cause of confusion in knowledge and leads to injustice against the soul itself[68]".

Here, al-Attas warns that when technology reduces humans to informational units, it commits ẓulm (injustice) against the soul, because it ignores the God-given dignity that cannot be digitized.

Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988), a leading 20th-century thinker, highlighted the importance of moral intentionality in human action:

> "What makes an action truly human is its moral orientation, and no mechanical process can supply this intentionality".

His insight suggests that AI, lacking intentionality and moral consciousness, cannot be a subject of dignity in the Islamic sense. Dignity is inseparable from moral selfhood, which machines cannot embody.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr has been one of the most vocal in warning against the dangers of technological reductionism:

> "Modern man, in surrendering to technology, forgets his own inner reality and reduces himself to a mere functionary within the machine[69]".

For Nasr, the dignity of the human lies in spiritual consciousness, not mechanical productivity. AI, when uncritically embraced, risks deepening this crisis by normalizing the treatment of humans as data streams within vast computational systems.

Collectively, these philosophers remind us that karāmah al-insān cannot be preserved by secular technocratic paradigms alone. It requires constant reference back to revelation, spirituality, and the higher aims of the Sharīʿah. Their reflections provide a framework for resisting the erosion of dignity in the digital age, ensuring that human beings remain moral agents, not reducible entities.

Towards an Islamic Framework for AI

[67]Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, Mathnawī, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson London: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial, 1925, 1:120

[68]Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, Islam and Secularism Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1993, 11

[69]Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968, 85

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Ethical Parameters from Shariah for AI Development

The development of Artificial Intelligence cannot be ethically neutral. From an Islamic perspective, all human endeavors must be anchored in the revealed principles of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The Shariah provides not only legal rulings but a comprehensive ethical vision that can shape the design, deployment, and governance of AI. Among its key parameters are justice (ʿadl), mercy (raḥmah), public interest (maṣlaḥa), and the protection of human dignity (karāmah al-insān). These principles must serve as ethical boundaries ensuring that AI does not exploit, dehumanize, or marginalize human beings.

The Qur'an asserts:

> "Indeed, Allah commands justice, good conduct, and giving to relatives and forbids immorality, bad conduct, and oppression." [70]

This verse establishes justice (ʿadl) as the very foundation of ethical life, extending to social, political, and economic domains. In the context of AI, justice demands fairness in algorithmic decision-making, avoidance of biases, and protection of vulnerable communities.This ethical horizon was also articulated by al-Ghazālī, who emphasized that the Shariah aims at the preservation of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property (maqāṣid al-sharīʿa). He wrote:

> "The objective of the Shariah is to promote the welfare of the people, which lies in safeguarding their faith, their life, their intellect, their posterity, and their wealth[71]".

This famous statement defines the quintessence of Shariah as the protection of fundamental human values. In the AI context, it implies that technologies must not jeopardize faith, life, intellectual integrity, family structures, or economic security.

Thus, AI ethics from an Islamic lens goes beyond secular utilitarian calculations, insisting on a moral compass rooted in divine revelation.

Fiqh al-Muʿamalat (Jurisprudence of Transactions) and AI Economy

The economic dimensions of AI, particularly in finance, commerce, and labor, require regulation under fiqh al-muʿāmalāt (jurisprudence of human transactions). This field of Islamic law governs contracts, trade, profit-sharing, labor relations, and financial ethics, offering a framework highly relevant to the digital and automated economy. AI-driven financial platforms, automated trading algorithms, and blockchain-based contracts must comply with Shariah principles, especially the prohibitions of ribā (usury), gharar (excessive uncertainty), and ḥarām (unlawful gains).

The Qur'an categorically condemns exploitative economic practices:

> "Those who consume interest cannot stand [on the Day of Resurrection except as one stands who is being beaten by Satan into madness. But Allah has permitted trade and has forbidden interest." [72]

This verse highlights a sharp distinction between ethical trade and exploitative interest. For AI-driven finance, it calls for algorithmic structures that promote transparency, fairness, and real value creation rather than speculation and exploitation.Classical jurists such as Ibn Taymiyyah emphasized fairness in contracts and condemned manipulation or fraud, which becomes especially pertinent in AI economies where data asymmetry and algorithmic opacity

[70]Qur'an 16:90

[71]Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, al-Mustaṣfā min ʿIlm al-Uṣūl, ed. Ḥamzah al-Malībārī Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2011,1:174

[72]Qur'an 2:275

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may disadvantage ordinary users. Ibn Taymiyyah wrote:

> "The purpose of contracts is justice between people, so that no one consumes the wealth of another without right[73]".

Justice in contracts is a universal principle; applied to AI, it prohibits exploitative pricing algorithms, manipulative advertising, and opaque financial products.Moreover, the automation of labor through AI raises questions about human dignity and livelihood. Shariah requires economic arrangements to maintain the balance between efficiency and justice, ensuring that technological progress does not lead to the unjust exclusion of workers. Contemporary Islamic finance scholars have begun addressing issues of smart contracts, Islamic fintech, and digital zakāt platforms, showing how fiqh al-muʿāmalāt remains a living and adaptable discipline-

Fiqh al-Nawāzil (Jurisprudence of New Issues) and AI Applications

Islamic law has always evolved in response to unprecedented circumstances. The discipline of fiqh al-nawāzil literally, the jurisprudence of "newly arising matters" was developed to address issues for which no direct precedent existed in classical fiqh. Historically, this approach allowed Muslim jurists to respond to novel challenges such as paper money, printing, or organ transplantation. In the contemporary age, Artificial Intelligence represents a new frontier requiring the same juristic creativity and intellectual rigor.

Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya emphasizes the dynamism of Shariah when he writes:

> "The foundation of Shariah is wisdom and the welfare of the servants in this life and the Hereafter. Every matter which departs from justice to tyranny, from mercy to cruelty, from benefit to harm, from wisdom to folly, is not part of the Shariah[74]".

This profound statement captures the adaptive spirit of Islamic law. Any new issue including AI applications must be judged according to whether it promotes justice, mercy, and welfare. Thus, AI-assisted medical diagnostics, for example, may be permissible if it alleviates suffering, while autonomous weapons may be impermissible if they violate principles of justice and mercy.Modern scholars employ fiqh al-nawāzil to issue fatwas on AI-driven activities such as automated financial trading, biometric surveillance, or robotic surgery. The principles of qiyās (analogical reasoning), istiḥsān (juristic preference), and maṣlaḥa (public interest) are frequently invoked. For example, if AI replaces human judges in certain legal determinations, jurists must evaluate whether such systems preserve the goals of justice (ʿadl), transparency, and due process, or whether they undermine the accountability required by Shariah.

The Future of AI Governance in Islamic Societies

The governance of AI in Islamic societies requires both theological depth and practical frameworks. The Qur'an establishes shūrā (consultation) as a principle of decision-making:

> "And those who have responded to their master and established prayer and whose affair is determined by consultation among themselves, and they spend from what We have provided them."[75]

This verse frames collective consultation as a foundational principle for governance. In AI policy, shūrā can manifest as multidisciplinary councils involving jurists, technologists, ethicists, and policymakers to ensure decisions are both Shariah-compliant and socially

[73]The Qur'an, 2:275, trans. Saheeh International Riyadh: Dar Abul-Qasim, 1997

[74]Ibn al-Qayyim, Iʿlām al-Muwaqqiʿīn ʿan Rabb al-ʿĀlamīn, ed. Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Raʾūf Saʿd Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1991, 3:1

[75]Qur'an 42:38

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beneficial.

Contemporary Muslim thinkers emphasize the necessity of integrating maqāṣid al-sharīʿa (objectives of law) into technological governance. For instance, al-Raysūnī argues:

> "The maqāṣid provide the spirit of the Shariah, ensuring that its rulings remain relevant and capable of guiding new realities[76]".

The maqāṣid act as a compass for aligning AI with divine intent, ensuring that technological innovations serve human welfare rather than reducing human beings to mere data points.

Looking forward, Islamic societies face the challenge of developing AI governance structures that are neither technophobic nor uncritical of Western secular ethics. The path forward requires institutions that can integrate Islamic jurisprudence, Sufi spirituality, and global best practices in digital ethics. This includes:

- Regulatory frameworks to ensure fairness in algorithmic decision-making.
- Ethical boards rooted in Shariah to oversee AI deployment in finance, healthcare, and security.
- Educational curricula blending Islamic sciences with data ethics to cultivate future scholars who can navigate both realms.
- Such governance would embody what the Qur'an describes as a community of balance:

  > "And thus We have made you a middle nation, that you may be witnesses over the people and that the Messenger may be a witness over you."[77]

This verse calls for a balanced path that neither rejects technological progress nor succumbs to uncritical adoption, but navigates a middle way grounded in revelation.

Summary

This article investigates how Islamic legal and mystical traditions engage with the challenges and possibilities posed by Artificial Intelligence (AI). It begins by situating AI within contemporary society, highlighting its transformative role in finance, medicine, governance, and everyday life. Against this backdrop, the study explores how Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) and Sufi thought can guide ethical responses to technological change.From the legal perspective, the article examines the foundations of Shariah Qur'an, Sunnah, ijmāʿ, and qiyās alongside the jurisprudence of transactions (fiqh al-muʿāmalāt) and newly arising issues (fiqh al-nawāzil). These traditions provide tools to evaluate AI's impact on economic justice, privacy, accountability, and public welfare. Core principles such as maṣlaḥa (public interest) and maqāṣid al-sharīʿa (objectives of law) serve as ethical parameters for ensuring that AI promotes human welfare without undermining faith, autonomy, or social balance.

From the mystical perspective, the article engages with Islamic spiritual anthropology. Concepts such as insān al-kāmil (the Perfect Human), rūḥ (soul), ʿaql (intellect), nafs (self), and iḥsān (spiritual excellence) are revisited to interrogate the reduction of human beings to data in the age of algorithmic control. Sufi reflections underscore that human dignity (karāmah al-insān) is inseparable from the divine trust (amānah) placed upon humanity, and cannot be replaced or simulated by machines.By bringing together legal reasoning and mystical insight, the article argues for an integrated Islamic framework of AI governance. Such a framework avoids both rejection of technology and blind imitation of secular ethics, instead embodying

[76]Aḥmad al-Raysūnī, Naẓariyyat al-Maqāṣid ʿinda al-Imām al-Shāṭibī Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1995, 27.

[77]Qur'an 2:143

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the Qur'anic call to balance (Q. 2:143). The conclusion affirms that Muslim societies must engage AI responsibly, grounding technological progress in justice, mercy, and human dignity, while safeguarding the spiritual and moral dimensions of human life.

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