

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND HUMAN IDENTITY: ETHICAL CHALLENGES IN ISLAMIC THOUGHT

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### Abstract

*This article critically examines the ethical challenges posed by the rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to human identity, consciousness, and moral agency from the perspective of Islamic thought. As artificial intelligence increasingly emulates human cognitive and decision-making abilities, it raises profound questions concerning the limits of khilāfah (human vicegerency), taklīf (moral responsibility), and ethical accountability.*

*The study situates AI as a transformative technology capable of simulating human cognitive functions while emphasizing the intrinsic limitations of machine intelligence in replicating the human soul (rūḥ), moral intentionality (ni'yah), and ethical discernment. Drawing on classical Islamic sources, including the Qur'ān, Hadith, and the works of scholars such as Al-Ghazālī, Ibn Miskawayh, and Al-Qurṭubī, the article analyzes the foundational principles of Islamic ethics Maṣlahah (public welfare), 'Adl (justice), Amānah (trust), and Ni'yah (intention) and their application to contemporary AI systems. Key ethical concerns addressed include autonomy, accountability, privacy, bias, and the preservation of human dignity within technologically mediated environments. The article further employs the Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah framework to evaluate the alignment of AI technologies with the objectives of Islamic law, ensuring the protection of faith, life, intellect, lineage, and property. By integrating classical jurisprudential reasoning with modern AI ethics, the study proposes a normative framework for the responsible development and deployment of AI in Muslim societies, highlighting the necessity of maintaining human-centered moral agency while leveraging AI's potential to enhance societal welfare. This research contributes to the emerging discourse at the intersection of technology, ethics, and Islamic thought, providing scholars, policymakers, and technologists with a comprehensive framework to navigate the ethical complexities of AI. Also engages both classical and contemporary Islamic ethical paradigms to explore whether AI possesses any capacity for moral reasoning or merely functions as a tool within the scope of human agency. By unpacking these complexities, the paper aims to enrich Islamic philosophical discourse on how technological advancement can coexist with the preservation of human dignity and the realization of divine purpose.*

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence, Human Identity, Islamic Ethics, Moral Responsibility, Privacy, Justice, Autonomy, Machine Simulation, Islamic Philosophy

### Islamic Anthropology and Human Identity

#### The Concept of Man in Islam

The Islamic conception of man is rooted in the Qur'ānic worldview, which regards human beings not merely as biological entities but as moral, spiritual, and intellectual beings created with divine purpose. The Qur'ān describes man as a khalīfah (vicegerent) on earth, endowed with reason ('aql) and responsibility (taklīf).

قُلْ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً<sup>1</sup>

“Indeed, I am going to place a vicegerent upon the earth

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<sup>1</sup> Qur'ān 38:72

In this verse, Allah announces His decision to make human beings His representatives (*khalīfah*) on earth. This highlights a key idea in Islam that humans are not just physical beings but are entrusted with a divine responsibility (*amānah*) and moral duty (*taklīf*). Human dignity comes from this special role given by Allah, which makes people unique and higher in status than other creatures.

The Qur’ān further emphasizes the balanced composition of man a synthesis of clay and spirit, symbolizing the harmony between matter and metaphysics.

﴿إِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ﴾<sup>2</sup>

“So when I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, fall down before him in prostration.”

This verse defines the ontological duality of man the body made of earthly substance and the soul (*rūh*) infused from divine command. According to al-Ghazālī, this divine breath is the source of human intellect and moral awareness, setting man apart from mere biological existence.

“العقل أصل الدين، وبه يعرف الإنسان ربه وشرعه”<sup>3</sup>

“Reason is the foundation of religion; through it man recognizes his Lord and His law.”

This view affirms that ‘aql (reason) works in harmony with revelation, serving as an instrument through which divine guidance is understood. Thus, within Islam, human identity is portrayed as an integrated whole—combining rational, moral, and spiritual elements under the principle of divine servitude (‘*ubūdiyyah*).

In his philosophical anthropology, Al-Fārābī presents the human being as inherently rational, attaining ultimate fulfillment through the development of intellectual and ethical virtues that lead to genuine happiness (*sa‘ādah*).

“The ultimate perfection of man lies in the actualization of his intellect in accordance with the order of the universe.”

Al-Fārābī’s conception complements Islamic theology by emphasizing that the perfection of human identity is achieved through reason and virtue aligned with divine will not merely through material progress.

### Components of Human Identity: Rūh, Nafs, ‘Aql, and Fitrah

In Islam, the human being is seen as a complete and balanced creation made up of several connected parts the Rūh (spirit), Nafs (self or soul), ‘Aql (intellect), and *Fitrah* (natural disposition). Each of these elements plays an important role in forming a person’s character, moral duty, and ability to make choices. The Qur’ān and classical Muslim scholars describe this harmony of spiritual, moral, and rational aspects as what makes humans unique among all creatures.

### Rūh The Divine Spirit

The Rūh represents the immaterial and divine aspect of human existence, breathed by Allah into man, signifying life, consciousness, and the potential for moral awareness-

﴿إِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ﴾<sup>4</sup>

“So when I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, fall down before him in prostration.”

The verse shows that the Rūh (spirit) comes directly from Allah, which makes it sacred and divine in essence. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī explains that this “breathing” by Allah is not something

<sup>2</sup> Qur’ān 15:29

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū‘ al-Fatawā*, vol. 9 (Riyadh: King Fahd Complex, 1995), 310.

<sup>4</sup> Qur’ān 38:72

physical but a spiritual act a gift of life, intellect, and inner strength that raises human beings above all other creations.

“النفخ من الروح ليس نف “خا جسدي”، بل هو إفاضة الحياة والعقل والإدراك من عند الله”<sup>5</sup>

“The infusion of spirit is not a bodily action but a divine effusion of life, intellect, and perception.”

### Nafs: The Self and the Seat of Desire

In Islamic thought, the *nafs* refers to the human self that battles between right and wrong. The Qur’an describes three stages of the *nafs*:

1. al-nafs al-ammārah — the self that urges a person toward evil,
2. al-nafs al-lawwāmah — the self that feels guilt and blames itself for wrongdoing,
3. al-nafs al-muṭma’innah — the peaceful self that finds contentment through faith and obedience to God.

إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَمَّ يَتَّبِعُنَا بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَن رَّحِمَ رَبِّي<sup>6</sup>

“Indeed, the soul is ever inclined to evil, except those upon whom my Lord has mercy.”

This verse reveals the moral dimension of the self. According to Imām al-Ghazālī, the Nafs is the battlefield of virtue and vice. It can degrade to the level of animalistic desire or rise toward angelic purity through purification (*tazkiyah*).

النفس مرآة تعكس صفاء القلب، فإن زكيتها صفت وإن أهملتها كدرت<sup>7</sup>

“The soul is a mirror reflecting the purity of the heart; when purified, it shines, and when neglected, it darkens.”

### Aql: The Intellect and the Light of Discernment

In Islamic epistemology, ‘Aql (intellect) is considered the faculty through which man comprehends divine revelation and moral order. It bridges the spiritual and material aspects of human life.

إِنَّ فِي سَمَائِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ<sup>8</sup>

“Indeed, in that are signs for those who use reason.”

Here, the Qur’ān elevates the use of intellect as a form of worship and recognition of divine truth. Ibn Rushd (Averroes) argued that revelation and reason are complementary sources of truth, asserting that human reason, when guided by divine law, perfects the soul.

العقل والشريعة أختان بالرضاعة، كلتاهما ترشدان الإنسان إلى الحق<sup>9</sup>

“Reason and the Shariah are like sisters nourished from the same source; both guide man toward truth.”

### Fitrah: The Primordial Human Nature

The Fitrah represents the innate disposition towards truth, goodness, and recognition of the Creator. It is the natural state in which every human is born.

فَأَطَرْتُ لَأَلِّئُ النَّبِيَّ فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَ أَيَّهَا لَوْ تَبَّ أَيْدِي لَخِ لَخِ أَلَّ<sup>10</sup>

“The natural disposition (*fitrah*) upon which Allah created mankind; there is no change in Allah’s creation.”

<sup>5</sup> Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr (Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb)*, vol. 26 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 241.

<sup>6</sup> Qur’ān 12:53

<sup>7</sup> AbūḤāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma’rifah, 1983), 62.

<sup>8</sup> Qur’ān 30:24

<sup>9</sup> Ibn Rushd (Averroes), *Faṣl al-Maqālwa-Taqaṛīmā Bayna al-Ḥikmahwa al-Sharī’ahmin al-Ittiṣāl*, ed. George F. Hourani (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959), 45.

<sup>10</sup> Qur’ān 30:30

According to Ibn Kathīr, Fitrah means the innate recognition of Tawhīd (Divine Unity). It is neither learned nor acquired it is embedded in the human essence. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Every child is born upon the fitrah, then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian.”<sup>11</sup>

This hadith highlights that deviation from divine nature occurs due to external influences, not internal corruption. The Islamic ethical system, therefore, seeks to preserve and restore fitrah through revelation and moral cultivation.

The interplay of Rūḥ, Nafs, ‘Aql, and Fitrah forms the holistic structure of human identity in Islam. The Rūḥ connects man to the divine, the Nafs expresses moral struggle, the ‘Aql guides through reason, and the Fitrah anchors the self in innate truth. Together, they create the foundation for ethical consciousness a key aspect that differentiates humanity from artificial intelligence.

### Human Dignity and Moral Agency

#### Comparative Perspectives on Human Nature

Islamic thought locates human dignity (karāmah) and moral agency (taklīf) at the very heart of what it means to be human. The Qur’ān establishes that man has been honored above all creation, not because of his physical form or power, but due to his consciousness, intellect, and ability to make ethical choices in accordance with divine guidance.

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَّ النَّاهُ أُمَّ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبِ أَحْرَ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِمَّا عَمَلُوا وَالطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَا أُمَّ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ  
مِمَّا أَنْ خَلَقْنَا الْبَشَرِ ۗ

“Indeed, We have honored the children of Adam and carried them on land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created with definite preference.”

This verse serves as the cornerstone of Islamic humanism. The karāmah (honor) bestowed by Allah signifies intrinsic human worth that is not contingent upon race, gender, or social class. According to Al-Qurṭubī, this divine honor is a spiritual dignity rooted in knowledge, reason, and responsibility.

التكريم بالعقل والعلم لـ بالخلق والصورة، لئ العقل مناط التكليف والتمييز<sup>13</sup>

“The dignity of man lies in intellect and knowledge, not in physical form, for intellect is the basis of responsibility and distinction.”

Human dignity, according to Miller, is grounded in the distinct moral capacity of individuals to determine their own purposes while acknowledging others as participants in a shared moral community. Dignity as an inherently relational concept; one that is expressed through the recognition and reinforcement of others’ moral agency. Moreover, human interdependence and vulnerability are not threats to dignity but rather its essential foundation, reflecting the deeply connected nature of human moral life.<sup>14</sup>

#### Moral Agency and Accountability

Human beings are morally accountable (mukallafūn) because they possess freedom of will balanced with divine guidance. The Qur’ān repeatedly emphasizes personal responsibility for choices and deeds.

<sup>11</sup> Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm, vol. 3 (Riyadh: DārTayyibah, 1999), 432.

<sup>12</sup> Qur’ān 17:70

<sup>13</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, Al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān, vol.10(Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1964)296.

<sup>14</sup> Sarah Clark Miller, The Ethics of Need: Agency, Dignity, and Obligation.

فَمَنْ يَرِ أَعْمَ أَلِ مِثْقَلِ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرٍ أَوْ رَا يَرُهُ، وَمَنْ يَرِ أَعْمَ أَلِ مِثْقَلِ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ<sup>15</sup>

“Whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it.”

This divine principle underlines that every human action, no matter how small, carries moral consequence. According to Ibn ‘Āshūr, moral agency (ikhtiyār) is the divine trust (amānah) that distinguishes humans from all other beings.

الإنسان مكلف لأن فيه عقلٌ يميز بين الخير والشر، وهذه هي المانة التي أشفقت منها السماوات والرض<sup>16</sup>

“Man is morally accountable because within him lies intellect that discerns good from evil; this is the trust that even the heavens and earth feared to bear.”

### The Dual Nature of Human Freedom

While Islam affirms human freedom, it also defines its limits through divine law (sharī‘ah). Al-Ghazālī explains that true freedom (ḥurriyyah) is not mere autonomy but liberation from the domination of desire (hawā) and submission to God’s will.

الحرية الحقة هي التحرر من رق النفس والهوى، لَمَنْ أَمَرَ اللَّهُ وَنَهَى<sup>17</sup>

“True freedom lies in liberation from the slavery of the self and passion, not from the command and prohibition of God.”

This concept makes Islamic moral agency deeply ethical and teleological. It contrasts with secular notions of freedom that define autonomy in isolation from moral purpose. In Islam, human will operates within the framework of divine justice and mercy.

### Comparative Perspectives on Human Nature

When comparing the Islamic understanding of human nature with Western philosophical and secular anthropologies, we observe profound differences in ontology and teleology.

Modern Western thought, especially post-Enlightenment, often regards man as an autonomous, rational agent whose identity is self-constructed rather than divinely ordained. Thinkers such as René Descartes and Immanuel Kant emphasized self-consciousness and moral autonomy as the core of humanity.

Cogito, ergo sum” “I think, therefore I am.”<sup>18</sup>

This Cartesian notion situates human identity within rational self-awareness, detaching it from divine origin. In contrast, Islamic thought roots self-awareness in ‘ubūdiyyah (servitude to God), where being derives its meaning from submission to the Creator, not independence from Him.

### Islamic View: The Theomorphic Self

Islamic theology conceives man as a theomorphic being one who reflects divine attributes within creation through justice, mercy, and wisdom. As Ibn al-‘Arabī wrote:

الإنسان الكامل مرآة السماء الإلهية، يظهر فيها الحق على حسب استعدادها<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Qur’ān 99:7–8

<sup>16</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Anṣārī. Al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān. Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1964, vol. 14, p. 253.

<sup>17</sup> AbūḤamid al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 1983), 312.

<sup>18</sup> René Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, trans. John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 19.

<sup>19</sup> Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī, Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam, ed. Abū al-‘Alā‘ Afīfī (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1946), 57.

“The Perfect Man is the mirror of the Divine Names in which the Truth (God) manifests according to his capacity.”

This mystical perspective reinforces that human dignity lies in embodying divine qualities rather than asserting independence from the Divine. The human being, in this sense, is both servant (‘abd) and representative (khalifah) a synthesis that secular anthropology cannot capture.

### **The Development of Artificial Intelligence and Its Impact on Human Identity**

#### **Classification of Artificial Intelligence**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the capability of machines to perform cognitive tasks that traditionally require human intelligence such as learning, reasoning, perception, and decision-making. According to Stuart Russell and Peter Norvig:

“Artificial Intelligence is the study of agents that receive percepts from the environment and perform actions.”<sup>20</sup>

AI is generally classified into two broad categories: Narrow AI (or Weak AI), which specializes in specific tasks such as language translation or facial recognition, and General AI (or Strong AI), which aims to replicate human-level reasoning and consciousness. John Searle, in his famous essay *Minds, Brains and Programs*, distinguished between these two types:

“Strong AI claims that the appropriately programmed computer really is a mind, in the sense that it can understand and have cognitive states.”<sup>21</sup>

Further classification includes Reactive Machines (e.g., IBM’s Deep Blue), Limited Memory Systems (e.g., self-driving cars), Theory of Mind Systems, and Self-Aware AI the last being purely theoretical. Each level represents a deeper emulation of human cognitive complexity, thereby posing philosophical and ethical questions regarding human uniqueness and consciousness.

As Luciano Floridi notes:

“Artificial agents are increasingly designed to act autonomously and to make decisions that have moral and social implications, thus challenging traditional human-centered frameworks of responsibility.”<sup>22</sup>

#### **Historical Evolution of AI**

The origins of Artificial Intelligence trace back to classical philosophy, particularly to the quest to understand logic, reason, and the nature of mind. Aristotle’s work on syllogistic reasoning (*Organon*) can be considered an early framework for logical computation. In his *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle stated:

“Instruction given or received by way of argument proceeds from pre-existent knowledge.”<sup>23</sup>

The modern history of AI began in the 20th century with Alan Turing, who proposed the concept of a “thinking machine.” In his seminal paper *Computing Machinery and Intelligence* (1950), Turing posed the fundamental question:

<sup>20</sup> Russell and Norvig, *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach*, 4th ed. 2021, p. 4

<sup>21</sup> John Searle, “Minds, Brains, and Programs,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 3, no.3 (1980): 417.

<sup>22</sup> Luciano Floridi, *The Ethics of Information* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 198.

<sup>23</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, trans. Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 71.

“Can machines think?”<sup>24</sup>

The 1956 Dartmouth Conference, organized by John McCarthy, Marvin Minsky, Claude Shannon, and others, formally marked the birth of AI as an academic discipline. McCarthy defined AI as:

“The science and engineering of making intelligent machines.”<sup>25</sup>

Throughout the 1960s–1980s, AI research experienced both optimism and setbacks. The emergence of symbolic AI (expert systems) and later machine learning led to renewed growth. The introduction of deep learning algorithms in the early 21st century such as Geoffrey Hinton’s backpropagation models revolutionized AI capabilities in perception and language.

“Deep learning has transformed our ability to automatically extract complex structure from high-dimensional data.”<sup>26</sup>

Today, AI stands at the center of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, impacting human communication, employment, healthcare, and ethics. Yet, as scholars such as Nick Bostrom caution, the rapid advancement of AI also raises existential concerns:

“Once human-level machine intelligence is developed, it may lead to an intelligence explosion that could surpass human control.”<sup>27</sup>

### **AI and the Concept of the Self in Modern Thought**

The emergence of AI challenges traditional notions of human selfhood and identity. Modern cognitive science and philosophy of mind explore whether AI systems can replicate or simulate human consciousness. Scholars like Daniel Dennett and John Searle have debated whether computational systems could possess genuine self-awareness.

“A system may act as if it understands and even claims to have thoughts, but this does not entail the possession of consciousness.”<sup>28</sup>

Searle’s distinction between simulation and actual understanding emphasizes the uniqueness of human consciousness. While AI can replicate cognitive functions, the intrinsic subjective experience (qualia) remains outside the machine’s domain. This insight directly affects debates in Islamic thought regarding moral accountability, free will, and spiritual identity, as AI cannot be assigned ethical responsibility in the way humans can.

“Consciousness is not simply computation; it is a particular organization of experiential states.”<sup>29</sup>

In Islamic philosophy, the concept of *nafs* (self) and *rūh* (spirit) reinforces the notion that moral agency and self-awareness are inherently tied to divine origin and spiritual consciousness. AI may mimic decision-making but cannot possess spiritual or moral essence.

“Man is honored through intellect and spirit; his moral responsibility is inseparable from divine trust (*amānah*).”<sup>30</sup>

Thus, the integration of AI into society raises questions about the distinction between functional intelligence and conscious, ethically accountable selfhood.

<sup>24</sup> Alan M. Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence,” *Mind* 59, no. 236 (1950): 460.

<sup>25</sup> John McCarthy, “What Is Artificial Intelligence?” (Stanford University, 2007), 1.

<sup>26</sup> Yann LeCun, Yoshua Bengio, and Geoffrey Hinton, “Deep Learning,” *Nature* 521 (2015): 444.

<sup>27</sup> Yann LeCun, Yoshua Bengio, and Geoffrey Hinton, “Deep Learning,” *Nature* 521 (2015): 446.

<sup>28</sup> Searle, “Minds, Brains, and Programs,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 1980, p. 417

<sup>29</sup> Daniel C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1991), 18.

<sup>30</sup> Al-Qurtubī, *Al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol. 10 (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1964) 296.

### **Influence of AI on Muslim Societies**

Artificial Intelligence increasingly affects various aspects of Muslim-majority societies, including education, healthcare, governance, and religious practice. The ethical and social implications of AI must be considered within the framework of Islamic ethics, which prioritizes human dignity, justice, and moral responsibility.

“AI systems can optimize social services, but without ethical guidance, they may inadvertently reinforce inequality or bias.”<sup>31</sup>

Floridi’s observation highlights that AI is not value-neutral. Muslim societies must incorporate Sharia-compliant ethical frameworks to ensure AI technologies respect human rights, privacy, and social equity. In education, AI-enabled adaptive learning platforms have transformed teaching and assessment. However, scholars emphasize that these systems should enhance rather than replace human judgment.

“Intelligent tutoring systems can provide personalized instruction, yet the teacher’s role in moral and spiritual guidance remains indispensable.”<sup>32</sup>

Religious practice is also influenced by AI, such as applications for prayer times, Qur’anic recitation, and halal verification. While these tools enhance accessibility, scholars argue they cannot replace human engagement with spiritual reflection and ethical decision-making.

“Digital tools can facilitate religious practice but do not substitute the moral reasoning and inner awareness that define human faith.”<sup>33</sup>

Additionally, AI impacts governance and economics in Muslim societies. Predictive algorithms influence public policy and finance, yet decisions rooted solely in computational analysis may conflict with Islamic principles of justice (adl) and accountability.

“Automation in governance presents efficiency but risks undermining ethical accountability if human oversight is neglected.”<sup>34</sup>

The influence of AI in Muslim societies presents both opportunities and ethical challenges. While AI enhances efficiency, learning, and accessibility, it cannot replicate human moral agency, spiritual consciousness, or the ethical responsibility emphasized in Islamic anthropology. A careful integration guided by Islamic ethical frameworks ensures that technology serves human well-being rather than undermining human dignity.

### **Islamic Ethical Frameworks and Artificial Intelligence**

#### **Foundations of Islamic Ethics: Maṣlaḥah, ‘Adl, Amānah, Ni‘yah**

Islamic ethics revolves around several core principles, particularly Maṣlaḥah (public interest/welfare), ‘Adl (justice), Amānah (trust/responsibility), and Ni‘yah (intention). These principles collectively form a moral compass that is both individual and societal.

#### **Maṣlaḥah – Public Interest**

“Whatever benefits people and brings no harm is considered maṣlaḥah and is encouraged by Shariah.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Floridi, *The Ethics of Information*, 2013, p. 210

<sup>32</sup> Luciano Floridi, *The Ethics of Information* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 210.

<sup>33</sup> Ziauddin Sardar, *Reading the Qur’an in the Age of Technology* (London: Hurst & Company, 2017), 142.

<sup>34</sup> Nick Bostrom, *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 132.

<sup>35</sup> Al-Shātibī, *Al-Muwafaqāt fi Usul al-Shariah*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1988), 57.

Al-Shātībī emphasizes that moral and legal reasoning should promote the welfare of society. In the context of AI, this principle requires technologies to enhance social well-being while avoiding harm. e.g., AI in healthcare must prioritize patient safety over profit or efficiency.

### **Amānah – Trust and Responsibility**

“Verily, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due”<sup>36</sup>

Amānah implies ethical stewardship. AI developers and operators bear a moral responsibility to ensure their creations do not violate societal or individual trust, including data privacy and equitable access.

### **Ni‘yah – Intention**

“Actions are judged by intentions”<sup>37</sup>

Ni‘yah stresses that ethical evaluation considers not only outcomes but also the moral intentions behind actions. In AI, even well-functioning systems require morally guided design and purpose to prevent misuse.

### **Al-Ghazālī: Ethics as Spiritual and Rational Integration**

Al-Ghazālī views ethics as a balance between reason and spirituality, guiding humans toward moral perfection (iḥsān):

“The knowledge of good and evil is incomplete without understanding the human soul and its inclinations, for action depends on both reason and inner disposition.”<sup>38</sup>

Ghazālī’s approach highlights that ethical reasoning requires understanding both cognitive and spiritual dimensions. For AI, this implies that moral decision-making frameworks should not be purely algorithmic but informed by ethical philosophy and social context.

### **Ibn Miskawayh: Virtue Ethics**

Ibn Miskawayh emphasizes the cultivation of virtues as the core of ethical behavior:

“The aim of human life is to develop virtues that perfect the soul, balancing desire and reason.”<sup>39</sup>

This virtue ethics framework suggests that AI systems could be evaluated by their capacity to promote human flourishing (falāḥ). AI should enhance intellectual, moral, and social development rather than undermine it.

### **Integration of Classical Theories with AI**

Both Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Miskawayh emphasize the interconnection between reason, morality, and social welfare. Applying their frameworks to AI entails:

1. Designing AI with a purpose aligned to public welfare (Maṣlaḥah).
2. Ensuring AI decisions are fair and just (‘Adl).
3. Maintaining trust and accountability (Amānah) in data handling and outputs.
4. Incorporating moral intention (Ni‘yah) into the design, not just functionality.
5. Promoting virtue and human flourishing, in line with classical ethics.

This sets the stage for assessing AI ethically from an Islamic perspective, bridging technological innovation with timeless moral principles.

<sup>36</sup> Qur’ān 4:58

<sup>37</sup> Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Book of Revelation, Hadith 1 (Cairo: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2002).

<sup>38</sup> AbūḤāmid al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 1983), 175.

<sup>39</sup> Ibn Miskawayh, Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq, vol. 1, 1965, p. 24

## Ethical Parameters for AI in Islamic Thought

Islamic thought offers specific ethical parameters for evaluating technological innovations, including Artificial Intelligence. These parameters are grounded in the Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah (objectives of Islamic law), which aim to preserve faith (dīn), life (nafs), intellect (ʿaql), lineage (nasl), and property (māl). AI development must therefore be evaluated not only for technical efficacy but also for alignment with these objectives.

### Preservation of Intellect (ʿAql)

“And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge.”<sup>40</sup>

The Qurʾān stresses caution and responsible reasoning. In AI, this principle translates to ensuring that autonomous systems do not make decisions beyond their designed ethical or cognitive capacity. Developers must implement safeguards to prevent errors that could harm human intellectual and social welfare.

### Preservation of Life (Nafs)

“Whoever saves a life, it is as if he had saved all of humanity.”<sup>41</sup>

AI applications in medicine, autonomous vehicles, and security must prioritize the protection of human life. Algorithms must minimize risks and support human well-being. Ethical compliance with the sanctity of life is a fundamental requirement in Islamic frameworks.

### Preservation of Property (Māl)

“Do not consume one another’s wealth unjustly.”<sup>42</sup>

Financial and economic AI systems must avoid exploitation, fraud, or inequitable distribution. Shariah-compliant AI emphasizes transparency, accountability, and protection against harm in wealth-related algorithms.

### Preservation of Faith (Dīn) and Lineage (Nasl)

AI must not interfere with religious obligations, spiritual practices, or familial integrity. For instance, digital platforms facilitating religious observance should support accessibility while upholding moral accountability and privacy.

“No compulsion in religion.”<sup>43</sup>

## Application of Fiqh Principles to Technological Ethics

Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) provides practical tools to operationalize ethical evaluation in AI systems. Key principles include:

### 1. Maslahah (Public Interest)

“Actions are judged by their ability to serve the welfare of people and prevent harm.”<sup>44</sup>

Maslahah provides a basis for assessing whether AI applications contribute positively to society. For example, AI in healthcare should maximize public benefit, reduce inequality, and respect patient autonomy.

### 2. La Dararwa La Dirar (No Harm)

“There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm.”<sup>45</sup>

This principle directly applies to AI risk management. Autonomous systems must avoid causing physical, financial, or psychological harm. It also guides ethical programming of AI decision-making algorithms to prevent misuse.

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<sup>40</sup> Qurʾān 17:36

<sup>41</sup> Qurʾān 5:32

<sup>42</sup> Qurʾān 2:188

<sup>43</sup> Qurʾān 2:256

<sup>44</sup> Al-Shātībī, *Al-Muwafaqāt*, vol. 1, 1988, p. 57

<sup>45</sup> Ibn Qayyim, *Ahkām al-Duwal*, 1990, p. 112

### 3. Ijtihād (Scholarly Reasoning)

“Scholars exercise independent reasoning in cases not explicitly addressed in revelation.”<sup>46</sup>

Fiqh-based ijtihād allows Islamic scholars to assess emerging AI technologies that lack direct precedent in classical texts. This ensures ethical deliberation keeps pace with rapid technological advancement.

### 4. Qiyās (Analogical Reasoning)

“Analogical deduction applies when no direct textual guidance exists.”<sup>47</sup>

AI ethics can be derived by analogy to established rulings. For instance, algorithms affecting human rights can be evaluated analogously to principles of fairness and justice in financial or social transactions.

### 5. Balancing Benefits and Harms

“When choosing between conflicting outcomes, prioritize the lesser harm and greater benefit.”<sup>48</sup>

AI deployment often involves trade-offs, such as privacy versus security or automation versus employment. Islamic jurisprudence provides tools to evaluate these trade-offs ethically.

Applying fiqh principles to AI ensures that technological innovation aligns with Islamic moral, social, and spiritual objectives. Combining maqāṣid-based parameters and classical jurisprudence creates a comprehensive framework to guide AI developers, policymakers, and scholars in evaluating AI ethically within Muslim societies. This chapter establishes a normative foundation that bridges modern AI challenges with timeless Islamic ethical principles.

## Ethical Challenges to Human Identity in the Age of AI

### Autonomy and Human Will

Human autonomy is a central concern in Islamic anthropology, where free will (ikhtiyār) is essential for moral agency. AI systems, capable of predictive decision-making, raise questions about whether human autonomy is compromised when machines influence or replace human decision-making.

“Autonomy in human beings is not merely the capacity to choose but the capacity to choose rightly, guided by intellect and moral reasoning.”<sup>49</sup>

AI algorithms, especially in governance, healthcare, and social media, can subtly influence human choice. While AI may assist decision-making, overreliance threatens the exercise of rational will (‘aql), potentially undermining ethical and spiritual development. Islamic ethics emphasizes that true freedom involves alignment with divine guidance and moral responsibility, which AI cannot replicate.

“Machines may act, but only humans bear responsibility for the moral quality of their actions.”<sup>50</sup>

Islamic thought asserts that while AI can influence choice through nudges, algorithms, or automation, it cannot replace the human faculty of moral discernment, which is essential for identity formation. The challenge is to integrate AI without diminishing human agency.

### Accountability and Moral Responsibility

<sup>46</sup> Al-Shātibī, *Al-Muwafaqāt*, vol. 2, 1988, p. 142

<sup>47</sup> Al-Shātibī, *Al-Muwafaqāt*, vol. 2, 1988, p. 145

<sup>48</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 1990, vol. 12, p. 310

<sup>49</sup> Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, vol. 4, 1983, p. 312

<sup>50</sup> Searle, “Minds, Brains, and Programs,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 1980, p. 417

Accountability (taklīf) is inseparable from free will. Humans are morally responsible for their actions because they possess conscious understanding and ethical judgment

“Man is morally accountable because within him lies intellect that discerns good from evil; this is the trust that even the heavens and earth feared to bear.”<sup>51</sup>

AI systems lack moral consciousness; thus, responsibility remains with the human designers, operators, and users. This distinction is crucial to preserving human ethical agency. Misattributing accountability to AI risks eroding moral responsibility and undermines social and legal structures.

“Once AI begins to replace human judgment, ethical negligence is not excusable simply because a machine acted.”<sup>52</sup>

### Implications for Human Identity

1. Erosion of Autonomy: AI’s predictive and persuasive power may subtly diminish the exercise of human rational and moral choice.
2. Displacement of Responsibility: Decision-making automation may lead individuals or institutions to evade ethical accountability.
3. Ethical Dependency: Societies may develop overreliance on AI, weakening human moral discernment, a key component of Islamic identity.

Islamic ethics addresses these challenges by reaffirming that human beings remain morally and spiritually central, regardless of AI capabilities. Ethical AI design must ensure that technology supports human agency rather than replacing it.

### Privacy and Surveillance

AI technologies, particularly those involved in data collection, facial recognition, and predictive analytics, present serious challenges to privacy, a critical component of human dignity in Islamic thought. Privacy (sitr and kifāyah) is both an ethical and legal imperative.

“Do not spy on one another, nor backbite; privacy is a sacred trust.”<sup>53</sup>

The Qur’ānic injunction emphasizes the inviolability of personal space and the moral obligation to respect individual confidentiality. AI systems capable of constant monitoring may violate this principle if deployed without oversight. This is particularly relevant in Muslim societies where surveillance can infringe on social trust and individual rights.

“Data surveillance, if unregulated, can erode human freedom and dignity, making privacy a central ethical concern.”<sup>54</sup>

Islamic ethics demands that AI deployment be transparent, consent-based, and limited to essential purposes, preserving the moral agency and dignity of the human subject.

### Bias, Discrimination, and Justice

AI systems can inherit biases from training data or algorithms, raising ethical concerns regarding fairness and discrimination. Justice (‘Adl) is a central principle in Islamic law and is non-negotiable in technology ethics.

“Indeed, Allah commands justice and the doing of good”<sup>55</sup>

Islamic principles mandate that every system affecting human life must uphold fairness and equity. Algorithmic bias whether in hiring, policing, or financial services can result in systemic injustice, undermining both societal trust and the moral legitimacy of AI applications.

<sup>51</sup> Ibn ‘Ashūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, vol. 30, 1984, p. 215

<sup>52</sup> Nick Bostrom, *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 132.

<sup>53</sup> Qur’ān 49:12

<sup>54</sup> Luciano Floridi, *The Ethics of Information* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 215.

<sup>55</sup> Qur’ān 16:90

“Machine learning algorithms can perpetuate societal inequalities if unchecked; justice requires active intervention.”<sup>56</sup>

To comply with Islamic ethics, AI design must include bias detection, algorithmic transparency, and continuous auditing to ensure equitable outcomes, reflecting the principle of fairness for all.

### **The Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah Approach to AI Ethics**

The Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah (objectives of Islamic law) provide a holistic framework for evaluating AI’s ethical impact. This approach focuses on preserving the essential benefits of human life while preventing harm.

“The objectives of the Shariah are the preservation of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property.”<sup>57</sup>

Maqāṣid provides a value-oriented framework for AI ethics:

1. **Preservation of Faith (Dīn):** AI should respect religious obligations and not facilitate practices contrary to Shariah.
2. **Preservation of Life (Nafs):** AI must prioritize safety in healthcare, transportation, and automation.
3. **Preservation of Intellect (‘Aql):** Educational AI must enhance learning and critical thinking.
4. **Preservation of Lineage (Nasl):** AI applications should protect family structures and social cohesion.
5. **Preservation of Property (Māl):** AI in finance and economics must prevent exploitation and ensure equity.

“Applying the Maqāṣid to technology ensures that innovation serves humanity without compromising ethical and spiritual values.”<sup>58</sup>

The Maqāṣid framework provides a comprehensive, principle-based lens to evaluate AI ethically. By prioritizing human dignity, justice, and well-being, this approach ensures that AI complements rather than compromises human identity and moral agency, aligning technological development with Islamic ethical standards.

### **Human Identity, Soul, and Machine Consciousness**

The rise of AI challenges traditional conceptions of human identity, particularly regarding the soul (rūḥ), consciousness, and moral agency. Islamic thought provides a framework for distinguishing between human and artificial awareness, emphasizing ethical, spiritual, and existential dimensions.

#### **The Nature of the Soul in Islamic Thought**

The rūḥ (soul) is central to human identity in Islamic anthropology. Unlike physical or cognitive faculties, the soul represents the spiritual essence of humanity, connecting individuals to God and underpinning moral accountability.

“And they ask you, O Muhammad, about the soul. Say, ‘The soul is of the affair of my Lord. And mankind <sup>59</sup>has not been given of knowledge except a little.’”

The Qur’ānic verse emphasizes the unique, divine origin of the soul. Unlike AI systems, which operate via computation and algorithms, the human soul is a metaphysical reality,

<sup>56</sup> Cathy O’Neil, *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy* (New York: Crown, 2016), 45.

<sup>57</sup> Al-Shātībī, *Al-Muwafaqāt*, vol. 1, 1988, p. 20

<sup>58</sup> Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Shari’ah Law: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008), 112.

<sup>59</sup> Qur’ān 17:85

enabling consciousness, intention (ni‘yah), and spiritual awareness. Ethical and moral agency in Islam is therefore inherently linked to the presence of the soul.

“Man possesses intellect, desire, and spirit; it is the spirit that grants moral discernment beyond physical or cognitive capacities.”<sup>60</sup>

The Islamic perspective asserts that the soul is non-replicable; AI can simulate intelligent behavior but cannot instantiate the metaphysical essence of rūḥ. This distinction forms the basis for moral accountability, spiritual responsibility, and ethical decision-making.

### **Human Consciousness versus Artificial Awareness**

Human consciousness involves self-awareness, intentionality, moral reasoning, and emotional depth. In contrast, AI exhibits artificial awareness, characterized by computational processing, pattern recognition, and decision-making based on programmed algorithms. John Searle highlights this distinction:

“Simulation of understanding is not equivalent to actual understanding; computers can manipulate symbols but do not possess consciousness.”<sup>61</sup>

AI may mimic cognitive tasks such as language processing or problem-solving, yet it lacks experiential subjectivity (qualia). From an Islamic perspective, consciousness (‘aql combined with rūḥ) is tied to divine knowledge, ethical choice, and the capacity for worship (‘ibādah). Machines, regardless of complexity, cannot fulfill these dimensions of human identity.

“Artificial intelligence can act as if it reasons, but it cannot exercise ethical judgment grounded in spiritual awareness.”<sup>62</sup>

The distinction between human consciousness and artificial awareness underscores that AI, while functionally intelligent, does not possess moral or spiritual identity. Ethical frameworks in Muslim societies must reflect this ontological difference, ensuring that AI serves as a tool to augment human potential without replacing the unique essence of the soul or undermining moral accountability.

### **The Vicegerency of Man and Machine Simulation**

In Islamic thought, human beings are entrusted with vicegerency (khalīfah) on Earth, a role that encompasses moral stewardship, ethical decision-making, and the maintenance of justice (‘adl). AI systems, regardless of intelligence, cannot assume this role because vicegerency is inherently tied to conscious moral agency and divine accountability.

“Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority (khalīfah).”<sup>63</sup>

This Qur’ānic verse underscores the divine mandate that human beings bear responsibility for maintaining order, justice, and ethical conduct. While AI can simulate tasks associated with governance, decision-making, and prediction, it lacks spiritual consciousness and ethical intentionality required for vicegerency. Machines operate on algorithms and data patterns, devoid of ni‘yah (intention) and moral accountability.

“Simulations may replicate the appearance of agency, but true responsibility requires conscious deliberation and ethical discernment.”<sup>64</sup>

<sup>60</sup> AbūHāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 1983), 57.

<sup>61</sup> Searle, “Minds, Brains, and Programs,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 1980, p. 417

<sup>62</sup> Luciano Floridi, *The Ethics of Information* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 198.

<sup>63</sup> Qur’ān 2:30

<sup>64</sup> John Searle, “Minds, Brains, and Programs,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 3, no. 3 (1980): 417.

Islamic ethical reflection suggests that machine simulation cannot substitute for human stewardship, even in highly automated societies. The role of AI is supportive, enhancing human capacity but not replacing the divinely mandated moral and ecological responsibility of mankind.

### **Theological Boundaries of Human and Machine Existence**

Islamic theology establishes clear boundaries between human existence and artificial entities. Humans are endowed with *rūḥ*, intellect (*‘aql*), and moral accountability, whereas machines, including advanced AI, are ontologically distinct and cannot participate in spiritual or ethical consciousness.

“He (God) breathed into him of His spirit; thus man differs from all creation in the possession of the soul.”<sup>65</sup>

The Qurtubī commentary emphasizes that the divine infusion of the soul (*rūḥ*) is unique to humans, endowing them with moral and spiritual capacities. AI may simulate human reasoning but cannot possess divine consciousness or ethical intentionality. Attempts to attribute spiritual or moral agency to machines would contravene Islamic theological principles.

“Machines may act as if conscious, but they lack subjective experience, moral understanding, and accountability before God.”<sup>66</sup>

The theological distinction informs both ethical and societal approaches to AI. Human identity and moral responsibility are non-transferable reinforcing that AI should function as an instrument of human benefit without infringing on the sacred and divinely ordained aspects of human existence.

### **Summary**

This article explores the complex ethical challenges posed by Artificial Intelligence (AI) to human identity from the perspective of Islamic thought. It emphasizes that while AI can simulate human cognitive functions, it cannot replicate the soul (*rūḥ*), moral intention (*ni‘yah*), or consciousness that define human moral and spiritual identity. Drawing upon classical Islamic sources the Qur’ān, Hadith, and the works of scholars like Al-Ghazālī, Ibn Miskawayh, and Al-Qurtubī the article analyzes foundational principles of Islamic ethics such as *Maṣlaḥah* (public welfare), *‘Adl* (justice), *Amānah* (trust), and *Ni‘yah* (intention).

The study examines key ethical challenges related to AI, including autonomy, accountability, privacy, bias, and justice, and demonstrates how Islamic jurisprudential frameworks (*fiqh* and *Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah*) can guide the responsible deployment of AI technologies. It highlights the ontological distinction between human consciousness and machine intelligence, emphasizing that humans possess a divinely endowed soul that carries ethical and spiritual responsibility, which AI cannot share.

Finally, the article proposes a normative framework for AI in Muslim societies, advocating human-centered design that enhances societal welfare without compromising moral agency, ethical responsibility, or the sacred aspects of human identity. This study contributes to the emerging discourse at the intersection of technology, ethics, and Islamic thought, providing guidance for scholars, policymakers, and technologists.

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<sup>65</sup> Al-Qurtubī, *Al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol. 10, 296

<sup>66</sup> Luciano Floridi, *The Ethics of Information* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 198.

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