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***AL-ISTIKHLĀF* FRAMEWORK IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: RECLAIMING THE HUMAN IDENTITY AND RESPONSIBILITY IN THE DIGITAL ERA**

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Abstract: Artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as one of the most disruptive forces of the twenty-first century, reshaping cultures, economies, social relations, and even the definition of human intelligence, creativity, and knowledge. Beyond its technical and economic effects, AI raises profound questions about human identity, responsibility and purpose: if machines can imitate reasoning, generate knowledge, and even simulate empathy, what remains distinctive about the human being? This article aims to highlight the *Qur'ānic* perspective of the human being and intelligence as a response to the current discourse on AI and the human being. The *Qur'ānic* conception of the human being as *'Abd* [slave of Allah (ﷻ)] and *Khalīfah* (vicegerent on earth) provides a key to unlock the discourse on the matter at hand. The article employed library research and textual analysis. Drawing on *Qur'ānic* exegesis, classical Islamic scholarship, and contemporary AI ethics, it contrasted natural intelligence with machine computation and highlighted the unique moral, spiritual, and teleological dimensions of humanity that cannot be replicated by algorithms. The article then applied the *al-Istikhḷāf* framework to assess AI's impact on identity, psychology, social relations, labour, and spiritual life. It then outlined the normative guidance through *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* (higher objectives of the law). The article concluded that the human identity, grounded in the faculties of *'Aql* (intellect), *Qalb* (heart), *Rūḥ* (soul), *Nafs* (self),

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and *Fitrah* (primordial disposition), offers a coherent ethical and ontological framework for engaging AI. The article concluded that Muslims must not remain passive consumers of technology but should actively shape responsible AI development and governance with humility, moral clarity, and divine purpose, ensuring that innovation serves human flourishing rather than eroding it.

Keywords: *Al-Istikhlaḥ* Framework, Human Being, AI, Identity, Responsibility.

Introduction

We live in an era in which the screen has deeply become our portal to the world. What was meant to mediate only our communication now influences even our sense of being. Once defined by embodied presence, shared memory, cultural, civilisational, and spiritual rootedness, human interaction now unfolds largely through curated images and algorithmic attention. Whether we realize it or not, this is a big shift in the evolution of the human species. As the glowing rectangles in our hands become the new interface that connects us to place, family, culture, and ritual, the very contours of human society are being redrawn; raising questions about human identity, reasonability and intelligence in the digital era.

The subject of this study has been addressed by some contemporary scholars in the field of information technology by interpreting the impact of AI on people's intellectual and mental wellbeing. Farhangi asserts in his work that this reconfiguration; if not addressed wisely; is not without consequence. Prolonged screen exposure has been shown to impair posture, vision, and cardiometabolic health, especially in the young.¹ Larson addresses in his work that from a psychological perspective, social media floods us with stimuli designed to captivate, distract, and addict-activating the brain's reward circuits in cycles of ephemeral pleasure and residual emptiness.² According to Pranathi's research, short-form videos such as reels, stories, and live-feeds fragment our attention and draw the mind to novelty, making stillness feel foreign.³ Over time, this immersive environment cultivates a mode of being that is reactive, performative, and disoriented.

From spiritual and ethical considerations, this situation signals a deep reordination of the human soul, consciousness and modal edifice leading to de-spiritualisation and

¹ M.A. Farhangi, E. Fathi Azar, A. Manzouri, et al., "Prolonged screen watching behaviour is associated with high blood pressure among children and adolescents: a systematic review and dose-response meta-analysis," *J Health Popul Nutr*, Vol. 42, No. 89 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41043-023-00437-8>

² Abigail Larson, "What Makes social media so Addictive, and How Does it Affect our Mental Health?," *Psychology Student Publications*, Vol. 63, (2024). <https://commons.und.edu/psych-stu/63>

³ J.S.R. Pranathi, A.M. Jacob, "Impact of Short Form Videos on Attention Span Mediated by Sleep Quality and Stress," *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Approaches in Psychology (IJLAP)*, Vol. 3, No. 4, (April 2025).

digitalization of the human being in the name of progress and the expense of a purposeful and value-driven existence. While these effects arise from the social architecture of these platforms, many are intensified by the underlying AI algorithms that curate content, recommend media, and optimise engagement- thus linking the perils of social media to the broader ethical questions surrounding artificial intelligence. Where once human identity was forged in embodied social relations, it now risks being reconstructed through metrics of popularity and algorithmic reach. This alleges the question of the identity and nature of the human being. Is it still measured by human intelligence and defined by a purpose-driven worldview, or by the Artificial Intelligence and machine-driven purposes?

In this digital reality, human identity and nature risk becoming performative, curated for algorithms rather than anchored in spiritual truth and the original configuration of human nature. The rhythms and patterns of human life; once shaped by culture, values, religion, community, nature, and ritual; are now governed by notification pings and content refreshes. Where once human identity was forged in embodied real social relations, it now risks being reconstructed through metrics of popularity and algorithmic reach. This artificialisation and algorithmicizing of human life and relations negatively impact the core identity and nature of man as *Khalīfah* (vicegerent on earth) having higher purposes and deep missions in society and civilisation. The feedback loop of validation that digital platforms foster often reduces human worth and roles to performance, comparison, and digital affirmation; giving precedence to tangible factors, sometimes at the expense of the intangible important ones.

This article seeks to elucidate the *Qur'ānic* stance on human being and intelligence in relation to the contemporary dialogue surrounding artificial intelligence and human existence. The *Qur'ānic* conception of man as *'Abd* [slave of Allah (ﷻ)] and *Khalīfah* (vicegerent on earth) offers a crucial insight into the current discourse. The article utilized library research and textual analysis, referencing *Qur'ānic* exegesis, classical Islamic scholarship, and modern AI ethics, contrasting natural intelligence with machine computation and emphasizing the distinctive moral, spiritual, and teleological aspects of humanity that algorithms cannot replicate. Subsequently, it employs the *Istikhlāf* framework to evaluate the influence of AI on human identity, psychology, social relations, labor, and spiritual life, while delineating normative guidance via *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* (the Higher Aims of the Law).

Revisiting the Human Identity: From Epistemological Perplexity to Al-Istikhlāf Framework

This section examines the epistemological challenges of the digital age, where artificial intelligence and Western modes of thought have redefined human identity and knowledge. It

traces how the Enlightenment's turn from revelation to reason fractured the unity between science, ethics, and transcendence, laying the groundwork for secular modernity, consumerism, and the commodification of identity. By revisiting these intellectual shifts through both historical and civilisational lenses, it highlights how the current age of digital excess echoes Ibn Khaldūn's warning of luxury and decline, and why the *Qur'ānic al-Istikhlāf* framework offers an essential alternative to recover the balance between human purpose, transcendence, and worldly achievement.

A. Digital Era, AI and Epistemological Perplexity: An Impact of Western Civilisation

The present age is marked by the dominance of digital culture and artificial intelligence over human life, to the point that some predict we may one day create God-like AI, rendering human intelligence subordinate to it. How did we arrive here? As a species, human beings are the inheritors of a legacy that began in mud and breath- creatures who once created with bare hands and built civilization after civilization. From the earliest communal settlements to the mushrooming of lively cities, humans have shaped meaning through language, culture, religion, worship, and enduring social bonds and networks. And yet now, at the height of technological achievement, we risk becoming passive consumers, scrolling through reality, spectators to our own becoming.

Ibn Khaldūn, in his *Muqaddimah*, traced the cyclical rise and decay of civilizations, observing how luxury breeds complacency and how power, once secured, slowly estranges man from his origin and purpose.⁴ In this digital age, we witness a new manifestation of this dynamic: a civilization so advanced that it forgets the very virtues that elevated it, thereby paving the way for self-destruction and the erosion of the balance between material and spiritual forces, which is the very core of human civilization.

The roots of this crisis can be traced back to the Enlightenment project, which redefined the human being as an autonomous, self-legislating subject, divorced from divine command and metaphysical purpose. Emerging in 17th- and 18th-century Europe, the Enlightenment was marked by a profound shift in epistemology: revelation was replaced with reason, tradition was eclipsed by empiricism, and the sacred was exiled from the public sphere. Thinkers such as René Descartes, John Locke, Immanuel Kant, Voltaire, and David Hume played pivotal roles in this transformation. Descartes centred the human subject as the starting point of certainty

⁴ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, Translated by Franz Rosenthal. 3 Vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 289.

with his dictum *Cogito, ergo sum* (I think therefore I am);⁵ Locke emphasized empirical experience as the foundation of knowledge;⁶ Kant attempted to rescue reason from scepticism by establishing its moral autonomy;⁷ while Voltaire and Hume championed secular rationalism and scepticism toward religious authority.⁸

While this movement ushered in scientific advancements and the birth of modern institutions and civilisation, it also initiated a metaphysical rupture, culminating in a deep epistemological lacuna barring revelation and religion from the spectrum of scientific knowledge. In sidelining the divine, it fragmented the unity between knowledge and ethics, reason and revelation, science and consciousness, and self and transcendence. Over time, this vision deepened through secular modernity; giving rise to technocracy,⁹ consumerism,¹⁰ secular humanism, and the commodification of identity.¹¹ What began as an intellectual turn toward autonomy and self-governance evolved into a culture that reduces human worth to performance metrics, productivity, and digital visibility.

In such a climate, the ontological depth of the human being, his yearning for transcendence, his moral conscience, and his inner coherence become increasingly muted. It is in response to this that this article highlights the epistemological and civilisational values of the *Qur'ānic al-Istikhlāf* Framework and its significance in reclaiming the ontological role of the human being who is at once an '*Abd* and a *Khalīfah*.

B. The *Qur'ānic Istikhlāf* Framework: Re-claiming the Integrated Islamic Epistemological System

Within the Islamic intellectual tradition, human identity has long been conceived as rooted not in autonomy but in divine purpose. *Al-Qur'ān* presents the human being as a unique creation, entrusted with the *Amānah* (trust) of stewardship (Q: 33:72). Man is both '*Abd* and *Khalīfah*, a moral agent who operates within the boundaries of divine guidance. Thinkers from al-Ghazālī

⁵ René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998).

⁶ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁸ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Voltaire, *Philosophical Letters*, trans. Leonard Tancock (London: Penguin Books, 1980).

⁹ M. Cole, What's Wrong with Technocracy? *The Boston Review*. (Aug 20, 2022). www.bostonreview.net

¹⁰ Peter N. Stearns. "Consumerism." *Handbook of economics and ethics* (2009), pp. 62-76.

¹¹ Bethan Benwell, and Elizabeth Stokoe, "Commodified Identities," In *Discourse and Identity*, pp. 165-203 (Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

to Ibn ‘Arabī, from al-Fārābī to al-Attas, located the essence of man not in self-legislation but in his role as a bearer of trust (*Amānah*) and recipient of guidance (*Hudā*). This identity is anchored in the interplay of ‘*Aql* (intellect), *Qalb* (spiritual heart), *Rūh* (soul), *Nafs* (self), and *Fiṭrah* (primordial moral disposition). Together, these faculties equip the human being to seek truth, act with justice, and align with God’s Will.

Al-Qur’ān provides a framework which situates human identity at the confluence of servanthood and vicegerency.¹² As a servant or ‘*Abd*, one affirms Divine sovereignty through devotion and submission; as *Khalīfah*, one exercises entrusted responsibility over creation with ethical consciousness.¹³ This dual station is not symbolic but foundational. Situated within a *Tawhīdic* paradigm wherein all domains of life are woven together through the Oneness of purpose, these roles are integrated across four interdependent spheres of existence: the human being’s relationship with God (spiritual alignment), his relationship with himself (psychological coherence), his relationship with others (social ethics), and his relationship with the rest of the universe (ecological harmony). By re-anchoring human freedom, reason, and morality within the spheres of these four relationships, the *Qur’ānic* perspective paves the way for Man to make sense of who he is and be the best version of himself that he can be.

C. ‘*Abd*, and *Khalīfah*: Ontological Roles

Rather than mere theological abstractions or juridical roles, ‘*Abd* and *Khalīfah* represent ontological truths embedded in the *Qur’ānic* view of Man. The ‘*Abd* acknowledges his finitude and servitude to the Creator, while the *Khalīfah* manifests that servitude through action, governance, and moral leadership. These roles are interdependent; servanthood without vicegerency leads to stagnation, while vicegerency without servanthood veers into hubris. Islamic thought affirms that human dignity arises not from self-legislation but from fulfilling a divinely-ordained trust. *Khilāfah* is not a claim to power but a burden of moral responsibility as an expression of human distinctiveness grounded in purpose instead of dominance.

¹² Hidayah Wan Ismail and Abdelaziz Berghout, "The Concept of *al-Istikhlaḥ* and Its Importance in Reclaiming the Attributes of Man as *Khalīfah* on Earth," *Al-Shajarah: Journal of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (ISTAC)* (2024), pp. 83-102.

¹³ Masoud Shavarani, "The Position of Humanity in Islamic Environmental Theology: Caliph or Servant," *Islam and the Contemporary World*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (2024), pp. 73-99.

Human Beings between Natural and Artificial Intelligence:

This section explores the profound distinction between natural and artificial intelligence, situating the human being within the *Qur'ānic* conception of *al-Istikhlāf*. It begins by addressing how Islamic epistemology and psychology resolve the tension between human intellect and machine learning, by grounding identity in the multidimensional faculties of *'Aql*, *Qalb*, *Rūh*, *Nafs*, and *Fiṭrah*. These faculties together constitute natural intelligence, which integrates rational discernment, moral conscience, spiritual depth, and innate orientation to the Divine. The discussion then turns to the constitutional make-up of the human being, examining each faculty in detail and demonstrating how they collectively define the human vocation as *Khalīfah* on earth. In contrast, artificial intelligence; lacking *Fiṭrah*, *Rūh*, and moral accountability; remains an instrumental tool rather than a bearer of responsibility. Through this comparison, the section underscores the uniqueness of human stewardship and clarifies why AI must remain subordinate to the higher purposes of human existence.

A. Solving the Dialectic between Natural and Artificial Intelligence:

Aside from the ontological identity of the human being as a servant and a vicegerent on earth, Islamic psychology and epistemology identify a multidimensional human nature comprising *'Aql* (intellect), *Qalb* (heart), *Rūh* (soul), *Nafs* (self), and *Fiṭrah* (primordial disposition). Each plays a unique and interrelated role in shaping moral consciousness and spiritual awareness of the human being as *al-Istikhlāf* man based on his existential and ontological identity on earth. This concept solves the dilemma between the natural and artificial intelligence by telling us who the real human being is and what makes him *Khalīfah* on earth. The natural intelligence of the human being therefore is constituted of intelligence and wisdom that is the product of the combination of *'Aql*, *Qalb*, *Rūh*, *Nafs*, and *Fiṭrah*. The components of this natural intelligence will be explained in the following section.

B. The Constitutional Make-up of the Human Being

'Aql is the rational faculty enabling discernment and moral reasoning and is tasked with interpreting Divine signs and making morally sound judgements. *Al-Qur'ān* frequently implores readers to use their *'Aql* when reflecting on God's majesty (e.g. "*afala yatafakkarun, afala ya'qilun*"). Scholars from as early as the tenth century gave great thought to the *'Aql*. Abū Maṣ'ūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944) views *'Aql* as a source of knowledge. At the start of *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, al-Māturīdī lays out how we know: by sense perception, transmission/report (*Sam'*),

and intellect (*'Aql*).¹⁴ He repeatedly balances reason and tradition rather than pitting them against each other, viewing the human being as epistemic ‘triathletes’ who utilize senses, testimony, and reason. Further, Islamic philosophers such as al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) spoke of intellect as a light within the heart that illuminates divine knowledge and guides action.¹⁵

In the *Ihyā'*, Ghazālī opens his chapter on knowledge by saying “Intellect is the source and fountainhead of knowledge...,” then explains that “*'Aql*” has multiple meanings- often summarized as (i) the human distinguishing faculty, (ii) practical foresight of consequences, (iii) seasoned discernment from experience, and (iv) a light by which truths are perceived.¹⁶ This shows that natural intelligence isn’t merely data-crunching; it blends innate capacity, moral prudence, lived experience, and illuminative insight—dimensions AI doesn’t have. From a lexical point of view, al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī, in *al-Mufradāt*, ties *'Aql* to the root “to bind, restrain” and glosses *al-Lubb* as the intellect purified of dross, meaning the refined core that filters impulses and orients one to Truth.¹⁷

The human *'Aql* therefore is moral self-restraint and understanding, not just computation of facts and events. Writing in the 14th century, Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328) reconciled *'Aql* and Revelation, arguing that sound reason and Revelation cannot truly conflict.¹⁸ When there is a clash, it is with speculative and not decisive proofs, and often the weightier evidence prevails. Ibn Taymiyyah argues that true knowledge is when *'Aql* and *Naql* and *Fiṭrah* all work together in concert.¹⁹

Viewed from this perspective, moral-rational agency is calibrated by Revelation and *Fiṭrah*, and not just logic gates. Also writing in the 14th century, Ibn Qayyim (d. 751/1350) in *Miftāḥ al-Sa'ādah* exalted *'Ilm* and *'Aql* as keys to felicity, provided they are rooted in guidance, cautioning readers how knowledge without the right orientation can mislead.²⁰ Building on all the above, contemporary work by Sarif and Ismail outlines models like NQRA to articulate the interplay between *Nafs*, *'Aql*, and *Qalb*, underscoring how intellect is embedded within a spiritual moral framework.²¹

¹⁴ Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, ed. Fathalla Kholeif (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1970); see also the ISAM critical edition (Ankara, 2003).

¹⁵ Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), Vol. 1, pp. 3:4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-23.

¹⁷ al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī, *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, ed. Ṣafwān 'Adnān al-Dāwūdī (Damascus/Beirut: Dār al-Qalam/al-Dār al-Shāmiyyah, 1992).

¹⁸ Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar' Ta'arūḍ al-'Aql wa al-Naql*, ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim (Riyadh: Jāmi'at al-Imām Muḥammad b. Sa'ūd al-Islāmiyyah, 1979-1991), 1:147.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa'ādah wa Maṣṣūr Wilāyat al-'Ilm wa al-irādah* (Mecca: 'Ālam al-Fawā'id; various printings), Vol. 1.

²¹ Suhaimi Mhd. Sarif and Yusof Ismail, “The Intertwined Relationship Between the Nafs (Carnal Soul), Aql (Reasoning), and Qalb (Heart),” *Journal of Islamic Studies and Culture*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2019), p. 4554.

Qalb in Islamic tradition, is the spiritual core and moral compass. It is the locus of inward perception where divine light is received and spiritual transformation begins. Classical Islamic thought treats the *Qalb* not as mere sentiment but as the human control-centre where knowing, willingness, and values converge. Ibn al-Qayyim and others describe the *Qalb* as a realm requiring constant purification (*Tazkiyah*) for ethical cultivation.²² *Al-Qur'ān* itself anchors this view; “it is not the eyes that grow blind, but the hearts within the breasts” (Q. 22:46); locating insight in an inner faculty rather than in raw perception.

Building on this, al-Ghazālī distinguishes the heart’s two registers: the physical organ and a subtle, God-oriented reality that governs the person like a king over his troops, rendering the limbs obedient to its judgments.²³ Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī’s lexicon explains why it is called *Qalb* (“to turn”): it is prone to reversal, and therefore in need of steadying through remembrance and moral training.²⁴ Sunnī *Kalām* reinforces the epistemic role of the heart: al-Māturīdī places knowledge on a tripod of sense, reliable report, and reason²⁵ yet *Qur’ānic* diction ascribes understanding to the *Qalb*, marking it as the locus where these inputs are weighed. Ibn Taymiyya sharpens the point: sound reason and authentic revelation cannot truly conflict, because the heart; the seat of intention and moral resolve; coordinates the deliverances of intellect with the guidance of Revelation and the *Fitrah*.²⁶

Ibn al-Qayyim then offers a diagnostic: hearts are either sound, diseased, or dead.²⁷ In the spiritual manuals (e.g., al-Qushayrī), this becomes praxis: *Dhikr* of the tongue must mature into *Dhikr* of the heart to stabilize attention and intention.²⁸ Taken together, the tradition presents the *Qalb* as the integrative governor of cognition and character - precisely the dimension absent in artificial systems, and thus essential to any account of human vicegerency in the digital age. On the other hand, *Rūḥ* is the spirit which connects human consciousness with the Divine; it is the essence breathing life into the *Nafs* and *Qalb*. In Islamic psychology, the spirit is not merely an abstraction but the enabling dimension of awareness, moral responsiveness, and the longing for transcendence.²⁹

²² Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Madarij al-Salikin bayna Manazil Iyyaka Na'budu wa-Iyyaka Nasta'in* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 1:87.

²³ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, Vol. 3, pp. 3-5.

²⁴ Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān*, ed. Ṣafwān 'Adnān Dāwūdī (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1992), p. 685.

²⁵ Ramon Harvey, *Transcendent God, Rational World: A Māturīdī Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), pp. 78-83.

²⁶ Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar' Ta'arūḍ al-'Aql wa-al-Naql*, ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim, 11 vols. (Riyadh: Jāmi'at al-Imām, 1979), 1:152-153.

²⁷ Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān min Maṣā'id al-Shayṭān*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqqī (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sunnah al-Muḥammadiyyah, 1955), Vol. 1, pp. 9-12.

²⁸ Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah fī 'Ilm al-Taṣawwuf*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd ibn al-Sharīf (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1966), pp. 293-296.

²⁹ F. Uddin, “Ruh, Nafs, Aql and Qalb and Spiritual Intelligence,” *International Journal of Islamic Psychology*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2024), pp. 87-104.

This spiritual dimension, integrated with our corporeal constitution, confers self-awareness, rational capacity, and ethical conscience, from which the capacity to know and worship God arises. Toshihiko Izutsu explains that the *Rūh* is not an actual Divine fragment but rather is a Divine Command, and it is through the *Rūh* that the human being is made morally and spiritually accountable.³⁰ *Al-Qur'ān* speaks with purposeful reserve: “*They ask you about the Rūh; say: the Rūh is of my Lord’s command*” (Qs. 17:85), yet it links human distinctiveness to God’s “breathing into” Adam (Qs. 15:29; 32:9; 38:72). Classical authors treat *Rūh* as the life-principle and a subtle, God-oriented reality that enables receptivity to Truth.

Al-Ghazālī differentiates levels: the animal spirit that animates, and the higher spirit that orients the person to knowledge of God and moral purpose.³¹ Sufi handbooks (e.g., al-Qushayrī) frame praxis (dhikr, vigilance, sincerity) as polishing the mirror through which the *Rūh* receives guidance, while theologians insist its essence is known only as an affair of the Divine command, not reducible to material description. In vicegerency terms, *Rūh* supplies the human being with vertical orientation - the capacity to respond to revelation, to worship, and to aim action beyond utility. That teleological altitude is precisely what artificial systems lack: they can map means, but not receive or owe ends.

Another component to the human being is the *Nafs*: *al-Qur'ān* addresses stages of the *Nafs* as a moral continuum - from the commanding self that incites to evil (*al-nafs al-ammārah*, Qs. 12:53), through the self-reproaching conscience (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*, Qs. 75:2), to the tranquil, God-contented self (*al-nafs al-muṭma'imah*, Qs. 89: 27-30). Classical psychology makes this developmental: the *Nafs* bears drives and desires; the *Qalb* governs; the *'Aql* discerns; and the *Fiṭrah* (Qs. 30:30) sets the native orientation toward Truth and Good.³²

Al-Ghazālī explores these stages in the context of purification and moral ascent,³³ turning it into a method, *mujāhadāt al-nafs* and *tazkiyah* (purification) to cultivate habituated virtue while Ibn al-Qayyim’s diagnostics (sound, diseased, dead hearts) stress that felicity depends on purification and direction, not information alone.³⁴ It is in the *Nafs* that the difference between humans and machines is more apparent. Humans possess an inner arena

³⁰ Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in The Qur'an* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), pp. 211-215.

³¹ Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī, *Marvels of the Heart: Book XXI of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*, trans. Walter James Skellie (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2010), pp. 43-45.

³² Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, Vol. 3 (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), pp. 5-7; See also Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Madarij al-Salikin bayna Manazil Iyyaka Na'budu wa-Iyyaka Nasta'in* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.), Vol. 1, pp. 87-89.

³³ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, Vol. 4, p. 233.

³⁴ Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān min Maṣā'id al-Shayṭān*, Vol. 1, pp. 9-12.

where appetite meets conscience and can be educated toward serenity; whereas machines have no appetitive self to restrain, no self-reproach to heed, and no tranquillity to attain; hence they cannot stand in for the human *Khalīfah*.

Finally, the *Fitrah* supplies the native axis around which these faculties turn. *Al-Qur'ān* names it explicitly; - “Set your face toward the religion as a pure monotheist, the *fitrat Allah* upon which He created humankind” (Qs. 30:30); and hints at its primordial depth in the pre-temporal covenant (Qs. 7:172). Classical authors treat *Fitrah* not as a blank slate but as an innate orientation: a seeded recognition of God and a moral grammar that inclines the human being toward truth and good, even as habit, passion, and socialization can cloud it. In Ibn Taymiyya’s register, *Fitrah*, *‘Aql*, and *Wahy* (revelation) operate in concert: the *Fitrah* furnishes first principles, the *‘Aql* articulates and reasons from them, and revelation confirms, corrects, and perfects what is otherwise vulnerable to distortion.

Al-Ghazālī’s idiom makes the same point from another angle: the *Qalb* is the king that governs the troops (limbs of the body) as well as the mirror that must be polished so the *Fitrah*’s light is not refracted by the *Nafs*’ appetites. Disciplined remembrance and ethical habituation return the self to what it already knows by nature. In vicegerency terms, *Fitrah* underwrites accountability and teleology: humans are answerable because they are natively disposed to recognize the Right and to orient action toward it. Artificial systems, by contrast, possess no *Fitrah*—no covenantal memory, no native teleology, no moral “first language.” They can model preferences but they cannot owe obligations. This is why, in the digital age, human beings remain the bearers of stewardship: their *Fitrah* anchors ends, their *‘Aql* reasons about means, their *Qalb* commands, and their *Nafs* is trained to obey. Together, these faculties form a coherent ontology of natural intelligence rooted in moral agency and divine accountability.

AI, by contrast, operates within algorithmic logic devoid of consciousness, intention, and moral intuition. It may simulate reasoning, but cannot possess *Fitrah*, nor aspire toward virtue. While AI can serve the *Khalīfah*, it fundamentally lacks the spiritual essence (*Rūh*) and moral sensibility that define human stewardship. This distinction will shape how we approach the ethical use of AI, ensuring it remains a tool that supports, rather than undermines, the higher purposes of human life.

At this juncture, it is important to note that *Qalb*, *Nafs*, *Rūh*, *‘Aql* and *Fitrah* exists in every human being. By virtue of this fact, every human being is therefore ontologically equipped to become a *Khalīfah*. This is affirmed by *al-Qur'ān* which states that humanity as a whole was entrusted with the vocation of *Khalīfah*—God’s steward on earth (Qs. 2:30; Qs. 33:72) designating every human being as a *Khalīfah*, for each carries the innate faculties of

reason, will, and moral agency. This “ontological *Khalīfah*” status is what grounds human uniqueness and responsibility.

However, *al-Qur’ān* also makes a critical distinction: not everyone who bears the title fulfils it. The trust (*Amānah*) was accepted by humankind collectively, but its discharge depends on aligning one’s knowledge, freedom, and power with God’s guidance (*Hudā*). To be a *true Khalīfah* requires embodying justice, mercy, and humility, and living within the covenant (*Mithāq*). Where these conditions are betrayed, man becomes *Zalūm* (unjust) and *Jahūl* (ignorant) (Q 33:72).

Having outlined the *Qur’ānic* conception of human identity, it is now necessary to consider how this identity relates to the rise of artificial intelligence. In doing so, we can better understand what distinguishes the human intellect and spirit from the machine’s computational capabilities.

The Digital Age and the Crisis of Identity: How *Al-Istikhālāf* Framework Gives Hope

This section examines the crisis of human identity in the digital age, where artificial intelligence has not only transformed economies and societies but also unsettled the very meaning of being human. It begins by tracing the rise of AI, its aspirations, and inherent limitations, before turning to the *Qur’ānic* conception of man as ‘*Abd* and *Khalīfah* as a framework of hope and guidance. The discussion highlights how the *Istikhālāf* paradigm offers ethical clarity in navigating AI’s impact on intellect, psychology, relationships, and spiritual life. By contrasting the fragmented self, shaped by algorithms with the integrated self, envisioned in revelation, the section underscores the urgent need for ethical stewardship, ‘*Ubūdiyyah*, and alignment with divine purpose. It concludes by outlining practical recommendations, grounded in *Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah*, for Muslims to engage with AI not as passive consumers but as conscious shapers of technology in service of humanity’s higher ends.

A. The Advent of Artificial Intelligence and its Limitations

Artificial intelligence may feel like a sudden arrival in our lives, but its story stretches back decades. The dream of creating thinking machines took shape in 1950, when British mathematician Alan Turing proposed his famous “imitation game,” now known as the Turing Test, a thought experiment in which a machine is judged intelligent if it can hold a text-based conversation so convincingly that a human cannot tell whether it is speaking to another person

or a computer.³⁵ Just a few years later, in 1956, John McCarthy convened the Dartmouth Conference and gave the field its name: artificial intelligence.³⁶ What followed was a journey of breakthroughs and setbacks - periods of bold optimism followed by long “AI winters” when progress seemed to stall.

Yet researchers pressed on, building expert systems in the 1980s, and later developing neural networks - computer systems loosely modelled on the human brain, made up of layers of interconnected “neurons” that can learn patterns from large amounts of data. This renaissance in the 2010s, combined with the advent of deep learning and the transformer models that power today’s generative AI, marked a new era for the field. Alongside the technology’s rise, voices like philosopher Nick Bostrom began to ask harder questions. In his 2014 book *Superintelligence*, Bostrom warned that the leap from today’s narrow AI to systems smarter than humans could be the most transformative and dangerous moment in history.³⁷ Whether AI becomes our greatest tool or our greatest threat, he argued, will depend on the wisdom and values we embed in it now.

Yet, despite the excitement of the new dawn of progress, beneath the shimmering veneer of circuits and screens lies a profound existential tremor. Humanity’s sense of self wavers when his vicegerency is ceded to algorithms. In virtual spaces, identity becomes fragmented: profiles and data shadows eclipse the integrated self. Islamic epistemology warns against reducing human beings to mere data points in technocratic systems; rather, it calls for a reassertion of spiritual ontology as the basis for moral personhood.

B. The True Khalīfah: the Wisdom for Saving Humanity

In this epoch, the role of ‘*abd*’ is obscured by the illusion of technological omnipotence, and the responsibilities of *Khalīfah* are diffused across digital infrastructures. Without the inner alignment of *Tawhīd*, servitude becomes servility to data, and stewardship devolves into exploitation. The existential coherence that binds our four spheres: God, self, others, cosmos - is imperilled.

When algorithms shape visibility and automated systems affect livelihoods, *Khilāfah* demands accountability: transparency over opacity; equity over bias; restoration over exclusion. The human *Khalīfah* is called to reclaim agency: to question, to design, to legislate.

³⁵ B. Gonçalves, “The Turing Test is a Thought Experiment,” *Minds & Machines*, Vol. 33, (2023), pp. 1-31. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11023-022-09616-8>

³⁶ John, McCarthy, Marvin Minsky, Nathaniel Rochester, and Claude E. Shannon. “A Proposal for the Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence.” August 31, 1955. Reprinted in *AI Magazine* (2006).

³⁷ Nick Bostrom, *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

As algorithms detect our habits and preferences, they begin to curate content aligned with predicted desires. In doing so, they subtly mould our behaviour, narrowing our experiences to fit algorithmic expectations. Left unchecked, this process transforms the user into the ultimate consumer as shaped by data, rather than shaping it with discernment. As responsible human beings aware of our existential purpose, we must navigate AI, and not allow it to navigate us. We must summon our moral creativity to mould systems that reflect a divine vision of flourishing rather than domination.

C. Impact of AI on Human Intellect, Psychology, Relations, and Life

The integration of AI into daily life has produced profound changes in human cognition, social interaction, and psychological well-being. On the cognitive level, studies indicate that constant reliance on AI-powered tools for information retrieval and decision-making can lead to “cognitive offloading,” where the brain delegates memory and problem-solving functions to machines.³⁸ This can weaken deep learning, reduce attention span, and impair the ability to engage in sustained critical thinking.

Psychologically, AI-driven recommendation systems and social media algorithms can foster addictive behaviours by optimising for engagement rather than well-being.³⁹ Such platforms exploit the brain’s dopaminergic reward pathways, creating compulsive patterns of content consumption and eroding the capacity for mindful presence. Empirical evidence links excessive engagement with AI-curated environments to increased rates of anxiety, depression, and loneliness, especially among younger users.⁴⁰

In the realm of human relationships, AI-mediated communication; from chatbots to algorithmic matchmaking; risks reducing interpersonal bonds to transactional exchanges. While AI can enhance connectivity across distances, it can also dilute the richness of embodied interaction, empathy, and mutual vulnerability that are essential to authentic human relations. Economically and professionally, AI automation is reshaping labour markets at an unprecedented scale. The World Economic Forum predicts that by 2025, 85 million jobs may be displaced by AI and automation, even as 97 million new roles emerge that require human-AI collaboration.⁴¹ Yet these

³⁸ Evan Risko and Sam Gilbert, “Cognitive Offloading,” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* Vol. 20, No. 9 (2016), pp. 676-688.

³⁹ Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2019), pp. 375-380.

⁴⁰ Jean M. Twenge, Gabrielle N. Martin, and W. Keith Campbell, “Decreases in Psychological Well-Being Among American Adolescents After 2012 and Links to Screen Time During the Rise of Smartphone Technology,” *Emotion*, Vol. 18, No. 6 (2018), pp. 765-780.

⁴¹ World Economic Forum, *The Future of Jobs Report 2020* (Geneva: WEF, 2020).

new roles demand continuous reskilling, creating both opportunities and pressures for workers. Spiritually, the saturation of life with AI technologies risks deepening heedlessness (*ghaflah*), as individuals become more absorbed in mediated realities and less attuned to the divine signs in creation. This calls for an intentional cultivation of the faculties of *‘Aql*, *Qalb*, *Rūh*, and *Fiṭrah*, ensuring that AI serves as an instrument for human flourishing rather than a catalyst for moral and spiritual erosion. Recognising these impacts allows policymakers, scholars, and community leaders to anticipate challenges and craft responses grounded in Islamic ethical principles.

D. AI and the True Khalīfah: The Ethics of Technological Stewardship

Al-Qur’ān speaks to *Haqq* (Truth), *Hikmah* (wisdom), and *Ma’rifah* (discernment) as pillars of Islamic epistemology; referring to realities that must guide every innovation. In the realm of AI, this means vigilantly ensuring that tools serve *Maṣlahah* (benefit), uphold *‘Adl* (justice), and embody *Rahmah* (mercy). Like an archer entrusted with divine arrows, the human *Khalīfah* must aim AI toward noble ends. Technology, being the arrow, amplifies the reach of human intent. In itself, the arrow is inert; its moral valence emerges only when shot. A skilled archer can use it to protect or to harm; likewise, technology reflects the aims of its wielder. *Al-Qur’ān* teaches that deeds are judged by intentions (*Niyyah*), and in the same way, AI is not inherently good or evil, but becomes so according to the purposes for which it is designed, deployed, and governed. Yet, unlike the archer’s arrow, AI has the potential to evolve through self-learning algorithms, introducing a level of unpredictability and autonomy that demands careful ethical oversight. Some scholars have noted how this can provoke existential discomfort in humans, forecasting the doom that can come about when humans are replaced by robots that challenge our role in the world.⁴²

The speed at which these technologies evolve and how little the general public understands about their inner workings have also been a cause for worry.⁴³ Among Muslim scholars, Yaqub Chaudhary has voiced his concern that AI can pose a metaphysical and ethical challenge to the Islamic conception of human nature, intelligence and Divine order.⁴⁴ When sacred and intelligible truths are subjected to quantifiable data influenced by algorithms, Chaudhary is of the view that this can potentially displace spiritual reliance on God with

⁴² Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less From Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011).

⁴³ Frank Pasquale, “Humans Judged by Machines: The Rise of Artificial Intelligence in Finance, Insurance and Real Estate,” In *Robotics, AI and Humanity*, edited by Joachim von Braun, Marcelo Sanchez Sorondo, Gregor M Reichberg and Mary S. Archer (Cham: Springer, 2021), pp. 119-28.

⁴⁴ Yaqub Chaudhary, “Artificial Intelligence and the Metaphysics of the Human: An Islamic Response,” *The Muslim World*, Vol. 111, No. 4 (2021), pp. 561-583.

algorithmic authority. However, Shoaib Malik⁴⁵ and Yusuf Celik⁴⁶ take a more optimistic stance and argues that at most AI can serve as intellectual provocations to Muslims rather than actual existential dangers, provided they are critically managed.

In his article, Gamal Abdelnour⁴⁷ urges Muslims to participate in purposeful engagement with artificial intelligence, rooted in intentionality, moral clarity and collective responsibility. He argues for the recentring of the heart and spiritual virtues that define humanity's relationships to the Divine so that humanity can encounter AI not with fear but with discernment and moral clarity. This approach parallels the *Qur'ānic Istikhlāf* framework developed here, which likewise seeks not only to diagnose contemporary shifts but also to offer normative guidance and actionable steps grounded in divine purpose.

At the heart of the current race among major technology companies to create more advanced chatbots, artificial general intelligence, and even superintelligence, lies the desire to make human life more efficient. This same pursuit of efficiency has fuelled the rise of civilizations throughout history, from the harnessing of agriculture to the mechanisation of industry. As human knowledge expands, we gradually unlock the layers of universal order and wisdom that the Creator has embedded within creation for humanity to discover. *Al-Qur'ān* reminds us in Sūrat al-Raḥmān: “*He created man, taught him al-bayān (clear expression)*”.⁴⁸ Classical exegetes understood *al-bayān* as the unique human capacity for articulate speech, reasoned thought, and the clear conveyance of meaning.⁴⁹

In this sense, AI, particularly in its capacity to process and generate human language may be viewed as an extension of this divine gift into more complex forms of expression. Yet, unlike the human faculty of *al-Bayān*, which is meant to serve *Ḥaqq* (Truth) and *ʿAdl* (justice), AI's version remains, at best, unbiased⁵⁰ and morally neutral, unless deliberately guided by ethical and spiritual principles. Without such guidance, the very efficiency it offers can

⁴⁵ Shoaib Ahmed Malik, “Artificial Intelligence and Islamic Thought: Two Distinctive Challenges,” *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies*, Vol. 8, (2024), pp. 108-15.

⁴⁶ Yusuf Celik, “Answering Divine Love: Human Distinctiveness in the Light of Islam and Artificial Super Intelligence,” *Sophia*, Vol. 62, (2023), pp. 679-96

⁴⁷ M. Gamal Abdelnour, Artificial Intelligence and the Islamic Theology of Technology: From “Means” to “Meanings” and from “Minds” to “Hearts” *Religions* 16: 796. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16060796> (2025).

⁴⁸ Qs: 55: 3-4. *The Qur'ān*. Translated by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁴⁹ See for example Al-Bāghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, on Qur'an 55:4, interpreting “*ilmuhu al-bayān*” as “speech, writing, understanding, and conveying”- clarifying both articulate expression and comprehension. See also Al-Suddī, as quoted in Al-Bāghawī's *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, explained *al-bayān* as the knowledge of a people's own tongue i.e. the capacity to express clearly in one's language. Ibn Kīsān, also cited by Al-Bāghawī, interpreted “*He taught him al-bayān*” as knowing “the names of things,” and that Adam spoke “in seven-hundred thousand languages, the best of which was Arabic,” which underscores not just speech but expansive linguistic capacity.

⁵⁰ Joy Buolamwini, and Gebru Timnit, “Gender Shades. Intersectional Accuracy Disparities in Commercial Gender Classification,” *Proceedings of Machine Learning Research*, Vol. 81, (2018), pp. 77-91

accelerate the spread of falsehood and harm, undermining the higher purposes for which *al-Bayān* was bestowed. Viewed from this perspective, AI should not be seen as a threat to human identity, but as a tool that Muslims must ethically master and direct if they are to fulfil their role as a true *Khalīfah* on earth.

E. AI and ‘Ubūdiyyah: Truth, Meaning, and Divine Alignment

From an Islamic virtue ethics perspective, the development and deployment of AI must be rooted in *Taqwā* (God-consciousness), ‘*Adl* (justice), and *Ihsān* (excellence).⁵¹ Algorithms are not merely neutral tools but active participants in shaping social norms; they can foster either virtues or vices at scale. If designed without moral anchoring, they risk habituating societies to efficiency without compassion, optimisation without justice. Conversely, when guided by virtue ethics, AI can become an instrument for promoting justice, mercy, and truthfulness in both governance and daily life.

If *Khalīfah* guides our outward engagement with technology, then ‘*Ubūdiyyah* (act of worship or servanthood) shapes the inward compass.⁵² It demands that we remain anchored in the pursuit of *Ḥaqq* and resist the seduction of limitless autonomy. AI tempts us with the illusion of omniscience, but servanthood reminds us that knowledge is *Amānah* (trust) meant to serve Truth, not ego.

To be ‘*Abd* in the digital age is to approach innovation with humility. It is to recognize that data is not wisdom, and that automation cannot replace moral discernment. Technology becomes a means to manifest *Ihsān* (beauty), not an end in itself. History offers a sobering lesson. When the printing press transformed Europe; igniting an explosion of literacy and knowledge production; the Muslim world, once a beacon of intellectual vitality, was slow to embrace this new medium. This technological hesitation contributed to the shifting of intellectual and political power away from Muslim civilizations. As Europe advanced in literacy and knowledge production, the Muslim ummah increasingly lagged behind.

Notably, the first *Qur’ān* which was printed using movable type, emerged not from Muslim lands but from Venice in 1537, produced by Paganino and his son—ironically on paper marked with Christian watermarks.⁵³ This image serves as a poignant metaphor: a sacred text

⁵¹ Ezzieddin Elmahjub, “Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Islamic Ethics: Towards Pluralist Ethical Benchmarking for AI,” *Philosophy & Technology*, Vol. 36, (2023), p. 37, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-023-00668-x>.

⁵² James David Pavlin, *The Concept of Ubudiyyah in the Theology of Ibn Taymiyyah: The Relationship between Faith, Love and Actions in the Perfection of Worship* (New York University, 1998).

⁵³ See "Paganino Paganini," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paganino_Paganini

rendered for Muslims yet mediated through non-Muslim hands and materials.⁵⁴ The missed opportunity of that revolution, contributed to a widening intellectual and technological gap between the Muslim world and the West and remains a cautionary tale, underscoring the urgency of not repeating history in the digital age.

Today, artificial intelligence stands as a comparable inflection point. The question is not only how Muslims will respond, but whether they will once again be content to consume, rather than shape, the tools that define an era.

F. Towards an Ethically Guided Future: Recommendations

In addition to other ethical measures, AI policy must be guided by the *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*—the preservation of faith (*Dīn*), life (*Nafs*), intellect (‘*Aql*), progeny (*Nasl*), and wealth (*Māl*).⁵⁵ Anchoring AI development to these higher objectives ensures that innovation does not compromise the very values Islam seeks to protect. This process should be informed by *Shūrā*-based participatory governance, allowing scholars, engineers, policymakers, and community stakeholders to collectively deliberate on the moral trajectory of AI in Muslim societies.

The findings of this inquiry suggest a path forward for Muslim engagement with AI that transcends binary narratives. The Islamic vision of man as ‘*Abd* and *Khalīfah* restores a vision of human purpose grounded in divine trust and accountability. It calls upon Muslims—not merely as users, but as shapers—to engage AI ethically, consciously, and constructively.

At the policy level, this entails creating ethics councils that include theologians, engineers, and policymakers. Islamic legal bodies should draft AI ethics guidelines grounded in *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*, focusing on justice, privacy, transparency, and social welfare. Funding interdisciplinary research between Islamic scholars and computer scientists is key to shaping normative frameworks for Muslim societies.

In education, Islamic universities and seminaries should integrate AI ethics and digital theology into curricula. Engineering and science students should study the moral implications of their tools. Most urgently, youth initiatives must promote critical media literacy and foster a culture of ethical tech engagement rooted in *at-Tawhīd*.

⁵⁴ Francis Robinson, “Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print,” *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (1993), pp. 229-51. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X00016127>.

⁵⁵ Raquib Arshad, Bushra Channa, Tazeen Zubair, and Junaid Qadir, “Islamic Virtue-Based Ethics for Artificial Intelligence,” *Discover Artificial Intelligence*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2022), p. 11, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44163-022-00033-1>.

Conclusion

Artificial intelligence confronts us not just with technical innovation, but with spiritual trial. It reveals not only the power of human creativity, but the fragility of human purpose. In this shifting terrain, the Islamic vision of man as *‘Abd* and *Khalīfah* – the *Qur’ānic Istikhlaḥ* Framework – offers a theological compass for the age of machines. It reminds us that our value is not in how efficiently we compute, but in how faithfully we uphold trust. The *Qur’ānic Istikhlaḥ* framework thus offers a principled response to the moral disorientation of our time. It challenges us to use AI not to dominate, but to dignify, not to escape our limits, but to fulfil our trust. The future, then, is not about choosing between faith and progress, but about allowing faith to illuminate the path of progress. This study concluded that the human identity, grounded in the faculties of *‘Aql* (intellect), *Qalb* (heart), *Rūḥ* (soul), *Nafs* (self), and *Fiṭrah* (primordial disposition), offers a coherent ethical and ontological framework for engaging AI. The article, among others, suggests that Muslims must not remain passive consumers of technology but should actively shape responsible AI development and governance with humility, moral clarity, human interest oriented, and divine purpose, ensuring that innovation serves human flourishing rather than eroding it. Specialised research on application of the *Qur’ānic Istikhlaḥ* Framework to deal with challenges of AI, digital culture, human identity and the future of human civilisation, culture education, economy and politics is highly recommended.

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