IJEMD-SS, 4 (2) (2025) https://doi.org/10.54938/ijemdss.2025.04.2.506

International Journal of Emerging Multidisciplinaries: Social Science

Research Paper

Journal Homepage: www.ojs.ijemd.com

ISSN (print): 2957-5311

Transhumanism and Qur'an-Centered Human Conception: A Contemporary Approach

Edanur Özyılmaz [1*]

1.Department of Theology, Sakarya University, Institute of Social Sciences, Sakarya, Türkiye

Abstract

Transhumanism, which emerged in the second half of the 20th century, is a movement that argues human nature is not fixed and immutable; rather, it can be transformed through technological and scientific innovations. In the transhumanist future, human forms are expressed through terms such as transhuman, posthuman, cyborg, and homo cyberneticus, reflecting the potential and levels of advancement of nanotechnology, biotechnology, and information technology in transforming humanity. From a Qurancentered perspective, humans are rational beings endowed with free will and bear responsibility. The most fundamental responsibility of a human is to recognize their Creator and their servitude. Humans, who are obliged to reflect the exemplary personalities of God's prophets, the vicegerents of Allah on Earth, are also tasked with cultivating the land. In the face of ideologies like transhumanism that aim to transcend human biological and cognitive limits, we believe it is crucial to revisit the Islamic conception of humanity. We are of the opinion that the studies conducted in this direction will be an important step towards reinterpreting Islam's universal message and providing solutions to contemporary issues.

Keywords: Religion; Kalam; Quran; Transhumanism; Human; Transhuman.

INTRODUCTION

Transhumanism, which emerged in the second half of the 20th century, can be described, in its simplest form, as a movement of techno-optimism. According to [1], transhumanism is a way of contemplating the future, grounded in the premise that the current state of humanity does not represent the pinnacle of our development but rather an early stage. [1] Transhumanists generally focus on altering human nature through advancements in nanotechnology, biotechnology, and information technologies, advocating for

Email addresses: edanur.ozyilmaz1@ogr.sakarya.edu.tr(Edanur).

transcending ordinary human traits, continuously enhancing human happiness, extending life, and even achieving immortality. [2]

Transhumanism should not be perceived merely as an unrestrained technological frenzy; it must also be recognized as a movement that assumes ethical responsibility for its aims and objectives. Transhumanists acknowledge that some technologies may pose significant threats to human life and even consider the possibility that the survival of our species might be at risk. For instance, cyber weapons have the potential to disrupt economic stability, manipulate political processes, and threaten human rights.[3]Therefore, understanding potential dangers to humanity and striving to prevent catastrophic outcomes constitutes a crucial part of the transhumanist agenda. [1] Transhumanists do not claim that the ideal of transcending the current human condition is an end in itself. Instead, they argue that it serves as a condition that enables the more widespread, enduring, and comprehensive pursuit of other goals and experiences, such as freedom, equality, moral development, global collaboration and peace, sustainability, and environmental preservation. Transhumanists are aware that even a posthuman being could experience boredom, depression, or anxiety without a sense of meaning, purpose, or belief.[4]

The ideals that define transhumanist thought—surpassing human conditions, achieving a superior form of humanity, or conquering death—are not new but have been expressed throughout human history. Humans have always envisioned attaining higher levels of consciousness and intelligence. Humanity has consistently sought to transcend its physical, intellectual, or environmental limitations. In ancient times, this was pursued through metaphysical elements, spiritual experiences, alchemy, or moral development in its simplest form. However, with scientific and technological advancements, these ideals are now pursued through rational and tangible realities.

When examining the Qur'anic verses on human creation, it becomes evident that the aim is not to provide ontological details about human nature. Instead, the verses emphasize Allah's infinite knowledge, power, and will, aiming to strengthen the faith of believers and challenge the denials of disbelievers. The Qur'an provides a significant framework for understanding human responsibilities, potential, and status through its verses on human creation and role on Earth. The appointment of Adam as Allah’s vicegerent on Earth, his ability to name things, the human acceptance of bearing the trust (amanah), and the descriptions of humans as *ahsan-i taqwim* (the best of forms) and *asfal as-safilin* (the lowest of the low) offer profound and meaningful insights into the Qur’anic conception of humanity. These elements reveal the purpose of human creation and responsibilities while demonstrating that humans are endowed with the capacities to access knowledge, establish moral values, and bring about order on Earth.

The primary objective of this study is to examine whether the conception of humanity presented by transhumanism—a modern philosophical and scientific movement—can be reconciled with the Qur'ancentered conception of humanity. To this end, the study considers areas of conflict, such as the abstract understanding of the soul, playing the role of God, altering God's creation, and societal inequalities, while also exploring potential points of alignment between the two perspectives. We hope that this study, by offering an interdisciplinary perspective, will contribute significantly to the literature and provide valuable insights for current and future discussions.

Transhumanist Conception of Humanity

The intellectual foundations of the transhumanist conception of humanity are rooted in various philosophical and scientific approaches. First and foremost, transhumanism merges the humanist legacy, which centers on humanity as a measure of value and emphasizes individual potential and freedom, with technology. Unlike humanist thought, which regards the human condition itself as inherently valuable, transhumanism views the current state of humanity, both physically and cognitively, as something to be transcended through technological means. While humanist thought considers humans valuable in and of themselves, transhumanism attributes value to humans in terms of their capacity for growth and transformation.

With the advent of Enlightenment thinking, faith in the power of the scientific method was reinforced, and the observable consequences of using knowledge and technology to facilitate human change and development began to materialize. Transhumanism, by relying on technological advancements that are testable and verifiable through scientific methods, and by focusing on tangible and observable progress rather than metaphysical speculation, embodies a positivist and empiricist stance. At the same time, its evaluation of the potential benefits and risks of such developments reflects a rationalist approach. From the perspective of scientific methodology, transhumanism considers the human being a subject of transformation and development through an empiricist, rationalist, and positivist lens.

Transhumanism also draws on two dominant materialist paradigms prevalent in today's world. The first is historical-sociological materialism, rooted in the social sciences, which posits that humans are shaped by historical contexts and the societal environments in which they are educated. The second is naturalistic materialism, which asserts that our genetic code fundamentally determines who we are and effectively complements the first paradigm. According to these two contemporary materialist paradigms, humans do not merely possess a history and a body; rather, they are entirely constituted by this history and this body. Transhumanism, with its contemporary materialist outlook, regards the human brain as a more complex machine than other machines and, accordingly, asserts that computers could one day think and feel as humans do.[5]

The general transhumanist conception of humanity can be characterized as materialist, physicalist, and functionalist. Consequently, transhumanists believe that phenomena such as thinking and feeling, which are often attributed to the self, are essentially tied to physical processes. While some transhumanists maintain that the self is intrinsically tied to the current physical human form, the majority adhere to a form of functionalism. According to this functionalist view, the self must be embodied in certain physical environments, but this does not necessarily require a biologically human medium. For example, if an individual's biological neurons were gradually replaced with synthetic components capable of supporting the same level of cognitive function, that individual could retain the same mind and personality traits despite existing within a non-biological medium.[6] Transhumanism advocates for

enhanced longevity and biological advancements that could radically alter desires, memory, cognition, and identity, potentially weakening personal identity ties over time. Transhumanist projects argue that cognitive and biological enhancements can fundamentally transform our understanding of the self and identity.[7]

One of the most significant approaches shaping the transhumanist conception of humanity is the theory of evolution, introduced by Charles Darwin in the 19th century, which remains a cornerstone of modern biology. According to transhumanist thought, while biological evolution is an immensely creative process, it can sometimes become confined within specific patterns. However, humans can identify these patterns and redesign them using genetic engineering and other scientific methods, thereby expanding the boundaries of evolution. This suggests the potential to transcend the natural limits of evolution and create new biological functions and traits.[8] In the natural evolutionary process, mutations and genetic changes occur randomly, with these changes subsequently directed by natural selection. Genetic engineering, however, has the capacity to reduce this randomness, enabling targeted modifications to achieve specific objectives.[9] From a transhumanist perspective, the already declining Homo sapiens species must and inevitably will be surpassed by a superior Homo cyberneticus. Unlike its predecessors, Homo cyberneticus will be the master of its destiny—a meta-human created in its own image. Transhumanists argue that choosing the path of artificial evolution and advancing irreversibly toward a post-human future is a more appropriate course for humanity than remaining as the current species.[10]

According to transhumanists, the scientific and technological advancements they advocate, along with humanity’s physical and cognitive integration into these developments, are a natural extension of humanity's evolutionary history.[11] For transhumanists, nature is not sacred, and thus there are no barriers to fundamentally altering, enhancing, or augmenting it. On the contrary, doing so is considered a moral duty. The human genome is not a sacred temple, and there is no reason to prevent modifications as long as they promote freedom and human happiness; indeed, such modifications should be encouraged.[5]

[12] defines evolution as a process of forming patterns through ascending orders of organization. He proposes that the history of evolution consists of six stages, each using the information-processing methods of the preceding stage to create the next.[12] Kurzweil describes the current human condition as version 1.0, arguing that the biological human body is fragile and requires tedious and protective maintenance rituals. While human intelligence can occasionally reach peaks of creativity and expressiveness, he views human thought as derivative, secondary, and limited. For instance, although the brain is impressive in many ways, it also has significant limitations. The brain relies on its intense parallelism—trillions of connections working simultaneously between neurons—to recognize fine patterns quickly. However, our thinking process is exceedingly slow. Kurzweil contends that basic neural operations are millions of times slower than contemporary electronic circuits, restricting the physiological bandwidth we use to process new information compared to the exponential growth of the human knowledge base. Kurzweil envisions version 2.0 of humanity as a future model that overcomes biological constraints, gains power over its evolutionary destiny, and possesses intelligence trillions upon trillions of times more advanced than its current form. This new humanity will also control its own mortality. [12]As for version 3.0 of the human body, Kurzweil predicts that it will allow us to reshape our physical forms based on the experiences gained from version 2.0. Like the transition from version 1.0 to 2.0, the shift to version 3.0 will be gradual, incorporating competing ideas and approaches.[12] [8] identifies seven key transformations for the human form:

1. Achieving longevity and immunity to aging through genetic modifications, cellular manipulations, and synthetic organs.
2. Enhancing sensory capabilities and developing new senses using biotechnological and computational methods.
3. Improving brain organization and capacity, expanding working memory, and increasing intelligence.
4. Creating a "Meta-Brain" that enhances awareness through sensory, computational, and intelligence networks, while enabling control over emotions.
5. Controlling genetic programming to correct individual and species-wide flaws and enhance physical and intellectual abilities.
6. Reshaping motivational and emotional responses in a healthy manner by addressing excessive emotions and removing emotional barriers to rational self-correction.
7. Transcending the state of being merely biological entities by integrating advancing technologies into humanity.[13]

Transhumanism's goal of enhancing humans both biologically and technologically goes beyond merely adding physical attributes to the body. It includes altering biology, extending lifespan, and transferring brain functions to non-biological platforms. Potential future modes of existence resulting from humancomputer interaction and bodily variations include the cybernetic human (cyborg), transhuman, prosthetic being, posthuman, and uploaded consciousness. These forms represent various possibilities for how technology could transform the human body and experience. Since these forms of existence have yet to be realized, their experiences remain largely speculative. However, artistic and design-based approaches offer ways to understand transhumanist ideas and technologies not only theoretically but also practically and aesthetically. Such endeavors provide fresh perspectives on potential future human experiences, enabling a more thorough evaluation of their benefits and challenges.[14] Transhumanism does not envision the human form merely as a metallic cybernetic organism or a disembodied entity. Rather, it proposes a being with a distributed identity that evolves over time, aiming to enhance humanity rather than eradicate it. Distributed identity implies that an individual's sense of self is not confined to a single physical body or entity but is instead spread across various platforms, systems, and environments. This suggests that identity and consciousness can transcend the physical body’s boundaries, existing across multiple domains and interacting among them. For instance, a person's thoughts and memories might be partially transferred to a digital brain, while others remain in a biological body. Components of identity could be distributed across virtual reality environments, digital networks, biological systems, and nonbiological systems.[14]

The potential human forms in a transhumanist future are described using various terms such as transhuman, posthuman, cyborg, Homo cyberneticus, Homo deus, Humanity 2.0, and Humanity 3.0. These terms reflect different levels of advancement enabled by nanotechnology, biotechnology, computer science, and information technologies. Transhumanism emphasizes the use of these technologies to enhance human existence. However, as humanity evolves and develops, these technologies will also evolve, aiming to transcend biological limitations to achieve features like superintelligence, enhanced physical capabilities, or extended lifespan, ultimately transforming humans into "post-human" entities.

Temporal and qualitative differences among these uses are immediately apparent. However, despite discussing such differences, it is challenging to precisely delineate and define the boundaries between these forms of humanity. This is because we are referring to possible projections about the future, and the transition to these new forms will occur gradually over time. The transition between human types can be likened to a spectrum of colors blending into one another. Each color (type) connects to the next through smooth transitions, and the boundary between a particular color (type) and the next is neither definitive nor sharp. Therefore, determining transitions between types in human evolution is as challenging as pinpointing a specific shade within a spectrum. While we can refer to certain definitions such as transhuman and posthuman, it can often be quite difficult to strictly limit the qualities that constitute the content of these definitions. Furthermore, as these concepts encompass projections about a future that has not yet materialized, it can be observed that even among transhumanists, there is no complete consensus on the definitions and characteristics of these concepts.

According to José Luis Cordeiro, humanity finds itself at a crossroads, akin to other natural species that are being reclassified in light of new relational dynamics and shifting epistemological paradigms. By exploring the bodily, cognitive, and agentic boundaries of humans, we can observe where humanity ceases to be defined by traditional notions, where it is questioned, and where individuals position themselves to grow or become more than human. Our understanding of ourselves and our relationships with the natural world is significantly evolving due to continuous advancements in science and technology. Reality is not static; humans and the rest of nature are dynamic and in a state of perpetual change. Humanity's current state is not the endpoint of evolution but the beginning of a conscious and technological evolution.[15]

The Qur'anic Concept of Humanity

In the Qur'an, the creation of human beings is addressed in two distinct ways: organic and inorganic. Inorganic creation is discussed in the context of Prophet Adam, while organic creation encompasses humanity as a whole. Numerous verses emphasize that the fundamental elements of human creation are composed of earth, water, and their derivatives, as well as components of the human biological structure, such as sperm and the embryo formed by fertilized ova. Both creation processes described in the Qur'an attribute the existence of humans to physical and biological causes rooted in the earth. However, in Surah Al-Hijr (15:29), Allah states, "When I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down prostrate to him." The phrase "breathed into him of My spirit" implies the presence of an element in human essence that transcends the physical and biological factors emphasized in other verses.

Islamic scholars have proposed various interpretations regarding the nature of the "spirit" mentioned in this verse. While none of the scholars deny the existence of the spirit in the context of human essence, there is no consensus regarding its exact nature. According to Al-Zamakhshari, the phrase "breathed into him of My spirit" means "endowed him with life." He asserts that there is neither literal breathing nor a physical entity being infused; rather, it is a metaphorical expression describing the life imparted by Allah.[16] Similarly, Al-Maturidi holds that the spirit is a force that animates the created body, pervading all its parts, but its exact nature is beyond complete human comprehension.[17]

On the other hand, Imam Al-Ash'ari describes the spirit as wind, a subtle substance that circulates through the cavities of the human body. According to him, humans do not live because of the spirit but because of life itself. However, as long as life persists, the spirit remains within the body. Thus, the spirit

acts as the carrier of life, but it is not the source of life itself. Al-Ash‘ari interprets Qur'anic expressions such as “the spirit departs” and “when the soul reaches the throat” as indicative of the characteristics of physical substances. He argues that the body’s existence depends on the spirit in the same way that it depends on nourishment and water: just as the body cannot survive without nourishment, it cannot live without the spirit. Life requires the presence of both the spirit and sustenance. In this sense, the spirit is one of the essential elements for the body’s survival.[19]

Interestingly, Al-Ash‘ari’s definition of the spirit bears notable similarities to the role of oxygen in the human body as understood in modern science. While it does not precisely align with the physical, chemical, and biological processes associated with oxygen today, his description reflects a concept analogous to the function of oxygen. Considering the scientific limitations of Al-Ash‘ari’s time, his explanations about the spirit remarkably parallel the modern understanding of oxygen as an indispensable element for sustaining life.

According to Qadi Abd al-Jabbar, whose views on the soul align closely with those of Al-Ash‘ari, the soul is a subtle and delicate entity, distinct from any material or structural element within the body. The soul must reside in a living being to grant it vitality. However, it is impossible for the soul to possess life and volition itself, as life requires moisture and a specific structure—attributes absent in the nature of the soul.
The soul is essential for life, akin to blood, yet it is not a part of living beings. Therefore, claims that the soul is alive or possesses will are invalid. In this context, the soul can be understood as an energy or breath within the body but cannot be regarded as a living and volitional entity.[20]

Fakhr al-Din al-Razi interprets the term “breathed” in the verse as suggesting that the soul resembles air or wind, yet he contends that the act of breathing is not performed directly by Allah. Instead, the phrase symbolizes the soul’s honor and significance.[21] Similarly, Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır understands this expression as the exaltation of humanity but also interprets it as the refinement and maturation of matter’s potential.[22]
It is important to emphasize that the interpretations of this verse and the explanations provided by scholars in this context are speculative. The verse may suggest that the soul is a substance distinct from the body, but this does not necessitate that it exists independently of the body. The soul’s distinction from the body does not imply that it is entirely separate or isolated from it. In other words, while the soul and the body may be different in structure, they are not independent or disconnected entities. The soul can be understood either as an attribute signifying vitality or as the integrity of the body that enables human functions.(Türker, 2022, s. 28)

The Qur’an does not address the subject of creation to provide direct ontological knowledge about the essence of humanity. Instead, these discussions aim to highlight Allah’s absolute sovereignty over the universe, His transcendence, infinite power, and the necessity of worshiping Him alone.
When examining hadith reports regarding creation, it is evident that many of these narrations have been critiqued in terms of their chains of transmission and textual content. Furthermore, a significant portion of these narrations are not directly attributable to the Prophet Muhammad but instead derive from Isra’iliyat, or knowledge borrowed from the People of the Book.(Oruçhan, 1994)

The Qur’an discusses human beings not only in terms of their creation but also in light of their weaknesses and superior attributes. For instance, in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:30), Allah declares, “And

[mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, ‘Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority
(khalifa).’” Similarly, in Surah Sad (38:26), Allah says, “O David, indeed We have made you a successor (khalifa) upon the earth…” These verses affirm that prophets were created as Allah’s deputies to govern among people in accordance with His commands. In essence, all prophets are deputies tasked with executing Allah’s rulings among their communities, and every community is obliged to abide by the rulings of their prophet.

In Surah Al-Baqarah (2:31–33), it is mentioned that Adam was taught the names, and he conveyed these names to the angels. While scholars have diverse interpretations regarding the nature of these names,([25], [26] what is crucial for us here is that, although these verses narrate the story of Adam, they signify the universal human capacity to acquire knowledge and transmit it to others.
In Surah Al-Ahzab (33:72), Allah states, "Indeed, We offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man [undertook to] bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant." Numerous interpretations have been offered regarding the nature of this “Trust” (amanah), including the declaration of faith (shahada and tawhid), the obligations prescribed by Allah (such as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage), human faculties like hearing, sight, and limbs entrusted for preservation, the knowledge of Allah, obedience to His commands, and even interpersonal trusts.[27], [28], [16]. However, what is significant here is not the precise nature of the trust but the fact that humans possess the capacity and qualifications to bear it.

In Surah At-Tin (95:4–6), it is declared: "We have certainly created man in the best of stature; then We return him to the lowest of the low—except for those who believe and do righteous deeds, for they will have a reward uninterrupted." The phrase "the best of stature" (ahsan-i taqwim) signifies crafting something in the most optimal and harmonious manner. Humans are created upright, with the ability to carefully select their sustenance, as well as endowed with intellect, willpower, understanding, decency, and knowledge.[31] Allah has equipped humans with the faculties and abilities to utilize objects for their benefit and has also endowed them with discernment and knowledge. By performing righteous deeds, humans can attain a unique dignity and merit not possessed by other creatures.[29] This is further emphasized in Surah Al-Isra (17:70): "And We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference." The continuation of Surah At-Tin mentions that humans may descend to “the lowest of the low” unless they believe and perform righteous deeds. Similarly, in Surah Al-A‘raf (7:179), a group among humans and jinn is described as being "like livestock; rather, they are more astray."

From these verses, it can be inferred that while humans are created with qualities that render them unique and privileged, they may degrade to the lowest position by deviating from Allah’s path and committing evil deeds. As beings endowed with intellect and free will, humans have the potential for both good and evil. However, they must always remember that their choices carry consequences in the sight of Allah.
This is highlighted in Surah Al-Mu’minun (23:115): "Then did you think that We created you uselessly and that to Us you would not be returned?" This verse draws attention to the purposeful nature of human creation. Surah Adh-Dhariyat (51:56) further specifies this purpose: "And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me." However, worshiping Allah on earth is not limited to rituals and obedience alone. Surah Hud (11:61) reminds us of another responsibility: "It is He who has produced

you from the earth and settled you in it to develop it." This indicates that humans are also tasked with organizing and cultivating their worldly lives.

From the aforementioned verses, the Qur'anic conception of humanity can be summarized as follows: Humans are created beings with a beginning and an end, brought into existence by a necessarily existent Creator. Their existence is contingent and dependent upon a cause. The creation of humans in this world is purposeful. Their primary duty and attribute are to recognize their Creator and acknowledge their servitude to Him. For humans to fulfill this servitude, they must be tested in this world, equipped with qualities such as intellect, knowledge, willpower, and strength. Another responsibility is to establish a moral order on earth in accordance with Allah's commands, utilizing the superior attributes bestowed upon them. To guide humanity in this task, Allah sent prophets as His deputies. Under the guidance of these prophets and the principles conveyed through them, humans act as deputies of the prophets, both spiritually and materially contributing to the development of the world. Thus, the "Trust" assigned to humans encompasses these two significant duties: acknowledging and fulfilling servitude to Allah and establishing a moral and ethical order in this world in accordance with His divine will.

Can a Reconciliation Be Achieved Between the Transhumanist Conception of Humanity and the Qur'anic Perspective?

One of the primary obstacles to reconciling transhumanism with most religious systems is the relationship between the soul and the body. In Abrahamic faiths, including their theological traditions, the belief that humans possess a unique soul that cannot be transferred to other beings is widely accepted and poses a significant challenge for transhumanists.[33] However, when examining the Qur'an, it becomes evident that the Qur'anic conception of humanity does not promote a dualistic view of the soul and body.

The term "nafs" in the Qur'an, particularly in the later phases of Islamic philosophy and under the influence of Sufism, came to be understood as a separate substance distinct from the body, often synonymous with the soul. However, in the Qur'an, the term "nafs" is predominantly used in the sense of self or selves. In some verses, it denotes the deepest essence of a person, the living reality of the human being. Nevertheless, there is no suggestion that the "nafs" is something separate from the body. In this context, the "nafs" can be understood as the inner self or personality of a person, composed of a life-consciousness center and a reason-intellect center.[34] The life-consciousness center is the fundamental internal force that enables the continuation of life, providing the basic energy required for survival, the sense of vitality, and the instinct for self-preservation. The reason-intellect center refers to the mental faculties or capacities that allow humans to think logically, analyze events, make decisions, and acquire knowledge. When these two centers are considered together, it can be said that the "nafs" arises from their combination. In other words, the "nafs" is shaped by the interplay of the life force (hayat) that sustains human existence and the cognitive abilities (aql) that enable rational thought. In this sense, the "nafs" represents the center that determines a person's identity and existence. This center simultaneously encompasses the life force that ensures survival and the mental capacities for decision-making, reasoning, and wisdom. Together, these elements constitute the unique personality and inner world of the individual.

The widespread adoption of the notion of the soul as a distinct entity separate from the body is often attributed to the observation that, despite the body's constant transformation, aging, and decay, there

remains a persistent sense of self or identity, which is identified as the soul or "nafs." However, this perspective might stem from a limited understanding of the human body. Human organs are created to fulfill specific functions and capacities. Although they undergo continuous change due to cellular regeneration, their essential functions are preserved. For instance, the cells of the eye are constantly renewed, yet the organ continues to perform its function of vision unless it sustains physical damage. Similarly, could it not be that the human body possesses an organ capable of maintaining a stable consciousness or sense of self despite the ongoing changes within the body?[35]

Modern neuroscience, which maps the brain's regions and examines their functions, attributes many faculties traditionally associated with the mind or soul to specific regions or systems within the brain.[36] Advanced brain imaging technologies, such as computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), and positron emission tomography (PET), have enabled the observation of the human brain while it is still alive and the identification of brain damage. These imaging tools have revealed correlations between brain damage and behavioral changes. Moreover, cognitive faculties can now be pinpointed and examined with precision using these imaging devices. Thus, advancements in neuroscience and brain imaging challenge traditional views of the soul as a separate essence, instead pointing to the brain as the central organ responsible for many faculties historically attributed to the soul or "nafs." This understanding opens new avenues for reconciling transhumanist conceptions of humanity with religious perspectives by framing the "nafs" not as a separate entity but as an integrative function of the body’s biological and cognitive systems.

Numerous neurological cases clearly demonstrate the correlation between mental functions and the brain. One of the most notable examples is Phineas Gage, a railroad foreman who suffered a severe brain injury while working with explosives. During an accident, a 1.11-meter-long, 6-kilogram iron rod was propelled

through his left cheek, passing upward and exiting through the top of his skull. Remarkably, Gage survived and lived for over a decade after the incident. However, the injury caused profound changes to his personality. Formerly kind, sociable, and mild-mannered, Gage became impulsive, unreliable, quarrelsome, and disrespectful. The transformation was so radical that his acquaintances reportedly stated, "Gage is no longer Gage. Another notable case involves a relative of Kelly James Clark, who was a kind and gentle Christian. Following a snowmobile accident, this individual suffered a closed head injury and spent three weeks in a coma. Upon regaining consciousness, his personality underwent a dramatic transformation. The once tender and devout Christian had become irritable, aggressive, and an avowed atheist.[37] For further examples of the correlation between mental functions and the brain, references can be made to V. S. Ramachandran and Sandra Blakeslee's "Phantoms in the Brain: Probing the Mysteries of the Human Mind" and Jonah Lehrer's "How We Decide."

These cases illustrate the difficulty of substantiating the existence of a metaphysical entity independent of the physical body. They demonstrate that physical trauma to the brain can profoundly affect the mind, self, or personality. Explaining such drastic changes through the concept of an abstract, disembodied soul appears increasingly untenable. Contemporary neuroscience supports these findings through studies in localization. Researchers have identified specific regions of the brain that activate during particular psychological events or experiences. For example, psychologists have observed significant activity in the prefrontal cortex and the anterior cingulate cortex when patients mourn the loss of loved ones. Moreover, longitudinal studies have revealed that chronic psychological conditions, such as depression, can alter the size of the hippocampus and lead to structural changes in the brain over time. These findings underscore the critical role of the brain in governing mental functions and personality, posing challenges to traditional conceptions of the soul as separate from the physical body.[37]

One of the frequently cited criticisms against transhumanism in religious discourse is that its goals, objectives, and areas of application involve humans attempting to assume the role of God, thereby intervening in and corrupting His creation. This perspective arises, in part, from the lack of a clear distinction in Islamic theology (kalam) regarding the domains of divine and human actions. Acts considered under the absolute sovereignty of God in one theological school may be seen as part of the human sphere of influence in another. The primary reason for this discrepancy is that conceptions of God, apart from their unity under the tawhid principle of the Qur'an, are not independent of historical and contextual factors and may vary over time and space. Declaring certain domains as exclusive to divine action—particularly in periods when science was far more limited compared to today—and treating these as universally binding principles does not align with the dynamic nature of kalam. The relationship between God, humanity, and the universe in kalam is a delicate subject that can evolve depending on temporal and spatial contexts. Since the creation of the universe and humanity, many transformations and developments have occurred. However, asserting that God's relationship with humanity and the cosmos has remained entirely unchanged throughout these transformations risks relegating God to a passive role.(Can, 2022, s. 84)

To make this concept more comprehensible, we can examine verse 34 of Surah Luqman: *"Indeed, Allah [alone] has knowledge of the Hour, sends down the rain, and knows what is in the wombs.*
And no soul perceives what it will earn tomorrow, and no soul perceives in what land it will die. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted." Based on this verse, it has been argued that only Allah knows when

the Hour will come, when rain will fall, the gender and complexion of the unborn, what a person will achieve in the future, and where they will die—collectively referred to as the mughayyebat al-khams (the five unseen matters).[39] However, knowledge and control over certain aspects of these matters, such as predicting rainfall or influencing it, have now entered the human domain.

Today, meteorological sciences enable us to forecast weather conditions daily or even weekly. Additionally, artificial rainfall can be induced to address water shortages and augment resources. Similarly, medical advancements allow for routine monitoring of the fetus in the womb, with the capacity to intervene when necessary. If this verse is interpreted without considering its historical context, then contemporary abilities to induce rainfall, predict it, or monitor and intervene in the state of an unborn child could be construed as assuming the role of God. However, the verse's reference to the exclusive knowledge or agency of God regarding these matters pertains to the conditions of its revelation when such capabilities were beyond human reach. The verse does not prohibit humans from acquiring knowledge or exercising agency in these domains.

The reality is that, even if we desired, we cannot "play the role of God." Such an idea is logically incompatible with the conception of God as an absolute sovereign with unparalleled power and knowledge. The notion that humans could "play God" stems from a flawed assumption about the nature of divine and natural abilities. If "playing God" refers to intervening in nature, then it is evident that humanity has a long and proven history of doing so. For instance, we have developed various methods to cure diseases, ranging from the traditional use of medicinal herbs to modern pharmaceuticals, surgeries, and vaccines. Similarly, the domestication of wild plants by our ancestors transformed them into crops like wheat, peas, and lentils—essential staples in modern diets. Moreover, the seedless watermelon, sweet corn, and countless other farm products we consume today are hybrid innovations resulting from human interventions in nature.

In conclusion, efforts in synthetic biology to create entirely new organisms are, when evaluated in a historical context, neither as radical nor as revolutionary as they might initially appear. Throughout human history, similar attempts to manipulate nature and create new life forms have occurred. Therefore, contemporary advancements in synthetic biology should not be regarded as extraordinary or unexpected within this broader framework. However, groundbreaking technologies that challenge established norms or traditions are often perceived as "playing God." For instance, in the 18th century, the introduction of the smallpox vaccine faced opposition from various religious denominations on the grounds that it interfered with divine intentions. Similarly, Benjamin Franklin's invention of the lightning rod, during a time when lightning was considered a form of divine judgment, led some of his contemporaries to accuse him of playing God. Even Henry Ford's Model T automobile provoked religious objections from certain quarters.[40]

Transhumanists argue that nature is sometimes harmful and should not always be accepted as it is. They highlight numerous unacceptable aspects of human nature—such as cancer, malaria, dementia, aging, hunger, unnecessary suffering, cognitive deficiencies, murder, rape, genocide, deceit, torture, racism—and contend that these should be rejected.[41] Essentially, intervening in such undesirable aspects of human nature is less about corrupting it and more about improving and enhancing its capacities. From this perspective, transhumanism can also be viewed as a pursuit of self-improvement and betterment through the application of human intellect and capabilities granted by God. In Islam, there is no inherent objection to improving living conditions through the use of knowledge and technology, provided that principles such as justice, equity, preservation of human dignity, accountability, avoidance of waste, honesty, and transparency are upheld.

Health is a fundamental indicator of human quality of life. The state of health affects the quality of life; the lack of medical facilities negatively impacts the quality of life. [42]Transhumanist goals, such as curing diseases, extending human life, and improving health, should be considered valuable and encouraged from a religious standpoint as long as they serve the purpose of enhancing human well-being. Indeed, Islam recognizes the significance of health to such an extent that certain prohibitions are lifted when health is at stake. This is a fundamental principle that underscores the importance Islam places on the human body.[43] For instance, organ transplantation and biotechnological interventions aimed at extending life and improving health are deemed permissible under specific conditions in Islamic jurisprudence. This demonstrates the compatibility of transhumanism's goals of enhancing human health and quality of life with Islam's principles of preserving life and prioritizing health. Similarly, the prevention of hereditary diseases through genetic engineering aligns with Islam's emphasis on the preservation of lineage and fostering healthy generations. Furthermore, applications of human-machine integration, such as prosthetic limbs and neurotechnological implants, enhance the quality of life for individuals with disabilities. These practices are consistent with Islamic principles of preserving human dignity and promoting social equity.

One of the most pressing concerns regarding the transhumanist conception of humanity is the potential for increased inequality within societal structures. For instance, Francis Fukuyama argues that in a transhumanist future, wealthy individuals may have greater access to technology, equipping themselves with technological privileges that would perpetuate their superior social status and further deepen societal inequality and discord.[44] Conversely, Ray Kurzweil contends that the exponential growth in priceperformance ratios will lead to the rapid affordability of all technologies, potentially rendering them nearly free.[12] For example, the earliest personal computers were prohibitively expensive, accessible only to large corporations and a few individuals. By the late 1990s and early 2000s, computer prices had dropped significantly, becoming accessible to a broader audience. Low-cost computers and laptops have made computing technology increasingly available. Today, computers and laptops are offered in a wide range of price brackets, with affordable models available even for low-budget users. Technological advancements consistently trickle down from higher-income social groups to lower-income groups. However, Kurzweil asserts that this diffusion is accelerating exponentially due to the rapid and continuous reduction in the cost per unit of technological tools.

Transhumanists acknowledge the potential dangers posed by technology but also believe that human enhancement technologies possess significant potential for valuable and beneficial applications. According to transhumanists, the most prudent approach in the face of these possibilities is to embrace technological progress while strongly advocating for human rights and individual choice. This includes taking measures against the use of biological weapons for military or terrorist purposes, preventing undesired environmental or social side effects, and addressing tangible threats. Not all change constitutes progress. Even well-intentioned technological interventions in human nature may not yield universally beneficial outcomes. Given that attitudes toward human enhancement technologies are likely to vary, it is crucial not to impose a one-size-fits-all solution from above. Instead, individuals should consult their own consciences about what is right for themselves and their families. Informing the public, engaging in open discussion, and promoting education are the most appropriate approaches to encouraging others to make wise choices. Rather than globally banning potentially beneficial medical or enhancement options, efforts should focus on providing accurate information through these means[41]

In conclusion, it can be said that transhumanists do not adopt an uncompromising stance or impose a specific conception of humanity. Their primary goal is to maximize human potential through biological and technological advancements. This objective does not conflict with the fundamental purpose of Islam, which is servitude to God. As long as humans remain rational beings, they continue to bear the responsibility of recognizing their Creator and their servitude to Him. This responsibility remains unchanged, whether humans establish colonies at the farthest reaches of the galaxy or whether their veins are coursed with nanobots rather than blood.

Moreover, transhumanists' aim to maximize human potential aligns with Islam's emphasis on human responsibility to cultivate the Earth through principles such as justice, equity, brotherhood, morality, education, social justice, and spiritual values. At this juncture, integrating technological and biological advancements in harmony with spiritual values can be encouraged, ensuring balanced development of humanity both spiritually and technologically.

The principles of Islam, which emphasize social justice and equality, and the transhumanist commitment to autonomy, individual rights, and solidarity with all humanity, guided by a responsible and inclusive moral vision[45], offer a potential foundation for shaping the future society.
It is crucial for Muslims to play a role in designing future societal structures and systems, guiding human development and progress toward goodness and truth. Many of the concerns expressed about the transhumanist future—such as the ethical implications of intervening in nature, the essence and boundaries of being human, the extent to which interventions retain humanity, the nature of what comes after humans, and the fate of those who reject such interventions—stem from the fact that the ethical limits of these future technological advancements have yet to be fully delineated. Therefore, it is imperative for Islamic perspectives to play a critical role in constructing ethical principles that can serve as benchmarks for humanity's future.[46]

CONCLUSION

The transhumanist conception of humanity and Islam's understanding of the human being present potential areas of conflict, particularly concerning the abstract notion of the soul, the assumption of the divine creative role, the modification of creation, and societal inequality. However, when Islam's perspective on humanity is approached from a more holistic standpoint, it becomes apparent that absolute and inevitable discord between these two conceptions is not unavoidable. In this context, we argue that adopting a conciliatory attitude rather than a confrontational approach, and aiming to find common ground between these two perspectives, can lead to more constructive and beneficial outcomes.

Although achieving complete harmony between transhumanism and Islamic teachings may not be feasible, it is both possible and crucial for Muslims to make significant intellectual contributions to the future vision of humanity. Perspectives offered by Islam on issues such as the preservation of human dignity, the balance between spiritual and technological development, the promotion of social justice, the protection of nature, and visions for the future can provide valuable insights into transhumanist discussions. These approaches can help address ethical, spiritual, and societal challenges in the modern world more comprehensively and equitably. To achieve this, a reconciliatory and objective stance, rather than a reactionary one, is likely to yield more effective and meaningful results. By prioritizing dialogue

and mutual understanding, the rich ethical and spiritual frameworks within Islamic thought can contribute to shaping a balanced discourse on transhumanism.

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