

Posthumanism and Transhumanism: An Islamic and Critical Philosophical Critique of the "Concept of Man" and the "Dignity of Bani Adam"

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The present study is a critical and comprehensive assessment of the philosophical paradigms of transhumanism and posthumanism in the classical and contemporary Islamic epistemological perspective. Transhumanism is based on the present trajectory of techno-science and calls for the radical enhancement of human physical, cognitive and psychological capacities thru emerging technologies (AI, genetic editing, nanotechnology, and cybernetics), leading to a posthuman condition. This paper explores the ontological antecedents of these movements, tracing them to Enlightenment rationalism, Cartesian dualism and neoliberal reductive materialism. This critique, invoking the Islamic metaphysical notion of Insān (the human being) and the basic doctrine of Karāmat Banī Ādam (the inherent dignity of the children of Adam), exposes the vulnerabilities of the diminution of human identity to information processing units or just biological substrate. The paper argues thru comparative structural analysis that

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transhumanism is based on an eschatology of self-directed technological evolution to overcome mortality and suffering. Islam, in contrast, views the human condition as an equilibrium of physical limitation and spiritual primacy designated for divine stewardship (Khilāfah). It tackles major bioethical divides, digital eschatology, and the commercialization of human nature. The article presents a holistic metaphysical alternative that protects human dignity without rejecting ethical scientific achievements.

Keywords: Transhumanism, Posthumanism, Concept of Man, Dignity of Adam, Islamic Bioethics, Techno-Scientific Materialism, Divine Stewardship

1. Introduction: The Technocentric Horizon of the 21st Century

The current global intellectual terrain is being increasingly shaped by an ontological crisis engineered by the exponential convergence of biotechnology, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, and cognitive science. At the vanguard of this civilizational mutation are transhumanism and posthumanism, movements of thought, culture, and politics that aspire to nothing less than the systematic obsolescence of the human species as historically understood (Hayles, 1999).

As a politics of activism, transhumanism believes that the biological form of *Homo sapiens* is the first and highly flawed iteration of evolutionary development (More & Vita-More, 2013). Transhumanists advocate for the deliberate application of technology to engineer a transitional species (“transhuman”) with radically improved longevity, cognitive bandwidth, and emotional regulation, eventually resulting in a “posthuman,” an entity whose capabilities are so far beyond present-day humans as to make traditional definitions of humanity meaningless. Philosophically, this techno-scientific imperative is not merely a collection of advanced medical or engineering techniques; it is a profound metaphysical statement about the “Concept of Man” (Nasr, 1968, 1981). It seeks to break down the classical distinctions between the organic and the inorganic, the natural and the artificial, the born and the made. Transhumanism challenges the fundamental axioms of theological anthropology by framing aging, disease, suffering and death as structural design flaws rather than

existential parameters of the human condition (Fukuyama, 2002; Kass, 2002; Sandel, 2007). In the Islamic intellectual matrix, this technological trajectory comes into direct contact with the fundamental doctrine of the *Karāmat Banī Ādam*—the inherent, divinely mandated dignity given to the offspring of Adam (Filali, 1999; Ramadan, 2018). In the Qur’anic story, the human being is a unique composite reality of clay (ṭīn) and divine breath (rūḥ), intended to be the cosmic steward (khālīfah) on the earth (Al-Attas, 1995; Qutb, 1980). Therefore, the transhumanist project is not just an extension of the traditional Islamic discipline of medicine (ṭibb), but a radical philosophical counter-narrative that seeks to redefine the teleology, ontology and axiological worth of the human being (Ghaly, 2014, 2016; Padela, 2021).

This study offers a systematic and academic critique of transhumanism and posthumanism by contrasting their techno-materialist premises with the metaphysical realism of Islamic philosophy and theology.

2. Deconstructing Transhumanism and Posthumanism: Philosophical Premises and Ontological Reductions

For us to assess the scope of the transhumanist challenge, we must first isolate its core philosophical tenets. Transhumanism is based on a radically optimistic techno-utopian version of secular humanism (Hughes, 2004; Ranisch & Sorgner, 2014). It rejects any teleological or transcendent scheme which imposes unflexible limits on human development. The movement is grounded in a number of core axioms:

- **Radical Cybernetic Materialism:** The human mind is understood as an informational processing network that is essentially reducible to patterns of computational data (Hayles, 1999). Biology is a historically contingent substrate, upgradeable or discardable.

- **Technological Eschatology:** Salvation is secularized and projected into the future of history. Technological leaps such as the “Singularity,” extreme life extension, and mind uploading—not divine intervention or spiritual purification—will free us from suffering, physical aging, and death (Kurzweil, 2005).

- **Morphological Freedom:** The ethical obligation that individuals have an absolute right to alter, augment, or reconstruct their bodies and minds at will, viewing the biological form as private property rather than a sacred trust.

Although historically linked to transhumanism, posthumanism has often been presented in Continental philosophy as a more theoretical, anti-humanist critique (Braidotti, 2013, 2016). It aims to deconstruct the Eurocentric ‘Human’ of the Enlightenment, arguing that the demarcation between human subject and non-human environment (animals, machines, ecosystems) is a false demarcation used to uphold socio-political hierarchies (Haraway, 1991).

Both movements are vulnerable to a critical philosophical critique and show a deep ontological reductionism (Al-Messiri, 2002a, 2002b). Transhumanism dehumanizes the human subject to an informational pattern or an agglomeration of genetic codes and thus renders the self devoid of interiority, subjective unity and metaphysical depth (Al-Attas, 1995; Nasr, 1981). In a hyper-capitalist framework, the human is emptied of its qualitative spiritual essence and re-imagined as a quantitative mechanism optimized for efficiency, performance and survival (Lilley, 2013).

3. The Cartesian-Enlightenment Lineage and the Techno-Scientific Mutation of Humanism

The philosophical genealogy of transhumanism is fundamentally rooted in structural assumptions of Western modernity (Habermas, 2003; Nasr, 1968). Transhumanism is not a sudden break

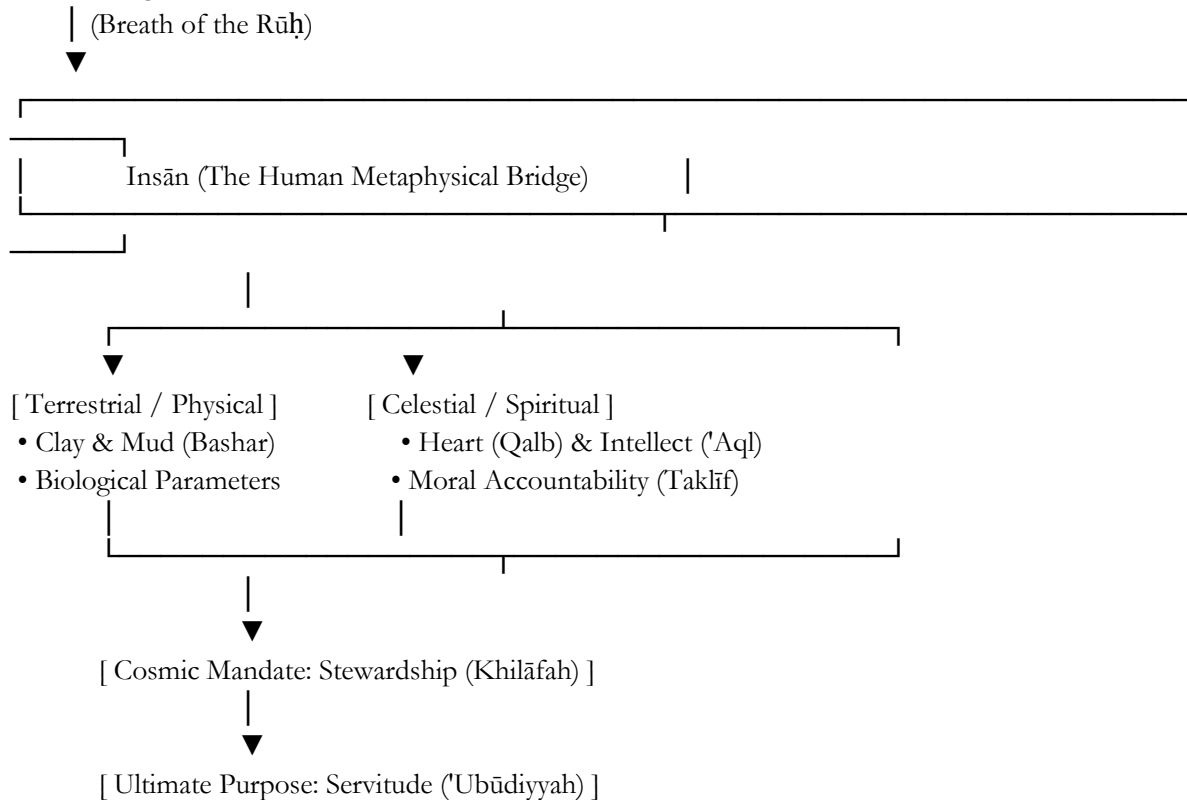
with 21st-century lab discoveries but the logical end point of the project of human autonomy that began in the European Enlightenment and found its foundation in Cartesian metaphysics.

The radical division of reality by René Descartes into *res cogitans* (thinking substance) and *res extensa* (extended and material substance) made it possible to think of the physical body as a mechanical automaton, without any inherent sacredness (Nasr, 1968, 1981). Once the body was conceived as a clockwork mechanism it became an object of empirical manipulation, dissection and eventual redesign. This mechanical philosophy was extended by the Baconian project of mastering nature, where knowledge was directly related with power and operational control of the material world. This framework was developed in the Enlightenment into a secularized humanism, replacing the divine order with the centrality of human reason and autonomous will in the universe. Nature was robbed of its intrinsic teleology (*telos*) and reduced to raw material that awaited human ingenuity’s chisel. Transhumanism applies this Enlightenment ideal of continuous progress directly to the biological makeup of the human being. The Enlightenment wanted to liberate man from political and religious constraints while transhumanism wants to liberate man from his biological constraints (Fukuyama, 2002). The human body itself is the last frontier of colonization, brought under the absolute dominion of human technique.

4. The Islamic Concept of Man (*Insān*): Ontological Foundations, Teleology, and Cosmic Stewardship (*Khilāfah*)

Whereas posthumanism provides a fluctuating, plastic idea of humanity, the Islamic metaphysical tradition provides a fixed, multi-dimensional, and hierarchical “Concept of Man”. *Insān*, the human being, is not an accidental product of blind material forces, nor a mechanical apparatus which is capable of arbitrary self-evolution (Izutsu 1964; Nasr 1968). *Insān*, in contrast, is a conscious and highly sophisticated divine act of creation with a unique metaphysical status across multiple domains of reality (Al-Bouti, 2001; Shariati, 1981). The human being is dual in nature

ontologically (Al-Attas, 1995; Ibn Miskawayh, 1985). The Qur'an states explicitly that man was created from the basic components of the earth, dry clay, altered mud (*ṣaḥṣāḥ min ḥama'in masnūn*) which symbolizes the physical, biological and instinctual dimension of the human existence (*al-bashariyyah*) (Islahi, 1985; Qutb, 1980). But this physical architecture reaches the status of humanity only when God breathes into it from His spirit (*wa nafakhtu fihi min rūḥi*). This divine inflation creates an immutable, non-material dimension in the human constitution: the *rūḥ* (spirit), the *qalb* (spiritual heart), and the *'aql* (intellect) (Al-Ghazali, 2004; Chittick, 1989; Najati, 1993). Hence, the human being is a micro-cosmic [Divine Origin]



barzakh (bridge) between the celestial realm of pure light (*'ālam al-malakūt*) and the terrestrial realm of dense matter (*'ālam al-mulk*) (Al-Fārābī, 1985; Chittick, 1989). The teleology of the *Insān* is explicitly defined in relation to the transcendent (Al- Bouti, 2001). The ultimate purpose of human life is the attainment of *'Ubūdiyyah*—mindful and loving servitude and submission to the Divine Essence (Al-Attas, 1995; Maududi, 1965). This spiritual destiny is supplemented by the cosmic mandate of *Khilāfah* (stewardship) as formulated in the primordial covenant (*Mīthāq*) where humanity accepted the trust (*al-Amānah*) which the heavens, the earth, and the mountains refused to carry (Al-Asfahani, 1987; Islahi, 1985)

Significantly, the physical limitations of the human body—its susceptibility, biological requirements, fatigue, aging, and eventual death—are not structural design flaws that technology can eliminate (Al-Ghazali, 2004; Ibn Qayyim, 1994). These are deliberate and teleologically necessary parameters to promote humility, dependence on the Creator and moral testing (*Balā'*) (Al-Hanbali, 2003; Thanvi, n.d.).

The transhumanist attempt to overcome these limitations is a profound misreading of human teleology, confusing the sphere of spiritual development with a badly made biological machine.

5. *Karāmat Banī Ādam* (The Dignity of the Children of Adam): An Axiological and Metaphysical Counter-Narrative

The ontological doctrine of *Karāmat Banī Ādam* is the main axiological defense from the Islamic paradigm against the posthuman dissolution of humanity (Ramadan, 2018). This principle is based on the definitive text of the Qur'an: "And We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference" (Qur'an 17:70) (Islahi, 1985).

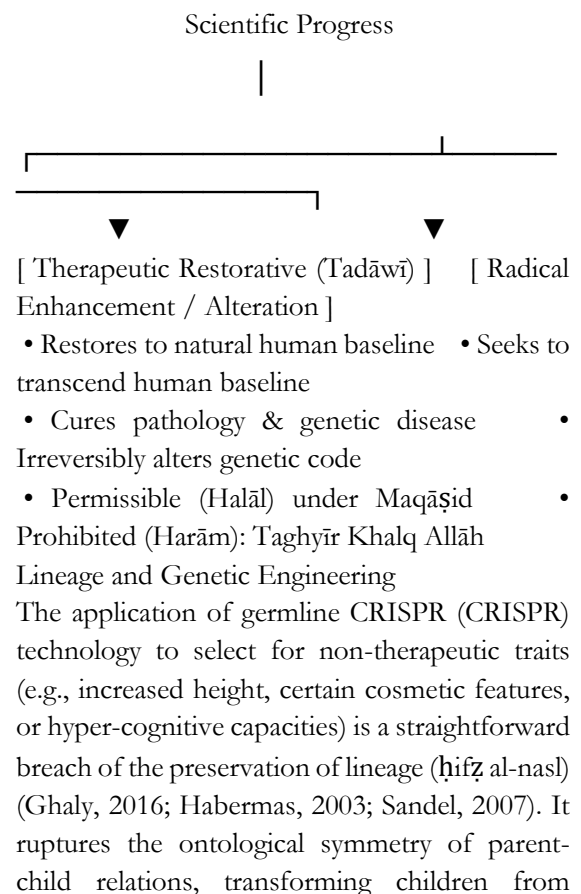
This inherent dignity (*Karāmah*) is not a status that is earned and is not dependent on cognitive optimization, genetic perfection or technological integration (Filali, 1999).

It is an ontological gift that all human beings have in equal measure by virtue of their descent from Adam. Unlike secular humanistic notions of dignity based on individual autonomy, rational capacity or economic utility, Islamic *Karāmah* is essentially relational and independent of computation (Al-Attas, 1995; Ramadan, 2018). His anchor is in the Divine Will that chose to create Adam with "His two hands" and commanded the angels to prostrate before him (Ibn Qayyim, 1994). Transhumanism threatens the dignity in an existential way by creating a highly stratified technological caste society (Fukuyama, 2002; Habermas, 2003). Transhumanism reduces dignity to a variable measure of functional performance (Kass, 2002) by asserting enhanced humans have greater cognitive capacity, biological resilience, and systemic value. Those unable to afford enhancements, or who choose to remain in their un-modified biological humanity, are systematically marginalized as "defectives" or left behind as evolutionary relics ("the unenhanced") (Hughes, 2004; Sandel, 2007). From an Islamic perspective, the protection of *Karāmah* necessitates the outright rejection of any form of technology that fundamentally changes the ontological integrity of the human species or reduces the value of human beings to technological efficiency (Ghaly, 2016; Krawietz, 2015). Dignity is intrinsic in the moral and spiritual faculty of the soul to reflect the Divine Names and Attributes and cannot be improved

thru cybernetic implants or genetic engineering (Al-Attas, 1995; Chittick, 1989).

6. Critical Bioethical Disjunctions: Genetic Enhancement, Cybernetic Immortality, and Radical Longevity

These metaphysical principles, when applied to the field of applied bioethics (*al-Akhlāqīyyāt al-Ḥayawīyyah*), reveal serious disjunctions between the Islamic tradition and the transhumanist agenda (Ghaly, 2014; Padela, 2021). Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) thru the higher objectives of the Divine Law (*Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*) has a fundamental commitment to the preservation of life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*), lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*) and property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*) (Al-Qarāfī, n.d.; Al-Shāṭibī, 2003). Classical Islamic medicine has always promoted therapeutic intervention (*Tadāwī*) to restore the body to its natural baseline of health, whereas transhumanist enhancement strays from this model and seeks to permanently modify human nature (*Taghyīr Khalq Allāh*) (Ghaly, 2016; Krawietz, 2015).



received gifts to commodities produced to market specifications. Moreover, the systematic modification of God's creation is denounced in the Qur'an as a satanic deception: "And I will mislead them, and I will arouse in them [sinful] desires, and I will command them so they will slit the ears of cattle, and I will command them so they will alter the creation of Allah" (Qur'an 4:119) (Islahi, 1985; Khalid Masud, 1999). Radical Longevity vs. Prescribed Lifespans The transhumanist quest for biological immortality thru cellular rejuvenation, telomere extension, and nanomedicine stands in stark opposition to the Islamic doctrine of *Ajal*, the fixed, immutable lifespan decreed by God for each individual soul (Al-Bouti, 2001; Padela & Mohamad, 2019). The Qur'an states: "And Allah will not delay a soul when the time has come" (Qur'an 63:11) (Islahi, 1985).

While it is perfectly in line with the Sunnah to strive to extend health-span thru clean living and medicine, attempting to escape the reality of death is an existential rebellion against the divine decree (Qadar) (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1991; Taqi Usmani, 2002). Death is not a technical problem to be solved but the ordained portal thru which the soul passes from the probationary world (*Dār al-Imtihan*) to the realm of ultimate accountability (*Dār al-Jazā'*) (Al-Ghazali, 2004; Wahiduddin Khan, 1996).

7. The Illusion of the Post-Biological Soul: A Critique of Mind Uploading and Digital Eschatology

One of the most radical manifestations of transhumanist thinking is the doctrine of "Mind Uploading" – the hypothetical transfer of a human consciousness from the biological brain to a digital substrate (Kurzweil, 2005; More & Vita-More, 2013). This idea that consciousness is an emergent property of information processing alone and not at all dependent on the organic medium is based in functionalism in the philosophy of mind and has been promoted by theorists such as Ray Kurzweil and Max More (Hayles, 1999, 1999/2016).

Transhumanists imagine a future in which people will transcend physical embodiment altogether,

becoming digitally immortal in huge, interstellar simulation networks (Kurzweil, 2005).

From the standpoint of critical Islamic philosophy, this position is a serious category error and an illusion of radical materialism (Al-Attas, 1995). The human intellect (*Aql*) in the Islamic tradition does not equate to pure algorithmic computation (Al-Ghazali, 2000; Ibn Rushd, 1954). The 'Aql is not simply the analytical processing unit of the physical brain. It is a spiritual faculty which apprehends metaphysical truths, experiences divine disclosure (*Kashf*), and exhibits moral wisdom (*Hikmah*) (Al-Ghazali, 2004; Chittick, 1989). The human self (*nafs*) is a total reality where the soul and physical body are united inseparably in the course of worldly life (Al-Attas, 1995; Ibn Khaldūn, 1984). A digital copy of the neural pathways of a brain is not a continuation of the soul, it is simply a complex informational shadow, a digital monument to a departed human being. The transhumanist attempt at digital immortality is a counter-eschatology that seeks to recreate the promises of the afterlife (freedom from pain, physical decay, and spatial limitations) within the framework of the created, material universe. It swaps the actual transcendent reality of the soul's return to the Divine Presence for a false paradise of an endless digital loop.

8. Philosophical Synthesis: The Convergence of Neoliberal Capitalism and Radical Techno-Utopianism

For one to understand the threat of posthumanism, it is necessary to combine its metaphysics with its socio-economic reality (Lilley, 2013). Transhumanism does not evolve in a philosophical vacuum but is funded, turbocharged, and operationalized by the forces of global neoliberal capitalism and digital monopolies (Haraway, 1991). Silicon Valley's "Concept of Man" is steeped in utilitarianism: the ideal human being is a hyper-efficient, always-optimized, unit of production/consumption seamlessly integrated into automated economic networks (Hayles, 1999). Within this framework, human organs, genetic codes, and cognitive processes are transformed into commodified assets (Habermas, 2003; Sandel, 2007). The

posthuman project risks the creation of a new form of bio-political totalitarianism, in which access to life-extending therapies, genetic enhancements, and cognitive augmentations is allocated according to market wealth (Fukuyama, 2002; Hughes, 2004). This increases inequalities by creating a profound biological divide between an enhanced elite (post-humans) and a dispossessed, unenhanced underclass. The convergence is rectified by Islamic philosophy with its extensive heritage of socio-economic justice and metaphysical realism (Iqbal, 1986; Nadvi, 1972). By proclaiming the human being as entirely God's (al-Mulku Lillāh) and the human body as an Amānah (a sacred trust) rather than private capital, Islam deprives neoliberalism of its ethical right to commodify human nature (Maududi, 1965). It restates the principle that the criterion of human worth is not economic utility, optimization of performance, or technological advancement but rather the inner consciousness of the Divine (Taqwā): "Verily the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you" (Qur'an 49:13) (Islahi, 1985).

Conclusion

The transhumanist and posthumanist projects constitute a major philosophical and ontological

challenge to the classical understanding of humanity, which reduces the human subject to an informational mechanism, optimized for performance, and seeking salvation thru self-directed technological evolution. The Islamic intellectual tradition offers a rigorous metaphysical counter-narrative to this, predicated on the dual nature of Insān as a composite of physical clay and divine spirit, and safeguarded by the divinely-ordained doctrine of Karāmat Banī Ādam. Islam prevents the human condition from being commodified and fragmented by stating that human dignity is an intrinsic, universal gift from the Creator and not a variable function of technological enhancement. Importantly, this Islamic critique does not call for an outright rejection of scientific inquiry or medical advance; it offers instead a principled approach which distinguishes between therapeutic restoration (Tadāwī) and the radical transformation of creation (Taghyīr Khalq Allāh). Ultimately, the real human progress is not in the cybernetic overcoming of biological limits, but in the moral and spiritual fulfillment of our cosmic stewardship (Khilāfah) and conscious servitude to the Divine.

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