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Beyond Muslim Concerns About Transhumanism: Challenging Muslim Skepticism and Advocating a Pro-Transhumanism Perspective

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Abstract: This paper explores the relationship between transhumanist ideals and Muslim theological perspectives, offering a counterpoint to the predominant skepticism in existing Muslim discourse. I argue that transhumanist goals—such as overcoming disease, enhancing human capabilities, and pursuing immortality—are not fundamentally incompatible with Muslim theologies. Instead, the perceived conflict often arises from reductionist interpretations of Muslim traditions. By adopting a dynamic and pluralistic understanding of Muslim theologies, I open pathways for constructive dialogue between these seemingly divergent perspectives. In the first Part, I critically examine arguments from Muslim critics of transhumanism, particularly their reliance on static and essentialist views of human nature. I highlight the need for theological approaches that engage with scientific developments, such as evolutionary theory, and argue for the reinterpretation of religious texts and myths in light of contemporary knowledge. The section also critiques the essentialist tendency to portray the Muslim theological traditions as a monolithic entity, advocating instead for an appreciation of the diversity within Muslim thought. In the second Part, I shift focus to examples from Muslim narratives and mythologies, illustrating their congruence with transhumanist aspirations. I examine concepts like paradise, prophetic miracles, and the utopian vision of human perfection, showing how these narratives reflect desires that align with transhumanist goals. The section underscores the compatibility of technological advancements with divine sovereignty and argues that such innovations can be understood as extensions of humanity's creative role.

Keywords: Transhumanism, Islam, Muslim theology, Muslim Mythology, Evolution, Essentialism

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"Swap meat for chrome, live a BD fantasy, whatever, but at the end of it all, it's the code you live by that defines who you are." – Johnny Silverhand (Cyberpunk 2077)

1. Introduction

In recent years, several Muslim authors have engaged with the topic of transhumanism from various perspectives (Mahootian, 2011; Mavani, 2014; Mobayed, 2017; Bouzenita, 2018; Hejazi, 2019; Jackson, 2021; Kam, 2023a, 2023b, 2024, Ali, 2024). Just recently an international conference was organized by the Department of Islamic Theology and Religious Education of Innsbruck titled "Sacred Cyborgs: Exploring the Intersection of Artificial Intelligence, Transhumanism and Religion". Spearheaded by Hureyre Kam, the editor of this special issue, this conference represents a pioneering endeavor. However, it is evident that, compared to other disciplines and the intensity of debates surrounding this subject, Muslim contributions remain relatively limited. As Kam observes, existing

works on the topic are predominantly characterized by a skeptical or dismissive stance toward transhumanism (Kam, 2023a, p. 30). A notable exception is Jackson's work, which introduces refreshing ideas to the discourse and seeks to open Muslim traditions to transhumanist concepts (Jackson, 2021).

The present paper aims to continue the intra-Muslim debate on transhumanism and aligns with Jackson's perspective, advocating for a positive engagement with transhumanism. The selection of authors in this paper is deliberate, as they explicitly engage with transhumanist concepts, offering theological perspectives that interact with the philosophical and ethical challenges posed by transhumanism.

In this paper, transhumanism is understood as a philosophical and intellectual movement that endorses the technological enhancement and advancement of the human condition. At its core, I understand transhumanism as the aspiration to transcend the biological, psychological, and cognitive limitations of humanity through scientific and technological progress (Thomas, 2024, pp. 1–6; Kam, 2023a, pp. 27–28). This understanding is based on the idea that human nature is malleable and can be shaped through technology, enabling humanity to surpass its traditional limitations. I argue that transhumanist goals such as immortality or human optimization are not fundamentally incompatible with the *entirety* of Muslim theological positions. Rather, the perceived conflict often stems from reductionist interpretations of Muslim theology in the existing literature, which fail to adequately account for the pluralism and dynamism of Muslim traditions. In the first part of this paper, I will illustrate this point using four exemplary cases.

In the second part, I will demonstrate through selected examples of Muslim mythologies that transhumanist ideas and aspirations are deeply rooted in the consciousness of those to whom the religious sources were addressed. Dreams of a life free from illness, supernatural abilities, or even immortality have often been projected onto the afterlife in the past, as humanity lacked both the technological foundation and the capacity for futuristic thinking. It was only through the scientific and technological advances of the 19th and 20th centuries that these visions became more tangible and, consequently, part of contemporary transhumanist discourses.

This paper focuses exclusively on the theological and religious-philosophical dimensions of transhumanism within Muslim traditions, deliberately setting aside sociological, economic, and historical critiques, as well as the material conditions shaping these discussions. While such perspectives are essential for a comprehensive assessment of transhumanism, the focus here is on the internal theological dynamics of the debate, exploring the extent to which transhumanist aspirations align with various interpretations of Muslim theology. Concepts such as life extension, the eradication of diseases through genetic modifications, and the enhancement of physical traits—including speculative notions like immortality—are examined in relation to Muslim theological thought. While these ideas present significant social and cultural challenges, such challenges should not necessarily lead to a rejection of transhumanist perspectives within theological discourse.

2. Part I: A critical examination of the arguments in Muslim critiques of transhumanism

2.1. Religious narratives as myths

Before delving into the critical examination of the arguments in Muslim critiques of transhumanism, I would like to briefly address two terms I use in my argumentation, namely myths and mythology.

In my theological understanding, I view the narratives in the Qur'an, along with the prophetic (*Aḥādith*)[1] and non-prophetic (*Akhbār*) traditions concerning the origins of the world, the creation of humanity, the earlier prophets and their miracles, as well as the apocalypses and the afterlife, as myths. Collectively, I refer to these as Muslim mythology. By interpreting these narratives as myths, I do not consider them texts that correspond directly to actual facts—whether historical or scientific—in the sense assumed by the correspondence theory of truth. This theory, which posits a congruence between statements and objective reality, seems to me inadequate for capturing the meaning and function of religious narratives.[2]

Instead, I adopt an approach that combines elements of the coherence theory of truth and constructivism. In this framework, the truth of such texts is less tied to their alignment with empirical facts and more derived from their internal consistency and their significance within a cultural and religious context. Religious myths construct a coherent worldview that reflects the values, beliefs, and cosmological concepts of a community, thereby creating a shared reality that is binding for believers. In other words, I do not read these texts as historical accounts or precise descriptions of the world. For this reason, they do not, in my view, conflict with historical facts or scientific knowledge.

Myths have always played a central role in human cultures and are far more than mere stories or fantasies. The scholar of religion Robert Segal defines myths, at their core, as narratives that evoke a strong emotional attachment among their adherents (Segal, 2015, pp. 5-6.). These stories may be either true or fictional, but their power lies in the profound conviction they instill. A more detailed definition describes myths as narrative accounts addressing fundamental questions about human life and the world, particularly regarding the origins, nature, and destiny of humanity and the cosmos (Witzel, 2012, Chapter. 1.2.). Contrary to the common assumption that myths are untrue or fantastical tales, they are in fact deeply symbolic and culturally significant. They are not simple fairy tales or deliberate fictions but serve as crucial vehicles for conveying meaning, truth, and cosmological perspectives within a community. Myths employ language and symbols to describe a reality that transcends the physical, often referencing supernatural beings, primordial times, and transcendent truths. Typically standardized and ritualized, myths are preserved collectively, transmitted by specialists, and recited on special occasions (Witzel, 2012, Chapter. 1.2.).

According to Lévi-Strauss, myths consist of basic building blocks known as mythemes: "It refers to the several individual smaller items and units that make up a myth. To take up a well-known example, the myth of the creation of humans in the Bible includes the mythemes of human origin from clay, the insertion of breath or spirit, the creation of the first woman from the man's rib, the initial lack of sexual shame, their primordial mistake or sin, and so on." (Witzel, 2012, Chapter. 1.2.)

The combination of mythemes into more complex narratives forms the foundation of culturally significant stories that go far beyond mere entertainment. Such myths create collectively shared meanings and truths that are regarded as indisputable within a given community. However, they may be interpreted differently—or even rejected—outside that community. These cultural and symbolic constructions are not only identity-forming but also essential for understanding societal and cosmological structures.

Scholarly engagement with myths has produced a wide range of interpretive approaches that illuminate the multifaceted nature and depth of these narratives. Among the most well-known are allegorical and euhemeristic methods, which interpret myths as encoded representations of natural or historical events, as well as psychoanalytic

[1] All Arabic terms and names in this text are transliterated according to the system established by the American Library Association and the Library of Congress (ALA-LC).

[2] However, I do not rule out the possibility that the intended audience or Muslims throughout history may have understood these narratives differently.

approaches such as Freud's theories of repression and Jung's concept of archetypes. In addition, there are further approaches to myth interpretation, such as the structuralist analyses of Claude Lévi-Strauss, which examine universal patterns and binary oppositions in myths.

These approaches, however, do not compete with one another but can instead be seen as complementary. Each method provides a unique perspective and uncovers different layers of the narratives. For instance, a psychoanalytic perspective reveals unconscious psychological mechanisms, while structuralist analysis highlights how myths reflect cultural and social order. Similarly, historical and allegorical methods illuminate the connections between myth and real-world experience. In my view, it is therefore beneficial to combine these various approaches to fully grasp the complexity of myths. This interdisciplinary strategy allows for a comprehensive understanding of both the cultural and social functions and the deeper symbolic and psychological meanings of myths.

It is important to emphasize that my use of the term "mythology" applies strictly to religious narratives and not to contemporary critiques of transhumanism. My interpretation of certain Qur'anic and traditional accounts as myths is rooted in a theological and hermeneutical approach that seeks to understand their symbolic, cultural, and epistemic significance. This categorization does not extend to modern sociological, economic, or historical arguments against transhumanism.

2.2. The Nature of Humanity Between Creation Mythology and Natural Science

The anthropological concept presented by some Muslim authors who oppose transhumanism is based on a view of human nature that can be described as static and essentialist. Tamim Mobayed, for instance, argues that humans are created in a state of inherent perfection, emphasizing this point with the Qur'anic statement that humans were created in the "best of forms" (Qur'an 95:4). From this perspective, the transhumanist idea of optimizing or enhancing human beings appears to contradict the "divine" perfection inherent in their creation (Mobayed, 2017, p. 8). Mobayed identifies a fundamental conflict between the transhumanist worldview and an "Islamic"[3] perspective. He underscores that the transhumanist notion of nature as incomplete stands in opposition to the Qur'anic view, which asserts that humans were created with a divine purpose.: "This places the Islamic worldview in conflict with that of the transhumanist school in regards to what constitutes human nature. Man's nature and creation is not "half-baked" as Bostrom writes; rather, humanity is created from a divine source with divine purpose." (Mobayed, 2017, p. 20).

Farzad Mahootian expands the discussion by noting that transhumanists reject a static conception of human nature, instead advocating a dynamic perspective that views humans as perpetually improvable (Mahootian, 2011, p. 141). However, he critiques the transhumanist literature for lacking a solid metaphysical foundation to support this view. He emphasizes that in "Islamic" metaphysics, human nature is divinely shaped, as

[3] In the following text, the terms "Islamic" and "Islam" are consistently placed in quotation marks. This stylistic choice reflects my critical stance toward the unexamined use of these terms. I reject their use in most contexts because they often convey an oversimplified or static image that fails to do justice to the complex and diverse realities of Muslim communities. Instead, I prefer to use the term „Muslim." This terminology acknowledges that all practices, ideas, theologies, and systems commonly constructed as "Islam" are, in fact, the products of Muslims. They stem from human actions, thought processes, and interpretations and are therefore more accurately attributed to the actual agents behind them. This conceptual distinction not only highlights the diversity of Muslim lifeworlds and perspectives but also underscores the dynamic and human-shaped nature of the concepts often labeled as "Islam."

evidenced by the Qur'anic depiction of Adam's creation by God's hands and the infusion of the divine breath (Mahootian, 2011, p. 135). It should be said at this point, however, that transhumanists do not need a 'metaphysical' justification for their position because the empirical data speaks for itself. Mahootian describes the human role as a "channel of grace" for nature. He argues that creation is entrusted to humanity for preservation and care (Mahootian, 2011, p. 135). This perspective, however, overlooks the fact that "nature," or our planet, existed for billions of years without humans—a point largely ignored in such arguments.

Similarly, Hamid Mavani posits a special cosmic position for humans, grounding this assertion in Qur'anic verses 95:4 and 38:75 (Mavani, 2014, p. 68). While his discussion acknowledges a dual composition of human nature—both divine spirit and physical matter—it ultimately assumes a divinely ordained teleology for humanity, in which human nature is understood as inherently structured toward a moral and spiritual purpose. Like other authors representative of this broader trend, Mavani's perspective does not engage with evolutionary theory, nor does it consider human nature as a subject of historical and biological transformation. Instead, these authors assume that humanity originated from a direct divine act of creation (Mahootian, 2011, pp. 135–136; Mavani, 2014, p. 68; Mobayed, 2017, p. 8;18;24; Bouzenita, 2018, p. 214). They rely on the Qur'anic creation narrative without subjecting it to critical examination; in Bouzenita's case, evolution is explicitly rejected (Bouzenita, 2018, p. 214). In an academic context, it is essential to approach questions of Muslim theologies in general, and Muslim ethics in particular, in a manner that at least considers the scientific consensus—especially when addressing the question of human nature.

It is therefore methodologically questionable to disregard the extensive scientific findings on human evolution and the various stages of human development. The argument for a static human nature only appears coherent if one assumes that humans are an exception in nature—a creation whose origin is purely divine and entirely independent of natural processes. However, this assumption fundamentally contradicts scientific evidence on human evolution, which clearly demonstrates that our existence is the result of a long, continuous process of development. Consequently, this perspective is in irreconcilable conflict with modern natural science (Coyne, 2010; Rosa & Müller, 2021; Shubin, 2009; Weiner, 1995). Instead, a static view of humanity is often presented, uncritically attributed to a construct referred to as "Islam." Natural sciences, through fossil discoveries, genetic analyses, and other methods, have provided detailed evidence that humans emerged through evolutionary processes. These findings make it possible to trace human development with precision and clearly show that humanity did not arise from a literal divine act of creation but evolved over millions of years. This scientific consensus calls for a theological engagement that addresses the tension between evolutionary insights and traditional interpretations of Muslim creation mythology.

The acceptance of evolution as a proven explanation for the origin of humanity is a fundamental prerequisite for the development of credible Muslim theologies. Without this consensus, theological thought quickly devolves into an unscientific endeavor that relies on alternative facts. At the same time, evolution has far-reaching implications for the understanding of human nature: a static or archetypal view of humanity, often derived from Abrahamic creation myths, becomes obsolete. Instead, humans must be understood as part of a dynamic developmental process that is empirically verifiable. Change and development are not new phenomena but have always been integral to human history.

From early on, humans began to optimize themselves—long before modern technologies like artificial intelligence or biotechnological interventions were even contemplated. Examples include fundamental innovations such as clothing, which not only differentiated us from animals but also provided significant advantages, and the mastery of fire, which revolutionized our way of life. Similarly, the study of plants and the subsequent development of medicines are among the earliest forms of self-

optimization. These innovations demonstrate that optimization is deeply rooted in human nature and history.

The recognition of this dynamic understanding of humanity poses challenges to traditional theological concepts but also opens new possibilities for a nuanced engagement with human nature and its future. This is particularly relevant in discussions about concepts like transhumanism, whose core lies in the enhancement and optimization of humanity. However, before Muslim thought can constructively engage in this debate, it must first address what it means for theology that humanity is the result of an evolutionary process.

Another key question concerns the approach to creation mythology in the Qur'an. Should these texts continue to be regarded as statements reflecting historical and biological truth, to be understood literally, thereby ignoring scientific research on human origins? Or is it instead necessary to reinterpret these texts, utilizing the tools already available within Muslim theologies to address such challenges?

A prominent example of such a theological model can be found in the work of Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī (d. 1210). He argues that textual indications (*ad-dalāʾil al-lafẓiyya*)—by which he refers to the Qur'anic text and the *Aḥādīth*, as they are textual in nature—do not yield certainty (*ghayr qaṭʾiyya*). This is because: "...every textual indication depends on the transmission of languages, the transmission of grammatical and morphological rules. Moreover, it is contingent upon the absence of ambiguity, the absence of metaphors, the absence of specificities, the absence of ellipses, and the absence of transmitted and rational objections —all of which are merely presumptive. And that which depends on something presumptive (*maẓnūn*) is itself even more likely to be presumptive. From this, it follows that no textual indication can be definitive." (ar-Rāzī, 1981, Volume 7, p. 182.)

This position, which ar-Rāzī reiterates in several of his works (Ghandour, 2020), forms the foundation of his argument. In contrast to textual indications, rational proofs are definitive and absolutely certain. In another passage from his Qur'anic commentary, he writes: "It is established that when a contradiction arises between a rational, definitive proof (*al-qāṭiʿ al-ʿaqlī*) and a textual-revealed indication (*al-ẓāhir al-samʿī*), the following possibilities exist: Either we affirm both as true, which is impossible because it constitutes the unification of contradictions (*al-jamʿ bayna al-naqīḍayn*)[4], or we reject both as false, which is equally impossible as it results in the negation of contradictions (*ibṭāl an-naqīḍayn*).[5] Alternatively, one might reject the rational definitive proof in favor of the textual-revealed indication; however, this would undermine rational proofs, which in turn would erode the foundations of monotheism (*at-tawḥīd*), prophethood (*an-nubuwwa*), and the Qur'an. Furthermore, prioritizing the textual-revealed indication would ultimately discredit both the rational and the textual proofs equally. From this, it follows that only the recognition of the validity of rational proofs (*ṣiḥḥat al-dalāʾil al-ʿaqliyya*) remains, while the textual-revealed indication must be subjected to a metaphorical interpretation (*taʾwīl*)." (ar-Rāzī, 1981, Volume 7, p. 152.)

Ar-Rāzī thus proposes that in cases where a Qur'anic text or a prophetic tradition conflicts with rational insights that allow no reasonable doubt, the rational insights take precedence. Ar-Rāzī emphasizes the necessity of interpreting the text on this basis and seeking alternative meanings of terms, particularly through linguistic variation—interpreting the text metaphorically. This model, based on a dynamic and flexible understanding, could be expanded in today's world to incorporate contemporary scientific findings, such as approaches from cultural studies, historical studies, or religious studies, and move beyond a purely philological approach.

Even in extreme cases where a text cannot be reconciled with rational and scientific insights, it could be categorized as part of the *Mutashābihāt* (ambiguous verses). Such texts

[4] Law of noncontradiction.

[5] Law of excluded middle.

are traditionally regarded as passages whose ultimate meaning is known only to God and therefore cannot serve as the basis for theological arguments. However, in the case of creation mythology in the Qur'an, such a categorization may not be necessary. Instead, one could argue that these myths are to be understood symbolically—for instance, as references to archetypal patterns described by Carl Gustav Jung.

Michael Witzel elaborates on Jung's views of myths as psychic representations, which are not individual in nature, as Freud interpreted dreams, but expressions of a "collective unconscious." According to Jung, these myths represent fundamental symbols that are more or less universal and present in all individuals. They are rooted in "historically inherited archetypes," defined as those psychic contents that have not yet been consciously elaborated. (Witzel, 2012, Chapter 1.5.). Jung explains that these archetypes provide central symbols that enable individuals to connect with their unconscious processes, thereby exerting positive and life-affirming effects (Witzel, 2012, Chapter 1.5.). However, Jung emphasizes that archetypes are not a direct creation of the unconscious; rather, they manifest in literary forms, such as fairy tales or narratives with happy endings. Unlike Freud, Jung also argues, according to Witzel, that myths and archetypes cannot be replaced by science—an assertion that remains relevant today ((Witzel, 2012, Chapter 1.5.). Witzel himself does not adopt this thesis but instead argues in *The Origins of the World's Mythologies* that myths—including the creation mythologies of the Bible and the Qur'an—are variations of myths originating in the Stone Age (Witzel, 2012). Other interpretations of myths exist within scholarly research and could play a pivotal role in interpreting the Qur'anic creation mythology.

All of this, of course, takes place against the backdrop of the belief held by most Muslims that the Qur'an is of divine origin, understood as a dictation. If this assumption were to be critically examined within Muslim theologies itself—for instance, by understanding the Qur'an as inspired but not dictated—then the Qur'anic texts could be analyzed more critically. Such an approach might offer better solutions to conflicts with natural science. This step would fundamentally transform how Qur'anic statements are approached.

2.3. Are human beings created perfect?

In this context, it is worth examining the Qur'anic verse often cited to assert the perfection of human creation and to reject transhumanist notions of human enhancement. This verse, 95:4, does not explicitly state that humans require no further optimization. Instead, it declares that humans (or the human) were created in *aḥsan taqwīm* (best stature). What exactly this phrase means will be analyzed in this section.

Interestingly, early exegetes were not unanimous about the identity of the "human" referenced in this verse. Early interpretations often identified specific individuals rather than humanity as a whole. For example, Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1201) in his Qur'anic commentary mentions four differing opinions. Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 687), for instance, believed that the term "human" in this verse referred to a specific person, namely *Kalada b. Usayd* (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1984, Volume 9, p. 171). His student, ʿAṭāʾ (d. 733), held the view that it referred to *al-Walīd b. al-Mughīrah*. Another interpretation, attributed to Muqātil (d. 767) by al-Māwardī (d. 1058) and also cited by Ibn al-Jawzī, claims that "the human" refers to *Abū Jahl b. Hishām* (al-Māwardī, 2019, Volume 6, p. 302; Ibn al-Jawzī, 1984, Volume 9, p. 171). Other interpretations identify the subject as *ʿUtbah* and *Shaybah* (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1984, Volume 9, p. 171) or even the *Prophet* himself (al-Māwardī, 2019, Volume 6, p 132).

It was only later commentators who interpreted the verse more generally, applying it to humanity as a whole (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1984, pp. 9, 172). This suggests that one could theoretically base an argument on these historical interpretations and contend that the verse was not originally intended to apply to humanity universally. From this perspective, the verse cannot easily serve as a foundation for rejecting transhumanism.

If, however, we assume that the verse does indeed refer to humanity as a whole, exegetes were still divided on the meaning of *aḥsan taqwīm*. Two interpretations from Ibn

ʿAbbās are recorded, which might complement each other. He suggested that the phrase refers either to the most balanced of all creatures (*aʾdal al-khalq*) or to the fact that humans stand upright. What this balance (*aʿdal*) means, however, remains open. (Ibn al-Jawzī, 1984, Volume 9, p. 172).[6] Another early exegete, Abu al-ʿĀliya, understood it as a reference to the beauty of the human form (al-Māwardī, 2019, Volume 6, p. 302). Ibn ʿAbbās's student, ʿIkrima (d. 636), interpreted *aḥsan taqwīm* as a reference to youth and strength (al-Māwardī, 2019, pp. 6, 302). This interpretation by ʿIkrima is supported by the following verse: "Then We reduced him to the lowest of the low" (*thumma radadnāhu asfala sāfilīn*) (Qur'an 95:5). Ibn ʿAbbās, ʿIkrima, Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī (d. 714), Qatāda (d. 763), and aḍ-Ḍaḥḥāk (d. 723) all agree that this refers to old age and the weakness associated with it (al-Māwardī, 2019, Volume 6, p. 302; Ibn al-Jawzī, 1984, Volume 9, p. 172). When the two verses are read together, it seems more likely that the first verse describes a phase of human strength—such as youth or physical vitality—while the second verse addresses a phase of weakness, such as old age. This interpretation makes sense both linguistically and contextually, particularly due to the use of the conjunction *thumma* ("then" or "thereafter"), which suggests a sequence or transition.

As mentioned earlier, the verses about the creation of humanity cannot be understood literally as scientific reality. Instead, these texts require in-depth interpretation that considers them in light of modern scientific knowledge.

Within the Muslim tradition, there are already indications that the human body requires modification—at least from a legal and ritual perspective. On this point, there is consensus across all schools of jurisprudence and denominations, even if differences exist regarding whether such modifications are deemed obligatory or recommended. For instance, practices such as circumcision of the genitals (Ibn Ḥazm, 1998, p. 252), grooming and cutting hair, and trimming and cleaning nails are prescribed (Ibn Ḥazm, 1998, p. 253). This demonstrates that interventions in the human body are by no means alien to Muslim thought. In later sections of this essay, we will also see that additional "upgrades" to the human body cannot automatically be considered objectionable but are, in fact, often viewed positively.

The example of Qur'anic verse 95:4 illustrates how some Muslim authors engage with Qur'anic texts. It becomes apparent that they, first, draw selectively from the Muslim traditions and Qur'anic exegesis, and second, project meanings onto the text that are neither supported by the text itself nor by a historical reading, let alone by scientific knowledge. Instead, a construction is made based on this verse, which is then used as an argumentative premise for engaging with transhumanism. This selective and reductionist approach can similarly be observed in discussions on other topics.

2.4. Is there a soul?

For example, this is evident in the discourse surrounding the conception of humans as a unity of body and soul. In this section, I will focus specifically on the arguments presented by Anke Iman Bouzenita. She observes that the most striking feature of transhumanism is its rejection of the complex interplay between body, mind, and soul. According to her, this rejection entails the denial of the immortal soul and the notion of death as a transition to eternal life, accompanied by the dismissal of the necessity of a finite physical lifespan. From an "Islamic" perspective, Bouzenita argues, intellectual engagement with this aspect of transhumanism could effectively end at this point (Bouzenita, 2018, p. 205).

According to Bouzenita, transhumanism can be classified as monistic, as it assumes that what dualists regard as an "immaterial, independent soul or mind" is merely a part of the body, specifically located within and contained by the physical brain (Bouzenita,

[6] However, we now know that several species existed before Homo sapiens that stood upright and walked on two legs, such as Australopithecus afarensis and Ardipithecus ramidus.

2018, p. 206). Bouzenita further asserts that the "Islamic" worldview holds that humans are endowed with an immortal soul (*rūḥ*), which departs from the body during sleep and returns upon awakening; its permanent departure from the body signifies death. On the Day of Judgment, the resurrected body and the human soul are reunited (Bouzenita, 2018, pp. 205–206). Additionally, she states that humans possess a *nafs*, which can be understood as the self or ego. Unlike the immortal soul, the *nafs* perishes with the individual. In the context of transhumanism, however, both *nafs* and *rūḥ*, these profound mysteries of human existence, seem to be reduced to mere perceptions that could potentially be stored on a hard drive (Bouzenita, 2018, p. 207).

The predominance of a dualistic conception of the human being in contemporary Muslim theology is not an inherent feature of the tradition itself but rather a result of historical developments, theological debates, and political patronage. While early Kalām discussions exhibited a range of views—including materialist and monist perspectives—the increasing influence of Neoplatonism and Aristotelian thought, particularly through figures such as al-Fārābī (d. 951), Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037), and later theological syntheses by scholars like al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) or ar-Rāzī, contributed to the widespread adoption of a body-soul dualism. In addition, Sufi metaphysics, which often incorporated concepts of the soul's transcendence and purification, reinforced this paradigm. This intellectual shift was further solidified through political support: From the 12th century onward, various Muslim dynasties increasingly endorsed a late-Ashʿarite or Ashʿarized form of Māturīdī doctrine, as well as Twelver Shiʿism, all of which exhibited strong dualistic tendencies. These schools, benefiting from institutional backing, gradually marginalized alternative perspectives, leading to the dominance of dualistic anthropology in mainstream Muslim thought. Despite these influences, alternative views never disappeared entirely, as evidenced by the continuous transmission of Muʿtazilite interpretations and the materialist perspectives found in early Ashʿarite thought. Recognizing this historical contingency challenges the notion that a singular "Islamic" view on the soul has always existed and opens space for transhumanist interpretations that align with certain strands of Muslim intellectual history.

Bouzenita speaks indiscriminately of an "Islamic position" and broadly attributes dualism to "Islam." I will address this erroneous assumption in her argumentation more thoroughly in Chapter 3. However, what concerns us here is not the definitive resolution of whether humans consist of a soul and body, solely a body, or how the soul should be understood. Rather, I aim to demonstrate that the claim that the "Islamic perspective" assumes humans are composed of a soul and body as two separate entities is simply incorrect. The Muslim theological tradition encompasses a variety of views.

The problematic aspect of Bouzenita's assertion lies in her selective extraction of a particular position from the Muslim traditions, presenting it as the sole perspective and framing it as "the Islamic view" or attributing it to "Islam." Based on this, she constructs a fundamental opposition between transhumanism and the so-called "Islamic perspective." This opposition is presented as insurmountable, implying an inherent incompatibility between the two.

Indeed, whether humans possess a soul and how the soul is defined has been a matter of disagreement among Muslim theologians. While it may be true that the dualistic view is currently the most widely recognized, it must not be portrayed as the only existing perspective. A brief glance at the works of *Kalām* theologians or *Tafsīr* literature reveals a range of differing views on this subject. Remarkably, some of these positions align entirely with the perspectives held by transhumanists.

Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī mentions in his *Tafsīr* and in his work *Maʿālim uṣūl ad-dīn* that most *Muʿtazilite* scholars hold the view that what we refer to as the soul is, in reality, the attributes life (*al-hayāt*), knowledge (*al-ʿilm*), and power (*al-qudra*) themselves. They deny the existence of an entity separate from the body that could be called a soul (ar-Rāzī, 1981, Volume 21, p. 45; Ibn at-Tilmisānī, 2010, p. 558). Among them, scholars like Abū al-Husayn al-Basrī explicitly assert that this life is biological in nature, consisting of the

natural elements that constitute the human being (ar-Rāzī, 1981, Volume 21, p. 45). The denial of a dualistic conception of humanity and the existence of a soul distinct from the body was not, however, unique to the Muʿtazilites. Similar views can also be found among the early *Ashʿarites*. For instance, the renowned theologian al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013) argued that the soul is merely the attribute of "life" (*al-hayāt*) (Ibn Maymūn, 1987, p. 616). Likewise, al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 1027), another prominent Ashʿarite scholar, and other *Kalām* theologians shared this perspective (Ibn at-Tilmisānī, 2010, p. 560).

Furthermore, other positions exist within the Muslim tradition, such as that of Abū Bakr al-Assam. He explicitly argued that humans possess no soul at all and that anything imperceptible to the senses should be negated (al-Ashʿarī, 1980, p. 331). Remarkably, this view closely aligns with certain transhumanist perspectives, and it is worth noting that Abū Bakr al-Assam lived as early as the 8th and 9th centuries.

Not only in early *Kalām* was dualism rejected, but also among some Sufis. Here, Ibn al-ʿArabī stands as a prominent example. He advocates a non-dualistic concept of the self, in which body and soul do not exist as separate entities but rather form an indivisible unity (Ghandour 2018, 153–59). Central to his teaching is *al-laṭīfa*, the subtle and conscious dimension of the human being, which can only exist in connection with a physical form. For him, cognition is inseparably linked to physical existence, as it is attained exclusively through the sensory organs and mental faculties of the body (Ibn al-ʿArabī 1911, vol. 4, p. 423).

In sharp contrast to certain philosophical and theological traditions, he explicitly criticizes the idea of an immaterial soul independent of the body. Every external appearance, in his view, has a hidden, profound dimension, yet these two aspects are inseparably connected. Ibn al-ʿArabī describes the belief that body and soul could truly exist separately as one of the greatest errors of some philosophers and some theologians (*ahl an-nazar*) He is particularly critical of philosophers who seek to transcend corporeality and regard the intelligible world as superior. For Ibn al-ʿArabī, conscious being is only possible in a physical form—both in this world and in the afterlife (Ibn al-ʿArabī 1911, vol. 2, p. 509.).

In *Akbarian* thought, body and soul are merely different perspectives of a single reality. Knowledge of the self is therefore always limited, as it can only be understood in its relational existence, not in its essence. The *laṭīfa* is the conscious being of a person, gaining access to knowledge only through the body. Since sensory perception, imagination, and intellectual processes depend on the body's condition, cognitive faculties can also be understood in a physiological context. Nevertheless, knowledge extends beyond the purely material, as experience possesses a deeper ontological dimension (Ibn al-ʿArabī 2002, vol. 1, p. 198).

His non-dualistic perspective parallels modern theories of consciousness that regard the self as an emergent property of the material body. Thus, his concept could also find relevance in a transhumanist discourse, particularly in the question of whether consciousness should be understood as a relation within existence rather than as an independent, immaterial entity.

These theological positions demonstrate that, particularly in the early *Kalām* and the *akbarian* Sufi-tradition, the view that humans lack a dualistic composition and that the soul is not a separate entity but rather a property or description of the living body, was relatively widespread. This also illustrates that materialist perspectives are not foreign to the Muslim theological tradition. Based on these positions, one could construct an argument compatible with transhumanist approaches without departing from the framework of Muslim theology.

The discussion of the soul and Bouzenita's treatment of the topic serves as a prime example of how supposed conflicts between "Islamic" positions and transhumanist ideas are, in reality, often constructed conflicts. Such constructions arise from a selective engagement with the Muslim tradition. It is certainly legitimate to claim that specific positions within Muslim theology genuinely conflict with or are incompatible with

transhumanist views. Such an approach would be nuanced and objective. However, what is untenable is the reduction of the entire Muslim tradition to a single opinion, which is then presented as "THE Islamic" position, while simultaneously accusing transhumanism of reductionism.

2.5. What does 'Islam' say about transhumanism or the trap of essentialism?

This brings us to an issue I have observed among Muslim critics of transhumanism: the use of what Kevin Reinhart describes as "Naked Essentialism" (Reinhart, 2020, pp. 13–17). This refers to an essentialist portrayal of something referred to as "Islam," assuming that readers already understand what is meant by the term without providing any clear definition or explanation.

However, the question of what "Islam" actually means is far more complex than it might initially appear. The works of Kevin Reinhart (Reinhart, 2020), Shahab Ahmad (Ahmed, 2015) and my recent study on the terms "Islam" and "Islamic" (Ghandour, 2023) demonstrate that an essentialist understanding of Muslim traditions and practices is unhelpful for creating an analytical category through which we can examine Muslims and their theologies and lived realities. The emphasis here is on *Muslims*, because ultimately, we can only study Muslims—their ideas or their actions. Even the Qur'an or the prophetic traditions can only be understood through the interpretive lens of others or one's own perspective.

The same critique I apply to the category of "Islam" also applies when some authors refer to an "Islamic perspective." Here too, one would expect the term "Islamic" to refer to something concrete. However, a closer reading of such texts often reveals that the author's personal position is presented as "Islamic." The author assumes that any argument grounded in the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and selective theological positions automatically represents Islam—providing what is labeled as an "Islamic" perspective. This approach, however, is a modern development and stands in contrast to the way Muslim scholars historically formulated positions. Traditionally, theological and legal views were always attributed to specific individuals—scholars, schools of thought, or recognized authorities—and never to an abstract concept called "Islam."

Before the emergence of the latest *reification*, as Wilfred Cantwell Smith calls it (Smith, 1963, pp. 75–108), the terms "Islam" and "Islamic" were never used in an essentialist manner by scholars in Muslim history (Ghandour, 2023). Instead, scholars consistently employed a nuanced and precise terminology. Entire treatises were dedicated to meticulously attributing opinions and positions within the theological tradition to a specific school or scholar. Each school of jurisprudence developed a sophisticated terminology for this purpose (aẓ-Ẓufayrī, 2002; ʿAlī Jumʿa, 2001) What characterizes traditional theology is its commitment to ascribing views to specific individuals rather than to an abstraction called "Islam." In the classical literature of the *Kalām* or *Fiqh* traditions, one does not encounter phrases like "Islam says," "Islam wants," or "Islam and…" before the 19th century. Such constructs are entirely foreign to traditional Muslim scholarship (Ghandour, 2023).

Therefore, when critics of transhumanism speak of "Islam," what exactly do they mean? Are they referring to a specific school of jurisprudence, a particular group of scholars, or perhaps even just their own opinions? Do they mean ideas that were advocated during a particular epoch of Muslim intellectual history? Or are they referencing modern movements? If the latter, who represents these ideas, and where can they be found?

When an author titles their essay "Islam and Transhumanism," one might expect it to account for the full spectrum of Muslim traditions. However, this is often not the case, as "Islam," as previously mentioned, remains abstract and undefined. One could even argue that it is an empty term, which can be filled arbitrarily. Kevin Reinhart aptly captures this when he writes: *"Islam – as an undefined monolith – is frequently responsible for*

whatever certain authors do not like" (Reinhart, 2020, p. 15). To this, I would add: or for whatever the author happens to favor.

Often, it is implied that Qur'anic citations or prophetic traditions can provide some sort of objective position of "Islam." Yet, this reflects a form of hermeneutical naivety. The assumption here is that an argument based on the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and selective theological positions automatically qualifies as "Islamic." Consequently, statements like the following can be made: „Islam proclaims that each human being enjoys the highest status in the cosmic order as the noblest of creation"(Mavani, 2014, p. 68); „Islam envisions this life as a transient phase of a trial and testing that all humans have to undergo…"(Mavani, 2014, p. 70); „Islam places a strong emphasis on autonomy…" (Mobayed, 2017, p. 19); "Islam views this as being an integral part of the Divine design…"(Mobayed, 2017, p. 19); "Islam gives the body its due,…" (Mobayed, 2017, p. 23).

The problematic aspect of this approach is that the imagined position, presented as "Islam," is placed in opposition to transhumanism. This creates the impression that we are dealing with two clearly delineated and fully defined phenomena. Such a juxtaposition conveys to readers that "Islam" and "Transhumanism" are fixed, immutable entities. When one further asserts that Islam is "such and such," transhumanism is "such and such," and that these are incompatible or inherently conflicting, a distorted picture emerges. This representation does not contribute to a nuanced discourse. Instead, it reinforces binary thinking, reducing complex and diverse traditions to simplistic oppositions.

3. Part 2: Arguments for Transhumanism from the Muslim Traditions

3.1. The idea of paradise as a transhumanist religious utopia

The goals of transhumanism, such as overcoming diseases, enhancing body parts and organs, or even pursuing immortality, are often seen from a Muslim perspective as incompatible with the so-called "Islamic view" of humanity. Consequently, these goals are frequently rejected, either wholly or partially. However, as a Muslim theologian, I argue that religious sources, practices of faith, and the associated narratives could regard these goals as desirable—albeit not in an explicit form. A deeper analysis is necessary to uncover these connections. Below, I will illustrate that using specific examples.

The desire for immortality is deeply rooted in human history. Various cultures have interpreted death as the end of life in different ways. Some cultures perceive life as a cyclical process in which individuals are reborn (Mercer & Trothen, 2021, p. 79), while others divide life into two spheres: an earthly existence and a transcendent state after death (Mercer & Trothen, 2021, p. 75). Muslims and Christians further distinguish the afterlife into two categories—a paradisiacal state and a state of punishment.

The descriptions of paradise as they are described in the Qur'an and the prophetic traditions are particularly relevant to the thesis we are discussing here. Regardless of whether these traditions (*Aḥādīth*) are considered authentic, they inevitably reflect the ideas of their transmitters and contain information about their historical and cultural context. They also preserve the collective memory of Muslims. Upon close analysis, these texts reveal desires, hopes, and fears—just as any other text does. These reflections can be deepened through various theoretical approaches.

Carl Gustav Jung's theory of the collective unconscious and archetypes offers a complementary perspective. According to Jung, archetypes are universal symbols deeply embedded in the human psyche that express fundamental human longings for perfection and transcendence. Paradise, in this context, can be interpreted as an archetypal vision of an idealized life, appearing across different cultures and addressing universal needs. In Muslim traditions, paradise represents a profound yearning for justice, peace, and eternal bliss. It not only provides spiritual solace but also serves a psychological function by channeling unconscious hopes and fears (Jung, 1969).

Paul Ricoeur's theories on narrativity and symbolism enable the analysis of paradise traditions as narrative constructions that convey cultural and existential meanings. Ricoeur emphasizes that narratives are central mediums for human self-understanding because they structure experiences of temporality and transcendence. Moreover, according to Ricoeur, religious texts possess a symbolic dimension that expresses deeper truths about human existence. From this perspective, paradise traditions can be seen as narratives that not only convey theological messages but also articulate collective dreams and normative values. They function as symbolic spaces where believers engage with idealized visions of the future and the transcendence of existential limitations (Ricœur, 1959).

Carl Jung provides a framework for exploring the unconscious psychological archetypes manifested in these narratives, and Ricoeur's approach allows for an understanding of these texts as narrative and symbolic constructions that shape cultural meanings and identities. This interdisciplinary perspective underscores that paradise traditions are not merely religious visions but also cultural artifacts that reflect collective values, dreams, and aspirations. They offer insights into the cultural and psychological dynamics of the communities that produced them, creating connections for reinterpreting transhumanist goals in a new light.

A particularly rich field for such an analysis is found in the numerous traditions that describe paradise in detail. Beyond the foundational paradise concepts in the Qur'an, a distinct genre of Hadith collections emerged throughout Muslim history, dedicated exclusively to the depiction of paradise. Prominent scholars such as Ibn Ḥabīb al-Andalusī (d. 853) (2002), Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1038) (1995), Ibn Abī ad-Dunyā (d. 894) (2012) oder Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah (d. 1292) (1428H) authored specialized works on the subject. These accounts go far beyond the concise Qur'anic descriptions, offering profound insights into the collective desires and hopes of the Muslim community.

In light of the theoretical approaches outlined earlier, these detailed traditions can be understood not only as theological statements but also as reflections of the cultural and psychological needs of their transmitters. Analyzing these texts enables a clearer understanding of the subtle connection between the idealized future visions within Muslim traditions and the objectives of transhumanism.

The traditions about the people in paradise—their appearance and their lives—offer not only a glimpse into what believers dreamed of for paradise but also reveal that these visions were accepted or at least deemed acceptable. In other words, it was permissible to dream of such things. Among these notions is the idea that the inhabitants of paradise will become increasingly beautiful. For instance, a tradition from Abū Hurayra quotes the Prophet as saying: "By the One who sent down the Book to Muḥammad: The inhabitants of paradise will truly increase in beauty and grace, just as they increased in ugliness and age in this world." (al-Iṣafahānī, 1995, Volume 2, p. 110.)

Since paradise in Muslim thought is eternal, this continuous renewal and enhancement of the beauty of its inhabitants is consequently understood as infinite. In this context, the idea of progressive, unending human development—and even improvement—is regarded as entirely legitimate. The statement by the Prophet or by Abū Hurayra[7] also stands in contrast to the interpretation of verse 95:4, as held by Muslim authors who reject transhumanism, which suggests that humans were created in the best form. For the aforementioned tradition indicates that humans possess infinite potential for external improvement, at least in an aesthetic sense.

In another tradition, transmitted in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, and others, we read that the inhabitants of paradise neither urinate nor defecate, do not spit, and do not blow their noses. Furthermore, their sweat smells like musk (al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, 1985, p.

[7] The hadith was also narrated by Ibn Abī Shayba without attributing it to the Prophet, but was handed down as a statement by Abū Hurayra. (Ibn Abī Shayba, 2006, pp. 18, 437).

39331).[8] All these are physical transformations that occur in paradise and are considered positive, even desirable. For people of the 8th or 9th century—the period in which these traditions emerged—it was inconceivable that such conditions could be attainable on earth, within worldly life.

In contrast, transhumanist utopias might aim to make such transformations technically feasible through advances in medicine and the requisite technologies. The notion of never falling ill also occupies a central place in the paradise concepts of Muslims from that era. In a hadith recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, the Prophet is reported to have said: "A caller in paradise will announce: It is decreed for you to be healthy and never fall ill again, to live and never die, to remain young and never age, and to be in bliss without ever experiencing sorrow again." (al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, 1985, p. 39456).

If one were unaware of the context of this tradition—that it represents a utopian vision of paradise—it could easily be mistaken for a transhumanist text. Transhumanists aspire to precisely these ideals: eternal health, eternal youth, and unlimited life. There is, however, a crucial distinction: while these visions of paradise are situated in an afterlife, transhumanists seek to realize them in the here and now.

The Muslim utopia regarding paradise imagines an even further-reaching possibility: the ability to alter one's appearance. One tradition describes this extraordinary concept: "In paradise, there is a market where no buying or selling takes place except for appearances of men and women. If a man desires an appearance, he assumes it." (al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, 1985, p. 39337). The hadith transmitted by at-Tirmidhī and others remains ambiguous in its implications. It does not explicitly clarify, for instance, whether a man could take on a female form or a woman could assume a male appearance. Nonetheless, the mere idea of being able to change one's form at will provides insight into human longings. These desires, unattainable on earth, were projected onto an afterlife where such transformations seemed conceivable. Interestingly, the notion of altering one's appearance has partially moved away from the purely utopian realm. Advances in cosmetic surgery already allow for remarkable changes to one's physical appearance. This marks the beginning of a development likely to accelerate with further technological progress. What was once considered an idealized vision of paradise could, within this or the next century, become part of everyday reality. The boundary between utopian or mythological imagination and technological feasibility seems increasingly blurred, offering new perspectives on what was once conceivable only in religious or philosophical contexts.

From a Muslim perspective, it is often argued that immortality, the overcoming of diseases, or the optimization of the body are not inherently bad but are reserved for the afterlife. The earth, it is said, is a place of trial and struggle, and humans must not "play God." However, this argument is insufficient for several reasons. First, the prospect of an ideal state in paradise does not preclude efforts to achieve similar conditions on earth. There are no explicit prohibitions in the Qur'an or Sunnah against striving for such advancements. Second, the fact that similar ideas exist in the Muslim utopia of paradise as those advocated by transhumanists today demonstrates that these concepts are not inherently implausible. They seemed unattainable to earlier generations simply because technological progress had not yet advanced far enough.

Many visions of paradise, as described in both the Qur'an and the prophetic traditions, reflect the desires and utopias of their time. These descriptions corresponded to the ideals and aspirations of a world where many people lived under harsh and deprived conditions. However, it would be a mistake to use these visions as a benchmark

[8] The hadiths are cited from *Kanz al-ʿummāl* by al-Mutaqqī al-Hindī. As a reference, the number of the hadith as it appears in the mentioned work is provided. In the main text, the primary sources of the hadith are mentioned. Under the given number, which is consistent across all printed versions, one can look up the Arabic text, the narrator, and additional sources. Explicit reference is made to the sources of narrations that are not listed in *Kanz al-ʿummāl*.

for our current progress or societal development. A look at the changes over the past centuries shows how much of what was once considered utopian has become commonplace today. The mention of milk and honey in paradise (Qur'an 47:15), which once symbolized abundance and delight, serves as an example. What was once unattainable for most people can now be purchased almost anywhere. Similarly, the description of luxurious couches (Qur'an 83:23) or other splendid furnishings (Qur'an 55:54), depicted as the epitome of comfort and wealth in paradise, illustrates this point. At the time, such items were accessible only to kings, sultans, or affluent elites. Today, thanks to industrialization and mass production, they are everyday commodities for many people. These developments highlight how dramatically living conditions have changed. What seemed like unimaginable luxury to people living in the deserts of that era has become a reality in the modern world. Furthermore, they illustrate how cultural and technological advancements can demystify old utopias and transform them into tangible, everyday realities.

3.2. The Miracles of the Prophets and Friends of God (awliyā')

Another aspect that highlights the deeply rooted desire for human bodily improvement within the Muslim traditions is the theme of the so-called miracles of the prophets and saints (*awliyā'*). These accounts of supernatural abilities, as described in religious sources and narratives, provide a rich foundation for psychoanalytic interpretations, much like the visions of paradise. Viewed through this lens and analyzed for the underlying desires, one can discern a projection of an idealized human image—a superior version of humanity that was seen as unattainable at the time and conceivable only through divine intervention. These stories reflect not only the wish for physical perfection but also the yearning for an expansion of human capabilities. The miracles serve as symbols of unrealized potential, offering hope and inspiration to the faithful.

An example of this is the Myth of the Prophet Abraham (Qur'an 21:69), who was unharmed by fire. His skin showed no reaction to the flames, symbolizing the desire to overcome burns and their associated pain. This ability is regarded positively in the tradition and, in my view, clearly illustrates the narrative of a "better body." A similar theme is found in the Myth of Moses and his hand, which began to shine when he withdrew it from his cloak (Qur'an 20:22). This account evokes associations with radiant skin, a characteristic that could one day be realized through advancements in genetic engineering. Here too, a desire for physical perfection emerges, transcending the natural limits of human capabilities. Moses' radiant hand is not merely a miraculous phenomenon but a symbolic representation of the possibility of enhancing the human body with extraordinary attributes. The Myth reflects not only divine intervention but also a profound longing for an idealized state of the body that surpasses ordinary human imagination. As such, it seamlessly integrates into the tradition of miracles, which repeatedly center on the concept of a "better human" and the quest for bodily perfection.

The Myth of Noah in the Qur'an also raises intriguing and critical questions (Qur'an 29:14), particularly regarding contemporary rejection of life-extending biotechnological measures. In the Qur'an and Muslim narrative traditions, Noah is said to have lived for centuries, a condition portrayed as positive. This depiction reflects an appreciation for longevity and raises the question of why a long life is considered desirable in religious mythology but is often viewed critically in modern contexts, especially when achieved through biotechnological means. The positive portrayal of Noah's long life in the Qur'an underscores the cultural and spiritual yearning for a life that transcends normal boundaries. At the same time, it prompts reflection on why this same longing is not more readily extended to biotechnological possibilities, even though the desire for longevity remains deeply ingrained in human nature.

In this context, the Myth of al-Khidr can also be cited. In Muslim traditions, al-Khidr is described as a person who does not die—or, more precisely, will only die at the end of time (al-Qurṭubī, 2006, Volume 13, p. 360). The famous hadith commentator and jurist al-

Nawawī (d. 1277) wrote the following about this: “The majority of scholars hold the view that he is alive and lives among us. This is undisputed among the Sufis, the righteous, and the learned. Accounts of sightings of him, encounters with him, learning from him, engaging in questions and answers with him, as well as his presence in honorable places and sites of virtue, are too numerous to be counted and too well-known to be concealed. Abū ʿUmar Ibn aṣ-Ṣalāḥ (d. 1245) stated: “He is alive, according to the majority opinion of scholars and the righteous, and this is also agreed upon by the general public.” (an-Nawawī, 1930, Volume 15 pp. 135–136)

Thus, we again encounter a figure from Muslim mythology who lives an extraordinarily long life—potentially for over a thousand years. This longevity is perceived as a miracle, something extraordinary and positive. However, when it is suggested that this exceptional trait attributed to al-Khidr might one day become accessible to all humans through technological means, the idea is often dismissed as meddling in divine matters or denounced as “playing God.” This reveals a contradiction: it is accepted that an individual in Muslim traditions/mythology can live for hundreds or even thousands of years, yet the notion that this ability could be extended to all humanity is rejected. This stance exposes a certain inconsistency in the reasoning.

3.3. Nobody Plays God

Moreover, the possibility of leading an extraordinarily long life—whether spanning centuries or millennia—does not, from a theological perspective, alter the fundamental reality that all life eventually ends and divine justice will prevail. There is no inherent contradiction between the duration of life and the belief in an afterlife and a Day of Judgment that will occur after the end of the entire universe. The Qur’anic verse (2:96) “*Each one of them would like to be allowed to live a thousand years. And to live a thousand years would be no means remove him from the doom.*“ underscores this perspective: it states that some humans wish to live for a thousand years, but even if they were to achieve this lifespan, they would not escape divine justice. This verse is particularly noteworthy and, in my view, receives insufficient attention in discussions about transhumanism. The Qur’anic text acknowledges that a lifespan of a thousand years is conceivable—at least within the realm of possibility. At the same time, it emphasizes that the length of one’s life does not alter the ultimate fulfillment of the divine plan.

We should not attempt to “play God” by interfering in matters that belong exclusively to His domain, particularly the question of when and how the resurrection will occur or what it ultimately signifies. While human advancements may conquer disease, extend life spans, or enhance physical and mental capabilities through technology, these achievements cannot alter or disrupt “God’s divine plan”. Instead, believers are called to trust in the promise of resurrection and to live their lives with virtue and purpose. This recognition does not prevent us from improving our lives or striving for our worldly goals and aspirations. Rather, it acknowledges that death is an unavoidable reality, as affirmed by the Qur'an, and that faith in an afterlife and a divine plan remain fundamental principles of belief. By respecting God’s sovereignty, we honor His wisdom while working to better ourselves and the world around us.

However, one could argue that human advancements, including those in biotechnology and artificial intelligence, are themselves part of what is often described as "God’s plan." It is also important to note that the very notion of "God’s plan" has no real foundation in the Muslim theological traditions, especially in *Kalām* and Sufism, and should not be conflated with *qadar*. The concept of God’s plan remains a primarily Christian theological construct. From a Muslim perspective, if such a plan exists at all, then it necessarily encompasses everything—including the potential transhumanist evolution of humanity.

Unless one implicitly believes that pursuing transhumanist goals could somehow disrupt “God's divine plan”, such fears seem unwarranted. If one truly holds this belief, however, it raises deeper questions about the very foundations of faith. I suspect this

underlying fear is one of the hidden concerns within Muslim discourse, which may also explain the rejection of ideas like the theory of evolution. This hesitation might stem from the perception that such concepts challenge the entirety of theological narratives that have been developed thus far. These narratives, deeply rooted in tradition and interpretation, are often seen as integral to faith, and any perceived threat to them can provoke resistance, as it may be viewed as undermining established religious understandings.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to demonstrate that transhumanist goals and approaches are not necessarily in conflict with all Muslim traditions and theologies. On the contrary, as we have seen, there are numerous aspects and approaches within Muslim traditions that offer opportunities to foster constructive dialogue with transhumanism. Notably, it has become evident that Muslim notions of paradise and mythic narratives already incorporate transhumanist ideals, such as physical perfection, immortality, and the eradication of disease. While these visions were initially directed toward a metaphysical afterlife, advancements in technology provide them with a new relevance, enabling their consideration within a worldly context.

A central focus of this investigation was the exploration of the inherent flexibility within Muslim theological approaches, which allow for the integration of scientific insights and contemporary ideas. These approaches demonstrate that Muslim theologies are inherently dynamic and adaptable, capable of engaging with concepts such as evolutionary theory or transhumanism. This adaptability provides a framework for reinterpreting traditional texts and myths in light of modern science, enabling a dialogue that bridges classical theological thought and contemporary advancements.

Another key emphasis was the critical examination of "bare essentialism", often observed in Muslim critiques of transhumanism. This perspective, which views "Islam" as a monolithic and immutable entity, fails to recognize the diversity of theological positions and the historical dynamism of Muslim traditions. This essentialist approach overlooks the dynamic nature of Muslim theological thought, which has historically evolved and engaged with external intellectual traditions. One such crucial area of engagement is the concept of human nature itself, which is central to both transhumanist and theological discourses.

Moreover, as discussed throughout this paper, the concept of human nature is central to both transhumanism and Muslim theological thought. Transhumanism challenges the notion of a fixed, immutable human essence by proposing a future in which biological limitations can be systematically transcended. Similarly, within the Muslim tradition, views on human nature have evolved historically, influenced by various philosophical, theological, and political developments. This fluidity suggests that theological engagement with transhumanism should not be limited to defensive reactions but should explore how core transhumanist principles—such as the pursuit of longevity, cognitive expansion, and bodily enhancement—might be reframed within a theological discourse that remains open to scientific insights and human development.

Adopting a more nuanced approach that embraces the diversity within Muslim thought could pave the way for a more open and constructive discussion of transhumanist concepts.

Particularly insightful was the examination of miracles attributed to prophets and saints within Muslim tradition. Narratives of invulnerable skin, extraordinary longevity, and transformable bodies reveal that the desire for human optimization and improvement is deeply rooted in Muslim traditions. Such stories can serve as a bridge for discussing and legitimizing transhumanist innovations within a theological framework.

The paper also examined the compatibility of technological advancements with the "divine plan of creation". The often-raised concern that transhumanist pursuits might undermine "God's plan" proves to be theologically unfounded. "Divine sovereignty over creation" remains intact, even when humans employ technological means to extend life,

cure diseases, or enhance physical traits. These efforts can instead be understood as expressions of human responsibility and creativity within the "divine plan".

At the same time, the transhumanist discourse raises fundamental ethical and philosophical questions that cannot be ignored. While the pursuit of enhancement and optimization aligns with long-standing human aspirations, it also brings forth dilemmas regarding the distribution of power, access to technology, and the societal consequences of human modifications. Who determines what constitutes an "improvement" of the human being? How can theological and ethical frameworks ensure that transhumanist advancements do not exacerbate existing social inequalities? Addressing these issues requires a critical engagement with transhumanist ideals that goes beyond technological feasibility and considers broader ethical and theological implications.

In conclusion, transhumanist goals and Muslim theologies need not be mutually exclusive. Rather, dialogue between these perspectives offers an opportunity to harness both scientific and spiritual potentials. The future of such discussions could be enriched by considering a broader range of Muslim traditions and schools of thought while critically reflecting on the ethical implications of emerging technological developments. Recognizing this intersection as a space for constructive theological and ethical reflection can help ensure that advancements in human enhancement serve not only technological progress but also deeper spiritual and moral insights.

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