Philosophical Posthumanism: An Ontological Assessment by Contemporary Muslim Scholars

This article examines the ontological foundations of philosophical posthumanism and critically examines its central claims through the lens of contemporary Muslim thought. Rooted in postmodern critiques of Enlightenment humanism, posthumanism challenges conventional ideas of human identity, agency, and moral status by emphasizing hybridity, technological mediation, and the interconnectedness of all forms of life—including animals, machines, and ecosystems. Through conceptual analysis and comparative hermeneutics, the study contrasts these claims with key Islamic metaphysical concepts such as *fitrah* (innate nature), *rūḥ* (soul), and *khalīfah* (vicegerency). Prominent Muslim thinkers, including Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Taha Abdurrahman, Osman Bakar, and Fazlur Rahman, argue that posthumanist ontology undermines the sacred status of the human being, potentially leading to spiritual alienation by denying transcendence and moral responsibility. While acknowledging the ethical and ecological contributions of posthumanism, the paper contends that its core assumptions remain incompatible with the Islamic worldview, which affirms human dignity, metaphysical purpose, and divinely ordained responsibility within the cosmos.

Keywords: Human exceptionalism, posthumanism, postmodernism, Muslim scholars, ontology.

Artikel ini mengkaji landasan ontologis dari posthumanisme filosofis dan secara kritis menelaah klaim-klaim utamanya melalui perspektif pemikiran Muslim kontemporer. Posthumanisme, yang berakar pada kritik postmodern terhadap humanisme Pencerahan, menantang pandangan umum tentang identitas, agensi, dan status moral manusia dengan menekankan hibriditas, mediasi teknologi, dan keterhubungan seluruh bentuk kehidupan—termasuk hewan, mesin, dan ekosistem. Melalui analisis konseptual dan hermeneutika komparatif, studi ini membandingkan gagasan-gagasan tersebut dengan konsep-konsep metafisika Islam seperti *fitrah* (hakikat manusia), *rūḥ* (jiwa), dan *khalīfah* (peran kepemimpinan di bumi). Para pemikir Muslim terkemuka seperti Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Taha Abdurrahman, Osman Bakar, dan Fazlur Rahman berpendapat bahwa ontologi posthumanis merongrong kedudukan sakral manusia dan berpotensi menimbulkan keterasingan spiritual melalui penolakan terhadap transendensi dan tanggung jawab moral. Meskipun mengakui kontribusi etis dan ekologis dari posthumanisme, artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa asumsi-asumsi dasarnya tidak sejalan dengan pandangan dunia Islam yang menegaskan martabat manusia, tujuan metafisik, dan tanggung jawab ilahiah dalam tatanan kosmik

Kata Kunci: Eksepsionalisme kemanusiaan, Pascahumanisme, Pascamodenisme, Cendikiawan Islam, Ontologi.

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Introduction

Posthumanism is a philosophical and cultural movement that questions the centrality of the human being in epistemology, ethics, and ontology. Etymologically, the term derives from the Latin prefix *post-* meaning "after" and *humanus* meaning "human," suggesting a condition or perspective that comes *after the human* or *beyond traditional humanism*. [1] As a philosophical concept, posthumanism was first articulated by postmodern theorist Ihab Hassan in his 1977 article Prometheus as Performer: Towards a Posthumanist Culture? In this work, Hassan invokes the mythological figure of Prometheus as a metaphor for the rise of a posthumanist cultural paradigm, one shaped by the techno-scientific revolution. He argues that the human form—including human desire and its external manifestations—is undergoing a profound transformation that demands critical re-evaluation. Central to his thesis is the notion of the "death of man," which he interprets as the simultaneous decline of traditional humanism and the ascendancy of machine-driven existence. Hassan suggests that humanism may be dissolving into a new ontological condition, which he describes, perhaps reluctantly, as posthumanism: *"Humanism may be coming to an end as humanism transforms itself into something one must helplessly call Posthumanism."*[2]

Emerging from critiques of Enlightenment humanism—which emphasized rationality, autonomy, and individualism—posthumanism challenges the notion that humans occupy a privileged or dominant position in the cosmos. It seeks to decentre the human subject by acknowledging the agency of non-human entities such as animals, machines, ecosystems, and artificial intelligence. Posthumanist thinkers argue that the boundaries between human and non-human, natural and artificial, biological and technological are increasingly blurred in the age of biotechnology and digital evolution. Posthumanism invites a rethinking of what it means to be human in a world shaped by technology, globalization, and planetary crises, challenging long-standing anthropocentric assumptions in philosophy, science, and ethics.

Thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Donna Haraway, and N. Katherine Hayles have been instrumental in shaping posthumanist discourse, emphasizing the fluid, constructed, and technocultural dimensions of human identity. Historically, posthumanism emerged in the late 20th century as a critical response to traditional humanism and Enlightenment ideals that positioned the rational, autonomous human at the center of meaning and value. Rooted in postmodern and poststructuralist critiques, posthumanism challenges anthropocentrism—the privileging of the human above all other forms of existence—and questions the boundaries between human, animal, machine, and environment. [3] Thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Donna Haraway, and N. Katherine Hayles played pivotal roles in shaping the discourse by highlighting the fluid, constructed, and technocultural essence of humanity.

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) is not a posthumanist *per se,* but his philosophical work laid crucial foundations for posthumanist thought, particularly in his critique of the *"human subject"* and the historical construction of knowledge, power, and identity. In *The Order of Things* (1966), Foucault famously declared the "death of man" as a stable epistemological category, arguing that the modern human subject is not a timeless essence but a product of specific historical and discursive formations. This critique directly challenges Enlightenment

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[1] Neveen Anwar Shaaban Mohamed, "The World Will Never Be the Same: Scrutinizing 'Posthumanism' in Ramez Naam's Apex," *Journal al-Dirasat al-Insaniyyah wa al-Adabiyyah* 28, no. 2 (2023): 56.

[2] Kavita Tiwade and Shubhada Sachin Yadav, "A Comprehensive Literary Review on the Posthumanism Reflected In Philosophy and Literature," *IJFANS International Journal of Food and Nutritional Sciences* 11, no. 11 (2012): 17042.

[3] Rosi Braidotti, "A Theoretical Framework for the Critical Posthumanities," *Theory, Culture & Society* 36, no. 6 (2019): 31–61.

humanism, which upholds the idea of the autonomous, rational, and universal individual as claimed by Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*, Kant's moral agents are capable of autonomous decision-making through the exercise of rational will or Locke's idea of the individual as a rational being capable of self-ownership and free will.

Foucault's concept of *biopower*—the regulation of life by institutions, technologies, and systems of control—also influences posthumanism. He showed how bodies are disciplined and subjectivities constructed through power-knowledge systems, thereby dissolving the idea of a natural or pre-social human essence. This opens the door to post-humanist arguments that the human is a fluid, constructed identity shaped by language, culture, and increasingly, technology. [4] Posthumanism draws on Foucault's insights to reject the fixed boundary between human and non-human, and instead emphasizes hybridity, relationality, and contingency. While Foucault did not engage directly with AI or cybernetics, his work provides the critical tools to deconstruct the humanist assumptions that posthumanism seeks to overcome.

From an ontological standpoint within the Islamic perspective, Michel Foucault's posthumanist thought is rejected because it contradicts the Islamic conception of the human being as a divinely created, spiritually endowed, and morally responsible entity. Islam rejects Foucault's framework, which views the human subject not as a fixed essence but as a construct shaped by historical discourses, institutional forces, and power-knowledge dynamics. His claim that identity is fluid, relational, and socially constructed—a core tenet of posthumanist ontology—is fundamentally incompatible with Islamic thought.

Islamic ontology affirms that human beings possess a God-given nature (*fitrah*), an immaterial soul (*rūḥ*), and a metaphysical status as *khalīfah* (vicegerent) on Earth. The human is not merely a social or biological construct, but a being with a transcendent purpose, grounded in revelation and created in *aḥsani taqwīm* (in the best form) as stated in the Quran.[5] Accordingly, Muslim scholars critique Foucault for denying metaphysical realities and reducing human nature to the products of social engineering.

Additionally, Foucault's anti-essentialism and rejection of universal truths are seen as ontologically destabilizing, leading to a conception of the self that lacks spiritual direction and accountability to God. The Muslim thinker, Taha Abdurrahman critiques Michel Foucault's posthumanist ontology for dissolving the fixed nature of the human self into historical and discursive constructions, thereby denying the existence of a stable soul and divine purpose. He argues that such a view promotes moral relativism, as it detaches ethics from transcendental grounding, and results in spiritual emptiness by negating the soul's central role in human existence. This, according to Taha, contradicts Islamic anthropology, which upholds the human being as a spiritually endowed, morally accountable creation of God.[6]

Historically, posthumanism intersects with developments in science, particularly biotechnology, artificial intelligence, and cybernetics, which increasingly blur the lines between organic and artificial life. These shifts prompt ethical and philosophical debates about subjectivity, embodiment, and agency. Posthumanism does not merely envision a future beyond the human but rather interrogates how the idea of "the human" was constructed, often in exclusionary and hierarchical ways. By destabilizing fixed notions of identity and

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[4] Betty Heleen, "Transgressive Bodies and Posthuman Identity: A Foucauldian Examination of Power, Norms, and Social Constructs in the Immortals of Meluha" *SSRN* 12, (2024): 7.

[5] QS. 95:4.

[6] Ṭāha Abd al-Raḥmān, *Suʾāl al-Akhlāq: Musāhama fī al-Naqd al-Akhlāqī lilḤadātha al-Gharbiyya [The Question of Ethics: A Contribution to Ethical Criticism of Western Modernity]*. (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2000), 147-149.

exploring interdependence with non-human entities, posthumanism offers a framework for rethinking existence in an era marked by ecological crisis, technological convergence, and ontological pluralism.[7]

Posthumanism and postmodernism are philosophically intertwined, both emerging as critiques of Enlightenment rationalism and the dominant humanist traditions of modernity. Postmodernism challenges grand narratives, objective truths, and stable identities, emphasizing fragmentation, multiplicity, and the socially constructed nature of knowledge. It deconstructs the Enlightenment idea of the rational, autonomous subject, opening space for alternative ways of understanding identity, power, and meaning. Posthumanism builds upon these postmodern critiques by further decentring the human subject—not just culturally or intellectually, but ontologically. Whereas postmodernism questions narratives of human superiority, posthumanism questions the ontology of the human itself. It explores how humans are entangled with technology, animals, and the environment, challenging anthropocentrism and the binary distinctions between human/non-human, nature/culture, and organic/machine.

Thus, posthumanism extends postmodernism by shifting from an epistemological critique of human knowledge to an ontological rethinking of the human condition. In essence, posthumanism can be seen as an evolution of postmodernism, shaped by technological advancement, environmental awareness, and new scientific paradigms. In contemporary discussions, Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* (1985) famously deconstructed the binary opposition between human and machine, while Hayles' *How We Became Posthuman* (1999) examined how information technologies redefine human identity.

This article employs a conceptual analysis approach combined with comparative hermeneutics to examine the ontological foundations of posthumanist thought in dialogue with Islamic philosophical perspectives. Through conceptual analysis, the authors critically dissect core posthumanist concepts such as the decentring of the human, the blurring of human–nonhuman boundaries, and the rejection of human exceptionalism. These philosophical constructs are unpacked and evaluated in light of Islamic metaphysical principles, particularly the Quranic concepts of *fiṭrah* (innate nature), *rūḥ* (spirit), and *khalīfah* (vicegerency). The article also applies comparative hermeneutics by interpreting both Western posthumanist texts and Islamic theological sources, drawing parallels and highlighting divergences. Key thinkers like Foucault, Haraway, Hayles, and Latour are juxtaposed with Muslim scholars such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Osman Bakar, and Fazlur Rahman, enabling a dialogical critique across philosophical traditions. This method allows the authors to uncover not only ontological tensions but also underlying epistemological and ethical differences between posthumanist and Islamic worldviews. By combining conceptual precision with hermeneutical comparison, the article presents a nuanced critique that moves beyond polemics, offering a thoughtful engagement with contemporary philosophical challenges from an Islamic ontological standpoint.

Philosophical Posthumanism and Muslim Scholars' Critics

Posthumanism challenges foundational views of the human being—views that are central to Islamic thought. For this reason, many Muslim scholars find it necessary to critically engage with posthumanism to safeguard theological integrity, ethical boundaries, and the sanctity of human identity in Islam. Posthumanist discourse often deconstructs the

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[7] Francesca Ferrando, "Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, and New Materialisms: Differences and Relations", *Existenz: An International Journal* *in Philosophy, Religion, Politics, and the Arts* 8, no. 2 (2013): 26–32

idea of a fixed human nature, viewing the self as fluid, technologically mediated, and socially constructed positions that undermine the Quranic concept of *fitrah* (innate disposition) and *rūḥ* (soul). Moreover, the pursuit of technological transcendence through artificial intelligence, genetic modification, and cybernetic enhancement raises ethical questions that conflict with Islamic principles of human dignity, divine purpose, and moral accountability.

Five core characteristics of posthumanism have been discussed by contemporary philosophers such as Judith Butler and cybernetic theorists including Gregory Bateson, Warren McCulloch, Norbert Wiener, Bruno Latour, Cary Wolfe, Elaine Graham, N. Katherine Hayles, Benjamin H. Bratton, Donna Haraway, Peter Sloterdijk, Stefan Lorenz Sorgner, Evan Thompson, Francisco Varela, Humberto Maturana, Timothy Morton, and Douglas Kellner.

A. Decentering of the Human

Posthumanism challenges the human-centered worldview (anthropocentrism), which places humans above all other forms of life or intelligence. In *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1991), Donna Haraway argues that the boundary between human and machine has already been breached, making the idea of a pure, central "human" identity obsolete. The human is merely one actor within a broader network of agents, including machines and animals. She uses the metaphor of the *cyborg*—a hybrid of machine and organism—to challenge traditional boundaries that have defined Western thought, human/animal, human/machine, physical/non-physical, male/female, and nature/culture. According to Haraway, these boundaries no longer hold in the age of advanced technology. Consequently, the notion of a fixed, essential human identity becomes untenable.

Haraway criticizes traditional humanism, which centres on a coherent, universal human subject—typically male, white, and Western. Instead, she promotes a posthuman identity that is fragmented, relational, and constructed through networks of information and power. The cyborg resists essentialist identities like gender or race, which she sees as constructs maintained by patriarchal and capitalist systems. It also challenges the idea that humans are distinct and superior to machines or animals. It suggests that human identity is fluid, shaped by technological and cultural interactions, not fixed by nature or biology. Rather than a dystopian figure, Haraway's cyborg is a hopeful symbol of coalition-building, hybridity, and transformation. It offers a way to think beyond outdated political ideologies (like essentialist feminism or rigid Marxism) and towards coalitions based on affinity rather than identity.[8]

In sum, Haraway's argument is that the cyborg is not a futuristic fantasy, but a present reality. The boundaries that defined the human are already breached by technology, and the cyborg is a metaphor for the posthuman condition: hybrid, networked, and always in flux. Through this lens, she reimagines politics, identity, and embodiment in a world where the lines between nature and technology are permanently entangled.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a leading Islamic philosopher, offers a profound critique of posthumanist notions that seek to decenter the human being. In contrast to posthumanism's rejection of human exceptionalism, Nasr asserts that humans occupy a unique metaphysical position in the cosmic order, not because of material superiority, but due to their spiritual nature and ontological responsibility. According to to Nasr, modern secular ideologies—including posthumanism—emerge from a desacralized worldview that denies the divine origin and purpose of creation. He argues that attempts to

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[8] Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. (London: Routledge, 1991): 155.

equate humans with animals, machines, or ecosystems overlook the *fitrah* (primordial nature) and *rūḥ* (spirit) breathed into humans by God[9], which bestows upon them the capacity for knowledge, moral discernment, and spiritual ascent.

Nasr maintains that the crisis of environmental degradation and the fragmentation of human identity cannot be resolved by abandoning the human centre, but rather by re-centering it within a sacred cosmology that recognizes humanity's duty as *khalīfah* (vicegerent) on Earth. [10] In other words, he criticizes posthumanist frameworks for lacking a transcendent anchor, reducing the human to mere biology, data, or cyborgic systems. From his perspective, such reductionism not only dissolves ethical boundaries but also erodes the spiritual dignity that Islam accords to human existence.

B. Blurring of Human–Nonhuman Boundaries

Posthumanism rejects rigid distinctions between humans, animals, machines, and environments, instead their emphasizing interconnectedness. Posthumanist thinker argue that AI systems like ChatGPT or neural prosthetics challenge the boundary between biological humans and machines. The development of brain-computer interfaces illustrates how human identity is merging with non-human entities.

Donna Haraway claims that technological advancements, especially in biology, cybernetics, and communication technologies, have already blurred the boundary between human and machine. The integration of pacemakers, prosthetics, and computer interfaces into the human body demonstrates how humans have become technologically mediated beings. This hybridity undermines the Enlightenment idea of the human as a distinct, autonomous, and rational subject.

Similarly, N. Katherine Hayles, in her influential work *How We Became Posthuman*, argues that the boundary between the human and non-human, especially between human beings and intelligent machines, has become increasingly porous due to developments in cybernetics, artificial intelligence, and information theory. She critiques the traditional notion of the "liberal human subject" as disembodied, autonomous, and rational, emphasizing instead that human identity is deeply entangled with technology and material embodiment.

Hayles traces how the concept of the posthuman arose from the shift in viewing humans not as distinct biological beings, but as informational patterns that can be replicated, transformed, or merged with machines. In this view, humans and machines are no longer fundamentally separate; both are part of a continuum of information-processing systems. This challenges human exceptionalism and compels a rethinking of consciousness, agency, and subjectivity.

Moreover, Hayles warns against overly utopian or dystopian visions of posthumanism. Instead of viewing technology as either salvation or doom, she advocates for an understanding of how technological systems shape human experiences and identities. For Hayles, recognizing the porous boundaries between human and non-human opens up a more nuanced, embodied, and ethically aware approach to living in an age of complex human-machine interrelations.[11]

In contrast, Islamic thought traditionally maintains a clear ontological and moral distinction between humans and nonhumans—be they animals, machines, or other entities. This distinction is rooted in the Qur'anic concept of

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[9] QS. 15:29.
[10] Sayyed Hossein Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996): 41.

[11] N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999): 278-283.

fitrah (innate human nature) and *rūḥ* (soul or spirit from God), which uniquely define the human being. According to the Quran, God breathed His spirit into Adam, marking the human as a special creation with spiritual, rational, and moral responsibilities [12] . While animals and other beings also form part of God's creation and should be treated ethically[13], they do not possess the same divine trust (*amānah*) as humans.[14]

Osman Bakar, a contemporary Muslim philosopher of science argues that the blurring of boundaries—especially through artificial intelligence, genetic modification, and cyborg technologies—undermines the metaphysical structure of creation (*tartīb al-wujūd*) in Islam. He sees posthumanism as an extension of secular materialism that disregards the sacred order and the elevated station of human beings as vicegerents (*khalīfah*). Bakar asserts that human identity cannot be redefined solely through technology or biological manipulation without violating divine purpose and human dignity.[15]

C. Rejection of Human Exceptionalism

Posthumanism denies that humans have unique qualities (e.g., reason, language, morality) that elevate them above other beings. Cary Wolfe, in his seminal work *What Is Posthumanism?* [16] argues that posthumanism fundamentally challenges the humanist belief that humans possess unique, superior qualities—such as reason, language, or morality—that elevate them above all other beings. He critiques the anthropocentric assumption embedded in Enlightenment humanism, which places the human at the center of moral, intellectual, and ontological value. According to Wolfe, this worldview constructs a rigid boundary between human and non-human animals, machines, and ecological systems.

Posthumanism, as Wolfe presents it, seeks to dismantle this hierarchy by revealing that many qualities attributed solely to humans are shared, in varying degrees, with other life forms and intelligent systems. For instance, complex communication, emotional intelligence, and even moral behaviors are observable in animals. Likewise, machines are increasingly capable of performing tasks once believed to require uniquely human cognition. By rejecting the idea of human exceptionalism, Wolfe promotes an ethical framework that acknowledges the inter-dependence of all beings—biological and technological. This shift calls for a more inclusive, less hierarchical understanding of subjectivity and agency. In doing so, posthumanism does not degrade humanity but repositions it within a broader, entangled web of life and information systems, where the human is one actor among many, not the supreme being.

From an Islamic theological perspective, humans *are* exceptional—not for domination, but for stewardship (*khalīfah*), accountability, and the capacity for spiritual knowledge (*ma'rifah*). Islamic tradition firmly upholds the concept of human exceptionalism, viewing the human being as a unique creation endowed with spiritual, moral, and intellectual faculties. The Quran emphasizes this distinction through several key verses: humans are created in *aḥsani taqwīm* (the best of forms),[17] honored above many other creations[18], and entrusted with the *amānah* (divine trust) that no other being accepted [19] . Central to this uniqueness is the *rūḥ* (spirit) breathed into Adam by God, [20] which grants humans not only reason (*'aql*) and free will, but

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[12] QS. 15:29.

[13] QS. 6:38.

[14] QS. 33:72.

[15] Osman Bakar, "The Post-Human and Trans-Human Future: An Islamic Response", in Mohammad Hashim Kamali, Osman Bakar, Daud Abdul-Fattah Batchelor, Rugayah Hashim, (eds). *Islamic Perspectives on Science and Technology: Selected Conference Paper* (Singapore: Springer, 2016): 141.

[16] Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010): xvi.

[17] QS. 95:4.

[18] QS. 17:70.

[19] QS. 33:72.

[20] QS. 15:29.

also the capacity to know, worship, and draw near to God. Thus, human exceptionalism in Islam is not about superiority in power or intelligence but about a sacred responsibility tied to vicegerency (*khalīfah*) on Earth and accountability in the Hereafter.

Contemporary Muslim scholars, such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Osman Bakar strongly critique the posthumanist rejection of human exceptionalism. Nasr warns that posthumanism, by dissolving the distinction between human and nonhuman, leads to spiritual disorientation and moral relativism. He argues that such views deny the sacred hierarchy embedded in creation[21]. Similarly, Bakar contends that human uniqueness is not an anthropocentric illusion, but a metaphysical truth rooted in divine purpose. Reducing humans to mere data or biological machines erases their moral agency and undermines their role as trustees of the Earth.[22] From an Islamic perspective, preserving human exceptionalism is essential to maintaining a worldview grounded in ethics, worship, and the transcendental relationship between humanity and the Divine.

D. Embodiment and Technological Mediation

Rosi Braidotti, a prominent posthumanist thinker, emphasizes that human identity is not abstract, universal, or disembodied but is always shaped through material, technological, and social systems. In her book *The Posthuman*, she critiques the Enlightenment ideal of the autonomous, rational subject, which ignores how power, embodiment, and history condition human experience. For Braidotti, identity is a process—fluid, relational, and embedded in concrete contexts—rather than a fixed essence.[23]

Braidotti stresses that embodiment is central to understanding subjectivity. Human identity is shaped by the body's interaction with its environment, technologies, institutions, and social structures. For example, gender, race, disability, and class are not merely social labels but lived realities that emerge through bodily experiences within specific political and technological frameworks. Moreover, digital technologies and biotechnologies have transformed how bodies function and are perceived, further destabilizing the idea of a unified self.

She also introduces the concept of *becoming*—the idea that subjectivity is always in motion, co-constituted through relationships with non-human entities, including machines and ecosystems. In this way, Braidotti's posthumanism challenges disembodied notions of selfhood and calls for an ethics of sustainability and interconnection that recognizes the agency of both human and non-human actors in shaping life.

One significant Muslim critique of Rosi Braidotti's posthumanism, particularly her notions of embodiment and technological mediation, arises from the work of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who sharply contrasts Islamic metaphysics with the materialist and immanentist orientation of posthumanist theory. While Braidotti celebrates the dissolution of the unified human subject through technological enhancement and views embodiment as fluid, porous, and continuously reconfigured by digital technologies, Nasr cautions against reducing the human to a cybernetic construct devoid of spiritual essence.[24] From an Islamic perspective, the human body is not merely a biological or post-biological site for experimentation but is divinely ordained and sacred, serving as a vessel for the *rūḥ* (spirit) granted by Allah.[25]

Nasr criticizes the posthumanist enthusiasm for merging organic and inorganic forms as a dangerous descent into *promethean hubris*, where

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[21] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature*, 84-87.

[22] Osman Bakar, *Islamic Civilisation and the Modern World: Thematic Essays.* (Johor Bharu: UTM Press, 2013): 103-122.

[23] Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press 2013): 1-3.

[24] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981): 119-120.

[25] QS. 15:29.

technology becomes a substitute for divine transcendence. He warns that such ideologies sever the human from its ontological roots in the Divine, ultimately leading to spiritual alienation. Thus, where Braidotti sees empowerment and emancipation through technological embodiment, Nasr and like-minded Muslim thinkers see a loss of human dignity and divine orientation. This critique challenges the ethical and metaphysical foundations of posthumanist discourse from within the Islamic worldview.

E. Ethical and Ecological Relationality

Bruno Latour, one of key figures in posthumanist philosophy, promotes an ethics of care that extends beyond humans to include the environment, animals, and even machines. In his *Actor-Network Theory (ANT)*, Latour argues that agency is not limited to human subjects but is distributed among a network of both human and non-human actors. Rivers, bacteria, animals, computers, and climate systems all play roles in shaping outcomes and deserve ethical consideration. This interconnected view challenges anthropocentrism and calls for a more inclusive moral framework—one that acknowledges our responsibility toward all entities that participate in our shared world.

Latour's ethics resonates with, but also differs from, eco-theologians such as Sallie McFague or Thomas Berry. Eco-theologians ground their environmental ethics in a theological narrative, emphasizing that nature is sacred and that humans are stewards within God's creation. Their concern for the Earth stems from a divine command to care for all living beings and ecosystems as reflections of the Creator's will. McFague for example, writes that the natural world is a sacrament—a visible sign of the invisible divine. All living beings and ecosystems are manifestations of God's creative

love, and thus, caring for them is a divine mandate. [26] For Thomas Berry, the universe constitutes a sacred community, wherein every element—human, animal, plant, or geological formation—serves as a manifestation of the divine presence. Nature is not merely a passive setting for human activity but possesses intrinsic worth and spiritual depth. Berry advocates for a paradigm shift from anthropocentric ethics to a biocentric or ecocentric worldview, grounded in the awareness that humans are integral members of the broader Earth community. He emphasizes that the universe itself is the primary revelation of the divine, the foremost scripture, and the central site of divine-human communion. Consequently, humanity's moral duty is to engage with this cosmic scripture in reverence and to act in ways that reflect a deep spiritual responsibility toward all of creation.[27]

While both Latour and eco-theologians advocate for expanded care, Latour does so without invoking transcendence. Instead, he sees moral obligation emerging from material entanglements and interdependencies. Where eco-theologians appeal to divine moral order, Latour promotes a secular, relational ethic rooted in the reality of shared vulnerability among humans, nature, and technology.[28]

Islamic eco-theology is grounded in the Quranic view that humans are *khalīfah* (stewards or trustees) of the Earth [29] entrusted with maintaining ecological balance (*mīzān*) and acting responsibly towards all of creation. Nature is seen as a sign (*āyah*) of God, possessing intrinsic value as part of divine order. Every creature praise God[30] and humans must act with *'adl* (justice) and *raḥmah* (compassion) toward all beings. This framework is theocentric and ethical, emphasizing accountability to God and moral responsibility for environmental care.

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[26] Salle McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993): 90.

[27] Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999): 105.

[28] Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2004): 10.

[29] QS. 6:165.

[30] QS. 24:41.

Ziauddin Sardar, a prominent Muslim scholar, critiques posthumanism as another extension of Western secular modernity. He argues that posthumanism erodes the metaphysical distinction between humans and other entities, leading to moral relativism and the loss of sacred values. He asserts that human uniqueness in Islam lies in *fitrah* (innate nature), *rūḥ* (spirit from God)[31], and moral agency, which cannot be reduced to information or cyborg identities. For Sardar, posthumanism's rejection of divine purpose and ethical accountability disconnects humanity from its spiritual foundations, making it incompatible with the Islamic worldview. [32]

Prior to Sardar, Fazlur Rahman (1919–1988), a prominent modern Islamic thinker, emphasized a Qur'an-centric view of the human being grounded in *fitrah* (innate disposition), rational-moral agency, and the divine purpose of vicegerency (*khilāfah*) on Earth. According to Rahman, the human being is not merely a biological or rational animal but a moral-spiritual agent who is responsible before God. He asserts that humans are endowed with *'aql* (intellect) and *irādah* (will), enabling them to discern right from wrong and to act ethically within a divinely structured moral universe.

Rahman views the Qur'an as portraying the human being as both free and accountable, capable of self-development (*tazkiyah*) and moral ascent through action and reflection. He underscores the concept of *taqwā* (God-consciousness) as the ethical compass for humanity, enabling growth in harmony with divine will. [33] (Rahman, 1980). In critiquing Western philosophies of the human, especially post-Enlightenment secular humanism, Rahman argues that they strip the human being of transcendent purpose and reduce human identity to material or purely rational

dimensions. He maintains that Western modernity often detaches moral thought from revelation, leading to existential alienation and ethical relativism. While appreciating the West's emphasis on reason and autonomy, he insists that without divine guidance, human freedom becomes directionless. "The malaise of modern man is not the result of reason per se, but of the loss of moral vision anchored in revelation."[34]

Conclusion

From an ontological perspective, Muslim philosophers critique posthumanism for undermining the divinely ordained nature and purpose of the human being—*fitrah*—as outlined in Islamic metaphysics. While posthumanist thought views the "human" as a mutable, technologically influenced construct devoid of any fixed essence, Muslim thinkers maintain that humans possess an inherent essence granted by God—*nafs* and *rūḥ*—which defines their moral responsibility and spiritual purpose. Thinkers like Seyyed Hossein Nasr argue that posthumanism is rooted in a secular, materialistic worldview that rejects the metaphysical hierarchy distinguishing humans from other beings, thereby erasing the divinely set boundaries between human, animal, and machine.

In Islamic metaphysics, humans are seen as *khalīfah* (vicegerents) on Earth, endowed with unique faculties such as intellect (*'aql*), will, and soul—qualities that set them apart ontologically from other creatures. Posthumanist ideals of enhancing or altering the human body through technology threaten to sever this God-given identity and purpose, potentially leading to existential disorientation and spiritual estrangement. Muslim critiques caution that reducing human identity to mere data, biological mechanisms, or algorithms undermines human

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[31] QS. 15:29.

[32] Ziauddin Sardar, "Welcome to Postnormal Times: The Future(s) of Science and Technology", *Futures* 42, no. 3 (2010): 197–202.

[33] Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980): 37.

[34] Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982): 13.

dignity. Thus, Islamic ontology insists that the essence of humanity is not a product of social or technological constructs, but a divinely created reality that must be safeguarded amidst posthumanist reinterpretations.

Technological advancements celebrated by posthumanists—such as AI, genetic engineering, brain-computer interfaces, and robotics—are viewed in Islamic thought with caution. These enhancements may violate the sanctity of the human body, interfere with divine creation (*taghyīr khalq Allāh*), and blur the essential distinction between human and machine. By promoting a secular and technocentric understanding of humanity, posthumanism poses serious challenges to the Islamic worldview, particularly in terms of identity, ethics, and purpose. If left unexamined, it risks weakening spiritual awareness, moral integrity, and metaphysical certainty among Muslims.

Therefore, Muslim scholars are called upon to engage proactively, offering Islamic ontological and ethical responses to the challenges of the posthuman age. In conclusion, Islamic ontology confronts posthumanism by reaffirming the spiritual, moral, and metaphysical foundations of humanity as revealed by God. It presents a theocentric alternative to secular posthuman narratives, grounded in principles such as *fitrah*, *rūḥ*, *khalīfah*, *tawḥīd*, and divine revelation. Through this framework, Islam offers a comprehensive vision for human dignity, ethical development, and spiritual fulfilment in an era of rapid technological transformation.

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The authors affirm that there are no conflicts of interest or affiliations that may have affected the objectivity of this study.

Author Contributions
Each author played a significant role in shaping and composing this article.

Ethical Considerations
The research adhered to ethical guidelines and did not involve human or animal subjects in any form of direct engagement.

Data Availability
As this study did not involve the generation or analysis of new data, data availability is not relevant.

Disclaimer
The opinions and conclusions expressed in this article are entirely those of the authors and do not represent the official stance of any institutions with which they may be affiliated.

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