First talk

Ultimate Consciousness: What Algorithms Cannot Be

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There are questions that lie dormant at the heart of philosophy for centuries, only a miracle can awaken it. These are questions about God, humanity, and the universe; questions asked by the Greeks, then by the Muslims, and later by the Europeans. Today, however, humanity faces a different rather question, one that is sharper and more urgent. This question no longer concerns the external world or what serves humanity; it is about the human being himself, about what was once believed to be exclusively his: his mind, his thinking, and his ability to create, understand, and interpret.

The artificial intelligence did not emerge overnight. Its foundations have been built over decades, drawing from the intersections of mathematics, logic, neuroscience, philosophy, and computer science, gradually reaching a threshold in recent years that redefines what is possible. Yet, what distinguishes the current moment is not merely the accumulation of technological potential, but the fact that this accumulation has reached a point where existential questions demand answers that cannot be postponed: What is a human being? What defines us? And where is the dividing line between us and what we have created with our own hands?

This issue addresses this topic. It neither celebrates technology in a naive manner, nor rejects it in a reactionary stance. Rather, it engages with it through a critical philosophical reading that respects the depth of the question and refuses to fall into preconceived judgments. This introduction is not limited to serving as a preface to the content of the issue, but is an initial attempt to see what this new technology offers us, and the image it reflects, an image that we may not be ready to confront.

First: Is the Mind a Human Possession?

Since the rise of the philosophy, the humanity has distinguished itself from other creatures by one essential virtue: the reason. This distinction was not merely a theoretical luxury, but the fundamental pillar upon which all human constructs, morality, laws, arts, and sciences, are built. When Aristotle defined humans as "rational animal," he was not just offering a definition; he was establishing a system based on the duality of soul and matter, where reason is what elevates humanity above all else. When Averroes (Ibn Rushd) discussed this definition, he added a deeper dimension: the active reason, which illuminates knowledge and enables the understanding of universals, is not merely an individual possession, but a shared horizon from which all human minds draw their light. In those times, this issue was an abstract metaphysical matter, far removed from the tangible threats of the concrete world.

However, what is happening today has shifted this issue from the realm of abstraction to the realm of lived experience. When we read a system of artificial intelligence generating a philosophical text, or a poem with rhythm and imagery, or a solution to a mathematical problem that had remained unsolved for decades, we are not merely facing an advanced machine. We are confronted with a profound challenge to what we once believed to be unique to our species. The question that was once exclusively philosophical has today become a functional, social, and civilizational question all at once: Is reason a physical phenomenon that can be simulated? On the other hand, is there something in human consciousness that transcends all simulation?

The American philosopher John Searle addressed this issue in his famous «Chinese Room» thought experiment. With rigorous logic, he proved that processing symbols is not understanding, and that a machine generating correct answers does not necessarily mean it understands what it is saying.1 On the other hand, Australian philosopher David Chalmers took the opposite stance, proposing what he called "the hard problem of consciousness": even if we understand all the physical mechanisms of the brain, there remains a persistent mystery, why do these mechanisms have a subjective character? Why does pain feel painful, and joy taste different?2 To this day, artificial intelligence does not offer an answer to this problem; rather, it makes the question even more urgent.

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1 - Searle, John R.: "Minds, Brains, and Programs", Behavioral and Brain Sciences, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 417-424.

2 - Chalmers, David J.: "Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness", Journal of Consciousness Studies, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 200-219.

However, the issue does not end within the confines of Western analytic philosophy. In Islamic philosophy, the thinkers, like Al-Farabi, and Avicenna (Ibn Sina), made a precise distinction between the potential reason, the actual reason, and the acquired reason. At the heart of this distinction was the notion that mature human intellect grasps universal truths as they truly are, and is aware of itself as it understands. Meanwhile, Mulla Sadra, the founder of Transcendent Theosophy, built his philosophy on the principles of «the primacy of existence» and «substantial motion.» He thought humanity not as a fixed being, but as an existence in continuous ascent, progressing through different stages of existence, where the highest form of perception is not merely information processing, but a form of presence. When this deep, transcendent framework is compared to what artificial systems do today, the fundamental difference becomes clear: AI processes but does not present, generates but does not know, simulates but does not exist.

Yet, these precise distinctions do not quell the anxiety, because the practical question remains: if the outcome of machine performance is indistinguishable from human performance in various fields, does it matter what happens inside? Does the ontological difference between consciousness and simulation have any practical effect? This is the dilemma that stands at the forefront of contemporary philosophical debates, and it is a dilemma that no one has yet resolved.

Second: The Gap between Tool, Agent

The Human history, in a sense, is the history of his tools. He made the chipped stone, then the wheel, then the steam engine, and finally the computer. At each stage, he feared what he had created, adapted to it, integrated it into his civilization, and then moved on to something further. So, does artificial intelligence differ from its predecessors as tools? Is there something inherent in its nature that makes it leap from the category of a tool to another category that has yet to be defined by names?

The tool in general, by its classical definition, is an extension of human will and a means of achieving a goal. A hammer drives a nail because a human holds it and directs it. A calculator performs operations because a human inputs data and specifies the operation. Even a classical computer remains within these boundaries: it executes what it is programmed to do, and nothing more. However, modern generative systems break this framework in a radical way. They produce outputs that were not directly programmed, display behavior that was not specifically anticipated, and perform in open contexts that go beyond the instructions given to them. In other words, they exceed the limits of being just a tool without reaching

the level of a true agent, and thus inhabit an unprecedented middle ground.

This intermediate situation is the source of the deepest philosophical and ethical concerns. When we say that a machine «decides,» «chooses,» or «creates,» we are employing language originally built to describe an intentional, conscious agent. Yet, this linguistic description has ethical, legal, and civilizational implications. Who bears responsibility when a machine makes a mistake that costs human lives? Who owns the rights to creativity when a system produces a work of art? Do machines have rights once they reach a certain level of complexity and adaptability? These are questions that arise from the technological realities people live with every day in their offices, clinics, courts, and schools.

Perhaps, the most dangerous aspect is that this intermediate entity reshapes our very conception of agency. Jürgen Habermas, in his theory of communicative action, argued that true agency requires intention, mutual understanding, and a shared horizon of meaning. Artificial systems imitate the structure of communication without engaging in its meaning. This difference, although originally metaphysical, transforms into a political difference when these systems are employed to shape public opinion, influence discourse, and produce news. At that point, the issue is no longer just technical performance; it becomes a matter of sovereignty over the symbolic space, in which identities and societies are formed.

Third: Labor, Creativity, Bet on Human Dignity

At the beginning of the last century, economists warned that mechanization would destroy the labor market. Yet, the reality turned out to be more complex than they had anticipated: yes, certain jobs vanished, but new ones emerged that no one had imagined. Today, this argument is revived by the optimists of AI when faced with fears of technological unemployment. However, there is a significant difference that undermines the standard comparison: classical automation displaced manual labor, opening the door to intellectual work. But generative artificial intelligence is knocking at the very doors of intellectual labor itself, entering the most advanced and specialized fields: writing, design, medicine, law, engineering, music, and scientific research.

However, the issue is not limited to economic numbers and the number of threatened jobs. There is a deeper aspect related to the very meaning of human labor. In Hegelian philosophy, labor is a means of self-realization in the world. Humans produce and see in their production an image of themselves, acquiring their identity through this relationship between the internal and the external, between idea and accomplishment. Marx, for his part, viewed «alienation», the worker›s disconnection from the product of their labor, as a

form of existential death. Therefore, what does it mean when a machine can accomplish in seconds what would take human weeks of effort, suffering, and accumulated experience? Is this liberation, or is it irreversible alienation?

The matter becomes even more sensitive in the realm of creativity. When artificial intelligence generates a poem, a painting, or a piece of music, we are faced with a dual question: Is what has been produced real creativity? And does this production diminish or expand the space for human creativity? Economic logic suggests that an abundant supply reduces value, and if paintings, poems, and musical compositions are produced at a massive rate beyond human capabilities, the creative market will experience an unprecedented structural disruption. But existential logic tells us something different: Human creativity has never been just about production; it has been a testament to suffering, experience, and presence in the world. Beethoven did not compose his Ninth Symphony in a vacuum; he created it from deep pain, solitude, and a desire to transcend boundaries. Dostoevsky did not write The Brothers Karamazov in ease, but while grappling with debts, illness, and profound spiritual questions. So, does artificial intelligence replace this suffering, which is the essence of creativity, not a mere incidental factor?

Some argue that machine-generated creativity does not threaten human creativity, but rather restores its true depth: when a machine can mimic the surface, the essence is laid bare, and what truly distinguishes human creativity becomes clearer. Yet, while this argument may be philosophically subtle, it remains little more than a consolation if the economy is moving in a different direction, redistributing opportunities and resources regardless of these existential distinctions.

Fourth: Ethics in the Age of Algorithms

If you were to ask a classical moral philosopher about the foundation of moral action, they would likely tell you that it rests on three pillars: free will, awareness of the action and its consequences, and the responsibility that arises from these two. Every ethical system, whether Kantian, utilitarian, or virtue-based, requires an agent who embodies these three components. However, what happens when a decision affecting human lives is made by a system that lacks will, self-awareness, and responsibility?

This is not a theoretical question. Today, artificial intelligence systems are used for initial sorting of job applications, for evaluating bank loan applications, for managing weapon systems, and for guiding automated surveillance. In all these cases, a decision affecting a specific individual is made by algorithms that are oblivious to the pain of those they exclude, unaware of the misery of those whose requests are denied, and experiencing

no moral qualms when issuing a judgment without merit. Even more dangerous is that these systems, because they appear «objective,» lend their decisions an air of neutrality that makes objecting to them seem rational, as if you were objecting to mathematics rather than politics.

The issue goes beyond distributive justice. The algorithms governing social media platforms shape the public space in which political opinions are formed. They determine what is seen and what is hidden, what is amplified and what is marginalized. When Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman developed the «Manufacturing Consent» model, they analyzed the mechanisms of human media and how it creates consensus in capitalist societies. However, artificial intelligence has granted these mechanisms a tremendous power and an unprecedented capacity for individual targeting: individuals no longer consume a unified collective discourse, but are submerged in a «knowledge bubble» that accumulates their biases, sustains their illusions, and deepens the divide between them and those who oppose them, all with eerie precision and professionalism, unknown to the individual.

It is at this point that the ethical debate intersects with the political one. The ability to shape collective knowledge is the primary form of power in any society. When this power is transferred to systems controlled by a handful of large global tech companies, the issue no longer remains one of technical performance, but becomes one of cultural hegemony with far-reaching geopolitical implications.

The profound paradox here is that the tools originally built to serve and liberate humanity from constraints can, under the accumulation of power and the logic of the market, transform into instruments for reproducing inequality and deepening control. This is not a romantic cautionary metaphor; rather, it is a documented dynamic of the present, before it becomes a prediction of the future.

Fifth: Our Reading as Muslims

These transformations cannot be understood in isolation from our civilizational position. The Arab and Islamic world today receives artificial intelligence, for the most part, from the position of consumer, not producer, a position that is far from neutral. The tools used in Arabic were originally designed to serve the English language, its data, and its culture. They inherently carry, even implicitly, conceptions of the world and standards of truth, beauty, and morality that reflect the modern Western context more than our own cultural contexts.

This does not imply adopting an exclusionary or anti-technological stance. Islamic heritage, in its golden age, did not reject foreign influences; rather,

it knew how to absorb, transform, and enrich its own legacy without being absorbed by them. Al-Khwarizmi, the founder of algorithms, Ibn al-Haytham, the pioneer of optics, and Ibn Khaldun, the architect of the laws of history, were not blind transmitters of knowledge. They engaged with knowledge on the ground, and reason on reason. The difference today, however, lies in the fact that the pace of technological transformations outstrips our institutional capacity for assimilation, critique, and development. This makes the digital divide a danger that threatens to transform technological dependence into structural cultural and intellectual dependence.

The issue is not limited to the technical aspects of language; artificial intelligence transcends them to raise theological and ethical questions that intersect with the core of Islamic heritage. The problem of free will and determinism, which has preoccupied theologians for centuries, reappears today in a new guise: Does a programmed being act by its own volition or by determinism? Similarly, the issues of legal obligation and responsibility, upon which the fundamentalists built their jurisprudential system, find themselves facing unprecedented challenges, such as the extent to which it is permissible to delegate legal rulings to machines, and whether algorithmic decisions entail ethical consequences for their designers or users. These questions are no longer mere theories; they have become a practical reality imposing themselves on the fields of religious rulings, the judiciary, education, and medicine in our contemporary world.

The ideal approach, and the one we believe is most appropriate, lies in confronting AI with our own intellectual and critical tools, without being dazzled by its promising prospects or terrified by the uncertainty of its outcomes. We must pose our own questions, rooted in our philosophical, jurisprudential, and cultural heritage, rather than merely translating the questions of others. We must actively contribute to building systems that reflect our language, values, and knowledge, instead of simply being consumers of what is produced in cultural contexts that are alien to us.

Sixth: Legitimate Fear, Responsible Hope

For those following the discussions in today's most prestigious academic, intellectual, and political forums, it becomes clear that fear is not a culture of backwardness, and warning is not a form of stagnation or reactionism. Competent scientists are signing petitions calling for a halt to the development of general artificial intelligence systems until adequate safeguards are put in place. A philosopher like Nick Bostrom has spent decades outlining the existential risks posed by systems that surpass human intelligence and operate beyond our control. Geoffrey Hinton, one of the leading pioneers of

deep learning, left Google so that he could warn more freely about the risks associated with the technologies he helped develop.

However, the fear represents a starting point, rather than a stance. The history teaches us that fear that does not lead to understanding, followed by organized action, only produces paralyzed panic or foolish denial. What we need is not to prematurely decide whether artificial intelligence is a blessing or a curse, but to develop analytical, ethical, legal, and political frameworks capable of keeping pace with this rapidly advancing field, steering it towards the service of human dignity rather than undermining it.

The responsible hope does not claim that everything will necessarily be alright. Rather, it affirms that humanity can channel this immense power to realize humanity›s centuries-old dreams, when it organizes, unites, and employs its collective wisdom at the right time. Those dreams are curing intractable diseases, studying the climate with unprecedented precision, providing education to every child everywhere in the world, and achieving productivity that liberates people from the drudgery of monotonous work, granting them time for reflection and creativity. This future will not materialize spontaneously, nor will it be a readily available gift. Rather, it will be forged through a conscious collective will that resists market forces when necessary and harnesses technology to serve its values and priorities, not the other way around.

Conclusion:

Here we pose a question that shakes certainty and challenges assumptions: if machines become capable of thought, what remains for humanity? The honest answer is that we still do not know. However, this "ignorance" is not a void to be filled with illusions or fears, but rather the vital space in which true thought plays its role; through questioning without preconceived notions, critique free from ready-made condemnation, and the search for meaning in what technology seems to surpass.

Standing at this point does not mean silence, just as engaging in contemplation does not mean feigned neutrality. There is something the Islamic perspective can contribute at this moment, starting from a coherent philosophical and ethical stance that possesses genuine critical tools, demanding a leading role in the discussion rather than being relegated to its margins. We believe these capabilities are embodied in the following:

1. Concept of Caliphate, Trust

The Qur'anic view of humanity is built upon a fundamental duality: humans are stewards [califah] on Earth. This caliphate is not merely an

honorary position but a heavy responsibility for justice, development, and accountability. In parallel, humans are entrusted with a trust that the heavens, the earth, and the mountains declined to bear. Within this framework, the question arises: what trust is it that humans place in a system that does not comprehend its gravity? And what kind of caliphate is it when part of this trust is delegated to an algorithm that cannot distinguish truth from falsehood except based on data that might be contaminated with biases and human prejudices? The Islamic view of trust requires awareness, will, and the capacity for accountability, three things that are inherently absent in any artificial system, no matter how sophisticated. Thus, the use of these systems in domains that affect human dignity, rights, and freedoms is, in essence, the replacement of trust with a mere tool, and the substitution of conscience with mechanical judgment.

2. Critique of the Western Technological Model Centrality in Defining Knowledge

The dominant linguistic models in today's technological landscape do not represent the entirety of human knowledge. Rather, they largely reflect a significant portion of knowledge produced in English, which has been subjected primarily to Western academic, technical, and commercial standards. When these models are used to issue fatwas, or employed in religious education, moral guidance, or judicial rulings, Islamic knowledge, with its rich cultural heritage of theology, jurisprudence, philosophy, Sufism, and logic, is marginalized, or at best, reduced to a mere appendage of a system not governed by its values. The greatest danger lies in the fact that this marginalization occurs silently, under the guise of objectivity, efficiency, and data neutrality, masks that cannot withstand rigorous intellectual critique.

3. Use of Artificial Intelligence in Warfare, Targeting, Surveillance

The reality in Gaza, Lebanon, Iran, and other arenas of hegemonic wars reveals the application of these technologies in facial recognition systems at checkpoints and airports, in algorithms for compiling lists of military targets, and ultimately in comprehensive surveillance tools that turn every citizen into an open file for the state or the enemy. The overarching principles of Islamic law emphasize the principles of "no harm, no foul," that "necessities are determined by their extent," and that the preservation of life, intellect, and justice are among its highest objectives. Therefore, the use of artificial intelligence systems to generate assassination lists, impose total censorship, or entrench structural inequality constitutes a clear violation of the objectives of Islamic law, a violation so blatant that it requires no far-fetched interpretation.

4. Use of Artificial Intelligence in Producing Religious Content

Today, fatwas, lectures, and sermons are formulated, prepared, and published automatically using linguistic models. The problem lies not in employing technology to organize content, but rather in the fact that fatwas in Islamic tradition are not based solely on linguistic proficiency. They are grounded in piety, an understanding of the objectives of Islamic law, and an awareness of the circumstances of those seeking a ruling and the potential consequences of the pronouncement, human dimensions that algorithms lack. Therefore, it is a grave mistake to replace this profound human presence with automated texts, which may be structurally correct but lack the spirit.

5. Gap between Producer, Consumer in the Islamic World

What artificial intelligence produces today does not represent our values, reflect our questions, or carry our cultural lexicon except to a limited extent. Arabic, the language of the Quran and the language of hundreds of millions, remains marginalized in most major technological models, leaving the most economically vulnerable Muslim societies to bear the burdens of digital transformation without being partners in shaping it. This gap represents a structural problem that requires serious political, scientific, and educational will to restore the nation's role as a key player, not merely a passive recipient.

The human philosophy has always arisen in moments of tension and transformation, when thinking beings are confronted with what they cannot comprehend, finding themselves compelled to re-examine their fundamental questions. We are living through such a moment today; therefore, what we write here is an invitation to stand together at this threshold, to contemplate what awaits us on the other side, with open eyes, alert minds, and hearts clinging to their humanity. For humanity, ultimately, is an open-ended existential project built upon meaning, choice, responsibility, and full responsiveness to the call of others. As long as artificial intelligence remains incapable of suffering, hope, love, and accountability, this project remains ours. The essential question is not whether a machine can become human, but rather whether we, in this rapidly evolving, terrifying, and dazzling age, are capable of preserving our humanity?

In the eleventh issue of "Oumam" magazine, we chose to dedicate it to open the door for discussion the artificial intelligence, and the transformation of modern humankind under its influence and development.

*In the "Focus" section, the first research paper (by Dr. Waseem Jaber) was titled: "Epistemological Hegemony of Algorithms: Monopoly of Defining Truth in the Dominant Western Digital Context." The second research paper, titled "Algorithmic Ethics: From Cultural Biases to Engineering of Acceptance,

Submission," was presented by Assist. Prof. Fatima Ramadan Abdel Rahman Abdel Latif. The third paper, "Work, Alienation in Automation Age: Artificial Intelligence Reshapes Social Classes," was presented by Prof. Adel Awad. As for the fourth research, entitled: "Criticism of Bruce Reichenbach's Vision of Human Destiny, spirituality in Artificial Intelligence Utopia," Dr. Mohammad Firas Al-Halabawi translated it from Persian.

*In the "Foundations" section, Mr. Mohammad Baqir Ammar Darwish addressed "Artificial Intelligence from Islamic Ethical Perspective: Foundational Framework for Confronting the Western Hegemony."

*In the "Studies and Research" section, Abdullah ibn Amara wrote "Production patterns in Pre-Colonial Algeria: Piracy as Production pattern."

*Finally, in the "Book Review" section, Mrs. Lina al-Saqr presented us the book titled "Digital Flood: How It Affects Our Lives, Freedom, Happiness."

In light of the exceptional circumstances that our Islamic world is going through because of the American-Zionist aggression against Iran, Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen, we are issuing this issue. Ironically, this aggression - with its destruction of vital facilities, killing of innocents, and assassination of leaders - is using artificial intelligence for the purposes of espionage, reconnaissance, and directing strikes, which constitutes a grave insult to all of humanity. Instead of artificial intelligence being a means to serve civilization, it has turned in the hands of tyrants into a tool for the destruction of crops and offspring. We ask Allah, Almighty, to grant our nation well-being and a decisive victory, to turn the schemes of our enemies back upon themselves, and to drown their tools and means as He drowned Pharaoh and his soldiers before.

Praise be to Allah, Almighty, first and last.

References:

- Searle, John R., «Minds, Brains, and Programs»,Behavioral and Brain Sciences, Cambridge University Press, Vol. 3, No. 3, Cambridge, 1980.
- Chalmers, David J., «Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness», Journal of Consciousness Studies, Imprint Academic, Vol. 2, No. 3, Exeter, 1995.