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Artificial Intelligence and Religious Subjectivity in Contemporary Islam: Navigating Faith in the Age of Technology

1. Khawaja Muhammad Abdun-Nafay
khmabdunnafay@gmail.com

M.Phil. Scholar,
Department of Islamic Studies,
Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan.

2. Dr. Jamil Ahmad Nutkani
jamilnutkani111@gmail.com

Assistant Professor,
Department of Islamic Studies,
Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan.

How to Cite:

Khawaja Muhammad Abdun-Nafay and Dr. Jamil Ahmad Nutkani. 2024: "Artificial Intelligence and Religious Subjectivity in Contemporary Islam: Navigating Faith in the Age of Technology". *Al-Mithāq (Research Journal of Islamic Theology)* 3 (02):01-10.

Article History:

Received:
20-07-2024

Accepted:
15-08-2024

Published:
18-09-2024

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Conflict of Interest:

Author(s) declared no conflict of interest

Abstract & Indexing



Publisher



HIRA INSTITUTE
of Social Sciences Research & Development

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1. Khawaja Muhammad Abdun-Nafay

M.Phil. Scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan.
khmabdunnafay@gmail.com

2. Dr. Jamil Ahmad Nutkani

Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan.
jamilnutkani111@gmail.com

Abstract:

This article commences with an exploration of the intricate relationship between religious belief and practice, emphasizing the importance of these elements in shaping individual and collective identity. Drawing from postmodernist critiques, we analyze the evolving nature of religious subjectivity in an era dominated by technological and industrial advancements. In doing so, we engage with key insights from the Holy *Qur'ān*, as well as classical and contemporary scholarly interpretations of the corpus Islamicus, to establish a foundational framework for understanding the spiritual and ethical challenges faced by modern Islamic societies. Additionally, we review the extensive literature on the dehumanizing impact of industrial technology, focusing particularly on how it fosters the alienation of religious consciousness. This alienation, we argue, threatens the essential core of spiritual self-fulfillment and calls for the urgent implementation of both individual and collective safeguards. These safeguards, we propose, should be grounded in the higher objectives of Islamic law, or *Maqāṣid al-Shari'ah*, which provide a comprehensive framework for addressing contemporary ethical dilemmas. In light of recent developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its integration into the digital sphere, we further posit that this technological advancement represents a significant acceleration of the dehumanizing trends already set in motion by industrialization. The ethical challenges posed by AI, particularly in terms of its impact on human autonomy and spiritual well-being, necessitate an informed and proactive response from Islamic societies. To this end, we conclude that Islamic communities must urgently seek guidance from their rich juridical and ethical traditions to navigate the complexities of AI and its societal implications.

Keywords: *Islam, Science, Artificial Intelligence, Religious Subjectivity, Technology.*

Introduction

One of the more common complaints among Muslim jurists today is the apparent profusion of mindless inquiries with precious little effort or reflection reflected within. While we would certainly refrain from pretending to empirically substantiate this opening claim, many of those who have been long in touch with the community will be glad to attest to the trend.

Alienation from the individual exercise of routine subjectivity, and the delegation of one's essential functions to higher reasoning (or authority) is far from a novel phenomenon. While traceable back to humanity's fall from the Heaven, the scope and scale of anxious conformity and ethical collectivism has varied over time. We draw on a burgeoning research literature on modern alienation and subjectivity, and explore the role of mass media and technology in exacerbating these symptoms. More

specifically, the “crisis of modernity” and the accompanying disruption of spiritual self-image might have been induced in a significant capacity by the socio-economic tolls of liberal capitalism and the Westphalian state.

Ironically, this apparent disdain for basic wisdom on the part of the masses might also stem from the folly of overassertive mediocracy and universalist ethical standardisation. While this is a vastly underexplored area of research, the current authors nonetheless contend that the deterioration of the Islamic heritages of logical rationalism and mysticism may ultimately boil down to the pervasiveness of objectified judicial thought, a dominance strongly reinforced by the industrial-capitalist influences indicated previously.

The current authors assert that the advent and proliferation of advanced artificially-intelligent networks and algorithms in the twenty-first century reflect a potentially hazardous development for the modern man. It is argued, in light of sociological and psychological literature, that the inception of the digital realm governed by the A.I. may have far-reaching consequences for religious subjectivity in complex ways, not in a disjointed fashion, but as a continuation of the revolutionary forces long promoting communal disorientation and alienation from one’s transcendental self. This is, we may relevantly add, especially the case for the two billion Muslims of the world today, for our community has largely been exceptionally resistant to the forces of secular humanism and liberal individualism, not to mention the piecemeal adoption of capitalist culture and Washington Consensus economics by much of the Ummah.

The arguments here presented are unapologetically opinionated but reflexive, as all serious research always is. In a field of study that has fundamentally been a bastion of explicit activism since inception, we intend to play our role not by presenting revisionist theories, but by contributing to the evolution of a more balanced and healthy perspective on Islamic history and society. We recognise that many of the topics hereby touched have traditionally been neglected by the scholars of Islam and further fruitful inquiry is not only welcome, but desperately requisite.

Religious Subjectivity in the Islamic Tradition

“Dissent within my Nation is a blessing,” (*Ikhtilāf Ummaht-ī Raḥmat*) the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) is said to have declared in an apparently apocryphal tradition that nonetheless perfectly represents a popular notion among some classical Muslim scholars.¹ It forms only one of the countless epistemological assumptions and ontological attitudes that constituted (and still do, to some extent) what Islamicist Thomas Bauer has recently called “A Culture of Ambiguity”.² While far from a postmodernist utopia, parts of the Golden-Age Islamic world normalised a socio-religious outlook radically surpassing mere “toleration” or even “tolerance”, occasionally bordering on a celebration of spiritual diversity. The level of recognition and legitimacy historically accorded minority communities in the Islamdom compares favourably to that in the Catholic Europe, for instance.³

In the modern era, this vein of moral subjectivity and independent agency with regards to religious experiences has been particularly unpalatable to the mainstream *Sunnī* thought. This reflects, in part, the ever-growing hegemony of the realist juridical-procedural infrastructure on public discourse, one that has effectively dominated and silenced esotericism (mainly *al-Taṣawwuf*), logical rationalism (the staple of the *Mu’tazilī* tradition and *al-Kalām*, inter alia) and other strands of Islamic thought since at least the nineteenth century.

As much can be inferred from the explicitly legalistic language that (uncharacteristically) characterises the axiological milieu of contemporary Islam.

Borrowing from the defunct “debate” surrounding *al-Sharī‘at* and *al-Ṭarīqat*, the results of the purported conflict were decisive by all measures: Mainstream *Sunnī* narratives today would universally suggest (perhaps cherish) an unconditional triumph and primacy of the former over the latter.⁴ The current authors believe that this classical thesis merits a revival and meticulous investigation before more certain conclusions can be drawn.

The Holy *Qur’ān* and much of the pre-modern Islamic tradition would seem unambiguously insistent on the nuanced nature of “belief” and “conversion”.⁵ The same would seem completely amiss in an Islamic society today.⁶ In a very different context, the Jamaican-American race theorist Charles W. Mills has described his own position regarding ethnic identity as ‘constructivist objectivism’ (in contrast to the extremes of “voluntarist subjectivism” and “foundational essentialism”).⁷ The term that might be aptly appropriated in the religious context to describe (early) Islamic attitudes towards faith (albeit with a stress on the “constructivist” part), in contrast to the predominant legalism of modern Islam.

This confusion of the legalist-objectivist process of juridical ruling and the religious-subjective domain of “faith” would seem largely untenable in light of the spiritual core of Islam (itself severely weakened by the relative decline of mysticism), with its emphasis on pragmatic sagacity.⁸ Textual and anecdotal evidence would suggest that the classical notion of “Belief in the Unforeseen”, a central tenet of Muslim theology and spirituality, for instance, relies strongly (if not solely) on emotional appeal and passion,⁹ and is clearly centred around the “heart” and “conscience” instead of “mind” and “reason”.¹⁰ Even the juridical literature could not resist the conclusion that formal conformity is unwarranted in matters of faith.¹¹ Religious truth, then, would only seem accessible through the free exercise of individual subjectivity alone.

More specifically, the interpretation of virtually every phrase and verse of the sacred texts requires biased analysis and opinionated application, often subconsciously. This is the case in practice even within the *Tafsīr bi-al-Āthār* community of Qur’anic Exegesis, despite ostensible opposition to the more openly-subjective *bi-al-Rā’y/ al-Dirāyat* school.¹² The resolution of contradictions in particular becomes impossible without allocating a decisive role to individual (and ultimately institutional) agency, even if only through selection bias or unspoken faith-based assumptions. Examples of this obvious phenomenon in the field of *Al-Īmāniyāt* are too numerous to list, but the ever-elusive problems in the chapter of *Ṣifāt Allāh* (esp. *Khalq al-Af’āl, Khalq al-Qur’ān, al-Tajsīm, al-Istiwā’*), but also the less-debated details of Heavenly blessings (*Ṣifaht al-Jannat*) offer excellent demonstrations. The *holy mysteries* here posed are clearly insurmountable unless subjective decisions are made without full textual or rational basis.¹³

But we actually began this section with an anecdote regarding juridical dissent for a reason: The level of ritualistic tolerance evidently reserved for dissent and ambiguity in the golden age of Islamic Jurisprudence itself is a shining spectacle of respect for subjective individual agency, the parallels of which are nearly unheard of in the history of Abrahamic religions.¹⁴ Surviving doctrines in juridical theory shed some light: It is standard assumption that legal ‘Commandments’ are not technically contingent on the existence of a practical or even theological foundation (the so-called *Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah*), not to mention that the entire spectrum of *al-Taqlīd* would be simply inconceivable in the uncompromising realist viewpoint.¹⁵

It naturally follows that many manifestations of these subjective principles remain in the Islamic legal literature and custom to this day, even if the values themselves have been lost or are no longer applied in any practical sense. Some of the prime remnants

include judgements based on the classical concept of *Al-Maṣāliḥ al-Mursalah*.¹⁶ There are conveniently vague exceptions to virtually all obligatory commandments in the Divine Law, with a case-by-case decision required on the ground. Wisdom, elegance, and mindful reception (constituting *al-Bāṭin*) seem to be just as, if not more, important to acts of worship than their sheer shape (*al-Zāhir*).¹⁷ When worldly penalties exist for religious offence, they are predominantly self-enforced or left to the offender's own judgement on multiple levels, not just the *Diyānat*, but also the *Qaḍā`* ones (court cases).¹⁸ Even Divine punishments are largely theoretical in their extremity, with grace actually occupying a central place in practical virtuosity.¹⁹ It is the impression of the current authors that the absolute insistence (by both rationalists and literalists) on universal values and deontological ethics therefore fits poorly into this scheme.

Alienation and Technology

“Alienation”, as a sense of otherization and distance, of not really belonging to and feeling the social and physical order of things around us, is an innate human condition. After all, the first human *Ādam* (A.S) still retained enough existential loneliness and curiosity to give in to the apple tree, even in the comfort of human company and the spiritual pleasures of the Paradise. This implicit hope of one day discovering a long-forgotten home for ourselves underpins the universal human craving for an afterlife. Despite its all-pervasiveness in the modern sociological literature, the practical significance and human consequences of ‘alienation’ remain poorly understood, and even the term itself has been marred with contradictory over-theorising, diluting its scientific utility.²⁰ Most commonly associated with Marxist thought in contemporary scholarship, the religious dimension of “alienation” has nonetheless been crudely addressed by the burgeoning Islamist treatment of the “Crisis of Modernity”.²¹ Christian existentialists have made the alienation of individual religious subjectivity a centrepiece of their criticism of enlightened rationalism for at least two centuries at this point.²²

It is not immediately obvious that the modern era has indeed ushered in an unprecedented crisis of “alienation”.²³ Nonetheless, it is equally implausible to imply that the inception of Westphalian collectivism, capitalist stratification, cosmopolitan urbanisation, democratic mass media, and liberal norms have not created a unique cultural structure with drastic implications for faith-based communities like Islam. Many such developments, it might be argued, ultimately devolve to the organic evolution of technology and mass communication despite diversity in institutional contexts and particular outcomes.²⁴

The prevalence of self-alienation in technology-dominated landscapes is a recurring theme not only in the academia, but also contemporary entertainment: From George Orwell's “Oceania” to the countless worlds created by the dystopian “Cyberpunk” genre, from animated titles like *Psycho-Pass* to Hollywood hits like “Minority Report”. Objectivist standardisation and legalist conformity, with an accompanying constriction of organic individual agency, forms the core idea behind these popular stories.²⁵

In his monumental contribution to literary criticism, Walter Benjamin identified the “self-alienation” created by the “mechanical reproduction” of original *œuvres d'art* as a key thread behind the political artistic developments of the early-twentieth century. While he only uses the term once and eschews an exhaustive treatment of the subject, the popularity (even centrality) of his arguments in the essay highlight just one of the mechanisms through which modern technology inherently influences the patterns of human subjectivity and subtly modifies cultural-religious inclinations at the grassroots level.²⁶

Most general overviews of the alienating impact of capitalist technology are associated with Marxist humanism and similar schools of thought on the left side of the political spectrum.²⁷ This is far from inevitable, however. Sartrean Existentialists, for instance, have surprisingly little to say on the matter. And so, we observe, do scholars of Islam.

Artificial Intelligence and Religious Subjectivity

So far, we have scrutinised the indispensable role played by individual and group subjectivity in the religious and spiritual life of the human agent (*Khalīfa*). We have also identified and briefly elaborated on two major objectivising influences on the contemporary Muslim *Ummah*, focusing specifically on the role of industrial technology in pacifying the free soul bestowed upon all at birth. In this section, we focus more specifically on digital Artificial Intelligence, or A.I., which constitutes one of the most glaring emergent technological trends to leave its drastic mark on the modern mind.

Artificial Intelligence in its current form has a long history of application in industrial machinery, whose impact is visible in the ongoing process of automation and the related socio-economic phenomena.²⁸ But the arena where Artificial Intelligence could intrude most bluntly in the Believer's religious life is that of information technology and the digital world. Only three decades into its inception, the internet – a complex web of knowledge created, organised, and accessed through A.I. systems – has already been associated with increased alienation in the workplace.²⁹ Through mechanisms such as the “online disinhibition effect”, similar developments have also been observed in the social sphere.³⁰

Casting aside the obvious implications of such changes in the social structure for a public religion like Islam, there are more direct ways in which A.I.-based technologies could disrupt the religious agency of the Believer and the Community. Unfortunately, there is currently a dearth of substantial studies of the subject from a religious, let alone Islamic, perspective despite the obvious relevance.³¹

It should be noted that the contemporary Artificial Intelligence is simply incapable of imitating the kind of subjectivity discussed earlier, and in all likelihood, it might never develop a sense of a religious realm.³² For now, information technology is the primary pathway through which the A.I. could become relevant in this regard, aside from its background influences comparable to other technological developments.³³

Excessive dependence on A.I. for the process of gaining casual knowledge poses serious questions about the health of individual religious subjectivity. To borrow terms from Bloom's taxonomy, observation would reveal that the internet browsers and social media applications have bypassed the cognitive and affective domains (the “head” and “heart”) and toxically infected the psychomotor functions (“hand”) of a significant segment of the modern population at an alarming pace.³⁴ The dangers of A.I.-assisted misinformation, which is only now being rudimentarily understood,³⁵ can also have a major import on the religious lives of Muslims if current trends continue.³⁶ One recent study also found a correlation between “interpersonal alienation” and “excessive Internet fiction reading”, hence the vicious cycle of isolation from meaningful socio-cultural activities (including religion).³⁷

The other side of the coin also deserves attention, however. Given that the “connectionist” bend in the field of A.I. research (established in the late-1980s and 1990s) stays in place for the long haul,³⁸ an alternative arrangement closer to the work-free utopia once envisioned by Karl Marx may feasibly enter the realm of possibility.³⁹ The social, but also the technological, assumptions behind this thesis, however, are highly implausible. Nonetheless, it is hard to deny that the integration of information

technology systems has drastically improved labour productivity and enabled more leisurely time (a crucial component of developing a healthy agency). The spectrum of positive economic possibilities raised by robotic automation might take some time to materialise, but their sheer existence is undeniably a boon to the flowering of the religious mind.

Concluding Remarks

Since the 1990s, a growing body of radical democratic literature has touted the alleged blessings of a “critical” or ‘monitoring’ postmodern citizenry alienated from the mainstream processes that sustain the liberal society.⁴⁰ For a culture that encourages conformity in public affairs and agency in private matters (like Islam), the prevalence of such attitudes could pose an existential problem: One that is already being identified as the “Crisis of Modernity” in its preliminary stages. After establishing the crucial role played by pragmatic subjectivity in the religious and spiritual life of the ideal Muslim, we identify a number of forces responsible for its gradual suffocation. Industrial technology in a capitalist framework has long been associated with such alienation. In this article, we have briefly explored the various ways in which recent advances in Artificial Intelligence might exacerbate or ameliorate these symptoms in the long term. Ultimately, a satisfactory compromise between neo-Luddite Romanticism on the one hand and unfettered progressivism and techno-fetishism on the other hand must be reached.

References

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- ² Bauer, Thomas (2021) **A Culture of Ambiguity: An Alternative History of Islam**. Tr. Hinrich Biesterfeldt & Tricia Tunstall. New York City: Columbia University Press, P. 126.
- ³ Cohen, Mark R. **Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages**. Princeton University Press, 1994. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1f886q5>.
- ⁴ Barelvī, Aḥmed Raza Khan, **Sharī`at o Ṭarīqat: Tasheel e Maqāl al-`Urafā` bi-Ḥzāz Shar` wa-`ulamā`**. Annot. Mufti Muhammad Qasim Attari. (Karachi: Al-Madīna al-`Ilmiya 2003), P. 201.
- ⁵ Examples of such attitudes are too numerous to list, but some relevant excerpts will be discussed shortly. Here, we only need look at, for instance, the curious essential (not merely linguistic) distinction made between the stages (processes?) of al-`Imān and al-Islām in 49:14, and the theological doctrine of Ziyādat al-`Imān. The latter, incidentally, is famously denied by the prominent Sunni jurist Abū Ḥanīfa; see: Abū Ḥanīfa, **Al-Fiqh al-Akbar**, (UAE: Maktabaht al-Furqān, 1999), P. 55.
- ⁶ Perhaps one of the most infamous monuments to the ingrained objectivity of mainstream Islamic thought today is this well-acclaimed volume, which has already gone through innumerable editions and reprints: Qadri, Muhammad Ilyas `Attar`, **Kufriyah Kalimat ke Bare men Sawaal o Jawaab**, (Karachi: Al-Madīna al-`Ilmiya, 2009), P. 51.
- ⁷ Mills, Charles Wade (1998) **Black Visibleness: Essays on Philosophy and Race**. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, P. 121.
- ⁸ See the reverence attached to it by the Prophet ﷺ in: Al-Bukhārī, Abū `Abdullah Muḥammad ibn Ismā`īl, **Al-Jāmi` al-Ṣaḥīḥ**, (Beirut: Dār Ṭūq al-Najāt), Ḥadīth No. 71.
- ⁹ It will be very difficult here to present an adequate elaboration on this point, but a careful reading of excerpts such as 3:190-191, 23:115-118, and 67:6-14 should suffice. Also see the portrayal of the Man-God relationship in: Al-Bukhārī, No. 7405.
- ¹⁰ Al-Rāzī makes this point explicitly with reference to several verses: Al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn, **Ma`ālim Uṣūl al-Dīn**, (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-`Arabi, 2001). P. 133-134. Compare the objectivist viewpoint to how Allah chose to reinforce Abraham’s faith instead, in 2:260. In contrast to the conventional legalistic understanding, at least some theologians have explicitly conceded the sufficiency of ‘Taṣdīq bi-al-Qalb’ for the accomplishment of ‘faith’ (“In the eyes of God”, not “For earthly”), even in the absence of the oft-stressed Iqrār bi-al-Lisān; see: Al-Farhārī, `abd al-`azīz al-Multānī, **Al-Nibrās**, (Istanbul: Maktaba Yāsīn, 2009). P. 534-535. That religion, in its essence, is purely a matter of conscience is clearly gleaned

from 2:256. Some exegetes have, unsurprisingly, seemingly limited this interpretation to only the ‘People of the Book’; cf. 18:29.

¹¹ Al-Aṭṭārī, Mufti Muhammad Qāsim, *Ṣirāṭ al-Jinān fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, (Karachi: Al-Madīna al-‘ilmiya, 2013). Vol: 7, P. 172.

¹² This is the broad consensus of later scholars of the Holy Scripture, reflecting in the so-called distinction constructed between the ‘Commendable Opinion’ (Al-Ra’y al-Mamdūh) and ‘Reprehensible Opinion’ (al-Ra’y al-Madhmūm); consult: Musā’id b. Sulaymā al-Ṭayyār, *Fuṣūl fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, (Dammam: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 2002), P. 65-71. Tradition suggests a more general reluctance to accept subjective interpretation in the earlier Tafsīr community; see: Al-Ṭabarī, Abū Ja’far b. Jarīr, *Jāmi’ al-Bayān ‘an Tafsīr Āy al-Qur’ān*, (Mecca: Dār al-Tarbiyaht wa-al-Turāth), Vol: 01, P. 84-87. We would also argue that the realist criticisms directed at the al-Tafsīr al-Ishārī tradition, for instance, by formal exegetes largely fails to account for this fundamental difference in outlook; hence the complaints of ‘failing’ to accurately reflect ‘God’s intention’ (Murād Allāh), understood as an objective essence free of human interpretative intervention yet still somehow accessible.

¹³ For only one famous (and ironic) instance of this struggle in action, see how the seminal work attributed to al-Imām Abū Ḥanīfaht justifies the mainstream rejection of literalism in *Ṣifāt: Al-Fiḥ al-Akbar*, P. 159-161.

¹⁴ Hence the bloom of the ‘hundred flowers’ that were the early schools of Islamic Jurisprudence. The process came to a halt and started a reversal sometime during the third (possibly second?) century A.H., hence the well-documented decay and ultimate demise of virtually all but half a dozen schools in the late Middle Ages.

¹⁵ On the former, see: Muḥammad b. Ḥussayn al-Jizānī, *Ma’ālim Uṣūl al-Fiḥ ‘ind Ahl al-Sunnaht wa-al-Jamā’ah*, (Dammam: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 2006), P. 201. The latter difference in background assumptions explains much of the dispute surrounding the status of al-Taqlīd in South Asia, even if neither of the parties is explicitly willing to concede their ideological objectivism.

¹⁶ The doctrine has been justified on the basis of traditions such as: “Be clement [in religious judgements], and do not [judge] harshly” (Yassirū wa-lā Tu’assirū), which would more and or less have no practical bearing unless there actually was some subjective flexibility accorded the individual believer and scholar; see: Al-Bukhārī, No. 6124-6128; Muslim, No. 1732-1734.

¹⁷ Once again, examples proliferate literally in every imaginable chapter of Islamic teachings, but much of it has been almost completely neglected by modern mainstream Muslims. Some of the most obvious warnings against such attitude come in the verses 107:4-5, and 22:37, and the Prophet Tradition quoted by al-Bukhārī, No. 1903. Wisdom in religiosity is necessarily manifested in many of the ways already discussed, while the role of elegance can be gleaned from the abundant al-Adab literature, but also the many traditions against ‘haste’, for instance; see: Al-Tirmidhī, Abū ‘īsā Muḥammad, *Al-Jāmi’*, (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2015), Ḥadīth No. 2012.

¹⁸ For instance, the legal threshold for many private offences is often so lofty that the only route for de facto conviction is a repeated, self-incriminating confession. E.g., see: 4:15, and 24:4.

¹⁹ For excellent elaborations on this spiritual dynamic, see: Muslim, No. 2816-2818.

²⁰ Even five decades after its publication, Richard Schacht’s lexicographical account remains the most renowned introduction to the early-modern and modern discussions surrounding ‘alienation’; see: Schacht, Richard (1970) *Alienation*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday. Of the few high-quality empirical tests of alienation ever conducted, Blauner’s similarly remains the most popular one: Blauner, Robert (1966) *Alienation and Freedom: The Factory Worker and His Industry*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. The recent marginalisation of ‘alienation’ as a leading concept in social analysis has been linked to the rise of postmodernist scholarship. See: Kellner, Douglas (2021) **Technology and Democracy: Toward A Critical Theory of Digital Technologies, Technopolitics, and Technocapitalism**. Cham: Springer. P. 67-92.

²¹ One recent example could be cited: Ali, Jan A. (2023) **Modernity, Its Crisis, and Islamic Revivalism**. *Religions*, 14(15), 01-26.

²² Søren Kierkegaard’s evaluation of the Hegelian ‘system’ and official church of Golden-Age Denmark offers a hallmark illustration; see: Westphal, Merold (1998) *Kierkegaard and Hegel*. In eds. Alastair Hannay & Gordon D. Marino, *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, pp. 101-124. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; also in the same volume: Bruce H. Kirmmse (1998) “**Out With It!**”: The Modern Breakthrough, *Kierkegaard and Denmark* (P. 15-47). Esp. see: P. 33-34.

²³ See Walter Kaufmann on ‘**The Inevitability of Alienation**’ in an acclaimed introduction to Schacht’s volume.

²⁴ This is the position taken by the predominant modernity theory, but has increasingly come under scrutiny in interdisciplinary surveys, philosophers, and sociologists. For a concise treatment of this

complex relationship, see: Thomas J. Misa, Philip Brey, Andrew Feenberg (eds.; 2002) **Modernity and Technology**. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

²⁵ Assuming the validity of Ralph Elliott's classical crowd psychology thesis, these market trends represent a real social outlook, aspirations and fears, prevalent in certain segments of the modern population. See: Elliott, Ralph Nelson (1994; ed. Robert Prechter) *R. N. Elliott's Masterworks*. Gainesville, Georgia: New Classics Library.

²⁶ Benjamin, Walter (1969) **The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction**. In ed. Hannah Arendt, *Illuminations*, P. 217-252. New York City: Schocken Books.

²⁷ Esp. Wendling, Amy E. (2009) **Karl Marx on Technology and Alienation**. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. On the Artificial Intelligence specifically, see: Yi, Chengcheng (2020) A Brief Analysis of the Alienation of Artificial Intelligence Taking Marx's Theory of Labor Alienation as an Analytical Tool. *Frontiers in Economics and Management*, 1(11), P. 182-188. For one radical activist whose ideology was informed primarily by modern technology, see: Kaczynski, Theodore J. (2016) *Anti-Tech Revolution: Why and How*. Scottsdale: Fitch & Madison.

²⁸ In 2018, nearly 45% of the OECD population was estimated to be at a high or moderate risk of immediate replacement by the A.I.: Nedelkoska, Ljubica & Glenda Quintini (2018) *Automation, Skills Use and Training*. OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers No. 202. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). From the time of the Luddites (and before), social resistance to the idea has been just as, if not more significant to the acceptance of new productivity-enhancing technology (today primarily represented by the Artificial Intelligence) as scientific-technical hurdles.

²⁹ Haga, Trond (2022) **Alienation in a digitalized world**. *AI & Society*, 37, P. 801-814.

³⁰ Joinson, Adam N. (2007) **Disinhibition and the Internet**. In ed. Jayne Gackenbach, *Psychology and the Internet: Intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transpersonal implications*, P. 75-92. San Diego: Academic Press.

³¹ One landmark contribution that lands the closest is that by: Herzfeld, Noreen (2002) **In Our Image: Artificial Intelligence and the Human Spirit**. Minneapolis: Ausburg Fortress. Another Christian overview of the potential impact of Artificial Super Intelligence is provided by: Golata, Paul (2018) **The Ethics of Superintelligent Design: A Christian View of the Theological and Moral Implications of Artificial Superintelligence**. Eugene: Wipf & Stock. Both of these, however, eschew a detailed exploration of the issue of human and machine agency in favour of more theological concerns, let alone attempt to study the impact of A.I. algorithms on human religiosity.

³² The Man and the Jinn are the only creatures endowed with the spiritual faculty in accordance with al-Qur'ān, 51:56, among others.

³³ The scientific literature on the human impact of Artificial Intelligence in information technology networks is still in its infancy. At least one noted group of ontological philosophy researchers have identified the loss of human essence as one of the key dangers of recent advances in machine consciousness; see: Wogu, I. A. P., F. E. Olu-Owolabi, P. A. Assibong, B. C. Agoha, M. Sholarin, A. Elegbeleye, D. Igbokwe, and H. A. Apeh (2017) **Artificial Intelligence, Alienation and Ontological Problems of Other Minds: A Critical Investigation into the Future of Man and Machines**. Abuja: 2017 International Conference on Computing Networking and Informatics (ICCNI).

³⁴ The over-arching role of capitalist instincts and monopolistic control in creating and perpetuating this over-dependence and alienation of the individual is hard to ignore. This is precisely the topic of inquiry for an emerging albeit sparse academic literature; for one noted study, see: Reveley, James (2013) **Understanding Social Media Use as Alienation: a Review and Critique**. *E-Learning and Digital Media*, 10(1), P. 83-94.

³⁵ Bontridder, Noémi, & Yves Pouillet (2021) **The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Disinformation. Data & Policy**, 3, E32, P. 21; K. Sedov, C. McNeill, A. Johnson, A. Joshi & I. Wulkan (2021) **AI and the Future of Disinformation Campaigns**. CSET Policy Brief, December 2021 (2 parts). Centre for Security and Emerging Technology.

³⁶ There is an extensive body of research linking online (dis)information to political radicalisation. The same, judging from whatever anecdotal evidence is available, might be a factor in the growth of Islamism (aided by Saudi and Iranian funding) in recent decades. On social media Salafism, see: Sorgenfrei Simon (2021) **Branding Salafism: Salafi Missionaries as Social Media Influencers**. *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 2021, P. 1-27.

³⁷ Yang, C., Z. Zhou, L. Gao, S. Lian, S. Zhai & D. Zhang (2022) **The Impact of Interpersonal Alienation on Excessive Internet Fiction Reading: Analysis of Parasocial Relationship as a Mediator and Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal as a Moderator**. *Current Psychology* (online: 28 April 2022), P. 16.

³⁸ Davenport (2013) **The Two (Computational) Faces of AI**. In ed. Vincent C. Müller, **Philosophy and Theory of Artificial Intelligence**, P. 43-58. Berlin: Springer.

³⁹ Marx, Karl (1858; tr. David McLellan) **Fragment on Machines**. In the *Grundrisse der Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie*. New York City: Harper. A more popular restatement is provided by: Bastani, Aaron (2019) *Fully Automated Luxury Communism: A Manifesto*. London: Verso.

⁴⁰ Inglehart, Ronald (1997) **Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies**. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Schudson, Michael (1998) **The Good Citizen**. New York City: The Free Press; Norris, Pippa (1999; ed.) **Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance**. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Norris, Pippa (2011) **Democratic Deficit: Critical Citizens Revisited**. New York City: Cambridge University Press. A key component still missing in the contemporary Islamist defence of the continued relevance of public religion is a convincing postmodern restatement of Islamic philosophy and thought, akin to what is only now being attempted by a group of Christian scholars in the West. E.g.: Walter Lowe (1993) **Theology and Difference: The Wound of Reason**. Bloomington: Indiana University Press; Kevin Hart (1989) **The Trespass of the Sign**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.