

The Ghazalian Project for the AI Era: *A Multiplex Critical AI Approach*

JUNAID QADIR

Professor of Computer Engineering,
CSE Department, CENG,
Qatar University



1

Technology and Humanity: An Evolving Partnership

*Homo Faber—
Human the
Tool Maker*

*Stone Tools
The Wheel*

PRIMITIVE
BEGINNINGS

*Printing Press
Steam Engine
Light Bulb*

DAWN OF
MODERNITY

*Internet
Smartphone*

DIGITAL AGE:
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

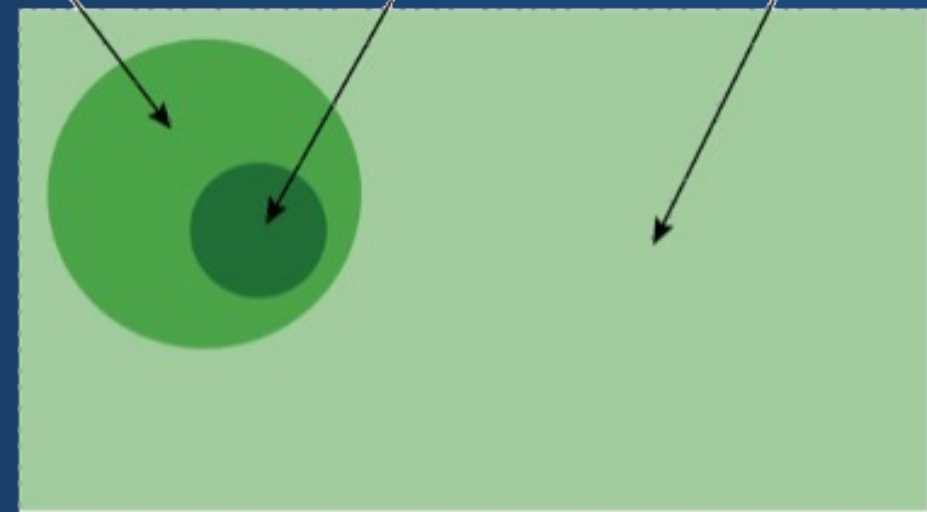
*AI and Robotics
ChatGPT*

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

TASKS THAT HUMANS
CAN DO ON THEIR OWN

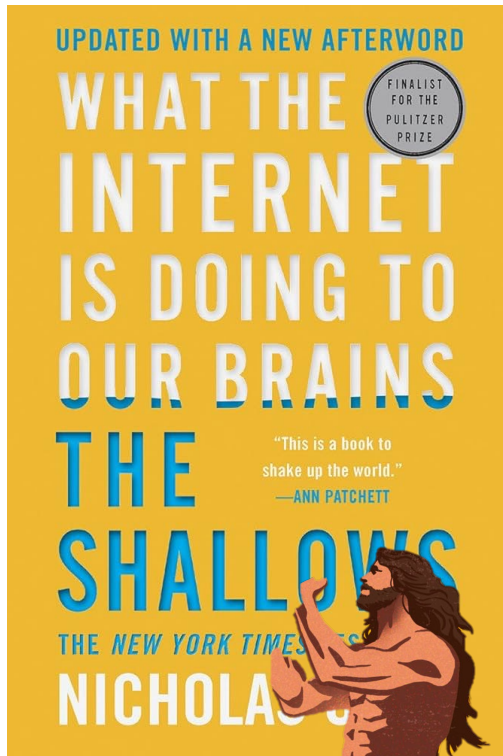
THE HUMAN TASKS THAT
AI CAN AUTOMATE

NEW TASKS THAT
HUMANS CAN DO WITH
AI AUGMENTATION

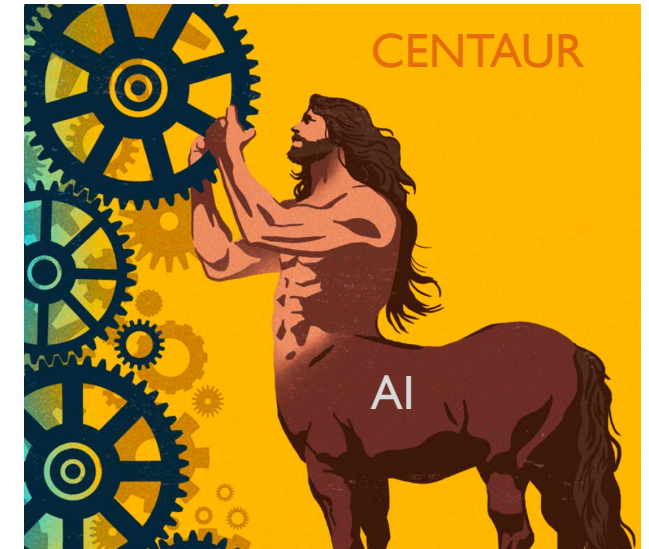
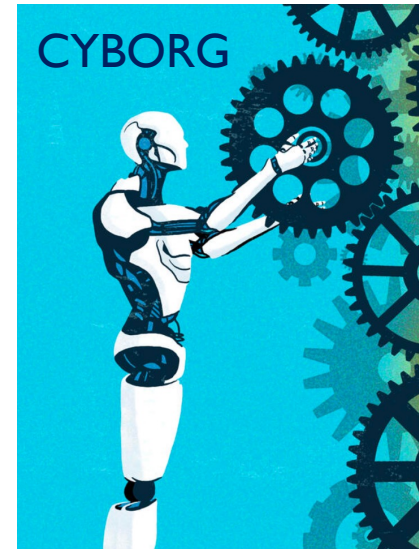
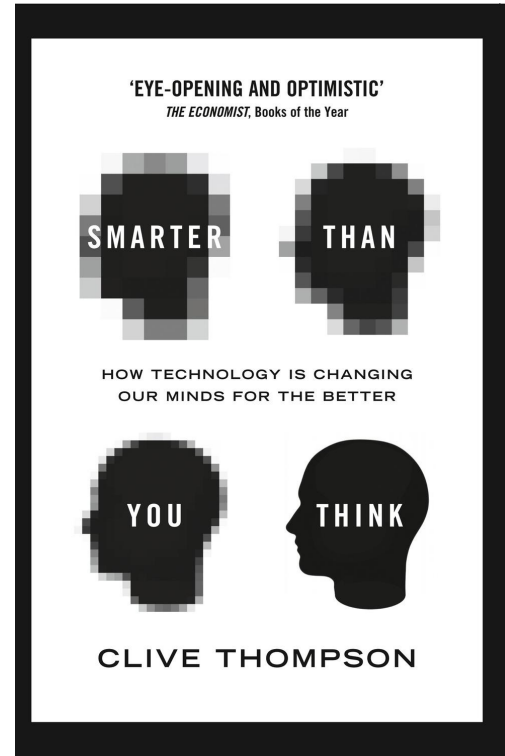


Are we getting smarter or dumber with technology

Why are these authors coming to starkly different conclusions?



THE HUMAN



“AI won’t replace you, but someone with AI will”

<https://hbr.org/2023/08/ai-wont-replace-humans-but-humans-with-ai-will-replace-humans-without-ai?>

Even if one tries, it has become almost impossible to escape the effects of technology

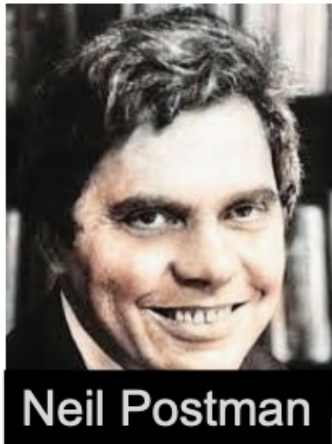
Two important insights about technology



Kranzberg's First Law of Technology

*"Technology is neither good nor bad;
nor is it neutral."*

"we shape our tools and thereafter our tools shape us."

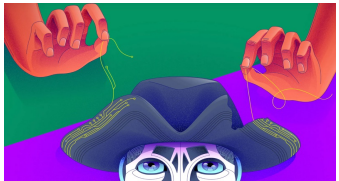


*"Every technology is
both a burden and a blessing;
not either-or, but this-and-that."*

Some Risks of Harmful Effects of AI Technology

AI COLONIALISM

The “Global North”—the rich dominating countries stand to dominate and monopolize the market

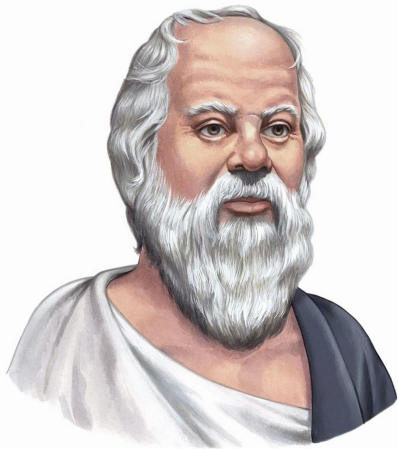


MARGINALIZING THE MARGINALIZED

Data-poor regions, not having indigenous LLMs, are put at a long-term risk of being colonized by standards embedded in LLMs

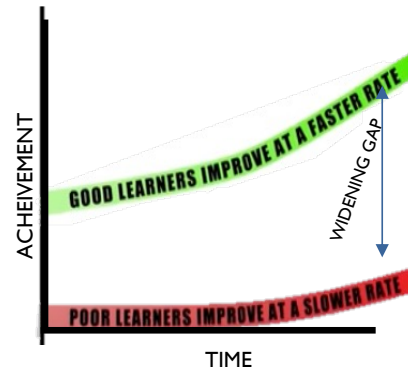
SOPHISTRY & PRETENTION

Post-Truth Society:
Easy to create plausible but untrue information.



INEQUALITY & LACK OF SHARED PROSPERITY

Technology, in the absence of appropriate checks, tends to exacerbate inequality.



REINFORCED BIAS

AI is not very artificial. Embedded within it are often (Eurocentric) human biases and judgements. Even with AI, there is no escaping ethical choices.

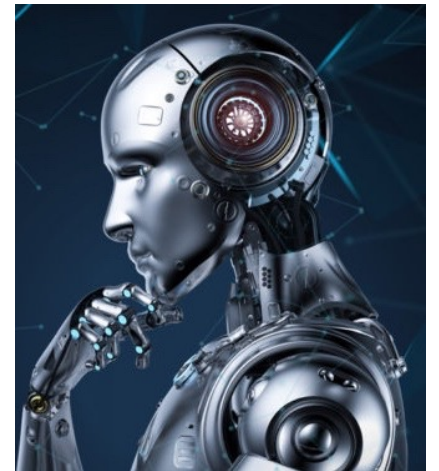


Abubakar Abid
@abidlabs

I'm shocked how hard it is to generate text about Muslims from GPT-3 that has nothing to do with violence... or being killed...

DEHUMANIZATION

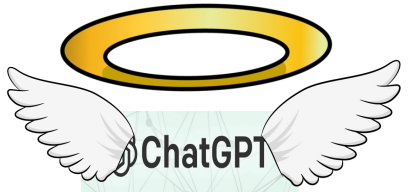
Contributing to roboticization and dehumanization of people and using them as means for technologic ends



Religious Harms of Uncritical Use of AI

HALO EFFECT

The Gullibility to Believe AI is infallible



Message ChatGPT...

Is there a God?

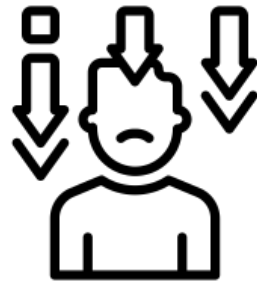
Is there an afterlife?

SLIPPERY SLOPE TO SINNING

Reduction of friction from sins and making sins easy through nudging

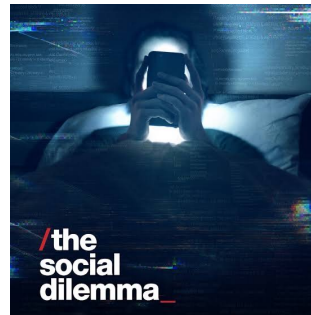
Opinion **The New York Times**
YouTube, the Great Radicalizer

By Zeynep Tufekci



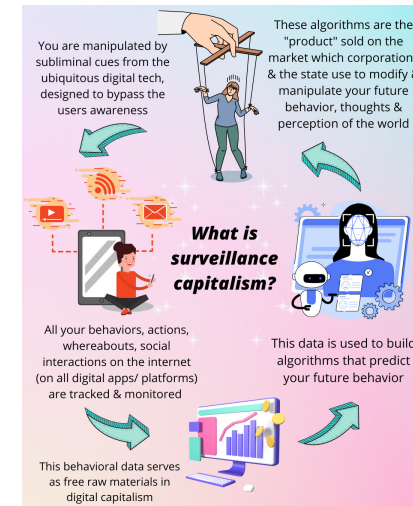
THE DANGER OF NAFSANIYYAH

Fulfilling (selfish) desires and pleasure and feeding the lower self



TECHNO HUMAN ENGINEERING

Nudging and exploiting people's behavior for commercial reasons (surveillance capitalism)



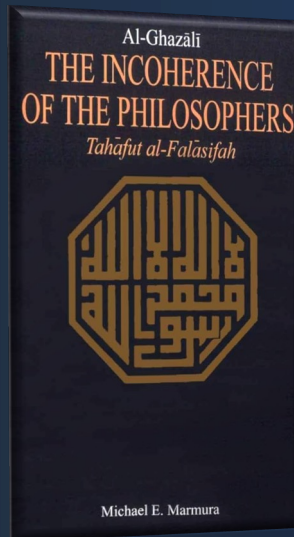
DISTRACTING FROM REALITY

AI-XR can distract from the reality (الحقيقة / الواقع)



'Fiction is outperforming reality': how YouTube's algorithm distorts truth

Ghazalian Project for the AI Era: *Critical Islamic Perspective*



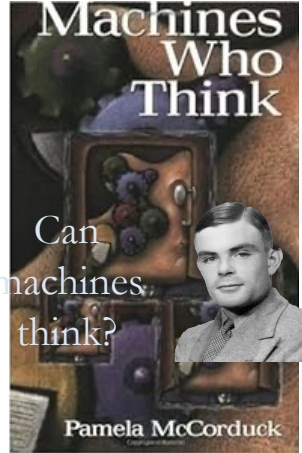
- *highlighted the flaws of materialism and hedonistic living*
- *focused on the primacy of moral character and virtue*
- *highlighted the religious danger of uncritical acceptance of knowledge and technology*
- *highlighted the danger of focusing superficially only on appearances*
- *highlighted the importance of intention (lillahiyat) and purpose (maslahah)*
- *highlighted that knowledge should be transformative and not only descriptive*

Philosophies underlying tools/ technologies

Technology is used for some ends and is premised with some underlying worldview about the nature of reality (metaphysics), existence (ontology), and value (axiology)



Modern Technology's Uniplex Worldview



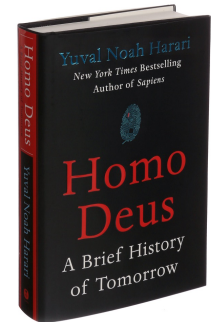
I, RODNEY BROOKS, AM A ROBOT



REDUCTIONISM:
*when humans are reduced to be
just like machines/ robots/ animals*

RELIGION OF TECHNOLOGY:

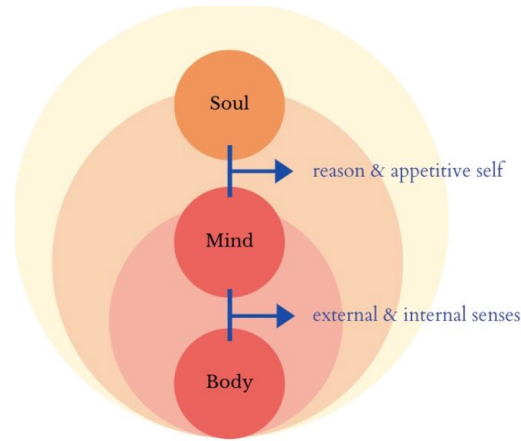
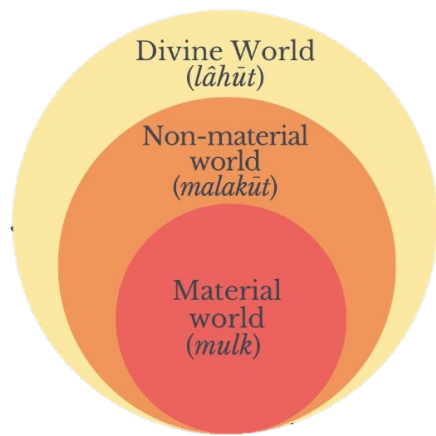
*The belief that human beings can develop technologies to effectively become “gods”
creating a technological utopia with immortality, perfectness, dominion, transcendence.*



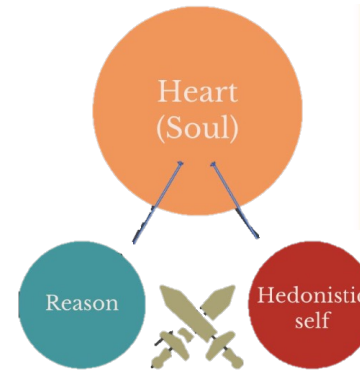
METAPHORS SHAPE THE WAY YOU THINK

“Metaphorical thinking half discovers and half invents the likenesses it describes.”—James Geary

Ghazalian Multiplex Human Ontology



The network between the human being and the multiplex world



1. the faculty of knowledge → foolishness – wisdom – deceitfulness
2. the faculty of anger → cowardliness – courage – aggression
3. the faculty of desire → inertness – temperance – debauchery
4. the faculty of justice → injustice – justice – injustice

Purification of the Heart:
Good Character (حسن اخلاق)

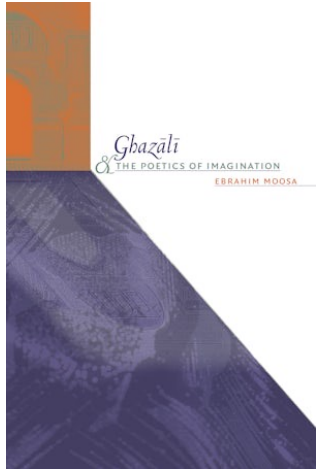
The heart is the knowing, deciding and acting human agency. The body and limbs are just tools of the heart



How we understand the self determines how we explain, understand, and regulate human behavior?

Ghazali's Nuanced Approach to Technologies

Critically appraisal and guarded adoption



WRITING TO REMEMBER

Subsequent to this event, Ghazali became obsessed with memory, something that was always available and present to him, while writing was susceptible to "theft."

WRITING TO INFORM



Compulsive doxological writing (aide memoire or memory-writing)

WRITING ON HEART



Heart writing .. Writing as part of a highly meta-physicalized self

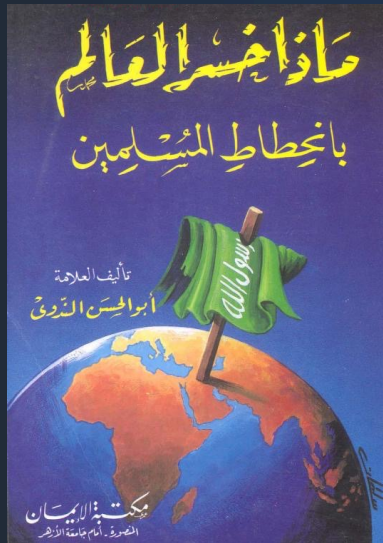
AL-GHAZALI AND THE ROBBERS



Ghazali lived in the medieval era with limited technology. We didn't even have the printing press then [and there's a long history of Muslim engagement with the printing press too]. HOW CAN WE LEARN FROM HIS VIEWS ON TECHNOLOGY

Realized the downside of a technology (and became wary as a replacement for memory after the robbery incident) but used it critically with intent for a religious purpose.

How will Ghazalian AI project be useful for the world?



WHAT THE WORLD HAS LOST DUE TO DECLINE OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

- Knowledge/science became a tool to dominate and manipulate.
- Diminishing focus on moral character, virtue, values, and ethical conduct.
- Increased materialism and a loss of meaning/ purpose.
- Exclusive focus on the pursuit of wealth to the detriment of nature and humanity.
- Rise in nationalism, new tribalism, racism, and selective “human rights.”
- Greed-driven colonization and increased global conflicts.

The unfair assertion that al-Ghazali is to blame for the downfall of sciences in Muslim world

Technology will not be considered autotelic

For what purpose is technology being used?

- 1) How is the technology that I am working on going to be used?
- 2) Who will benefit or suffer from it?
- 3) How much, and what social impact, will it have?

TECHNOLOGICAL DETERMINISM



TECHNOLOGICAL INSTRUMENTALISM



*Technology is
neither good nor bad
Nor is it neutral*

الرأي الجزئي

al-rā'y al-juz'ī:

*Judgement based on
individual (vested) purpose*

الرأي الكلي

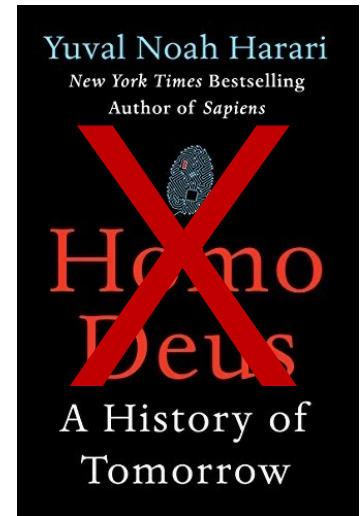
al-rā'y al-kullī:

*Judgement based on
universal purposes*

HOMO DEUS

TECHNOLOGY FOR WHAT?

*What happens when humans
try to attain God-like
capabilities of Creation,
Omniscience, and
Immortality.*



Holistic Conception of Human Flourishing (*Duniya and Akhirah*)

Ibn al-Qayyim (RA) said, “*Verily, the Sharia is founded upon wisdom and welfare for the servants in this life and the afterlife.*” Islam is not only focused on the *Akhirah* but motivates the development of conditions and supports for civilization and human material flourishing in this world aided by a divinely inspired moral order.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ۖ وَإِنَّمَا تُوَفَّقُونَ أُجُورَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۖ فَمَنْ زُحْزِحَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَأُدْخِلَ
الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ ۖ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ (3:185)

“Every soul will taste death and you will be paid in full only on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever is kept away from the Fire and admitted to the Garden will have triumphed. The present world is only an illusory pleasure” (Translation by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem)

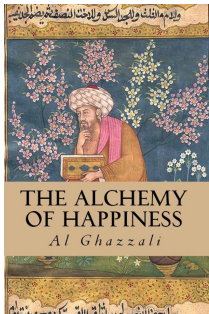
Starkly at odds with the transhumanist agenda aiming for digital immortality and at creating a digital earthly utopia.

وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهُوٌّ وَلَعِبٌ ۚ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِيَ الْحَيَوَانُ ۚ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ (29:64)

“The life of this world is merely an amusement and a diversion; the true life is in the Hereafter, if only they knew.”
(Translation by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem)

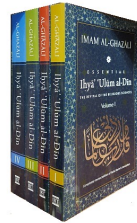
Ghazalian Multiplex Critical AI

DOES IT LEAD
TO HUMAN
FLOURISHING &
FELICITY?
(سعادة)



1. Ibādāt (religious duties)
2. Munjiāt (salvation)
3. Mu'amalat (human relations aspect of Islam)
4. Muhlikāt (damnation)

DOES IT
LEAD TO
SAVING
VIRTUES?
(منجيات)



Fourth Quarter - The Ways to Salvation (Rub' al-munjiyat)

- Book 31: On [Repentance](#)
- Book 32: On [Patience](#) and Thankfulness
- Book 33: On [Fear](#) and [Hope](#)
- Book 34: On Poverty and [Abstinence](#)
- Book 35: Faith in Divine Unity and Trust in Divine Providence
- Book 36: On Love, Longing, Intimacy and Contentment
- Book 37: On Intention, [Sincerity](#), and Truth
- Book 38: On Holding Vigil and Self-Examination
- Book 39: On Meditation
- Book 40: On the Remembrance of [Death](#) and the Afterlife

DOES IT
LEAD TO
DESTRUCTIVE
VICES?
(مهلكات)



Third Quarter - The Ways to Perdition (Rub' al-muhlikat)

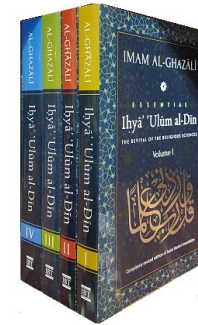
- Book 21: The Marvels of the Heart
- Book 22: On Disciplining the Soul
- Book 23: On Breaking the Two Desires
- Book 24: Defects of the Tongue
- Book 25: Condemnation of Rancor and [Envy](#)
- Book 26: Condemnation of the World
- Book 27: Condemnation of [Miserliness](#) and Condemnation of the Love of wealth
- Book 28: Condemnation of Status and [Ostentation](#)
- Book 29: Condemnation of Pride and [Conceit](#)
- Book 30: Condemnation of Self-Delusion

'Ujb and Batar
(Trying to be God)

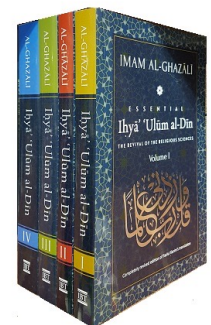
Satisfying Desires

- Ghafilah (Forgetting Akhirah/ Zikr/ **Death**)

DOES IT
RESULT IN
PUBLIC GOOD?
(مصلحة)



DOES IT
LEAD TO
SOCIAL ROT?
(مفسدة)



﴿وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ *
أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ﴾ [البقرة: 11، 12].

These perennial questions don't cease to apply with advanced technology and help us judge if the ends that technology is used for is worthwhile

Ghazalian Multiplex Critical AI for Judging AI

SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

*“How does a Muslim practice ethics in an age of technology?
Of course,
this question immediately triggers issues related to economics, politics, culture, society, and questions related to the environment in which technology is embedded” —
Ebrahim Moosa.*

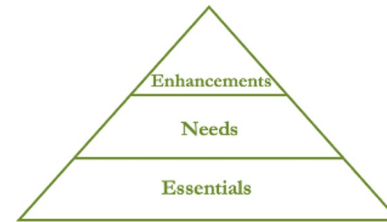
MINDFUL USE OF TECH WITH INTENTION



His last words on his deathbed:
“cultivate sincerity of motive”

(alaykum bi al-ikhlas).

PURPOSE & EFFECTS OF TECHNOLOGY

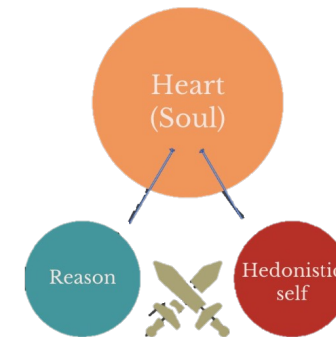


Does it comply with the following essentials?

Safeguarding/protecting religion	حفظ الدين
Safeguarding/protecting life	حفظ النفس
Safeguarding/protecting intellect	حفظ العقل
Safeguarding/protecting lineage	حفظ النسل
Safeguarding/protecting property	حفظ النسب

TECHNOLOGY & PURIFICATION OF THE SOUL

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا (89:7)
فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا (8)
قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ رَكَّاهَا (9)
وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا (10)



واعلم.. ما يطلب لذاته أشرف وأفضل مما يطلب لغيره والمطلوب لغيره الدراهم والدنانير فإنهما حجران لا منفعة لهما ولولا أن الله سبحانه وتعالى يسر قضاء الحاجات بهما لكانا والحصباء بمثابة واحدة

Know that ... that which is sought for itself is better and more honored than what it sought for other than itself. That which is sought for other than itself are gold and silver, for they are two stones of no intrinsic benefit, and if it were not that Allah has made them the means to facilitate the fulfillment of needs, they and pebbles would have been one and the same.

Thank you!

jqadir@qu.edu.qa