ISLAMIC CLASSICAL THEISM AND THE PROSPECT OF STRONG ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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Abstract

This article investigates the compatibility of strong artificial intelligence (AI) with classical theism, particularly within the Islamic tradition. By examining the functionalist view of mental states, we argue that a Muslim who accepts classical theism should be open to the possibility of AI that possesses genuine mental states. We present two arguments to support this claim: one that challenges substance dualism and another that assumes dualism. Both arguments demonstrate that mental states can arise in at least two different substances, which implies functionalism. As a result, the development of strong AI would not be surprising from an Islamic perspective, and its creation might even provide corroborative evidence for classical theism. This article thus provides a philosophical foundation for the existence of conscious and intelligent machines and their potential compatibility with Islamic beliefs.

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a field that aims to enable computers and machines to perform actions that humans and animals can perform. In other words, AI aims to create artificial "individuals" or "animals". This requires machines to possess qualities we normally attribute to humans and animals. Some of these qualities, such as calculation and prediction, are based on intelligence, while others, such as seeing, are not. Therefore, a more accurate definition of AI would be a discipline that aims to enable computers and machines to perform psychological actions (recognition, calculation, seeing, planning, etc.) that we associate with humans and animals (Boden, 2016, 1).

AI is a discipline that is intertwined with philosophy in various ways. First and foremost, basic approaches and techniques used in AI, especially before 2012, were developed by philosophers and are still heavily used in philosophy. These include propositional and predicate logic, types of logic related to reasoning about beliefs such as doxastic logic, logic systems related to obligation and permission concepts such as deontic logic, inductive logic, Bayesian confirmation theory, and other probabilistic reasoning tools. In fact, Alan Turing's paper "Computing Machine and Intelligence", which is considered the work that led to the emergence of AI, was published in *Mind*, a philosophy journal. In addition to the commonality in fundamental tools, philosophy is a discipline that addresses fundamental questions related to AI, such as what thinking is, how consciousness might emerge in systems, what it means to be a person, and which aspects of human mental processes can be mimicked by physical systems. In this context, the two disciplines interact with each other.[1]

For philosophers, AI is also interesting in terms of emerging ethical issues. Under what conditions can an entity have moral rights? Can a

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[1] For a detailed discussion about the philosophy of AI, see B. Jack Copeland, *Artificial Intelligence: A Philosophical Introduction* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1993).

legally unconscious entity that demonstrates human-like behavior have legal rights? When an autonomous machine accidentally commits a crime, who should be punished? What should be the duration of a prison sentence for AI with different processing speeds? These are questions that philosophers need to answer, and that will be of great importance in the future if AI becomes widespread.[2]

It is important to distinguish between two different categories of AI. We call the first group weak AI. AI in this group can demonstrate intelligent actions and solve complex problems. However, these AI systems have no mental states. In other words, they do not understand the tasks that require intelligence while performing them. Weak AI lacks real consciousness. Understanding or intentionality, as philosophers put it, is one of the most important features of consciousness. Intentionality is a mental feature that establishes a connection between our thoughts and the object we think about. Solving a problem that requires intelligence does not require intentionality. Algorithms provide solutions without needing to understand; therefore, a student can pass an exam by memorizing a method without understanding it. Other significant mental states are the traces left in our minds by experiences, which philosophers call qualia. For example, when we look at a red object, it appears as a perception in our consciousness. Imagine a device that recognizes red by wavelength. Even if this device detects red, it may not experience the perception of red. We can say that this device lacks the subjectivity/qualia property. While AI can recognize and distinguish colors, it will be an AI devoid of qualia features.

Strong AI systems exhibit actions that require intelligence as well as mental states such as qualia and aboutness. These machines can be considered to genuinely think and be conscious. The possibility of strong AI is an important issue not only for philosophers but also for engineers and entrepreneurs. People feel a moral responsibility toward conscious beings depending on their level of consciousness. It is seen as morally wrong by most people to harm a being that suffers, is aware of its suffering, and has high awareness or to terminate its existence ("kill") or operate it against its will. Therefore, companies that develop

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2   For a detailed discussion of the ethical issues arising from AI, see Markus Dirk Dubber - Frank Pasquale - Sunit Das (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ethics of AI* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020).

strong AI may face the risk of being accused of supporting "AI slavery". This makes the question of whether AI systems can have consciousness and under what conditions extremely important for companies dealing with AI. While it may be preferable for an AI system working on household chores to be unconscious, there may also be situations where machines are expected not to harm us by empathizing with us. Additionally, the question of whether AI systems can have free will is of great importance for people's safety. Therefore, the possibility of strong AI systems is a vital question not only for philosophers but also for AI in general. The answer to this question will help us understand the human mind.

In this article, I argue that if Islamic theism is correct, we should not be surprised by the possibility of strong AI. I do so by examining the relationship between functionalism and classical theism.

There is a close connection between strong AI and functionalism in the philosophy of mind. The strong AI defined earlier represents the idea that machines can achieve human-level intelligence, meaning understanding, learning, and reasoning skills equivalent to human cognition. The development of strong AI implies the emergence of machines with real consciousness, mental states, and self-awareness. In contrast, functionalism is a theory in the philosophy of mind that claims that mental states are defined by their functional roles within a system rather than their physical or biological structure. From a functionalist perspective, the importance of a mental state lies not in the material/substance it is made of but in its interaction with other mental states and the system itself. This perspective accepts the possibility of nonbiological entities, such as computers or robots, being equipped with mental states when they are functionally equivalent to humans.

Functionalism is often explained with an analogy involving objects such as pencils. A pencil can be made of different materials, such as plastic, wood, or metal. Whether an object is considered a pencil depends more on its function than its material. If an object can be used for writing, it is considered a pencil. It is not necessary for a pencil to be a physical object. If there is a supernatural object that can be used for the writing process, it can also be considered a pencil. Some objects, in contrast, are defined by their substance rather than their function. For example, consider water. For an object to be considered

water, it must consist of two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom. There can be no concept of water outside of matter. Thus, the properties of water are physical properties. Based on this analogy, does the mind resemble a pencil or water more closely? This is one of the fundamental questions of the philosophy of mind.

Functionalism introduces the concept of multiple realizability, allowing the same properties to emerge in different materials. In this context, mental phenomena are thought to be multiply realizable.

The connection between strong AI and functionalism is that functionalism provides a theoretical basis for the possibility of strong AI. When mental states are defined in terms of functional roles, it is believed that a computer, an artificial system, can obtain real mental states and consciousness by imitating the functional structure of the human mind. In this sense, functionalism offers a philosophical basis that suggests not only that conscious and intelligent machines are possible but also that they can be achieved through the proper functional organization.

When I mention theism in this study, I am referring to classical theism. Classical theism is a type of monotheism and thus accepts the existence of only one God. According to classical theism, God knows everything, is all-powerful, and possesses absolute goodness. Classical theism asserts that God is simultaneously both immanent (present or manifest in the material world via His attributes) and transcendent (independent of the material universe). Therefore, God is independent of time and space and is not material. God is superior to the universe in this sense but governs, creates, and sustains its existence. Classical theism rejects pantheism and panentheism. Almost all major schools of thought in Islam accept classical theism.

The Main Argument

In this article, my main claim is that classical theism requires the acceptance of functionalism within the framework of current scientific data. I call this position theistic functionalism. I believe this position offers a reasonable combination of both functionalism and classical theism. However, in this article, I defend functionalism from the perspective of theism. That is, I assume the truth of classical theism and argue for functionalism. I use the following argument to support my claim:

1. There is at least one human.
2. Humans have mental states.
3. Humans are entirely physical/natural beings.
4. God exists.
5. God has mental states.
6. God is a nonmaterial/supernatural being.
7. Mental states can emerge in both material and nonmaterial beings.
8. Therefore, functionalism is true.

The truth of the first premise is accepted even by solipsists.[3] It is clear that there is at least one human.

The second premise assumes that eliminative materialism, which denies all mental states, is false. Eliminative materialism is a radical position within the philosophy of mind that questions the existence of traditionally conceived mental states and processes (Churchland, 1981, 67-90). Advocates of eliminative materialism argue that our common understanding of the mind, known as "folk psychology", is fundamentally wrong and will be replaced by a more accurate scientific understanding based on neuroscience. They believe that as our knowledge of the brain advances, concepts such as beliefs, desires, and intentions will be revealed to be illusions, just as earlier scientific advancements debunked ideas such as phlogiston or the four humors. Eliminative materialism emphasizes the importance of empirical evidence and scientific research, noting that our intuitions about the mind may not accurately reflect the truth.

Eliminative materialism can be criticized in various ways. First, many critics point out that eliminative materialism underestimates the explanatory power and success of folk psychology. These philosophers claim that folk psychology is successful in explaining human behavior, making predictions, and guiding our actions (Fodor,

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[3] Solipsism is a philosophical view that claims that only one's own mind exists and that everything outside of one's own mind, including the minds of others and the external world, either does not exist or is unknowable. According to solipsism, an individual can only be certain of his or her own thoughts, experiences, and mental states, while everything else is uncertain or illusory. This form of extreme skepticism leads to the conclusion that only one's own mind can be known with certainty, and all other claims to knowledge are doubtful or unverifiable. Solipsism is criticized for being a self-defeating approach and for providing no basis for communication, knowledge, or interpersonal relationships because it denies the existence or knowability of other minds and external reality.

1987). If this critique is correct, then eliminative materialism cannot be true. Second, some philosophers argue that eliminative materialism is a self-defeating view. This is because the arguments of eliminative materialism rely on the very mental states it seeks to eliminate. For example, by defending eliminative materialism, one expresses human beliefs and desires, which makes the eliminative materialist position contradictory (Baker, 1991). Third, some critics argue that eliminative materialism wrongly assumes that scientific progress always leads to the elimination of older concepts. In many cases, scientific advances lead to the refinement or modification of existing concepts rather than their elimination (Kitcher, 1984).

In this article, since I assume that classical theism is correct, I do not need to defend this premise. To the best of my knowledge, no classical theist defends eliminative materialism. If we reject eliminative materialism, we can easily claim that humans have minds.

The third premise assumes that substance dualism is false. This position needs defense because a considerable number of classical theism proponents adopt substance dualism. The three most important arguments against substance dualism can be summarized as follows:

1. Physical principles such as the conservation of energy, the conservation of momentum, and the principle of causal closure conflict with substance dualism. These principles have been experimentally verified in numerous systems, including biological systems (Lowe, 1992, 263-276).
2. The mind-body interaction problem.
3. Neurophysiological studies.

Let us address the first argument. Energy is the name given to the ability of matter to perform work. In physics and chemistry, the law of conservation of energy states that the total energy of an isolated system remains constant or, in other words, is conserved over time. This means that energy can neither be created nor destroyed but rather can only be transformed or transferred from one form to another. Momentum is the measure of resistance that objects show to a change in their motion. Again, in closed systems, the total momentum is conserved. Momentum can neither be created nor destroyed, only transferred. Both conservation laws have been confirmed in all scientific observations to date, without a single exception. This includes biological systems. If a supernatural soul existing outside of

the universe determines our behavior, then there must be a continuous flow of energy and momentum of supernatural origin into our universe. This is because all physical changes involve the transfer of conserved quantities. Thus, if our brains are controlled by something supernatural, it means there are changes in the energy and momentum of our brains. If this is true, then we should see violations of conservation laws in entities with mental states. However, this does not seem to be true.[4]

The second argument against substance dualism is the mind-body interaction problem. According to dualism, the soul is not material but can control my body. How can it do this? Why can my soul control my body but not yours? After all, it is an immaterial thing and outside of space-time; why does it have such a close connection with only my body? It cannot be said to be closer to or inside my body because this would require attributing a location to the soul; however, this would make it a physical object. Even if we allow, for a moment, that the soul has a location, the question of how the soul is connected to my physical body remains unanswered. Being in the cockpit of an airplane does not explain how you operate the airplane. To explain how an airplane is operated, one must refer to the relationship between the pilot and the airplane and the mechanisms within the airplane. Unfortunately, thus far, no relationship has been successfully established that explains the relationship between the brain and the soul.

Our third argument is essentially based on four different neurophysiological findings. Therefore, it can be said that there are actually four separate arguments. These arguments can be summarized as follows.

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[4]   One may worry that this argument is also incompatible with classical theism such that classical theists cannot endorse it. However, I do not agree with this concern. Classical theists might argue that God's interaction with the world is not in violation of physical laws but rather is realized through them. This is a common view among contemporary classical theists. I believe this position is completely compatible with occasionalism as well if one simply interprets the "laws of physics" as God's habit (*ʿādab*) or custom (*sunnah*). In dualism the immaterial soul must constantly interfere with the physical body; hence, it needs to constantly violate the laws of conservation. This can be easily detected experimentally. On the other hand, even if God violates the laws of conservation for special interventions such as miracles, it cannot be easy to detect these violations experimentally due to their special nature.

First, research on the neural correlates of conscious experiences provides strong evidence for a direct relationship between subjective experiences and specific neural activity patterns. Using neuroimaging techniques such as fMRI, EEG, and MEG, scientists have identified brain regions and activity patterns associated with specific conscious experiences. These findings challenge dualism, which claims that the mind is separate from the brain. Instead, the evidence supports the idea that consciousness is a product of brain activity and not a separate, nonphysical entity (Koch et al., 2016, 307-321).

Second, the fact that brain damage can lead to changes in mental states and cognitive functions is incompatible with dualism. For example, strokes, traumatic brain injuries, or neurodegenerative diseases can cause changes in personality, memory, and cognitive abilities. These changes in mental states indicate that the mind is dependent on the brain. Dualism struggles to explain how damage to the brain, a physical substance, can affect the mind, a nonphysical substance (Gazzaniga et al., 2018, 47-49).

Third, neurophysiological research has shown bidirectional causality between mental states and brain activity. For instance, emotional states can cause changes in brain activity, and changes in brain activity can also evoke emotions. Similarly, cognitive processes such as attention and decision-making can both affect and be affected by neural activity. This interaction between mental and physical states conflicts with dualism, which proposes a strict distinction between mind and body (Damasio, 1994, 48-50).

Finally, understanding that mental disorders originate from neural dysfunctions further weakens dualism. Research has shown that disorders such as depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia are associated with abnormal brain activity patterns or neurotransmitter imbalances. Treatments targeting these neural bases, such as pharmacological interventions or deep brain stimulation, can alleviate symptoms or cure disorders. This strengthens the idea that these mental states depend on brain activity and weaken dualism (Insel - Scolnick, 2006, 11-17).

In this article, since we assume the truth of classical theism, we will not defend the fourth premise, which claims that God exists.

The fifth premise also appears to be true because we assume classical theism. Classical theism posits that God possesses mental

states such as knowledge, will, and intention. Although the nature of these states may differ from human mental states, at the core of classical theism lies a concept of a god who is all-knowing, all-powerful, and purposeful (Swinburne, 1993, 91-95; Plantinga, 1980, 10-14; al-Ghazālī, 2000, 66-68).

Let us provide two arguments supporting the claim that God has mental states. I will term the first argument "argument from agency". It can be summarized as follows:

1. Mental states are necessary for agency.
2. God is an agent who is capable of acting in the world.
3. Therefore, God has mental states.

The proposition that "mental states are necessary for agency" is rooted in the belief that intentional actions, decision-making, and control over one's behavior –the hallmarks of agency– require certain mental capabilities. For instance, to act with agency is to act with intention. Intentionality presupposes the existence of mental states such as desires, beliefs, and goals. An agent acts to achieve certain outcomes based on his or her beliefs about the world and their desires. Without mental states, there would be no preferences or aims to guide action. Alternatively, agency implies a level of self-awareness, which is a complex mental state. Being aware of oneself as a separate entity, understanding one's own mental states, and being able to reflect on one's own actions are all important components of agency. Hence, the first premise seems true, and the second premise is obviously true in classical theism.

The second argument, which may be termed the "argument from divine self-awareness", can be formulated as follows:

1. Mental states are necessary for self-awareness.
2. God is a self-aware being who is aware of Himself and the world around Him.
3. Therefore, God has mental states.

Self-awareness, as the conscious knowledge of one's own character, motives, and desires, seems to rely intrinsically on the existence and recognition of one's mental states. Hence, it requires the existence of mental states. Without mental states, there would be nothing to reflect upon, nothing to understand or be aware of in terms of oneself. In addition, self-awareness implies an understanding of the distinction between one's internal experience (i.e., mental states) and

the external world. Therefore, it requires the ability to acknowledge that mental states exist as inner reality and are separate from the external world. The second premise seems obviously true in classical theism, where God has the power to answer prayers and communicate with humans via prophets.

Before returning to our main argument, it may be helpful to consider some objections to the fifth premise. In classical theism, God is unchanging. One may worry that this implies that God has no mental state. Here is how the argument looks:

1. God is immutable in classical theism (i.e., He is unchanging).
2. Mental states are subject to change.
3. Hence, God in classical theism does not have mental states.

I believe the second premise is false. Why should mental states be inherently changeable? It seems one could argue that mental states, when applied to God, do not entail changeability in the way they do for humans. They could be seen as stable aspects of God's knowledge and will rather than fluctuating experiences. There are many models in the literature about how God can be both omniscient and changeless, and these models can be easily applied to other mental states of God.[5]

It is crucial to emphasize that when we ascribe mental states to God, this does not mean that God necessarily experiences all mental states like a human does. The omniscience and omnipotence of God suggest a very different kind of consciousness than human beings have. For instance, it could be argued that God does not experience uncertainty, confusion, or doubt, given that He is omniscient. Similarly, God does not experience fear, surprise, or frustration because these emotions are often tied to limitations in power or knowledge, which would contradict the notion of divine omnipotence. Additionally, some human mental states are intrinsically tied to our physical and temporal existence, such as fatigue, hunger, or anticipation. Given God's transcendence and eternality, these physical and time-bound mental states would not be applicable to God. Furthermore, human mental states are often influenced by factors such as upbringing, culture, personal experiences, and societal pressures that are irrelevant to God. Thus, while we may use human language and concepts to discuss

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[5] For one interesting analysis of the compatibility of the omniscience and immutability of God, see Paul Helm, *Eternal God: A Study of God without Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 73-95.

God's mental states for the sake of understanding, these should not be taken to imply a straightforward equivalence between God's consciousness and human mental states. It is also important to consider that many aspects of God's mental states, as described in classical theism, go beyond our human capacity to fully comprehend. For example, how can we truly understand what it means to be omniscient or omnipotent? These aspects of divine mental life are so radically different from our own experience that they likely involve "mental states" that we, as humans, cannot fully grasp. However, I do not think these differences render false the fifth premise of our main argument. I can now return to my main argument.

The sixth premise of my main argument is a necessary consequence of classical theism. In the theistic concept of God, God is generally considered a nonmaterial being that transcends the physical world. This understanding is prevalent in theistic religions, especially Christianity and Islam (Swinburne, 1993, 101-103; al-Ghazālī, 2000, 61-63).

The seventh premise is a logical consequence of the other premises.

The eighth premise is a consequence of the seventh premise. The thesis of multiple realizability, which posits that mental states can be realized in various physical or nonphysical systems, has played an important role in supporting functionalism. As defined above, according to functionalism, mental states are defined not by the specific physical or nonphysical substances that realize them but by their functions or causal roles. The multiple realizability thesis implies functionalism by suggesting that mental states can be realized in different types of systems that perform the same functions.

Before concluding this section, I would like to re-emphasize a point that is already clear in the argument.[6] In this section, I have argued that humans are entirely material beings. However, the defense here does

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[6] As functionalists often put it, pain can be realized by different types of physical states in different kinds of creatures, or multiply realized... Indeed, since descriptions that make explicit reference only to a state's causal relations with stimulations, behavior, and one another are what have come to be known as "topic-neutral" ... - that is, as imposing no logical restrictions on the nature of th the items that satisfy the descriptions - then it's also logically possible for non-physical states to play the relevant roles, and thus realize mental states, in some systems as well." (Janet Levin, "Functionalism", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Accessed March 30, 2023).

not entail metaphysical materialism, which claims that all existence is material. Indeed, in the sixth premise, I accepted that God exists and is a nonmaterial being. I also did not claim in this section that there are no nonmaterial beings other than God. Arguing that humans are material beings does not require the rejection of other nonmaterial beings. In fact, the position I defend here even allows for the possibility that humans exist as nonmaterial beings after death.

Does Islamic Theism Necessarily Entail Dualism?

One might think that Islamic theism necessitates substance dualism since dualism is a widespread view among Muslims. However, this belief is not accurate. Since this is not the main subject of this article, I will not provide a detailed analysis; a few notes will suffice.[7]

It is true that some Sufis and some Peripatetics, such as Ibn Sīnā, have embraced dualism. However, many schools of thought within Islamic thought have not adopted dualism. For instance, theologians, especially some Ashʿarī theologians, have rejected dualism. Ashʿarīs adopt occasionalism and believe that all events and actions are directly created by God. Ashʿarīs argue that the soul and body are not separate substances but inseparably connected. They state there is no need to propose a separate nonmaterial soul to explain mental phenomena since God directly guides every thought and action. Additionally, some Peripatetics, such as Ibn Rushd, rejected classical dualism by arguing that the intellect is the only nonmaterial aspect of the human soul and defending a more Aristotelian understanding of the soul as the form of the body. Hence, one cannot state that dualism is the only option endorsed by the Muslim intellectual tradition.[8]

Philosophers such as Lynne Rudder Baker believe that dualism has some conflicts with theism. Baker expresses concerns about the compatibility between theism and dualism based on the doctrine of bodily resurrection (Baker, 1995, 493-497). Theism contends that

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[7] For a detailed theological analysis, see Caner Taslaman, "Bedenin ve Ruhun İki Ayrı Cevher Olup Olmadığı Sorununa Karşı Teolojik Agnostik Tavır", *Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 33 (2007/2), 41-68.

[8] For a detailed summery of different opinions of early Muslim scholars regarding the nature and existence of the immaterial soul, see (Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Ismāʿīl Ibn Abī Bishr al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa-ikhtilāf al-muṣallīn: İlk Dönem İslâm Mezhepleri*, ed. and trans. Ömer Aydın - Mehmet Dalkılıç (İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2019), 466-472.

humans will be resurrected in the hereafter, with their bodies rising and reuniting in an elevated form. Baker argues that by emphasizing the separation between the nonmaterial soul and the material body, dualism can call this doctrine into question. If the soul can exist independently of the body and is considered the fundamental feature of a person, it is unclear why bodily resurrection is necessary or how it relates to personal identity. While the doctrine of resurrection implies that humans are somehow incomplete without their physical bodies, dualism tends to present the nonmaterial soul as the essential center of personality. This tension between the assumptions of the resurrection doctrine and dualism raises questions about their compatibility within theism. Functionalism, of course, does not face a similar problem because it naturally explains why we need a physical body in the hereafter by accepting that functions can only be implemented with a physical existence.

In conclusion, theism does not require dualism and may even have some potential conflicts with it. However, let us say one believes in the soul-body duality. I believe an argument that could include this as well could be developed. Let us take a look at this argument in the final section.

An Argument from Mind-Body Dualism to Functionalism

Let us accept mind-body dualism for a moment. Acknowledging the existence of a soul does not automatically exclude functionalism. In this section, I will provide a second argument claiming that even a classical theist who accepts the existence of a soul must also accept functionalism. The argument can be summarized in the form of premises as follows:

1. There is at least one human being.
2. Humans have mental states.
3. Human mental states are carried by the immaterial soul.
4. God exists.
5. God has mental states.
6. God is a nonmaterial being and a substance distinct from the human soul.
7. Mental states can emerge in entities with different substances.
8. Therefore, functionalism is true.

Premises 1, 2, 4, and 5 are the same as in the previous argument. The two new premises that interest us are 3 and 6. Premise 3 would automatically be accepted by someone who accepts the immaterial soul and associates the mind with it. Thus, I will not defend that premise.

The sixth premise claims that God and the human soul are composed of different substances. This claim actually reflects the opinion of Descartes, the most important representative of dualism. According to Descartes, God is a substance separate from both the human soul and the body. Descartes regarded God as the ultimate, infinite, and perfect being that created the world and everything in it, including human souls and bodies. God is different from human souls because God is infinite and perfect, while human souls are finite and flawed. God is also different from human bodies because God is not material and is not subject to physical properties such as space (Descartes, 1641, 24-34).

Descartes offers two strong, independent arguments to support our premise. The first is the ontological difference. One of the fundamental distinctions between God and human souls is their ontological nature. God is a necessary being that exists independently and does not depend on anything else to exist. In contrast, human souls are contingent beings that depend on God for their creation and existence. The second argument is that God is defined as infinite, eternal, and perfect, possessing all possible perfections. Human souls, however, are finite and have limited capacities. While human souls can reason, think, and have consciousness, they do not possess the infinite knowledge, power, and perfection of God. This also indicates that the substances of the human soul and God are different.

Another argument that indicates the difference in substance between humans and God in Islamic theism is the idea that God is completely transcendent to the universe and creation. If the divine substance is the same as the human soul, it could even imply the potential for humans to possess divine qualities, which does not seem compatible with Islamic theism.

A fourth argument can be developed from divine simplicity. Divine simplicity is a philosophical concept claiming that God is not composed of parts or properties but is instead a single, unified, and indivisible reality (Davies, March 30, 2023). This idea is found in

various religious and philosophical traditions, including Christian theology, Jewish thought, and Islamic philosophy. Proponents of divine simplicity argue that any division or complexity would imply dependency or limitation, and maintaining God's absolute perfection is necessary. There are different versions of divine simplicity, and a common view equates God's attributes with His essence. A theist who accepts the doctrine of divine simplicity must acknowledge that God and the human soul consist of different substances. This is because the human soul is thought to have various parts, such as reason and will, that introduce a level of complexity. Therefore, God's simplicity contradicts the complexity of the human soul and further emphasizes their differences in substance.[9]

In my opinion, a classical theist must accept the sixth premise because arguing that the divine substance and the substance of the human soul are the same would lead us to a form of pantheism or panentheism. Since I argue in this article that classical theism requires functionalism, I will not explore the cases of pantheism and panentheism.

If the sixth premise is true, the seventh premise emerges as an inevitable consequence of the other premises. This brings us back to the conclusion that mental states can arise in two different substances, which, as discussed earlier, leads us back to functionalism. Therefore, if classical theism is correct, even if we adopt the view that the human soul is immaterial, the most reasonable position still seems to be functionalism.

Before concluding this section, let us briefly comment on the importance of this conclusion. If theistic functionalism is correct, the tension between AI and theism encountered in religious circles would not only be an invalid inference but, in fact, the opposite would be

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[9] One may worry that divine simplicity is inconsistent with the claim that God has mental states because mental states are often thought to be complex entities that are composed of parts. However, I do not believe that this concern is warranted. First, divine mental states may be radically different than our mental states and may be inherently indivisible and not composed of parts. In addition, the doctrine of divine simplicity does not deny that God has various attributes such as omniscience, omnipotence, and omnibenevolence. Rather, it posits that these attributes are not additional "parts" of God but rather are identical with God's essence. In this sense, God's "mental states" might be understood as identical with God's essence, thus preserving divine simplicity. It is also worth noting that not all classical theists embrace the doctrine of divine simplicity.

true. If theism is correct, the emergence of strong AI is an expected situation. Therefore, the emergence of strong AI not only does not harm religious thought but actually confirms theism.

It is worth emphasizing that this compatibility between strong AI and theism more strongly confirms Islamic theism than Christian theism. According to traditional Christian theology, humans are created in the image of God (Imago Dei). In the Christian tradition, the concept of Imago Dei is of central importance in understanding human nature. According to Genesis 1:26-27, God created humans in His image and endowed them with unique abilities such as reason, morality, and self-awareness. This belief generally asserts that humans have a special status in God's creation and have a specific purpose and responsibility. AI that captures and even surpasses human consciousness and intelligence would weaken, if not disprove, the claim of the uniqueness of the human mind.

In contrast, there is no such situation in Islamic thought. There is no belief in Imago Dei, and the idea that humans are the most important beings is open to rejection. Indeed, Q 17:70 seems to contradict this belief: "*We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on land and sea, and provided them with good things, and preferred them over many of those We have created*." This verse declares that humans are superior to many of the created beings, implying that beings superior to humans are possible. Therefore, the formation of strong AI does not create a similar problem for Islamic theism as it does for Christian theism. Consequently, the claim that strong AI confirms theism is a more suitable claim for Islamic theism.

One may object that certain verses in the Qurʾān imply anthropocentrism similar to Imago Dei, which is inconsistent with the existence of strong AI. For example, the Qurʾān claims that humans are God's representatives or stewards (*khalīfah*) on earth (Q 2:30). While this verse can be and is interpreted as implying special status for humans, one should note that *khalīfah* can be read as a successor in the sense of "to come after temporally", which does not lead to that conclusion. Both interpretations are fairly common in the exegesis literature.[10] Another possible argument for anthropocentrism can be raised by reference to angels submitting (or prostrating) to Adam,

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[10] For a detailed discussion, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al. (ed.), *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York, NY: Harper One, 2015), 21-22.

which is found in several verses in the Qurʾān, including 2:34, 7:11, 15:29, and 38:72-73. These verses describe a scene where God orders the angels to prostrate to Adam after his creation. All of them do except for iblīs (Satan), who refuses out of pride and is thus cast out of God's favor. This episode is often interpreted as an affirmation of the honored status of humans in creation. It signifies the special stature of humans, who, unlike angels, have free will and moral responsibility. The angels' prostration is seen as an acknowledgment of this special status. However, one should note that acknowledging the special and honored status of humans does not imply that there cannot be other special and honored beings. The third possible objection is to refer to the concept of God breathing in Adam, often referred to as the "breath of life" or the "divine spirit", which is found in verses such as Qurʾān 15:29 and Qurʾān 38:72. This verse is interpreted by some scholars as implying that humans carry part of God; hence, we are special in a sense similar to Imago Dei. However, one should note that this is not the mainstream interpretation. It is usually interpreted by many scholars as a symbolic representation of the divine gift of life and consciousness to human beings (Nasr, 2015, 646). Of course, God is free to choose to provide the gift of life and consciousness to other beings besides us; hence, these verses also do not constitute a good argument against strong AI parallel to the Imago Dei problem. We should note that Imago Dei is a central doctrine in Christian theism, and a similar anthropocentric creedal doctrine does not exist in the Islamic tradition. While one can try to formulate scriptural arguments from the Qurʾān or ḥadīth for anthropocentrism, they will always be open to reinterpretation and will not be on the same footing as Imago Dei.

Conclusion

In this article, I argued that a Muslim who accepts classical theism should be open to the possibility of artificial intelligence with mental states (strong AI). I defended this through functionalism, which defines mental states in terms of functions. The relationship between strong AI and functionalism is that functionalism provides a theoretical framework for realizing strong AI. When mental states are expressed in terms of functional roles, a computer, as an artificial system, can achieve genuine mental states and consciousness if it simulates the

functional organization of the human mind. In this context, functionalism provides a philosophical foundation that argues not only that conscious and intelligent machines can exist but also that they can be achieved with the correct functional organization.

I presented two arguments, one that rejects substance dualism and one that assumes dualism, to argue that classical theism implies functionalism. Classical theism accepts a supreme creator with mental states. The substance of this creator is different from that of humans, whether a biological system or a soul carries the mental states in humans. Therefore, according to classical theism, mental states arise in at least two different substances. This implies that functionalism is correct. Hence, the emergence of strong AI would not be surprising in the classical theistic view and, consequently, in the Islamic perspective. In fact, if classical theism implies the correctness of functionalism, as argued here, then it can be said that the creation of strong AI confirms classical theism, albeit not very strongly.

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