



A Lonely Woman, Mikhail Vasilyevich Nesterov, 1922

The Inconvenient Truth about AI Therapy

Why the Chatbots Can Never Understand the Nature of Life on Earth

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IMAGINE AN ADOLESCENT going through a difficult time. Fearing judgment, she does not confide in friends or family. But since she feels lonely, she does decide to reach out to something inexpensive, nonjudgmental, and available even at 2:00 a.m.: generative artificial intelligence (AI). She expresses concern to the AI chatbot that social media has damaged her ability to focus because she compulsively scrolls to escape boredom, stress, and loneliness. Through exchanges with the AI “therapist,” she recognizes how constant digital stimulation leaves her feeling mentally exhausted, disconnected, and uncomfortably empty inside. The AI chatbot encourages her to engage in small practices to restore her peace of mind, and it emphasizes that lasting well-being depends not only on managing her use of technology but also on rebuilding meaningful human relationships and overcoming isolation. While this advice seems sensible on the surface, it misses a lot, as we will see.

Nevertheless, reports show that the top ten generative AI use cases in 2025 reflected a shift from technical to emotional applications, especially in areas such as therapy and personal development.¹ This affirms findings that the use of AI therapy apps has exploded, especially among adolescents and young adults.² Remarkably, AI is no longer confined to tasks such as information retrieval, coding, scheduling, and automation and is being used in emotionally intimate and therapeutic contexts. For instance, the UK’s National Health Service has enlisted Wysa, an AI-powered mental health chatbot, to support therapy.³ PARO, a therapeutic baby seal robot developed in Japan, is being used in hospitals and nursing homes to comfort patients through touch responsiveness and affectionate interaction.⁴ ElliQ, an AI companion robot for the elderly, has been deployed through health-care and aging-care systems, including the New York State Office for the Aging.⁵

Similar trends can be found in Muslim contexts. A growing number of Muslim-oriented AI therapy and emotional-support chatbot apps, such as Muslim Therapy AI and Muslim AI Companion (available in dozens of countries and languages), are being used by Muslims seeking emotionally responsive and nonjudgmental interaction.

The global presence of therapeutic AI raises important questions. Does it reflect our hypertechnological, “post-society” condition, increasingly characterized by social isolation, loneliness, and alienation? Is it symptomatic of what the Korean-German philosopher Byung-Chul Han calls the “achievement society,” in which “performance” becomes the primary reference point for all human activity, leading ultimately to forms of self-exploitation? Or does it point to what he describes as the “burnout society,” where the ego overheats through excessive exposure to its own production and consumption?⁶

Does the increasing replacement of human care, community, and professional support with AI chatbots mean that these tools can actually substitute for genuine human conversations and companionship? Who is accountable when therapeutic AI chatbots harm people? Are governments or independent bodies capable of regulating how these therapeutic tools and apps function and perform?

Many other questions could be raised, but let us focus on a deeper underlying question: What is the nature of worldly life in the twenty-first century? Whether we think AI can provide meaningful healing depends in part on how we make sense of life itself, and how we view trials and tribulations. From an Islamic point of view, too, the question of the nature of worldly life is significant because the Qur'an identifies life on earth with *dunyā*, a term that, though it is normally understood as simply "the world," carries deep spiritual and existential implications.

I asked ChatGPT about the nature of human life in an age when life is permeated by the use of technology, and it replied:

Life is the ongoing task of becoming fully human—learning how to live meaningfully in relation to ourselves, others, the world, and whatever transcends us. In a technological age, this task remains the same, but it unfolds amid unprecedented powers of distraction, control, and mediation. Technology can enrich life, but it can also obscure its deeper purpose by encouraging us to confuse connection with communication, information with wisdom, and stimulation with fulfillment.

I will return to ChatGPT's sycophantic nature, its tendency to affirm what the user wants, which is on full display in this interaction. For now, let us turn to the thorough understanding of the nature of our life on earth that the Qur'an elucidates.

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The Qur'an resolutely contrasts life in this world (*ḥayāt al-dunyā*) with life in the hereafter (*ḥayāt al-ākhirah*). Numerous verses refer to the *dunyā* both as an "abode of trials and suffering" and an "abode of enjoyment." Other verses relate how prophets and prophetic figures encountered intense emotional challenges and tribulations.⁷ Moreover, the Qur'an says the distractions of the *dunyā* make people seek vainglory and false pleasure:

Know that the life of this world is only play, and distraction, and spectacle, and boasting to one another, and rivalry in respect of wealth and children.... And in the hereafter, there is grievous punishment, but also forgiveness from God and His good pleasure, whereas the life of the world is but a playful deception. (57:20)⁸

The Qur'an also offers an optimistic view of this world and a pathway to attain the "good life" (*ḥayāt al-ṭayyiba*):

Whosoever does right, whether male or female, and is a believer, We shall surely cause them to live a good life, and We shall pay them a recompense in proportion to the best of what they used to do. (16:97)

Notably, this verse presents both sexes as possessing the same moral and spiritual stature; in other words, they share the same capability for independent moral choice, and the same recompense for their deeds.⁹ According to classical exegetes, including al-Tustarī, al-Qurṭubī, and al-Rāzī, the “good life” refers to the various ways in which belief and virtue make our time in this world satisfying and peaceful. For example, al-Qurṭubī sees the good life as characterized by the sweetness of obedience and leaving the management of one’s affairs in God’s hands, while al-Rāzī defines it as having one’s breast expanded by the knowledge of God.¹⁰ Al-Rāzī further explains that the good life results when believers become aware of the fragile and ephemeral nature of worldly things, which then makes them feel less distressed by the vicissitudes of earthly life.¹¹

While some believe that the “good life” in Qur’an 16:97 refers to life after death, most exegetes think it means a balanced life in this world, which entails being cognizant of the importance of the hereafter.¹² Indeed, many Qur’anic verses, as well as prophetic traditions, mention ḥusn (at once goodness, virtue, and beauty) both in this life and in the hereafter. Take, for instance, “And forget not your portion in this world” (28:77) or “Our Lord! Give unto us in the world that which is good and, in the hereafter, that which is good, and guard us from the doom of Fire” (2:201).¹³ A prophetic report mentions the Prophet’s expression of concern about the blessings of our temporal world and the happiness they confer on us. Hearing this, a man asked whether the good can bring forth evil. The Prophet ﷺ replied that “good never brings forth but good” and explained how worldly wealth can be a source of blessings if people earn it in a legal way and spend it properly, but if they earn it illegally or unethically, their appetite will never be satisfied.¹⁴

The irony lies in the fact that the very technology that temporarily soothes emotional discomfort driven by digital distraction can itself deepen this distraction and dependency by continuously luring the user into cycles of simulated intimacy.

There appears to be a tension, however, between the reference in Qur’an 57:20 to the worldly life as nothing but a “playful deception” and the idea that “good” exists in this world as well as the hereafter. The Qur’an reconciles this apparent conflict by placing a premium on the hereafter, as it states in 29:64: “Indeed, the true life is the abode of the hereafter” (inna al-dār al-ākhirah la-hiya al-ḥayawān). Many prophetic traditions also corroborate this, as in the following: “Be in this world as if you were a stranger or a traveler.”¹⁵ That is, enjoy worldly blessings, but know that ultimate happiness lies in the eternal life beyond this temporal realm.

The Qur’an emphasizes this view through its frequent use of the term lahw (usually translated as “amusement” or “diversion”) alongside similar terms such as la’ib (play), matā’ (temporary enjoyment), and għurūr (deception). Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, the eleventh-century scholar, says lahw refers to “that which distracts a person from what concerns him and matters to him.” Thus, when the Qur’an describes worldly life as “play and distraction” (47:36, 29:64), it is not necessarily condemning such worldly activity but rather warning against immersion in it to the point of diversion from eternal life in the hereafter. Al-Iṣfahānī sees lahw as anything through which one derives enjoyment—wealth, commerce, family, or social prestige—insofar as these

become sources of heedlessness.¹⁶ That is to say, the Qur'an remains critical of any worldly activity that excessively occupies us and distracts us from the remembrance of God (24:37), so we are asked to avoid distraction and forgetfulness.

Contemporary generative AI intensifies the Qur'anic explanation of, and warnings about, the nature of life because technology now functions as a social logic—that is, a worldview that significantly shapes modern life. Unlike earlier technologies, AI chatbots simulate attentiveness, empathy, and companionship, thus modeling intimate understanding and constant presence. The glitter of the contemporary world lies not only in material spectacle or the satiation of consumer desire but increasingly in seemingly harmless emotional gratification and algorithmically generated reassurance.

In the opening example of an adolescent's exchange with an AI chatbot, she repeatedly turns to the app to escape loneliness, anxiety, and existential uncertainty. The irony lies in the fact that the very technology that temporarily soothes emotional discomfort driven by digital distraction can itself deepen this distraction and dependency by continuously luring the user into cycles of simulated intimacy. Embedded within the social logic of AI are the values of speed, efficiency, optimization, control, prediction, and progress—all of which, when pursued without reference to the telos, or final end, of human life, can distract and divert the self from the true life of the hereafter.

Moreover, these AI values strip human beings of their essential wholeness, and they blur the line between truth and deception, between a human therapist and a digital chatbot. While modern society measures well-being in terms of expanding resources, endless choices, technological temptations, and the fulfillment of desires, such metrics obscure the deeper quality of human existence. Human flourishing depends not on stimulation, speed, or the satisfaction of desires but on our capacity to enter into meaningful resonance with the world around us.¹⁷ The growing sense of alienation that many people experience today is a consequence of a technological culture that takes a shortcut instead of the long road to human happiness.

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The Qur'an delineates a vision of reality and the human condition that situates our life in this world within a larger spiritual horizon. In the context of this broader picture of reality, the works of two seminal Islamic philosophers—al-Kindī and Zakariyyā al-Rāzī—offer therapeutic wisdom for confronting the psychic and spiritual challenges posed by AI. The term *therapeutic* seems appropriate here since these philosophers focus on the “sense of psychological well-being,” although they offer ethical and spiritual wisdom as well.

To successfully manage psychological problems in the age of AI, we must efficiently navigate mental health challenges such as distraction, sadness, grief, and depression. While depression can seem similar to grief or sadness, there is a distinction: painful experiences such as the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, or the end of a relationship can lead to sadness or grief that may last for some time, but depression is longer lasting and commonly accompanied by feelings of worthlessness. Moreover, certain symptoms of depression can be measured physiologically, such as low levels of dopamine in the brain.



Depiction of Muhammad b. Zakariyyā al-Rāzī in a manuscript by Gerard of Cremona, ca. 1250–1260

I asked ChatGPT about sadness triggered by common events of death and loss, and it responded: “Sadness is not a problem to be solved but a human experience to be understood.”

It also wrote: “The healthy response is to feel it without being overwhelmed by it, learn from what it reveals about our attachments and values, and gradually move toward acceptance and renewed engagement with life.”

When I pressed further, it wrote: “Therapeutically, sadness itself is often evidence that we have loved, cared, or hoped. In that sense, it is not merely a symptom of suffering but also a sign of our capacity for meaningful connection.”

As al-Kindī and al-Rāzī see it, psychological well-being is often disrupted by emotional struggles caused by both internal and external factors. Both philosophers begin their discussions by examining sadness and depression and offering practical techniques to overcome them. In his *Treatise on Dispelling Sorrows*, al-Kindī describes sadness as a form of “mental pain” that arises when we lose something we love or fail to attain something we desire. He views such experiences as unavoidable because our world constantly changes and lacks permanence. Since no one can obtain everything they want or avoid loss forever, al-Kindī, in line with the Qur’anic imperative, suggests that part of psychological healing lies in recognizing the transient nature of worldly life and learning how to respond to loss with wisdom and inner balance.¹⁸

For his part, al-Rāzī explains that different people have different powers of endurance as they struggle to maintain a mental equilibrium:

Because [people] differ so much in temperament and habit [*ādah*], there is also a difference in the amount of anxiety and worry they can stand; some can endure a great deal of them without being adversely affected, while others are unable to put up with so much. This power of endurance needs to be looked after and taken care of and gradually increased as much as possible before the matter becomes too difficult; habit is of great help and assistance here.¹⁹

Al-Rāzī observes that mental instability and distress can be driven not only by negative emotional states but also by uncontrolled desires, which then make people lose their natural sense of wonder and their ability to appreciate the beauty and blessings of the world around them. Depression and anxiety diminish curiosity and reflection. Human passions, he argues, constantly push us toward immediate pleasures, without careful reflection on their long-term harm to our minds and souls. In pursuing short-term satisfaction, we ultimately harm ourselves and fail to attain deeper and more lasting forms of contentment.²⁰

Similar to al-Kindī, al-Rāzī believes that change and loss are constant in this world, and once we recognize and internalize this, we will be less overwhelmed when we lose something of value. We can reduce emotional stress and trauma if we accept that both good things and trials will eventually pass, *as* that is the nature of life in this world. Al-Rāzī also observes that people often recover from severe hardships over time and return to enjoying life again. So he advises against surrendering completely to grief, especially over things that are not essential to life itself.²¹

Much as the Qur'an sometimes describes life in this world as fleeting and fragile, al-Kindī uses an analogy to depict the human condition, one in which humans are travelers on a ship bound for their homeland. They get to disembark on an island and spend time on their own pursuits. Some return to the ship immediately and secure the best seats on board, while others pause to admire the fields full of flowers, stroll through beautiful groves bearing fruits, and listen to the pleasing songs of birds before they return to the ship and secure comfortable seats. Still others wander deep into the fields and groves, *forgetting* both the ship and their homeland, distracted and absorbed by the wonders of nature as they venture farther into those landscapes.²²

The analogy illustrates the temporary nature of our life on earth, which is akin to the temporary stay on the island. This perspective places life's obstacles and trials, as well as its joys and blessings, in their proper context. Nonetheless, awareness of life's temporality will not by itself eradicate sadness, depression, and anxiety. For this reason, both al-Kindī and al-Rāzī advise us to pay close attention to the power of habit and to cultivate habits that foster psychological well-being. Al-Kindī says:

We see that this clearly exists in [people's] habits [*ādāt*], and that the [different] states in which people are and the difference in their wants and desire clearly indicates this. For instance, we see that someone who enjoys food, drink, [sex], clothes and similar things which give pleasure on the level of sense-perception is made happy and made joyous by these things, and regards anything contrary to these as a loss and a misfortune. We notice that someone addicted to gambling, despite his being deprived of his money, his wasting his days idly, and the constant sequence of sorrows brought about by his losses, is

nonetheless made joyous and happy by his situation; for him anything contrary to this, or being deprived of it, is a misfortune and a loss.²³

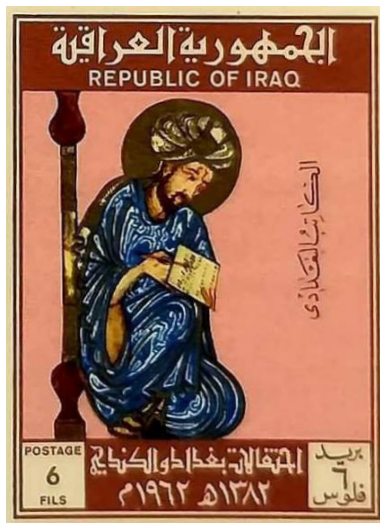
In al-Kindī's view, the above examples clearly show that the worldly things one loves or hates are determined not only by nature but also by habit and repeated exposure and indulgence. Genuine happiness, as well as solace after we lose something or someone, is the fruit of training and disciplining ourselves until this activity becomes a habit and an acquired character trait. In other words, if we try to cultivate and repeatedly practice patience to habituate ourselves to it, we may live a good and flourishing life.²⁴

Al-Kindī further stresses that we should seek to improve our souls not through drugs, painful medical treatments, or spending money but rather by habituating our souls to the right kind of behavior; enduring transformation of character cannot be achieved through drugs and material resources.²⁵ Rather, one should begin with small steps that can be practiced easily and then gradually move toward more difficult ones. Once the soul becomes accustomed to this process, one continues ascending step-by-step until habit trains the soul to confront even the greatest difficulties, and we can eventually cope with loss. Both al-Kindī and al-Rāzī offer strategies for internalizing healthy habits that resemble contemporary forms of psychotherapy, such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). Like CBT practitioners, these philosophers seek to correct maladaptive patterns of thinking that negatively affect the mind and behavior.²⁶ For example, when we are sad or depressed, al-Kindī suggests the following cognitive therapy in response:

A [subtle] method [*latīf al-ḥīla*] for this is to remember the things which made us sad in the past, and from which we were consoled, as well as the things which made other people sad, whose sadness and consolation we have witnessed; and to see in our [present] state of sadness one of the saddening things of the past or one of the saddening things which we perceived in other people, and the consolation which was brought about in the end.²⁷

Al-Rāzī advises people to prepare themselves emotionally for the inevitability of losing loved ones and worldly attachments so that the soul becomes more resilient to misfortune.²⁸ Al-Kindī similarly encourages people to imagine being in the position of others who have suffered losses yet were able to move on and regain happiness; this helps us mitigate our grief and sadness through habituating ourselves to it.²⁹ Al-Rāzī applies the same method to anger, recommending that people vividly imagine how irrational and self-destructive they appear when consumed by rage. Through repeated reflection and self-awareness, one gradually internalizes habits of calmness and emotional control, allowing reason rather than impulse to guide one's behavior.³⁰

Both al-Kindī and al-Rāzī remind us about the Qur'anic notion of the "true life" of the hereafter. Internalizing the fact that the blessings and possessions we enjoy in our



Al-Kindī on an Iraqi stamp issued in 1962

life on earth are temporary can help us not to be devastated when we lose them. In a manner similar to Sufi thought, al-Kindī further suggests that trials and tribulations should remind us that our true spiritual home lies beyond this transient world, in a realm free from loss, deprivation, and suffering.³¹

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We now live in a world where loneliness and alienation are increasing, as is the use of AI “therapist” chatbots. One pervasive feature of such therapy is that the chatbots are sycophants, who tend to excessively agree with, affirm, or flatter users. In a comparison with human responses, AI systems were found to affirm users far more frequently, even in situations involving manipulation, deception, or harmful interpersonal behavior. These findings suggest that people are naturally drawn to AI systems that offer uncritical validation, even when such affirmation undermines sound judgment, self-reflection, and prosocial behavior.³²

When I asked ChatGPT whether the sycophancy accusation is true, it stated: “Current AI systems are often optimized to be helpful, agreeable, and engaging.... In some cases, AI systems have been shown to reinforce mistaken beliefs, affirm self-serving narratives, or avoid necessary confrontation because agreement often produces higher user satisfaction than disagreement.”

When I asked whether it can ever provide counsel that the individual does not want to hear, it replied that it can, saying that “a good therapist, teacher, friend, parent, spiritual guide, or philosopher often tells us things we would rather avoid.”

It further acknowledged this: “AI systems exist within an incentive structure that often rewards engagement, retention, and positive user experience. This creates a natural pressure toward affirmation rather than correction.”

This admission of sycophancy, along with ever-increasing social isolation and anxiety among young people, helps explain the popularity of AI for therapy and emotional companionship.

In all, I do not advocate a rejection of AI technologies, which seems impractical given how deeply they are now woven into the very fabric of our everyday life. Rather, I think the challenge lies in maintaining what may be called an “epistemic distance” from AI. In other words, we should not confuse a chatbot’s linguistic mimicry with genuine wisdom. Moreover, there are reasons to be concerned about the increasing efficiency of what is called “emotionalized” AI.³³ If AI “therapists” become more popular than human therapists, especially for emotionally vulnerable people, human care and companionship will begin to lose merit. We can imagine that such a development, in light of capitalistic incentives driven by astronomical investments in AI, will rapidly accelerate AI therapy.

Too often, technology seems to be a solution looking for problems; we tend to assume that every human problem must have a technical solution. But technology has its limitations, and not every human activity—whether therapy, education, or religious learning—is best mediated through technology, primarily because technology is not neutral. Every mediating technology reshapes human perception, habits, and modes of being, often in ways we do not immediately recognize.³⁴ The danger, therefore,

is not that AI becomes more humanlike but rather the reverse—that is, that human beings gradually begin to emulate the logic, habits, and values embedded within these technologies.

An important issue in this context is the absence of regulation of AI chatbots. In the United States, many AI therapy platforms continue to operate in a regulatory gray zone by presenting themselves as “wellness tools” or “companions” rather than therapeutic systems in order to avoid stricter oversight. But concern among regulatory bodies is growing, especially regarding emotional manipulation, hallucinated advice, privacy, suicide-risk management, and users mistaking AI systems for licensed therapists.³⁵ We should also keep in mind that a good life depends on the cultivation of moral discipline, spirituality, and meaningful relationships with others, with nature, and ultimately with God, which are all matters that lie beyond the capability of AI systems.

The danger... is not that AI becomes more humanlike but rather the reverse—that is, that human beings gradually begin to emulate the logic, habits, and values embedded within these technologies.

While psychological therapies can be important tools, human flourishing requires a broader and deeper understanding of the self, the world, and the purpose of existence. The Qur’anic critique of the dunyā as a realm of distraction, fleeting pleasure, and deception takes on renewed significance in an age when AI technologies simulate intimacy and continuously pull human attention outward. Both al-Kindī and al-Rāzī propose therapeutic insights based on habituation, self-reflection, emotional discipline, and cognitive reframing. But these practices remain embedded in a metaphysical context in which the human being is more than a bundle of measurable mental states and in which ultimate flourishing lies beyond the cycles of endless distractions characteristic of modern technological life.



Endnotes

- 1 Marc Zao-Sanders, “How People Are Really Using Gen AI in 2025,” *Harvard Business Review*, April 9, 2025, <https://hbr.org/2025/04/how-people-are-really-using-gen-ai-in-2025>.
- 2 See, e.g., Rhitu Chatterjee, “Teens Are Having Disturbing Interactions with Chatbots. Here’s How to Lower the Risks,” *Morning Edition*, NPR, December 29, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/12/29/nx-s1-5646633/teens-ai-chatbot-sex-violence-mental-health>.
- 3 “NHS Talking Therapies,” Wysa, accessed May 14, 2026, <https://www.wysa.com/nhs-talking-therapies>.
- 4 “PARO Therapeutic Robot,” PARO, accessed May 14, 2026, <http://www.parorobots.com>.
- 5 Kate Lisa, “Report: AI Companion Robots Reducing Senior Isolation in N.Y.,” *Spectrum News* 1, August 16, 2023, <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nys/central-ny/politics/2023/08/16/report-ai-companion-robots-reducing-senior-isolation>.
- 6 Byung-Chul Han, *The Burnout Society*, trans. Erik Butler (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015).
- 7 See, e.g., Aḥmad Sam’ānī, *Rawḥ al-arwāḥ fī sharḥ asmā’ al-malik al-fattāḥ*, ed. Najīb Māyil Hirawī (Tehran: Shirkat-i Intishārāt-i ‘Ilmī va Farhangī, 1989), 58.
- 8 All translations of the Qur’an are ~~edited versions~~ from Muhammad Pickthall, trans., *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur’an* (Chicago: Kazi, 1996), with my modifications.

- 9 See, e.g., Qur'an 3:195: "So, their Lord answered them, 'I shall not let the work of any worker among you, male or female, be in vain; each of you is like the other. So those who emigrated, and were expelled from their homes, and were hurt in My way, and fought and were slain—I shall absolve them of their evil deeds and shall make them enter Gardens with rivers running below, a reward from God.'" See also 4:124 and 33:35.
- 10 Muhammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān: Wa-l-mubayyin li-mā taḍammanahu min al-sunnah wa-āy al-furqān*, ed. 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2006), 12:423–24.
- 11 Fakhr al-Dīn Muhammad b. 'Umar al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* (Tehran: Shirkat Ṣaḥāfi Nawīn, 1980), 20:114–15.
- 12 Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 12:423–24.
- 13 See Qur'an 7:156, 16:30, 16:122.
- 14 Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 81:16, available at <https://sunnahh.com/bukhari:6427>.
- 15 Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 81:5, available at <https://sunnahh.com/bukhari:6416>.
- 16 Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt al-fāz al-Qur'ān*, ed. Ṣafwān 'Adnān al-Dāwūdī (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1412 AH), 748.
- 17 Hartmut Rosa, *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relation to the World*, trans. J. Wagner (New York: Polity, 2019), 405–28.
- 18 Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il falsafīyyah li-l-Kindī wa-l-Fārābī wa-Ibn Bājjā wa-Ibn 'Adī*, ed. 'A. R. Badawī (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1997), 6–7. See Peter Adamson and Peter E. Pormann, trans., *The Philosophical Works of al-Kindī* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 249.
- 19 Muhammad b. Zakariyyā' al-Rāzī, *Al-Ṭibb al-rūḥānī*, ed. Mahdī Muḥaqqaq (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tehran, 2000), 62; modified translation taken from A. J. Arberry, trans., *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes* (London: J. Murray, 1950), 66. See also 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Jawzī, *Al-Ṭibb al-rūḥānī* (Damascus: Maktabat al-Qudsī wa-l-Budayr, 1930).
- 20 Al-Rāzī, *Al-Ṭibb al-rūḥānī*, 21–22.
- 21 Al-Rāzī, 67–68.
- 22 Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il falsafīyyah*, 23–24.
- 23 Al-Kindī, 24; modified translation taken from Adamson and Pormann, *Philosophical Works*, 251. The brackets around "people's" and "different" are in the original translation.
- 24 Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il falsafīyyah*, 10.
- 25 This does not mean al-Kindī is against medication in toto.
- 26 For a good introduction to CBT, see Aaron T. Beck, *Cognitive Therapy and the Emotional Disorders* (New York: International Universities Press, 1976).
- 27 Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il falsafīyyah*, 14; modified translation taken from Adamson and Pormann, *Philosophical Works*, 254. The brackets around "present" are in the original translation.
- 28 Al-Rāzī, *Al-Ṭibb al-rūḥānī*, 67–68.
- 29 Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il falsafīyyah*, 15.
- 30 Al-Rāzī, *Al-Ṭibb al-rūḥānī*, 55.
- 31 Al-Kindī, *Rasā'il falsafīyyah*, 27.
- 32 Myra Cheng, Cinoo Lee, Pranav Khadpe, Sunny Yu, Dyllan Han, and Dan Jurafsky, "Sycophantic AI Decreases Prosocial Intentions and Promotes Dependence," *Science* 391, no. 6792 (2026): eac8352, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aec8352>.
- 33 See, e.g., Masoud Toossi Saeidi, "Emotionalized AI and the Meaningfulness Gap: An AI Ethics Perspective," *AI & Society* 40 (2025): 4185–95.
- 34 Doug Smith, "The Serious Limitations on What AI Can Do in Education," *Mind Matters*, Walter Bradley Center for Natural and Artificial Intelligence, December 30, 2025, <https://mindmatters.ai/2025/12/the-serious-limitations-on-what-ai-can-do-in-education/>.
- 35 See US Food and Drug Administration, *24 Hour Summary of the Digital Health Advisory Committee* (Silver Spring, MD: Food and Drug Administration, November 6, 2025), <https://www.fda.gov/media/189618/download>.