

# The Illusion of Intelligence: Western AI's Materialistic Path

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The West's relentless drive to advance artificial intelligence through sheer computational scale reflects a misplaced conception of intelligence—one that assumes cognition can be reduced to raw computation. Yet beyond a certain threshold, additional FLOPs yield only marginal improvements in performance rather than transformative gains in intelligence. For example, training ChatGPT-4 consumed an estimated 62,000 MWh of electricity and tens of millions of dollars in compute costs, yet it still falls far short of the general reasoning capacity of the human brain, which achieves vastly greater adaptability while running on only ~20 watts.

Reducing human thought to the brain's material dimensions—stripped of its living and organic essence—is deeply flawed and has fostered the Western illusion that piling on more compute and energy could replicate human thinking, let alone achieve AGI.

This reductionist approach rooted in materialism reflects a broader Western scientific tradition that focuses on explaining the “how” of phenomena while neglecting the deeper “why” questions. Similar flawed thinking is evident in dominant scientific theories about the Big Bang, the creation of life, and humanity's origin—each elucidating causes in terms of Hobb's universal mechanical principles but leaving unanswered the ultimate purpose and metaphysical questions.

The term primordial refers to the earliest or original state from which everything else arises. In cosmology, it denotes the universe's initial primordial state just after the Big Bang, filled with basic particles and energy. In biology, it refers to the hypothesized early “primordial soup” of simple molecules that may have self-assembled and paved the way for life's origin. Regarding humanity, primordial points to the complex human nature arising somehow from lesser being through the process of evolution. Primordial intelligence is the fundamental, lived consciousness and awareness intrinsic to humans, which contrasts with artificial intelligence's computational mimicry.

Science has made strides in modeling the how of these primordial origins—the expansion of the universe, chemical pathways on early Earth, and the brain's neuronal activity. However, it fundamentally fails to explain the “why” i.e., why the universe came into existence, why life originated, why do humans exist and what is truly intelligence beyond data processing and sophisticated pattern recognition. These ultimate questions are metaphysical and existential, lying beyond the reach of empirical observation and measurement. This failure is not incidental but is due to the very nature of scientific thinking: it restricts itself to observable, measurable, and repeatable phenomena, avoiding subjective or untestable realms. Additionally, this form of thinking is always prone to mistakes and cannot become the basis of truth.

In the case of the primordial soup theory, for example, decades of research have revealed serious issues—such as the incorrect assumptions of Earth’s early atmosphere composition and the absence of a plausible natural mechanism for life’s building blocks to self-assemble spontaneously. These scientific dilemmas exemplify the limits of scientific methods when addressing primordial origins.

West’s blind faith that scaling computational resources alone can unleash genuine intelligence mirrors this scientific reductionism rooted in materialism. It risks conflating raw data processing with true conscious understanding, thereby missing the depth of human intelligence that engages ethical, existential, and metaphysical dimensions beyond scientific reach.

From an Islamic perspective, these primordial events—the Big Bang, creation of life, the first man, and intelligence—are understood as acts of deliberate creation by Allah (swt), the Necessary Existent and Originator of all that exists. The Qur’an clearly mentions that the heavens and the earth were once joined as one entity before being split apart, a description consonant with the Big Bang model, highlighting divine orchestration rather than random chance. Life is created by Allah (swt) from water and other elements, and man, being the highest creation, is bestowed with intelligence and consciousness by God’s will, setting humans apart with a purposeful existence. Islam places ultimate causality with Allah (swt), emphasizing that scientific descriptions of mechanisms do not negate divine involvement and that the metaphysical “why” is answered through intellectual conviction in the Creator—beyond empirical inquiry—as being the only cause behind these events.

In conclusion, pouring more computation, energy, and money into AI will not enable it to think like humans. Rather, true progress requires thinking beyond the narrow confines of science and recognizing that intelligence arises from the transmission of reality through the senses to the brain, where it is interpreted against prior knowledge—the ultimate source of which, in the Islamic worldview, is God and not mere trial and error. This perspective helps science properly define thinking and grasp the inherent limitations of AI. By affirming a divine origin to all primordial existence, the Islamic worldview complements science, offering a fuller understanding of intelligence and life—one that moves beyond mechanistic reductionism to embrace purpose, meaning, and essence.