

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah: Conception of the Soul and Its Relevance to Contemporary Psychology

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the intellectual legacy and philosophical contributions of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (1292-1350AD) through the drawing on his major theological, jurisprudential and spiritual writings. Ibn Qayyim's concept of the soul is rooted in the Qur'anic revelation and the prophetic traditions, encompasses ontological, epistemological, axiological and theological dimensions. His three-heart typology, cognitive-behavioural model and spiritual taxonomy constitute a distinct and comprehensive psychology, rooted in divine destiny, ethical accountability and the primacy of the heart. This paper critically analyses the structure, development and stages of the soul as conceptualised in his key works, in particular Kitab al-Ruh, al-Da' wal-Dawa' and Miftah Dar al-Sa'adah wa-Manshur Wilayat al-'Ilm wal-Iradah, and relates these models to contemporary subfields of psychology, including social psychology, cognitive psychology and clinical psychology. Rather than retrofitting his ideas into Western paradigms, this study positions Ibn Qayyim's thinking as a spiritually grounded framework with transformative potential for moral reasoning, mental health, emotional regulation and well-being. His work invites us to rethink psychology through a Tawhidic epistemology that prioritises revelation, spiritual intentionality and the interdependence of heart, mind and behaviour.

Keywords: *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 'Ilm al-nafs, Tawhid, Soul, Psychology.*

INTRODUCTION

An open-minded and critical scholar, Ibn Qayyim was a well-known and distinguished philosopher, theologian, jurist and poet who had written about 100 works under his name. His writings and opinions on the human soul were not compiled in specific sources. He discussed the subject in various disciplines such as theology, *hadith* (traditions), *tafsir* (Qur'anic exegesis), jurisprudence, morality, rhetoric, polemic, and *sufism*. His views, opinions, and writings on the soul can be found mainly in *Kitab al-Ruh* (The Book of Soul), *Miftah dar al-Sa'adah wa-Manshur Wilayat al-'Ilm wal-Iradah* (The Key to the Abode of Happiness and the Decree of the Sovereignty of Knowledge and Will), *al-Fawaa'id* (The Benefits), and *al-Tibb al-Nabawi* (The Medicine of the Prophet).

Although his teacher, Ibn Taymiyyah, primarily influenced him, Ibn Qayyim accepted the views of scholars from other schools of thought, such as *Hanbali* and *Ash'arite*. He valued arguments with evidence from the scripture and traditions to develop his position on specific

issues. His understanding of the concept of the soul was not restricted only in worldly life but also before birth and after death. He believed that soul is everlasting and is not diminished together with the physical body when one is dead. This paper outlines Ibn Qayyim's contributions, philosophical thoughts and approaches, highlighting the psychological implications of his views on the soul. The paper also discusses the implications of his works on the soul in the field of contemporary psychology.

BACKGROUND AND BIOGRAPHY

Early Life and Experiences

Abu 'Abd Allah Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr ibn Ayyub ibn Sa'd ibn Hariz ibn Makki Zayn al-Din al-Zur'i al-Dimashqi al-Hanbali, also known as Shams al-Din Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (superintendent's son of *al-Jawziyyah* school), was born on 7th Safar 691/29th January 1292 in Damascus. He learned his first scientific education from his father, a religious scholar with excellent knowledge in the law of inheritance. His father was the *qayyim* (superintendent) of the *al-Jawziyyah madrasah* (school). His other close family members, including his two sons, Ibrahim and Sharafud-Din 'Abd Allah, were also pious and knowledgeable.

As a pious scholar, Ibn Qayyim was profound in recitation and had an honourable character. He was very kind, humble, devoted in his prayers and never envied, harmed, belittled or mocked anyone. He would routinely pray at the mosque's same spot from very early in the morning until sunrise. Apart from being pious, he was also knowledgeable and had mastered many fields of *Islamic* studies from a very young age. Ibn Qayyim was a *hadith* (traditions) expert, an excellent interpreter of the Holy *Qur'an*, a jurist, and a theologian with proficient knowledge in science and philosophy. He also had a high inclination toward mysticism. As a book collector, he owned a vast library to keep all his books and manuscripts. He was also a prolific writer who produced various writings in *Islamic* sciences. He actively delivered *fatwas*, and at one point, he was held captive in prison due to his *fatwas*. Even during his imprisonment, Ibn Qayyim spent his time producing written works that benefitted others.

Career

Initially, Ibn Qayyim studied inheritance under his father, a qualified scholar in this discipline in the *madrasah* (school) of *al-Jawziyyah*. Later, the *madrasah* (school) became a court of law for *Hanbali* judges in Damascus when Ibn Qayyim took over managing it. He also learned theology and jurisprudence from Safi al-Din al-Hindi. Additionally, he obtained knowledge of the principles and works of *sufism*. He also mastered *tafsir* (*Qur'anic* exegesis), *Islamic* law, traditions and theology. However, he spent most of his life learning from Taqqiyyu ad-Deen Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah al-Harrani al-Dimashqi (i.e., Ibn Taymiyyah), a polarising figure and prominent medieval writer during his era.

At 21 years old, Ibn Qayyim became a devoted disciple, jurisconsult and *Hanbali* theologian of Ibn Taymiyyah (Holtzman, 2009). Although both of them differ in their personality traits (i.e., Ibn Taymiyyah was more hot-tempered than him), Ibn Qayyim was very

close to his teacher, and most Ibn Taymiyyah works influenced him. Despite being more mild-tempered, calmer, and easy-going, Ibn Qayyim was assertive in conveying his ideas on inner-religious polemic, such as his criticism on the *Jhamites* in his book, *Shifa' al-'Alil fi Masail al-Qada' wal-Qadar wal-Hikmah wal-Ta'lil* (Healing the Person Afflicted with Wrong Concepts about Predetermination, Wisdom, and Causality) (Krawietz, 2006).

Ibn Qayyim was an inquisitive scholar who positioned his arguments based on evidence such as the scriptures, consensus of the *salaf*, substantial rationality (*al-'aql al-salim*) and natural disposition. If he could not find conclusive scriptural proof on any theological issue, Ibn Qayyim would synthesise the scholars' opinions from various theological schools to construct his arguments and stance. He also opposed any uncritical religious imitation (*taqlid*).

He was viewed as an analytical yet open-minded scholar with a positivist outlook because he accepted previous scholars' opinions regardless of their philosophical orientation. He acknowledged the importance of the merits of the earlier scholars' works, although he might not necessarily accept all their ideas. Due to his openness to other scholars' ideas and teachings, Ibn Qayyim was competent in various subject matters such as jurisprudence, *tafsir* (*Qur'anic* exegesis), theology, *hadith* (traditions) and *Arabic* grammar. Similarly, he also had extensive knowledge of mannerism (*suluk*) and *sufism*.

Ibn Qayyim studied under Ibn Taymiyyah since his teacher returned from Cairo in 1312. Ibn Qayyim was very close to Ibn Taymiyyah, and most of his works were influenced by him. Ibn Qayyim was very outspoken, especially in terms of his unconventional views on law and theology. His unorthodox and broad-minded teachings, which differ from the mainstream views, led to his imprisonment, together with his teacher, Ibn Taymiyyah, in 1326. Even when he was held captive in prison, he continued his writing and knowledge dissemination.

The Influences on Ibn Qayyim's Thought

Three significant crises occurred before Ibn Qayyim was born, impacting those who lived in Damascus, including his family, leading to various social instability levels such as mass migration, unemployment, inflation, widespread hunger and corruption. It started with the two-hundred-year crusade conflict in the Levant, followed by numerous attacks by the Mongols and the ongoing internal power struggle between the Mamluk rulers (Sliti, 2015). Damascus became a central waystation of knowledge and a crossroad for integrating scholars and their thoughts regardless of the never-ending crises. Consequently, many *madrassahs* (schools) were built to ensure the smooth transmission and development of knowledge in Damascus, including the *madrassah* (school) of *al-Jawziyyah*, where Ibn Qayyim was trained and became a prominent scholar. All the above crises led to internal chaos and external threats during his time, which encouraged him to promote unity and be steadfast in *al-Qur'an* and *hadith's* teachings. He was firm in his stance for the truth, and he opposed uncritical religious imitation (*taqlid*).

In his early years, when he was about six or seven years old, Ibn Qayyim learned dream

interpretation from Al-Shihab al-Abir Ahmad Ibn ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Nabulsi al-Hanbali. However, he could not complete his study due to his very young age, and the teacher was very old at that time. Ibn Qayyim also learned the law of inheritance (*al-faraid*) from a very competent scholar, who was also his father, Abu Bakr Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. In addition, he studied legal theories and theology quite extensively under *Ash’arite* scholars such as Muhammad Safi al-Din ibn ‘Abd al-Rahim al-Hindi al-Shafi’i. His vast knowledge of theology was evident in his writing on the allegorical interpretation (*ta’wil*) of divine attributes, *al-Kafiyah al-Shafiyah fil-Intisar lil-Firqah al-Najiyah* (The Sufficient and Healing [Poem] on the Vindication of the Saved Sect), which was also known as *al-Qasidah al-Nuniyyah* (The Ode Rhyming of *Nun*).

In terms of *Arabic* grammar, Ibn Qayyim learned from a famous linguist, Abu al-Fath al-Bahlabki al-Hanbali. He also learned traditions (*hadith*) from a female scholar, al-Fahima Umm Muhammad bint Shaykh Ibrahim Ibn Jawhar. In addition to learning for seventeen years from his most influential teacher, Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim also studied under Zayn al-Din Amad Ibn ‘Abd al-Daim, one of Ibn Taymiyyah’s teachers. Among all his teachers, Ibn Qayyim was very fond of Ibn Taymiyyah. Ibn Qayyim became his disciple and disseminated Ibn Taymiyyah’s works further through his writings.

Ibn Qayyim was very devoted and supported his teacher to the extent that they were arrested together, repeatedly harmed and humiliated, and jailed due to the *fatwas* delivered. However, both of them did not stop publishing and issuing *fatwas*. When he was held captured, Ibn Qayyim continued reciting the *Qur’an*, contemplating and meditating until he mastered the discourse of the sciences of the people of mystical experiences (*ahl al-ma’arif*) (Krawietz, 2006). He was only released from prison after the demise of Ibn Taymiyyah. In his quest for knowledge, Ibn Qayyim did not restrict from whom he learned. He accepted the opinions and views of scholars from different schools of thought (e.g., *Ash’arite* and *Hanbali*), constructed his religious exertion (*ijtihad*), and rejected uncritical religious imitation (*taqlid*).

Ibn Qayyim’s passion for collecting books was also essential in developing his intellectual qualities and explained how he engaged with notable figures such as Ibn Sina and al-Razi. He collected rare books and possessed a vast medieval library to store his unquantifiable collections. Ibn Qayyim’s passion for knowledge led him to write about a hundred books and treatises in various fields (Leaman, 2015). His writings were wide-ranging and extended to almost every area in the *Islamic* framework, including *Qur’anic* exegesis (*tafsir*), tradition (*hadith*), jurisprudence and theology.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND NOTABLE WORKS

As a prestigious scholar and prominent disciple of Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim’s hard work and dedication to scholarship were noticeable through his early, middle and later writings, as summarised by Holtzman (2009) in Table 1. Krawietz (2006) noted that it was difficult for contemporary scholars to categorise Ibn Qayyim’s works because he discussed various subjects in each of his masterpieces. For example, he also discussed the legal aspects and hearts when

he wrote about theology in a book. Therefore, in this paper, an attempt was made to summarise his works in, but not limited to, the following categories:

Theology

Ibn Qayyim wrote a vast number of books and treatises on theology, covering the intra-religious polemic such as *al-Kafiyah al-Shafiyah fil-Intisar lil-Firqah al-Najiyah* (The Sufficient and Healing [Poem] on the Vindication of the Saved Sect), which was known as *al-Qasidah al-Nuniyyah* (The Ode Rhyming in Nun), *Ijtima' al-Juyush al-Islamiyyah 'ala Ghazw al-Mu'attilah wal-Jahmiyyah* (Mustering the Islamic Armies to Attack the *Mu'attilah* and the *Jahmiyyah*), and *Shifa' al-'Alil fi Masail al-Qada' wal-Qadar wal-Hikmah wal-Ta'lil* (Healing the Person Afflicted with Wrong Concepts about Predetermination, Wisdom, and Causality). *Al-Qasidah al-Nuniyyah* (The Ode Rhyming in Nun) contains a theological poem regarding the allegorical interpretation (*ta'wil*) of divine attributes, written in six thousand rhyming lines, ending in the letter *nun* (Holtzman, 2013).

On the other hand, in *Ijtima' al-Juyush al-Islamiyyah 'ala Ghazw al-Mu'attilah wal-Jahmiyyah* (Mustering the Islamic Armies to Attack the *Mu'attilah* and the *Jahmiyyah*), Ibn Qayyim refuted the literalistic criticism of the *Jahmiyyah* by relying on the information from *al-Qur'an* and *hadith* (traditions). Additionally, in *Shifa' al-'Alil fi Masail al-Qada' wal-Qadar wal-Hikmah wal-Ta'lil* (Healing the Person Afflicted with Wrong Concepts about Predetermination, Wisdom, and Causality), Ibn Qayyim argued on human nature and free will, which are related to the theological aspects of freedom of choice and accountability of individuals for their deeds. In this book, he also opposed the blurring boundaries between good and evil.

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Apart from intra-religious polemic, Ibn Qayyim also commented on the inter-religious polemic between Islam and Jews/Christians in his theological writings, *Hidayat al-Hayara fi Ajwibat al-Yahud wal-Nasara* (Guiding the Bewildered, on Responses to the Jews and Christians), by arguing and providing proofs to indicate textual corruption of the Jewish and Christian scriptures (Hoover, 2010). In relation to theology, Ibn Qayyim also wrote about the soul in his books, *Kitab al-Ruh* (The Book of the Soul) and *Hadi al-Arwah ila Bilad al-Afrah* (The Leader of Souls to the Land of Joys). In *Kitab al-Ruh* (The Book of the Soul), he discussed the soul's whereabouts after death. Meanwhile, in *Hadi al-Arwah ila Bilad al-Afrah* (The

Leader of Souls to the Land of Joys), Ibn Qayyim visualised paradise, the place for the soul to rest after death.

Table 1: Selected early, middle and later works of Ibn Qayyim

Early Works	Middle Works	Later Works
1. <i>Al-Futuh al-Qudsiyyah</i> (The Jerusalem Triumphs)	1. <i>Ahkam Ahl al-Dhimma</i> (Laws regarding the Dhimmis)	1. <i>Shifa' al-'Alil fi Masail al-Qada' wal-Qadar wal-Hikmah wal-Ta'lim</i> (Healing the Person Afflicted with Wrong Concepts about Predetermination, Wisdom, and Causality)
2. <i>Al-Tuhfah al-Makkiyyah</i> (The Precious Gift from Mecca)	2. <i>Al-Turuq al-Hukmiyyah fil-Siyasah al-Shar'iyyah</i> (The Ways of Governance, on Islamic Law regarding Rule)	2. <i>Al-Sawa'iq al-Mursalat 'alal-Jahmiyyah wal-Mu'attilah</i> (Thunderbolts Directed against the Jahmiyyah and the Mu'attilah)
3. <i>Al-Mawrid al-Safi</i> (The Clear Spring)	3. <i>Al-Kafiyah al-Shafiyah fil-Intisar lil-Firqah al-Najiyah</i> (The Sufficient and Healing [Poem] on the Vindication of the Saved Sect); also entitled <i>al-Qasidah al-Nuniyyah</i> (The Ode Rhyming in Nun)	3. <i>Al-Fawaid</i> (The Benefits)
4. <i>Ma'rifat al-Ruh</i> (Knowledge of the Soul)	4. <i>Ijtima' al-Juyush al-Islamiyyah 'ala Ghazw al-Mu'attilah wal-Jahmiyyah</i> (Mustering the Islamic Armies to Attack the Mu'attilah and the Jahmiyyah)	4. <i>Ighathat al-Lahfan min Masayid al-Shaytan</i> (Rescuing the Distressed from Satan's Snares)
5. <i>Tahdhīb Sunan Abi Daud</i> (The Neat Arrangement of the Hadith Collection of Abi Daud)	5. <i>Al-Da' wal-Dawa'</i> (The Malady and the Remedy), also known as <i>al-Jawab al-Kafi li-man Sa'ala 'an al-Dawa' al-Shafi</i> (The Sufficient Answer to the One Who Seeks a Cure)	5. <i>'Uddat al-Sabirin wa-Dhakhirat al-Shakirin</i> (Implements for the Patient and Provisions for the Grateful)
6. <i>al-Manar al-Munif fil-Sahih wal-Da'if</i> (The Lofty Light tower, on Authentic and Weak Hadiths), also entitled <i>Naqd al-Manqul wal-Mihakk al-Mumayyiz baynal Mardud wal-Maqbul</i> (Criticism of Hadiths, and the Touchstone which Separates Unacceptable from Acceptable Hadiths)	6. <i>Hadi al-Arwah ila Bilad al-Afrah</i> (The Leader of Souls to the Land of Joys)	6. <i>Tariq al-Hijratayn wa-Bab al-Sa'adatayn</i> (The Road of the Two Migrations and the Gate Leading to Two Joys)
7. <i>Al-Furusiyyah</i> (Horsemanship)	7. <i>Bada'i al-Fawaid</i> (Amazing Benefits)	7. <i>Madarij al-Salikin bayna Manazil Iyyaka Na'budu wa-Iyyaka Nasta'in</i> (Stages of the Travellers Between the Stations of "Thee only we serve; to Thee alone, we pray for Success)
8. <i>I'lam al-Muwaqqi'in 'an Rabb al-'Alamin</i> (Informing the Drafters of Legal Documents about the Lord of All Being)	8. <i>Rawdat al-Muhibbin wal-Nuzhat al-Mushtaqin</i> (The Garden of Lovers and the Promenade of Those Who Yearn)	8. <i>Tuhfat al-Mawdud bi-Ahkam al-Mawlud</i> (The Gift of the Beloved regarding Laws Dealing with the Newborn)
9. <i>Kitab al-Ruh</i> (The Book of the Soul)	9. <i>Miftah dar al-Sa'adah wa-Manshur Wilayat al-'Ilm wal-Iradah</i> (The Key to the Abode of Happiness and the Decree of the Sovereignty of Knowledge and Will)	9. <i>Zad al-Ma'ad fi Hady Khayr al-'Ibad</i> (Provisions for the Afterlife, on the Teachings of the Best of All People)
10. <i>Jala al-Afham fil Salah wal-Salam 'ala khayr al-Anam</i> (Enlightening Minds concerning the Prayer and Invoking Blessings on [the Prophet Muhammad], Who Is the Best of Humankind)		10. <i>al-Tibb al-Nabawi</i> (The Medicine of the Prophet)
11. <i>Kitab al-Salah wal-Hukm Tarihiha</i> (The Book of Prayer and the Legal Ruling on One Who Fails to Perform it)		

<p>12. <i>Al-Tibyan fi Aqsam al-Qur'an</i> (Explaining the Oaths in the <i>Qur'an</i>)</p> <p>13. <i>Aal-Wabil al-Sayyib min al-Kalim al-Tayyib</i> (The Heavy Shower of Good Utterances)</p> <p>14. <i>Hidayat al-Hayara fi Ajwibat al-Yahud wal-Nasara</i> (Guiding the Bewildered, on Responses to the Jews and Christians)</p> <p>15. <i>Kashf al-Ghita' 'an Hukm Sama' al-Ghina</i> (Lifting the Veil from the Legal Ruling on Listening to Singing)</p>		
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Jurisprudence

Among Ibn Qayyim's influential masterpieces on jurisprudence is *I'lam al-Muwaqqi'in 'an Rabb al-'Alamin* (Informing the Drafters of Legal Documents about the Lord of All Being), representing the best and most essential pre-modern *Islamic* contributions to the legal field (Krawietz, 2006). This book contains a vast collection of prophetic *fatwas*. This book also addresses legal scholars' vital roles and characteristics (i.e., *mufti* and *mujtahid*).

Similar to the *Qur'anic* exegesis (*tafsir*), Ibn Qayyim also did not write comprehensive legal manuals. Instead, he wrote on specific topics such as criminal law in *Ahkam Ahl al-Dhimma* (Laws regarding the *Dhimmi*s), *al-Turuq al-Hukmiyyah fil-Siyasah al-Shar'iyah* (The Ways of Governance, on Islamic Law regarding Rule), and *Kashf al-Ghita' 'an Hukm Sama' al-Ghina* (Lifting the Veil from the Legal Ruling on Listening to Singing). It was evident that Ibn Qayyim educated his readers and audience through his writings (Perho, 2010). For instance, he discussed issues on jurisprudence and suggested guidelines for right conducts in his book, *Zad al-Ma'ad fi Hady Khayr al-'Ibad* (Provisions for the Afterlife, on the Teachings of the Best of All People)

Tafsir (Quranic Exegesis) and Hadith (Traditions)

Even though Ibn Qayyim relied heavily on *al-Qur'an* for *fatwas*, he did not write a complete commentary on *al-Qur'an*. Instead, he focused on interpreting only selected verses of the *Qur'an*, resulting in limited and sporadic *Qur'anic* exegesis (*tafsir*). For example, he had written a commentary of *Surah al-Fatihah* in his book, *Madarij al-Salikin bayna Manazil Iyyaka Na'budu wa-Iyyaka Nasta'in* (Stages of the Travellers Between the Stations of "Thee only we serve; to Thee alone, we pray for Success"). Ibn Qayyim was also very well-versed in the sciences of *hadith*. He wrote several books on this subject, such as *Tahdhib Sunan Abi Daud* (The Neat Arrangement of the *Hadith* Collection of Abi Daud) and *al-Manar al-Munif fil-Sahih wal-Da'if* (The Lofty Light tower, on Authentic and Weak *Hadiths*), which was also entitled *Naqd al-Manqul wal-Mihakk al-Mumayyiz baynal-Mardud wal-Maqbul* (Criticism of *Hadiths*, and the Touchstone which Separates Unacceptable from Acceptable *Hadiths*).

'Ilm al-Nafs

Ibn Qayyim was known as the scholar of the heart, and he contributed significantly to the field of *'ilm al-nafs*. In one of his books, *al-Da' wal-Dawa'* (The Malady and the Remedy), also known as *al-Jawab al-Kafi li-man Sa'ala 'an al-Dawa' al-Shafi'* (The Sufficient Answer to the One Who Seeks a Cure), Ibn Qayyim wrote about spiritual heart. He introduced the concept of spiritual heart, characterised by the dynamics of one's emotion, cognition, and behaviour (Briki & Amara, 2018). The spiritual heart was further categorised into the following three-heart model consists of:

- (i) an ignorant heart, with no faith and goodness, and entirely controlled by the evil
- (ii) a heart in between the ignorant heart and the heart full of faith, covered with passions and impulses, and might be the platforms for evil doings
- (iii) a heart full of faith, protected from the evil by God

Ibn Qayyim believed that faith resulted from spiritual virtues (i.e., *aqeedah*, the firm belief that Muslims have in *Allah*), is fundamental to oneself. He argued that *aqeedah* significantly induced individuals' faith and later shaped their social, cognitive and behavioural virtues. In addition to the spiritual heart, Ibn Qayyim identified the illness of the heart (*qalb al-marid*) in his book, *al-Tibb al-Nabawi* (The Medicine of the Prophet). He divided the illness of the heart into two groups, illness related to: (i) uncertainty (*shubhah*) and doubt (*shakk*) and (ii) lust (*shahwah*) and seduction (*ghayy*) (Perho, 1995).

Besides, Ibn Qayyim explained the link between *firaasa* (natural intuition) and heart, in which *firaasa* (natural intuition), the light bestowed by *Allah* in human's heart, enables one to distinguish between right and wrong. *Firaasa* (natural intuition) may include judgement on other people and prediction of the future. *Firaasa* (natural intuition) and knowledge differ, in which the former refers to the first thought that emerges without any oppositional thoughts. Co-occurrence of oppositional thoughts is regarded as a normal thought, not *firaasa* (natural intuition). Ibn Qayyim noted that *firaasa* (natural intuition) did not help one to understand the truth unless the *firaasa* is a special one, gifted by *Allah*.

In *Miftah dar al-Sa'adah wa-Manshur Wilayat al'Ilm wal-Iradah* (The Key to the Abode of Happiness and the Decree of the Sovereignty of Knowledge and Will), Ibn Qayyim introduced a cognitive-behavioural model consisting of five aspects (i.e., thought, knowledge, paradigm, motivational drive, and action) that are causally linked in achieving happiness and success (see Figure 1). In the cognitive-behavioural model, Ibn Qayyim proposed that individuals' knowledge would increase when they think. Their knowledge would then lead to a paradigm, and the paradigm would elevate their motivational drives. Finally, the motivational drive would urge one to perform a behaviour. Ibn Qayyim suggested the cognitive-behavioural model as an essential foundation for any action performed. He asserted that a habit would be developed if one repeats the action, regardless of whether the action is good or evil. He also elaborated on the thought and reason as the basis of individuals' insight that would guide them to remember. Remembrance and contemplation were the bases of guidance and success, which will lead to happiness (Malkawi, 2020).

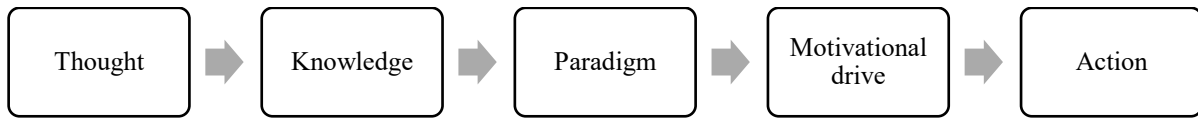


Figure 1: Ibn Qayyim's Cognitive-Behavioural Model

Besides the spiritual heart and cognitive-behavioural model, Ibn Qayyim presented different categories of thought in his books, *Miftah dar al-Sa'adah wal-Manshur Wilayat al-Ilm wa'l-Iradah* (The Key to the Abode of Happiness and the Decree of the Sovereignty of Knowledge and Will) and *al-Fawaid* (The Benefits). According to both writings, human thought can be categorised into *tafakkur* (contemplation), *tadhakur* (remembrance), *i'tibar* (understanding), and *tadabbur* (insight) (Abdul-Rahman, 2017). *Tafakkur* (contemplation) refers to the utilisation and evocation of thought, while *tadhakur* (remembrance) refers to recalling any information stored in the memory before. Both *tafakkur* (contemplation) and *tadhakur* (remembrance) occur when individuals are in their conscious awareness. On the other hand, *i'tibar* (understanding) and *tadabbur* (insight) are more advanced thoughts. *I'tibar* (understanding) refers to knowledge or information acquired by individuals, while *tadabbur* (insight) refers to the ability to anticipate and plan for the future.

Another contribution of Ibn Qayyim was the suggestion given in his book, *Risalatun ila Ikhwanih* (Heartfelt Advice to a Friend), on the steps in attaining happiness. He suggested six steps for individuals to undergo before they can be happy. In achieving happiness, Ibn Qayyim proposed the following steps:

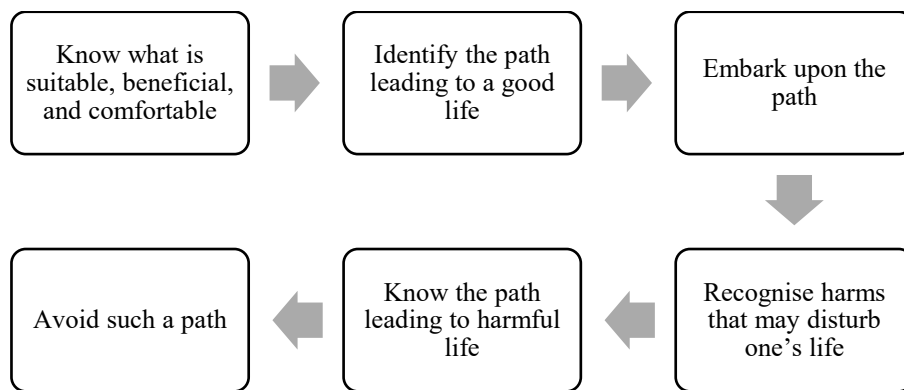


Figure 2: Steps in achieving happiness proposed by Ibn Qayyim

Ibn Qayyim asserted that one must go through all the above steps to attain happiness, pleasure, and success. If any of the steps are skipped, one would suffer and be negatively affected by the adverse consequences (al-Jawziyya, 2016).

In discussing human emotions, Ibn Qayyim also wrote about love in his famous book, *Rawdat al-Muhibbin wa-Nuzhat al-Mushtaqin* (The Garden of Lovers and the Promenade of Those Who Yearn). In this book, he stressed on the reconciliation between passion and mind that would strengthen individuals to fight against evils and their lust. He viewed that love and

divine wisdom were interconnected, in which love would be able to make one closer to God (Dajani & Khalidi, 2012). On the other hand, Ibn Qayyim believed that marriage is the perfect image of love between men and women in terms of love between human beings.

Ibn Qayyim described love as the inclination and desire towards something. Love affects happiness and contentment, in which those who are in love would be happier than those who are not (al-Jami, 2014). Ibn Qayyim believed that love and drive are the foundations of any action, as the action will be performed when a person loves something, and the drive comes together with it. He stressed that the ultimate love in oneself is love towards *Allah* (Zeni, 2017). In other instances, he proposed that love, specifically passionate love (*'ishq*), could be damaging, especially when it is exaggerated and connected to sexual pleasure (Perho, 1995).

According to Ibn Qayyim, pleasure can be divided into three. Firstly, the pleasure which relates to basic needs such as eating, drinking, sleeping, and procreation. The second type of pleasure relates to authority and leadership. The third category of pleasure is experienced through awareness of God and developing virtue (Abdul-Rahman, 2017). He asserted that any pleasure leading to pain, such as oppressing others, is a blameworthy one. Eternal pleasure can only be discovered when one has a meaningful and fulfilling relationship with *Allah*.

IBN QAYYIM'S PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHTS AND APPROACHES

Ontological Approach

Ibn Qayyim's ontological approach to human reality is based on a holistic and God-centred understanding of the human being. He rejected the reductionist tendencies of both body-soul dualism and materialist models and proposed that the human being is a dynamic interplay of nature, nurture and spirituality (Alias, 2012). For Ibn Qayyim, humans are born with an innate disposition (*fitrah*) predisposed to truth, goodness and divine consciousness. This *fitrah* is nurtured or corrupted by environmental factors and individual choices. Crucially, he emphasises that the soul is not just a metaphysical abstraction, but a real, active being that is central to moral and psychological well-being. His understanding derives entirely from divine sources, the *Qur'an*, the *Sunnah* and the teachings of the *salaf*, making ontology not just a philosophical question but a theological and moral imperative (Langermann, 2010; Munsoor, 2015).

At the centre of his ontological vision is the relationship of the soul to the heart (*qalb*), which Ibn Qayyim saw as the locus of faith, emotions, intentions and will. He identified three states of the heart: the dead heart, the sick heart and the healthy heart, in which each state reflecting a person's spiritual health and behavioural tendencies (Briki & Amara, 2018). These typologies are not symbolic, but diagnostic categories for understanding moral psychology. Furthermore, he categorised diseases of the heart into two main types: those rooted in false beliefs (*shubuhah*) and those arising from base desires (*shahawat*) (Perho, 1995). Healing the heart is therefore an essential prerequisite for reforming the self. He advocated *Qur'anic* recitation, remembrance of God (*dhikr*) and moral reflection as essential spiritual therapies. This underlines his central assertion that spiritual purification is not optional but necessary for

psychological well-being and righteous behaviour.

Importantly, Ibn Qayyim's ontological model integrates the *Shari'ah* (divine law) as a necessary framework for understanding human purpose and behaviour. He viewed the *Shari'ah* not only as legalistic, but as a divine system that is in harmony with the innate moral compass of the human soul. In his writings such as the *Kitab al-Ruh* and the *Miftah Dar al-Sa'adah*, he asserted that true self-knowledge must be grounded in divine revelation and orientated towards moral and spiritual transcendence (Langermann, 2010; Abdul-Rahman, 2017). In his framework, human identity is defined not only by existential characteristics, but also by a moral and eschatological goal, which is to serve God and return to Him in a purified state. Ibn Qayyim thus offers an ontological paradigm that is radically different from secular Western models. It demands that the study of human nature is inseparable from theology, ethics and divine accountability (Alias, 2012). This makes his vision not only a historical curiosity, but a powerful critique and alternative to the dominant paradigms of contemporary psychology.

Epistemological Approach

Ibn Qayyim's epistemology is based on a deeply integrative *Islamic* worldview that regards revelation (the *Qur'an* and authentic *hadiths*) as the highest and most certain source of knowledge. His approach to knowing the human being and the soul is not speculative, but firmly anchored in divine guidance, prioritising the exact formulations of the sacred texts. His quest for knowledge is also based on the consensus of the *salaf* (the righteous predecessors), whose understanding of revelation he considered most authentic and least affected by later theological distortions (Johansen, 2002). For Ibn Qayyim, this epistemological hierarchy guaranteed precision, coherence and moral certainty in matters of theology, psychology and law.

However, Ibn Qayyim did not reject reason or the human faculties. Instead, he affirmed sound reason (*'aql ṣariḥ*) as a valid tool, provided it is in accordance with revelation. He recognised that contemplation (*tafakkur*), introspection and observation are essential to attain knowledge, especially about the soul and its conditions. He recognised that the human heart, guided by the *fiṭrah* (primordial disposition), can recognise moral truths even before formal instruction. Revelation therefore has the task of illuminating and refining the natural inclinations of the soul, not contradicting them. In this way, Ibn Qayyim proposed a theory of knowledge that is both spiritually rooted and empirically sensitive, in which divine truth, reason and human nature are not in contradiction to each other but are deeply interdependent.

Ibn Qayyim's methodology also exemplifies scholarly openness. Although he was a committed follower of Ibn Taymiyyah, he did not confine himself to a particular *madhhab* (school of jurisprudence) when the evidence from the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* was inconclusive. He harmonised divergent opinions, when necessary, provided they were consistent with revelation, rational coherence and the welfare of the soul. His insistence that true knowledge leads to transformation, i.e., emotional regulation, moral reform and spiritual clarity, emphasises his view that the purpose of knowledge is not merely cognitive but existential

(Langermann, 2010). This stands in stark contrast to the secular epistemologies of modern psychology, which often disconnect empirical knowledge from spiritual meaning. Ibn Qayyim's approach invites contemporary psychology to understand knowledge not as morally neutral data, but as a means that leads the soul to truth, flourishing and divine proximity.

Axiological Approach

Ibn Qayyim's axiological framework is fundamentally rooted in the integration of divine revelation, intuitive reasoning and the rational faculty. He argued that moral knowledge is not a social construct but is rooted in the natural disposition bestowed by God and guided by revelation (Al-Bar & Chamsi-Pasha, 2015). The heart, as a locus of intuitive insight, plays a crucial role in the perception of ethical truths, while reason confirms and operationalises these insights in daily life. Ibn Qayyim emphasised that revelation, the consensus of the righteous predecessors (*salaf*) and a sound mind come together to discern what is morally right. For him, morality is not independent of religion, but embedded in it, and any separation between the two weakens both the moral compass and the spiritual being of the individual.

At the heart of his moral philosophy is the idea that ethical behaviour is the clearest sign of true religiosity. Ibn Qayyim held that good deeds are a reflection of a purified soul and that religious rituals without a moral character are insufficient. He believed that values such as patience (*ṣabr*), chastity (*‘iffah*), courage (*shaja’ah*) and justice (*‘adl*) are inner qualities that reflect the soul's harmony with the divine will. These virtues are not only to be observed externally but are cultivated internally through *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul). He saw the soul as a mediator between knowledge and behaviour and asserted that an enlightened and purified soul guides the intellect and desires towards virtuous action (Briki & Amara, 2018). The purification process involves deep contemplation (*tafakkur*), remembrance of God (*dhikr*) and self-control (*muraqabah*), all of which increase moral clarity and the motivation to do good.

Ibn Qayyim's moral epistemology goes beyond secular ethical paradigms by offering a holistic model in which faith, reason and the soul are integrated. He rejected moral relativism and argued that human values must be anchored in divine wisdom and eternal truths (Al-Bar & Chamsi-Pasha, 2015). In contrast to Western concepts that often dichotomise emotion and reason or faith and morality, Ibn Qayyim provided a unified ontological view that places the heart at the centre of ethical judgement. This theocentric ethics challenges modern psychology and the behavioural sciences to rethink the role of spirituality and moral intuition in human development. Ultimately, for Ibn Qayyim, the soul's journey to God is also a moral journey, where each step in virtue reflects a deeper alignment with divine destiny and a higher state of human flourishing (Malik, 2023).

THE NATURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOUL ACCORDING TO IBN QAYYIM

Ibn Qayyim believed that *Allah* created different types of souls: (i) souls that only perform good deeds, such as the angels; (ii) souls that only engage in evil deeds, such as the devils; and (iii) souls that can do both good and evil deeds, that is human beings. Hence,

individuals who perform predominantly good behaviours are associated with the angels, and those who mostly do bad deeds are associated with evil. The following discussion concentrates on the soul that belongs to human beings.

Nature of Soul

Ibn Qayyim discussed soul in a number of his works, especially the most well-known one, *Kitab al-Ruh* (The Book of the Soul). For the sake of our discussion, it is essential to note that he used many terminologies such as *nafs* (self), *ruh* (spirit), *qalb* (heart), *'aql* (mind), and *sudur* to connote soul. He argued that the difference between the terminologies is its attributes, not entity (Munsoor, 2015). Hence, these five terminologies are used interchangeably to denote soul in this section.

According to Ibn Qayyim in *Kitab al-Ruh* (The Book of the Soul), the soul is created by *Allah* to humankind and has its own characteristics. He provided twelve pieces of evidence from *al-Qur'an* and *hadith* (traditions) to prove his stance (Rahim & Yaakub, 2007). The evidence includes his discussion of the verses in the *Qur'an* in which he signified that:

- (i) the soul is a part of the worlds created by *Allah* (*al-Qur'an*, 1:2)
- (ii) human submits both physical self and soul to *Allah* and asks for his help (*al-Qur'an*, 1: 5)
- (iii) the soul asks for guidance from *Allah* (*al-Qur'an*, 1: 6)
- (iv) the soul is *Allah's* creation, as it seeks mercy from the Creator (*al-Qur'an*, 39: 53)
- (v) the soul needs to be loved and can be led astray (*al-Qur'an*, 12: 53)
- (vi) the soul is *Allah's* secret (*al-Qur'an*, 17:85).

Structure and Development of Soul

Ibn Qayyim emphasised the role of *dhikrullah* (remembrance of *Allah*) in sustaining both the *qalb* (heart) and the *ruh* (spirit) (Farid, 1996). In his book, *al-Wabil al-Sayyib min al-Kalim al-Tayyib* (The Heavy Shower of Good Utterances), Ibn Qayyim discussed eighty benefits of *dhikrullah* (remembrance of *Allah*) which include driving away *shaytan* (evil), pleasing *Allah*, avoiding the feeling of worry and melancholy, increasing happiness and joy, instilling a love for *Allah* as well as fearing Him.

Ibn Qayyim also suggested that the *Qur'an* is a *syifa'* (healer) in the *sudur* in his book *al-Tibb al-Nabawi* (The Medicine of the Prophet). He further explained that the physical body and *sudur* could not be separated. Hence, it is understood here that *sudur* is not referring to the physical body but the soul. Even though he was not a medical doctor, Ibn Qayyim's ability to understand and interpret the *Qur'anic* verses enabled him to argue on medication and health, both physically and spiritually. He contended that human medicine and divine guidance such as *dhikr* (remembrance of *Allah*), prayers, and verses from *al-Qur'an* are helpful for healing and spiritual therapy. As medicine is vital to healing the physical body, prayers are essential to healing the heart. In curing disease and for prayers to be answered, one needs to have a sincere and clean soul (Khatib, 2021).

In addition to *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah), *tafakkur* is essential in healing the heart and soul. By engaging in *tafakkur*, one is reminded of the purpose of human creation, able to prepare oneself for the day of judgement, encourage good deeds and peace among humankind, as well as help in gaining salvation and success both in this world and in the hereafter (Mamat et al., 2019). Ibn Qayyim added the importance of reciting *al-Qur'an* with reflection on the decency and refinement of the heart in his work, *Miftah dar al-Sa'adah wa-Manshur Wilayat al-'Ilm wal-Iradah* (The Key to the Abode of Happiness and the Decree of the Sovereignty of Knowledge and Will). Reflecting on the *Qur'an* helps one contemplate and understand the meaning, which is valuable and advantageous for the heart, as it will increase the faith in *Allah* (Sulaiman, 2021).

In his *Ighathat al-Lahfan min Masayid al-Shaytan* (Rescuing the Distressed from Satan's Snares), Ibn Qayyim argued the importance of intention that comes from one's heart before performing any behaviour. He postulated that both intention (that comes before an action) and reflection (that comes after the action) are essential elements for the soul to be responsible for any action. Hence, examining one's intention is crucial before engaging in any deed. The coexistence between the soul and physical body mentioned in his works further proves that individuals' behaviours depend on the quality of the soul. A nurtured soul will create individuals with good characters and vice versa.

Stages of Soul

According to Ibn Qayyim, the soul exists not only when individuals are in their mothers' wombs and alive in this world, but also after their death. He asserted that the soul is self-standing and independent of the physical body (Langermann, 2010). His discussion on the soul after death can be found in his well-known work, *Kitab al-Ruh* (The Book of the Soul). Before the soul moves from the worldly life to the hereafter, there will be a transition after the soul leaves one's body. During this transitional period, the angel will question the soul on all deeds performed by the body parts while he was in this world.

Ibn Qayyim argued that the soul would return to the body in the grave so that the dead can be questioned and tested, but in a different form, unlike in worldly life (Mabrouk, 1990). During this stage, the soul is in the interspace between death and resurrection. The soul at this stage is not similar to the one during sleep. When one is sleeping, the soul does not entirely leave the body, unlike when one is dead. Ibn Qayyim opined that the good soul would be placed in paradise, while the evil soul would be placed in the hellfire after the day of resurrection. Figure 3 illustrates the stages of the soul according to Ibn Qayyim:

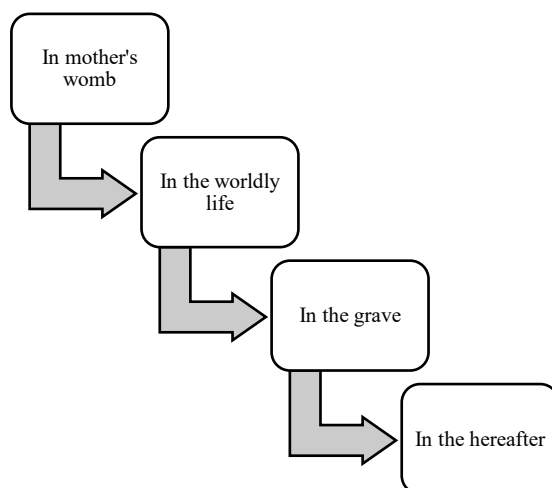


Figure 3: Stages of the soul proposed by Ibn Qayyim

IMPLICATIONS TO THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOLOGY

The implications of Ibn Qayyim's work for the teaching and learning of psychology are both profound, particularly in *Muslim*-majority contexts where the epistemological foundations of modern psychology are often not aligned with the *Tawhidic* worldview. Ibn Qayyim offers not only an alternative, but a theologically coherent, morally grounded and spiritually purposeful psychology. His model challenges the reductive tendencies of prevailing Western paradigms, which often exclude the metaphysical, spiritual and moral dimensions of the self.

Ibn Qayyim has contributed to psychology, in which he suggested that inner thoughts would eventually develop into tangible actions and observable behaviour (Badri, 2000). He added that lustful, harmful, and sinful inner voices could develop into strong and intense emotions if left untreated or unchecked. These negative inner voices would generate strength for individuals to act out, driven by their emotions or impulses, as outlined in Ibn Qayyim's cognitive behavioural model (Figure 1). For example, suppose a person is full of lustful thoughts and does nothing to prevent them. In that case, the person may develop a paradigm that leads to a motivational drive to watch inappropriate contents that can be found on the internet, which could badly pollute the heart. The consumption of pornography then could lead the person to develop compulsive sexual behaviour and engages in real-life events, which in the long run could negatively affect many parts of life, such as health and relationship issues.

In addition, Ibn Qayyim's characterisation of spiritual heart serves as an outline in cultivating the concept of character education in early childhood through four essential aspects:

- i) introduction of monotheism to children,
- ii) the need to teach children the principal teachings of religion,
- iii) familiarisation of sound ethics and morals towards children,
- iv) the instilment of exemplary praise and punishment in education (Makmudi, 2017)

In clinical psychology, mainly in the Western context, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy

(CBT) (Hofmann, et. al., 2012), Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) (Feigenbaum, 2007), and Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT) (Cuijpers, et. al., 2007) were practised to reduce the symptoms of psychological disorders among clients. However, these psychotherapy techniques do not implicitly include the metacognitive awareness aspect in their treatment plans. This limitation does not allow clients, especially those with strong faith, to ponder, contemplate, and reflect on their experiences and surroundings.

Centuries ago, when psychotherapy was not yet in practice, Ibn Qayyim introduced a concept known as reciprocal inhibition (Badri, 2018), a therapy that enables clients to contemplate. This therapy, which heavily relies on clients' imagination and thoughts, is now being practiced in one of the most successful contemporary treatments in clinical psychology. In this treatment, clients have to imagine the situation that has caused them to be distressed and anxious while they meditate until the serene feelings overpower the anxiety or stress. *Islamic* psychotherapy practitioners utilise Ibn Qayyim's conceptualisation of soul in assessment to identify which level of the soul might be affected and what has caused it to be affected and formulate suitable treatment plans that target the psychological imbalances (Keshavarzi and Haque, 2013). For example, if a person is stuck and experiences psychological imbalance, it may result in a pathological state of self-loathing and clinical depression (Rothman, 2019).

In addition, *tafakkur* and *dhikr* were applied in mindfulness-based therapy because both can assist clients in becoming more conscious and attentive towards the inner awareness of the heart by invoking and imagining experiences and the feelings of being in a particular stage of the spiritual heart (Isgandarova, 2018). Thus, clients will eventually become familiar with the feeling of being at the higher or even highest stage of the soul, which resembles a soul in a state of peace. Ibn al-Qayyim's works in psychology are generally accepted and widely put into practice in psychology. From an *Islamic* point of view, understanding and accessing individuals as a whole holistic system is very important, instead of looking from the existing restricted models that only focus on the cognitive techniques of individuals.

CONCLUSION

This paper discusses the intellectual legacy of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, focussing on his biography, his scholarly career and his significant contributions especially to *'ilm al-nafs*. By placing his life and scholarship in the socio-political and theological context of his time, he shows how his formative experiences, his academic endeavours and his long-standing association with Ibn Taymiyyah shaped his epistemological and ontological perspectives. A synthesis of his major works, which include theology, jurisprudence, *Qur'anic* exegesis, hadith studies and psychology, reveals his multidisciplinary mastery and integrated worldview.

The philosophical foundations of Ibn Qayyim's model of the soul, based on the *Qur'an*, the *sunnah* and the insights of the *salaf*, reflect a coherent *Tawhidic* framework that emphasises the unity of the spiritual, cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions of the human being. His conception of the soul (*nafs*, *qalb*, *'aql*, and *ruh*) is not only metaphysical, but deeply ethical and teleological, centred on the pursuit of divine proximity, moral excellence and inner purification. His epistemology combines scriptural fidelity with rational reflection and intuitive

insight, while his axiology views well-being and happiness (*sa'adah*) as the result of spiritual alignment and not merely material or psychological adjustment.

Crucially, this paper argues that Ibn Qayyim's ideas are not relics of the past, but represent a living intellectual tradition that can inform contemporary psychology. His writings on the heart, cognition, behaviour, emotion and motivation provide rich conceptual resources for rethinking modern psychological constructs, particularly in the fields of cognitive, clinical, social and educational psychology. His spiritually grounded cognitive-behavioural model, his theory of moral motivation, his categorisation of thought processes, and his psychospiritual model of healing represent credible and culturally grounded alternatives to prevailing psychological paradigms.

Rather than simply integrating Ibn Qayyim's work into Western frameworks, this paper emphasises the need for an epistemological and curricular shift in the teaching and practise of psychology, one that reclaims the soul as a central concern of human inquiry. His vision calls for a reconstruction of psychological science in line with a *Tawhīdic* worldview in which knowledge, healing, behaviour and consciousness are all aligned with divine purpose and moral responsibility. Such a reorientation holds the potential not only to decolonise psychology in *Muslim* societies, but to elevate it as a science of the soul rooted in revelation and reason.

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