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Abu Yusuf Yaʿqūb ibn Isḥāq Al-Kindī: The Philosophy of the Soul and Its Significance to Mental Health, Cognition, and Wellbeing

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ABSTRACT

Long before the emergence of modern psychology, Abu Yūsuf Yaʿqūb ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī has already developed a comprehensive philosophical account of the human soul that continues to offer valuable insights into mental health, cognition, and well-being. As the earliest philosopher of the Islamic tradition, al-Kindī reinterpreted Greek metaphysics and psychology through an Islamic monotheistic framework, laying intellectual foundations that shaped later falsafa and informed early conceptions of the self. This study revisits al-Kindī's thought to examine its relevance for contemporary psychological discourse. Employing a conceptual, interpretive, and historical-philosophical methodology, the analysis draws on close readings of al-Kindī's primary texts and a thematic synthesis of major secondary scholarship. A comparative analytical lens is used to explore al-Kindī's ideas on the soul, cognition, emotion, and ethical self-cultivation and selected themes in modern psychology, without imposing contemporary models onto classical sources. The study highlights al-Kindī's distinctive account of the soul as an immaterial, rational, and immortal substance whose perfection requires intellectual discipline, ethical refinement, and the governance of bodily faculties. His writings provide early formulations of concepts related to cognitive appraisal, emotional regulation, habituation, psychosomatic interaction, and the integration of spiritual and psychological well-being. The paper also examines al-Kindī theories of sleep and dreams, vision, and the imaginative faculty, as well as his influence on later thinkers such as al-Balkhī. By synthesizing these insights, the study demonstrates how al-Kindī's philosophical psychology contributes to contemporary efforts to articulate an Islamically grounded, holistic framework for understanding human nature, mental health, and psychotherapy.

Keywords: *Al-Kindī, Abu Yusuf Yaʿqūb ibn Isḥāq, Early Muslim Scholars, Islamic Psychology, Muslim Philosophers, Soul*

INTRODUCTION

An Islamic approach to modern psychology needs to return to the Qur'an and Sunnah as primary sources of guidance while also drawing on the rich intellectual legacy of early Muslim scholars and philosophers whose works explored existence, ethics, and the human self. Their contributions continue to offer a reservoir of insights that can be adapted to the challenges of modern contexts (Adamson, 2016; Iqbal, 1930; Nasr, 2006).

The understanding of human nature and the soul predates modern psychology by centuries and can be traced back to Greek thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle (Kenny, 2007). In the Islamic tradition, however, this philosophical heritage was not merely preserved but critically developed by Muslim philosophers, including al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, and notably al-Kindī. Revisiting al-Kindī's works are important because he represents the earliest systematic

effort within Islam to integrate reason, metaphysics, and an ethical understanding of the soul which are the areas that closely intersect with contemporary psychological concerns such as mental health, cognition, emotion regulation, moral development, and well-being. His writings offer conceptual tools for rethinking the human person in ways that are holistic, spiritually attuned, and methodologically rigorous, thereby addressing ongoing debates about the religious and philosophical foundations of modern psychology. These perspectives can enrich current psychological frameworks by providing alternative models of the self that align with Islamic worldview commitments (Goodman, 1992; Rassool & Luqman, 2023).

This paper aims to revisit the work of al-Kindī and evaluate the relevance of his thought to contemporary psychology. The contribution of this study lies in demonstrating how al-Kindī's insights, such as on the soul, cognition, mental distress, ethical self-cultivation, and therapeutic reasoning, can inform ongoing efforts to formulate an Islamically grounded psychology and offer conceptual resources for religiously responsive mental health practice. By doing so, the paper seeks to bridge the gap between classical Islamic philosophy and modern psychological discourse. The essay is structured to first elaborate on the background and biography of al-Kindī, then discuss his notable works and intellectual contributions, explore his conception of the soul, and finally examine the significance of his philosophical insights for modern psychology and its evolving paradigms.

METHOD

This study employs a conceptual, interpretive, and historical-philosophical methodology (Bevir, 1999; Gadamer, 2004) rather than an empirical or data-driven approach. The analysis is based on a close textual reading of al-Kindī's primary writings alongside a thematic synthesis of major secondary literature on his philosophy, psychology, and intellectual legacy.

The study further adopts a comparative analytical lens (McGrath, 2011), placing al-Kindī's discussions of the soul, mental health, cognition, emotion, and well-being in dialogue with selected themes in contemporary psychology. This comparative component does not aim to impose modern frameworks on classical texts; rather, it highlights conceptual resonances and potential contributions that al-Kindī's thought can offer to ongoing efforts in developing Islamically grounded and culturally responsive psychological models. According to Libbrecht (2009), this approach is appropriate for a historical–philosophical inquiry whose primary aim is to reinterpret classical Islamic thought for contemporary theoretical and practical development, identify its relevance to present psychological debates, and articulate its potential contributions to the foundations of modern psychological frameworks.

BACKGROUND AND BIOGRAPHY

Abu Yusuf Yaʿqūb ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī, known in Latin as Alkindus, is widely celebrated as the first major philosopher of the Arab Islamic world and is often hailed as "the Philosopher of the Arabs" (Adamson & Pormann, 2015; Najati, 2002; Zhuldyz et al., 2023). Born into the aristocratic Kindah tribe, descendants of ancient South Arabian nobility, al-Kindī benefited from a distinguished lineage that afforded him both status and early access to learning (Adamson, 2007). His father, Isḥāq ibn al-Ṣabbāh, served as governor of Kufa under the Abbasid Caliphs al-Mahdi and ar-Rashid, providing young al-Kindī with an environment conducive to scholarly pursuits (Adamson, 2007; Zhuldyz et al., 2023). Though exact details

vary, historians generally agree that he was born in Kufa, Iraq, around 801 CE (185 AH), although Basra is sometimes mentioned as an alternative (Adamson & Pormann, 2015; Najati, 2002).

Al-Kindī began his education in Kufa or Basra, where he memorised the Qur'an and studied Arabic grammar, literature, arithmetic, and Islamic jurisprudence (Puspita, 2023). His intellectual curiosity soon led him to Baghdad, then the vibrant heart of the Abbasid Caliphate and home to the famed *Bayt al-Ḥikma*, or House of Wisdom (Adamson, 2007; Gutas, 1998). There, al-Kindī immersed himself in the rational sciences and philosophy, thriving amid the Graeco-Arabic translation movement that was flourishing under Caliphs al-Maʾmūn and al-Muʿtaṣim (Zhuldyz et al., 2023). Although he likely did not know Greek himself, he actively supported the translation of key Greek works into Arabic, patronising translators such as Eustathius and ʿAbd al-Masīḥ al-Ḥimṣī and even editing texts like Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and parts of Plotinus's *Enneads*, which were known in the Arabic tradition as the *Theology of Aristotle* (Adamson & Pormann, 2015; Zhuldyz et al., 2023).

Al-Kindī's prominence as a court scholar reached its pinnacle under al-Muʿtaṣim (r. 833-842 CE) and continued under al-Wāthiq (r. 842–847 CE), both of whom were strong patrons of rationalist scholarship (Adamson, 2007; Lindberg, 1976). He even served as tutor to al-Muʿtaṣim's son and dedicated some of his most significant philosophical treatises, such as *On First Philosophy (Risāla fī al-Falsafa al-Ūlā)*, to members of the Abbasid court (Adamson, 2007). Through this privileged position, al-Kindī contributed profoundly to shaping the philosophical vocabulary and conceptual framework that would allow Greek thought to flourish in Arabic (Staley, 1989). He is rightly credited as the first systematic reinterpreted of Aristotle in the Islamic world, laying the groundwork for the *falsafa* tradition (Adamson & Pormann, 2015).

Despite his deep engagement with Greek philosophy, al-Kindī remained rooted in Islamic thought, striving to reconcile reason with faith (Adamson, 2007; Druart, 1993). His exposure to Muʿtazilite ideas further shaped this synthesis (Ivry, 1974; Zhuldyz et al., 2023). While he shared their emphasis on reason and some theological positions, he maintained intellectual independence and was critical of aspects of their atomistic physics and theological polemics (Ivry, 1976). His relationship with the Muʿtazila likely contributed to his later persecution when the Abbasid policy shifted toward Sunni theology under al-Mutawakkil (r. 847-861 CE), who actively suppressed rationalists (Ivry, 1976; Levey, 1962).

Al-Kindī's final years were marked by political intrigue and professional decline. Rival scholars, including the *Banū Mūsā* brothers, conspired against him at court, resulting in the temporary confiscation of his extensive personal library and a loss of favour (Ivry, 1974; Zhuldyz et al., 2023). Although his books were eventually returned, he never regained his former influence and spent his later life in relative seclusion in Baghdad (Adamson, 2007; Gutas, 1998). Historians estimate his death occurred around 866 CE (252 AH), though some sources suggest a date as late as 873 CE (Adamson & Pormann, 2015; Zhuldyz et al., 2023).

Throughout his prolific career, al-Kindī produced between 239 and 350 works spanning diverse fields such as philosophy, logic, mathematics, medicine, astronomy, music, and cryptography (Adamson & Pormann, 2015). His efforts to integrate Hellenistic philosophy with Islamic thought were foundational for later philosophers and even influenced medieval European scholarship through Latin translations of his treatises (Adamson, 2007; Arroisi et al., 2023). As Gerolamo Cardano famously noted, al-Kindī ranks among the pivotal thinkers who profoundly shaped human intellectual history (Zhuldyz et al., 2023).

In summary, al-Kindī's life exemplifies the rich interplay of religious, political, and intellectual currents that defined the Islamic Golden Age. As the "Philosopher of the Arabs," he bridged Greek and Islamic thought, championed reason within faith, and laid the groundwork for generations of scholars to come.

AL-KINDĪ'S NOTABLE WORKS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Al-Kindī was instrumental in introducing and naturalising Greek philosophy in the Arabic-speaking world and laid a foundation for early Islamic philosophy and psychology (Arroisi et al., 2023; Lindberg, 1976). His intellectual legacy is remarkable for its breadth, covering nearly every branch of knowledge known in his time. The 10th-century bibliographer Ibn al-Nadīm lists over 240 titles attributed to him, spanning about seventeen different fields (Puspita, 2023), though many survive only in fragmentary form (Khatchadourian & Rescher, 1965; Najati, 2002). Despite the loss of many writings, the surviving corpus testifies to an encyclopaedic intellect whose curiosity knew few bounds (Arroisi et al., 2023).

Philosophical Contributions

Al-Kindī's pioneering role in Islamic philosophy is evident in how he systematically reworked Aristotelian ideas for an Arabic audience and inaugurated what became known as *falsafa*, philosophy in the Islamic tradition (Zhuldyz et al., 2023). Among the Aristotelian concepts he adapted were the doctrine of the four Causes, Aristotle's theory of the First Cause, and the distinction between matter and form. Aristotle had taught that all beings are explained through material, formal, efficient, and final causes, and that the chain of efficient causes ultimately leads to an unmoved First Cause (Barnes, 1982). Aristotle also distinguished between primary matter as pure potentiality and form as its actualising principle (Adamson, 2007; McGinnis, 2010).

Al-Kindī accepted these metaphysical frameworks yet significantly reshaped them within an Islamic worldview. He reformulated Aristotle's unmoved First Cause into the actively creative God affirmed in Islamic monotheism, arguing that God is not only the ultimate cause but the creator who brings all things into existence *ex nihilo*, a view fundamentally different from Aristotle's philosophy (Adamson, 2007). Likewise, Al-Kindī replaced Aristotle's eternal cosmos with a universe that is temporally originated and wholly dependent on God's will (Adamson & Pormann, 2015).

Al-Kindī major work, *On First Philosophy* (*Kitāb fī al-Falsafa al-Ūlā*), is the earliest original philosophical treatise in Arabic (Adamson & Pormann, 2015). In this work, he assimilates metaphysics to theology, arguing for God as the "First Truth" and "First Cause," and defends creation *ex nihilo* using a mathematical methodology inspired by Euclid (Adamson & Pormann, 2015; Haque, 2004; Shamsi, 1978). Notably, al-Kindī emphasised that one should accept truth from any source, reflecting his openness to non-Arabic wisdom (Zhuldyz et al., 2023).

In exploring metaphysics, he addressed complex notions of being, coining Arabic philosophical terms such as *ays* (being) and *lays* (non-being) to articulate the process of creation as the "coming-to-be of being from non-being" (Adamson, 2002). He also offered one of the earliest Islamic philosophical treatments of the Soul and intellect. Works like *Opinions on the Soul (Fī al-Qawl fī al-Nafs)*, *Discourse on the Soul (Kalām fī al-Nafs)*, and *On the Intellect (Risāla fī al-ʿAql)* analyse the Soul as a divine, luminous substance originating from

God's light (Afrizal, 2014; Puspita, 2023). His fourfold classification of intellect, such as active, potential, actual, and acquired, became foundational for later thinkers such as al-Fārābī and Avicenna (McCarthy, 1964; Ivry, 1974).

Al-Kindī's ethical writings further illustrate his synthesis of Greek thought and Islamic values. In *On Dispelling Sadness (Risāla fī dafʿ al-aḥzān)*, he promotes philosophy as an imitation of God's characters and emphasises abstinence and intellectual contemplation as the path to happiness (Haque, 2004; Ivry, 1974; Groff, 2004). He argued that knowledge perfects religious understanding, thus fostering virtue (Stefaniuk, 2022).

His work on logic is equally notable. Al-Kindī engaged deeply with Aristotle's *Organon* and Porphyry's *Isagoge*, using Greek logic to critique Christian doctrines such as the Trinity (Adamson, 2007; Ivry, 1976). He compiled works like *On Definitions and Descriptions of Things* (*Fī Ḥudūd al-Ashyāʾ wa-Rusūmihā*) to create a lexicon that made Greek concepts accessible in Arabic (Zhuldyz et al., 2023).

Scientific and Mathematical Works

Al-Kindī's scientific endeavours were no less impressive. He regarded mathematics as fundamental to all sciences (Druart, 1993) and produced treatises on arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music (Arroisi et al., 2023). His *Treatise on Hindu Numerals* helped popularise the Indian numeral system in the Islamic world (Adamson, 2007).

Al-Kindī also emphasises the importance of mathematics as foundational for all sciences and philosophy, advocating an axiomatic method for attaining certainty (Adamson, 2007; Rescher & Khatchadourian, 1965).

In optics, he expanded upon Euclid's work in *On Perspectives (De Aspectibus)* and *On Rays (De Radiis)*, influencing figures like Ibn al-Haytham (Adamson, 2007; Lindberg, 1976). His medical works, such as *On Degrees*, introduced a quantitative approach to pharmacology, applying mathematics to drug formulation (Hamarneh, 1965).

Al-Kindī also made pioneering contributions in cryptology (the scientific study of techniques for secure communication, encompassing both the creation and analysis of systems that protect information). His *Treatise on Deciphering Cryptographic Messages* (*Risāla fī Istikhrāj al-Muʿammā*) is the earliest known text on frequency analysis for codebreaking, earning him recognition as an early founder of cryptanalysis (Haque, 2004).

In cosmology and astrology, al-Kindī wrote texts like *On the Prostration of the Outermost Sphere* (*Maqāla fī Sujūd al-Falak al-Aqṣā*), where he blended astronomical knowledge with Qur'anic exegesis (Adamson, 2002; Janssens, 2007). In this work, al-Kindī interprets Qur'anic references to the heavens "prostrating" before God such as Qur'an 22:18, which states that *"…the sun, the moon, the stars… and many of the heavens prostrate to God…"* through the lens of Aristotelian-Ptolemaic astronomy. He argues that this prostration is not a literal act but is manifested through the continuous, orderly circular motion of the celestial spheres (Janssens, 2007; Saruhan, 2023). Such motion, he maintains, expresses their obedience and dependence on God, thereby harmonising cosmological theory with Qur'anic revelation (Adamson, 2002; Janssens, 2007).

Al-Kindī even ventured into music theory, writing five works that applied mathematical principles to scales and tuning, thus laying the groundwork for the science of music in the Arab tradition (Wright, 2006). Among these treatises are *Risāla fī Hubr Taʾlīf al-Alḥān* (Treatise on the Composition of Melodies) and *Risāla fī al-Mūsīqā* (Treatise on Music), both of which survive in partial form (Farmer, 1929; Shiloah, 1995). In these works, Al-Kindī approached

music as a quantitative science, following the Pythagorean tradition that linked musical intervals to numerical ratios (Shiloah, 1995). He explained how consonance and dissonance arise from mathematical relationships between string lengths, and he offered one of the earliest systematic accounts of the Arab musical scale (Farmer, 1929). Al-Kindī also discussed the therapeutic and psychological effects of music, arguing that specific tonal patterns could influence emotional states (Wright, 2006). His work represents the earliest known attempt in Arabic scholarship to integrate mathematical acoustics, instrument construction, and melodic theory into a coherent scientific framework, making him one of the foundational figures in the development of Islamic music theory (Farmer, 1929; Wright, 2006).

Role in the Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement

Al-Kindī was a key figure in the translation movement, patronising, overseeing, and editing translations of Greek works by Aristotle, Euclid, Ptolemy, and Plotinus (Adamson, 2002; Zhuldyz et al., 2023). Though not a translator himself, he was crucial in shaping the philosophical terminology that made Greek ideas intelligible in Arabic (Staley, 1989). He edited and revised translations to ensure accuracy and supervised translators like Yahya b. al-Bitriq and Ibn Naʻima al-Himsi (Adamson, 2002).

Intellectual Orientation and Legacy

Al-Kindī learned much from Greek philosophers such as Aristotle, Plato, and Plotinus. Even so, he often charted his own course, diverging from Aristotle on key issues while aligning more closely with Neoplatonism in his conception of the soul and intellect (Ivry, 1974). Despite his foundation in Greek philosophy, he never lost sight of Islamic principles, holding that divine revelation transcends human reason and that philosophy and religion share the ultimate aim of uncovering truth albeit by different means (Ivry, 1974).

Al-Kindī's students, such as Abu Zayd al-Balkhī and Ahmad b. al-Tayyib al-Sarakhsi, carried on the Kindian tradition for two centuries, preserving his ideas and method (Adamson, 2007). His influence extended into Latin Europe through translations by Gerard of Cremona and others, and he was recognised by Gerolamo Cardano as one of history's great thinkers (Arroisi et al., 2023; Zhuldyz et al., 2023). While later philosophers such as al-Fārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes would refine and surpass his work, al-Kindī's role as the trailblazer who laid the groundwork for *falsafa* remains indisputable.

In sum, al-Kindī exemplifies the intellectual synthesis that defined the Islamic Golden Age, such as an openness to Greek wisdom, rigorous rational inquiry, and a commitment to harmonising philosophy with faith. His legacy lives on as a testament to the enduring power of cross-cultural scholarship and intellectual curiosity.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHTS OF AL-KINDĪ

Al-Kindī was the first major philosopher of the Islamic world and a pioneering figure in integrating Greek philosophical thought into an Islamic framework (Adamson, 2007). His wide-ranging corpus reflects a bold attempt to harmonise reason and revelation, drawing heavily on Aristotelian, Platonic, and Neoplatonic traditions while remaining grounded in Islamic monotheism (Arroisi et al., 2023). Al-Kindī's philosophical thoughts are evident in his positions on epistemology, ontology, and axiology.

Epistemology (Theory of knowledge)

Al-Kindī defines philosophy as "knowledge of the true nature of things, insofar as it is possible for man" (Druart, 1993; Groff, 2004; Ivry, 1974; Staley, 1989; Zhuldyz et al., 2023). For him, the ultimate aim of philosophy is not only to attain knowledge but also to live in accordance with it, since genuine philosophical understanding should shape one's conduct and cultivate virtue (Druart, 1993). Al-Kindī argues that when philosophical knowledge informs one's character and actions, it leads to inner equilibrium, moral refinement, and liberation from destructive emotions (Adamson, 2007). For example, in his treatise *On the Device for Dispelling Sorrows* (*Risāla fī ḥīla li-dafʿ al-aḥzān*), al-Kindī explains how living according to philosophical insight directly enhances a person's well-being and social relationships by enabling the management of grief, the moderation of desires, and the achievement of psychological stability (Adamson, 2007; Druart, 1993). In this sense, philosophy is not merely theoretical but provides practical guidance for living a balanced, virtuous, and purposeful life. Al-Kindī identifies two principal modes of human perception and knowledge, which are sensory (*ḥissī*) and intellectual (*ʿaqlī*) through which humans attain truth (Ivry, 1974).

Sensory knowledge concerns the understanding of the external, manifest forms of things. This capacity is not unique to humans but is shared with animals (Arroisi et al., 2023). Sensory perception captures particulars, which are inherently unstable due to their perpetual change (Adamson, 2007; Meguid, 2018). As a result, sensory data is transient, and any lasting awareness of particular objects must be preserved through faculties such as imagination and memory (Adamson, 2007).

Rational or intellectual knowledge, by contrast, is a uniquely human capacity that allows access to the essential and universal aspects of reality (Arroisi et al., 2023). Unlike sensory knowledge, intellectual perception offers certainty, grounded in the necessity and intelligibility of its principles. Al-Kindī maintains that such knowledge is acquired directly from the "first intellect" and is perfectly certain due to its basis in necessary truths (Adamson, 2007; Ivry, 1974).

A central concept in al-Kindī's epistemology is the "epistemic gap", which is a fundamental divide between sensory and intellectual knowledge. He strongly emphasises their dissimilarity and insists that sensation plays no direct role in the acquisition of intelligibles (Adamson, 2007; Ivry, 1974; Meguid, 2018; Stefaniuk, 2022). In this framework, the body and its associated faculties often serve as obstacles to true intellectual understanding (Adamson, 2007; Stefaniuk, 2022).

Despite this divergence, al-Kindī acknowledges the existence of intermediate faculties such as imagination (*phantasia*), memory, and thought (*fikr*), which mediate between sensation and intellect (Adamson, 2007; Stefaniuk, 2022; Stern, 1959). Among these, imagination holds a status superior to sensation, as it allows the retention and manipulation of sensory images even in their absence (Adamson, 2007). Similarly, the cogitative power of thought can engage with sensible forms, serving as a preparatory stage toward intellectual abstraction (Adamson, 2007).

While al-Kindī generally maintains the sharp epistemic distinction, certain texts reveal a more comprehensive view of sensation's role. For example, in *On the Quantity of Aristotle's Books (Risāla fī Kammiyyat Kutub Arisṭū)*, he asserts that knowledge of "secondary substances" (such as species and genera) is grounded in "primary substances" (sensible particulars) through their quantifiable and qualifiable aspects, features that are accessible via

sensation (Adamson, 2007; Meguid, 2018). However, he clarifies that although the mathematical sciences originate in sensible experience, they ultimately abstract their objects (quantity and quality) from these experiences through the intellect (Adamson, 2007; Meguid, 2018). Similarly, Al-Kindī implies that the soul is a receptacle for both sensible and intelligible knowledge, suggesting that "all knowledge comes from reason or the senses" (Meguid, 2018).

A distinct category in Al-Kindī's epistemological scheme is prophetic knowledge, which he calls "Divine science." This form of knowledge surpasses philosophy in its certainty and clarity, as it is granted through divine revelation rather than intellectual exertion (Ivry, 1974; Janssens, 2007; Staley, 1989). Whereas philosophy seeks truth through methodical inquiry and reasoning, prophecy communicates comprehensive truths in an easily intelligible form (Janssens, 2007; Staley, 1989). Nonetheless, Al-Kindī endeavours to demonstrate philosophical arguments without appealing to supernatural intervention, affirming that philosophical and revealed truths ultimately align (Ivry, 1974; Staley, 1989; Zhuldyz et al., 2023).

Al-Kindī's approach to epistemology directly informs and shapes his methodological framework. He consistently emphasises the necessity of employing the appropriate method for each distinct field of inquiry (Adamson, 2007). Central to his methodology is the concept of *ʿillah* (causality), which plays a crucial role in systematic investigation and ultimately leads back to God as the final cause of all things (Sahidin & Abdurahim, 2023). While Al-Kindī's philosophical method shares significant similarities with that of Aristotle particularly in its reliance on logical reasoning and critical analysis, it is distinguished by its incorporation of Islamic theological principles (Alagab, 2025).

Among the methodological tools he advocates, Al-Kindī gives particular priority to mathematics. He considers the mathematical sciences, such as arithmetic, geometry, harmonics, and astronomy, to be essential foundations for acquiring deeper knowledge (Adamson, 2007; Rehman, 1920). Importantly, he extends mathematical reasoning beyond its traditional domains and applies it to metaphysical inquiry. For instance, in discussions about the eternity of the world, Al-Kindī employs a Euclidean-style axiomatic method (Adamson, 2007; Rescher & Khatchadourian, 1965). Modelled on *Euclid's Elements*, this approach begins with precisely defined terms and self-evident axioms, then proceeds step-by-step toward conclusions reached through strict rational deduction (Adamson, 2007; Ivry, 1974). This method forms the core of Al-Kindī's mathematical-philosophical approach. By framing philosophical problems with clear definitions and deriving conclusions through demonstrative proofs, Al-Kindī follows what Rescher and Khatchadourian (1965) characterise as a rigorous, proof-driven adaptation of mathematical reasoning to metaphysics. In doing so, he treats complex metaphysical questions as abstract issues best addressed through disciplined intellectual reflection especially those involving concepts such as infinity and magnitude (Adamson, 2007; Rescher & Khatchadourian, 1965; Zhuldyz et al., 2023).

Al-Kindī also reserves purely rational arguments for metaphysics, the domain concerned with non-sensible substances (Meguid, 2018). He is careful to maintain a distinction between sciences, arguing that mathematics should not be applied to physics, as the latter investigates sensible substances subject to motion and change (Meguid, 2018). This clear differentiation among theoretical sciences (i.e., mathematics, physics, and metaphysics) corresponds to the different cognitive faculties employed by the soul in each respective domain (Meguid, 2018).

Ontology (Theory of Being/Reality)

Al-Kindī's ontology is fundamentally theocentric, centring on the conception of Allah S.W.T as the *True One*, the absolute source and cause of all being. Al-Kindī engages deeply with the metaphysical tension between Allah's essential unity and the multiplicity evident in creation. For al-Kindī, Allah is not merely a being among others but the *First Cause*, the originator (*mubdiʿ*), and the sole creator who brings everything into existence *ex nihilo* (Adamson, 2007; Bertolacci, 2001; Ivry, 1974; Zhuldyz et al., 2023). Allah is described as "the First True Who is the cause of every truth" (Adamson, 2007), the efficient cause from which all being emanates (Druart, 1993).

According to Al-Kindī, Allah's unity is absolute and beyond all predication or conceptual comprehension (Adamson, 2007; Ivry, 1974). He describes Allah as "only and purely unity," whose essence is utterly ineffable and transcends any attributes, particularly those ascribed by heretical interpretations (Adamson, 2002, 2007; Ivry, 1974; Stefaniuk, 2022). Al-Kindī approaches divine unity by emphasising what cannot be affirmed about Allah rather than by describing what Allah is (Adamson, 2007). In this apophatic method, he denies that God possesses multiplicity, composition, spatial location, or any qualities that imply limitation or likeness to created beings (Ivry, 1974; Druart, 1993). This approach is known as negative theological discourse, which maintains divine transcendence by asserting only what God is *not* (Adamson, 2007; Druart, 1993). By focusing on such negations, Al-Kindī safeguards the radical transcendence of Allah and avoids attributing human-like characteristics that would compromise the simplicity and singularity of divine unity (Adamson, 2007; Ivry, 1974). Al-Kindī further argues that human language inevitably introduces distinctions and multiplicity, and thus any affirmative description of Allah risks distorting the divine essence, which is absolutely one and without differentiation (Adamson, 2007; Ivry, 1974). In relation to creation, Allah is not a number but the cause from which numbers and all beings are derived, external to them in both nature and existence (Adamson, 2007).

Al-Kindī outlines two conceptions of being which are *simple* and *complex* that are distinct yet reconcilable (Adamson, 2002). *Simple being* refers to the bare fact of existence without any attributes, essence, or differentiation (Ivry, 1974). It serves as the fundamental bearer of all predicates (Ivry, 1974). In other words, "existence itself," or *being qua being* in its most abstract and indeterminate sense, exemplifies simple being. This notion parallels Aristotelian matter as the "first bearer of predication" (Adamson, 2002; Ivry, 1976; Meguid, 2018). By contrast, *complex being* refers to entities that already possess an essence along with distinct characteristics (Adamson, 2002). A human being, for example, has specific features such as rationality, corporeality, emotions, and a determinate physical form. Such attributes transform bare existence into a fully constituted and differentiated entity (Meguid, 2018). These beings are therefore complete and distinguishable from one another (Adamson, 2002). Al-Kindī reconciles these two conceptions by proposing that complex being emerges when an essence is predicated of simple being (Adamson, 2002). Once simple being receives an essence, it becomes the subject of additional accidental predicates, thereby yielding the differentiated entities that populate the world (Adamson, 2002).

In opposition to the Aristotelian doctrine of the world's eternity, Al-Kindī famously defends the Islamic position of the world's temporal creation. He argues against the notion of an eternal universe, instead asserting its origination in time through *creatio ex nihilo* (Adamson, 2007; Adamson & Pormann, 2015; Staley, 1989; Zhuldyz et al., 2023). Drawing heavily from John Philoponus's critiques of Aristotle, Al-Kindī employs rigorous philosophical arguments to demonstrate the impossibility of actual infinite magnitude, motion, or time (Adamson, 2007; Ivry, 1974; Meguid, 2018; Shamsi, 1975; Staley, 1989). He argues that time is intrinsically tied to motion, which in turn is coextensive with the existence of the universe itself (Meguid, 2018; Staley, 1989). While the world is not eternal, Al-Kindī concedes that it may be described as *sempiternal*, not infinite in actual duration, but conceptually unending both in the past and future (Shamsi, 1978).

Axiology (Ethics and Values)

Al-Kindī's ethical vision is deeply integrated with his metaphysical and psychological thought, promoting an intellectualist and ascetic lifestyle aimed at spiritual perfection and ultimate happiness. Ethics, described as the "fruit" of metaphysics, serves the higher purpose of achieving *faḍīlah* (full human excellence) and attaining happiness in both this life and the hereafter. For Al-Kindī, the philosopher's moral responsibility is to act truthfully in alignment with the truth (Druart, 1993; Groff, 2004).

True happiness in Al-Kindī's view, is found through intellectual contemplation. He contrasts the eternal, incorruptible realm of the intellect with the transient and perishable sensible world. Thus, ethical living involves detaching from the physical world and orienting the soul toward the immaterial domain of intelligibles (Adamson, 2007). This contemplative turn is complemented by a strict asceticism. Al-Kindī urges the suppression of passions and worldly desires, which he sees as impediments to the soul's purification and its pursuit of authentic knowledge (Adamson, 2007; Arroisi et al., 2023; Groff, 2004; Stefaniuk, 2022). The perfection of the soul is achieved by its full immersion in the intellectual realm (Adamson, 2007).

A cornerstone of Al-Kindī's ethics is the concept of *tashabbuh* (imitation of Allah's characters), which involves acquiring knowledge of noble, intelligible realities. While this does not imply any equivalence with the divine, it encourages humans to align with God's attributes within the bounds of His transcendence (Adamson, 2007; Druart, 1993; Groff, 2004). Al-Kindī's ethical framework is also shaped by several philosophical traditions. From Platonism, he adopts the division between the intelligible and sensible realms, and he aligns virtues such as wisdom, courage, and self-control with those in Plato's *Republic* (Adamson, 2007; Stefaniuk, 2022). Stoic and Cynic influences are evident in his emphasis on the suppression of passions, the valuation of what cannot be lost through external events, and the practice of *muḥāsaba* (self-examination) to overcome egocentric tendencies (Adamson, 2007; Druart, 1993; Groff, 2004; Stefaniuk, 2022). Although less prominent, Aristotelian elements appear in his notion of habituation as a means of moral development (Adamson, 2007).

Finally, Al-Kindī conceptualises freedom in a limited yet meaningful way. Freedom refers to the soul's capacity to shape itself according to reason. True freedom is found in submitting to the guidance of the intellect and resisting the sway of bodily emotions (Zhuldyz et al., 2023). Emotions, being corporeal, are to be governed or opposed by the rational soul in its quest for virtue and self-mastery (Stefaniuk, 2022; Zhuldyz et al., 2023).

AL-KINDĪ'S CONCEPTION OF THE SOUL

Al-Kindī offers one of the earliest systematic articulations of the soul in the Islamic tradition, drawing on Platonic, Aristotelian, and Galenic sources to develop a framework that is simultaneously metaphysical, ethical, and systematic (Adamson, 2007; Adamson & Pormann, 2015). This section examines al-Kindī's account across five key dimensions: the soul's nature and definition, its faculties, its relationship with the body, its connection to the intellect, and its relation to concepts such as *al-rūḥ* (spirit) and *al-qalb* (heart). Together, these elements reveal al-Kindī's broader effort to synthesise Greek philosophical doctrines with Islamic metaphysical concerns into a coherent vision of human nature, intellectual development, and moral perfection.

The Nature and Definition of the Soul

Al-Kindī defines the soul (*al-nafs*) by synthesising Greek philosophical traditions, identifying it both as the animating principle of the body and as a divine, simple, and immaterial substance (Adamson, 2007; Adamson & Pormann, 2015; Arroisi et al., 2023; Stefaniuk, 2022). His account is "much more Platonic than Aristotelian" (Adamson, 2007), reflected in his emphasis on the soul's nobility, perfection, and dignity (Arroisi et al., 2023; Druart, 1993; Puspita, 2023; Rahman et al., 2022). He describes its essence as deriving from the Creator, likening the soul's emanation to light radiating from the sun (Arroisi et al., 2023; Druart, 1993; Puspita, 2023; Rahman et al., 2022).

Although he incorporates the Aristotelian definition of the soul as the "first perfection" (*istikmāl*) or "completion" (*tamāmiyyah*) of a natural organic body, al-Kindī maintains that the soul's divine origin and independence from the body render it inherently immortal. Upon bodily death, the soul returns to the realm of intellect, fulfilling its ultimate purpose to live eternally in the realm of intellect, contemplating truth, united with its divine origin, freed from the limitations of bodily existence (Arroisi et al., 2023; Puspita, 2023; Rahman et al., 2022).

Faculties of the Soul

Al-Kindī's account of the soul's faculties integrates Aristotelian and Galenic philosophy with Neoplatonic metaphysics (Adamson, 2007; Druart, 1993; Stefaniuk, 2022). Although some contemporary summaries present his psychology in tripartite terms (e.g., Arroisi et al., 2023; Puspita, 2023), al-Kindī himself does not adopt Plato's tripartite model. Instead, he distinguishes between the rational soul and a set of bodily faculties that support its functions (Adamson, 2007; Adamson & Pormann, 2015; Druart, 1993; Stefaniuk, 2022).

Bodily faculties include the appetitive and irascible powers as well as nutritive and sensory functions (Adamson, 2007; Adamson & Pormann, 2015). Rooted in the body, these are considered "lower" because their impulses can impede the soul's perfection when left unchecked (Adamson, 2007; Adamson & Pormann, 2015; Arroisi et al., 2023; Druart, 1993). To achieve virtue and self-mastery, the rational faculty must discipline these bodily tendencies (Adamson, 2007; Stefaniuk, 2022).

Beyond these, al-Kindī identifies intermediary or psychic faculties, including imagination, memory, cogitation, and retentive capacities, which process sensory data and prepare it for intellection (Adamson, 2007; Adamson & Pormann, 2015; Arroisi et al., 2023).

Following Galenic physiology, he locates these faculties not in the heart, as Aristotle proposed, but in the brain, reflecting his commitment to contemporary medical science (Adamson, 2007; Adamson & Pormann, 2015; Arroisi et al., 2023; Puspita, 2023). Table 1 summarises al-Kindī's explanation of the faculties of the soul.

Table 1: Faculties of the Soul in al-Kindī's Philosophy

Category	Faculty	Description
Rational Soul (Essential, Immaterial)	Rational / Intellectual Faculty (*al-quwwa al-ʿaqliyya*)	The true essence of the soul; immaterial, simple, divine; responsible for intellection and ethical judgment; governs the lower faculties.
Bodily Faculties (Lower / Corporeal)	Appetitive Power (*al-quwwa al-shahwāniyya*)	Desires, inclinations toward bodily pleasure; tied to the body and can hinder perfection.
	Irascible/Emotive Power (*al-quwwa al-ghaḍabiyya*)	Anger, courage, emotional responses; also embodied; must be governed.
	Nutritive/Growth Power	Basic biological processes (growth, nutrition).
	Sensory Power	External senses that mediate perception of the physical world.
Intermediate / Psychic Faculties (Between Body and Reason)	Imagination (*al-quwwa al-muṣawwir*a)	Retains and recombines sensory forms; mediates between sense and intellect.
	Memory (*al-dhākira*)	Stores and recalls forms.
	Cogitation / Thought (*fikr*)	Manipulates mental images; prepares forms for intellection
	Retentive Faculty	Holds perceptual and imaginative forms.
	Internal Sense Processing	Processes, organises, and conveys sensory input to the intellect; located in the brain.

The Soul and the Body

Al-Kindī presents a dualistic view of the relationship between soul (*al-nafs*) and body (*al-jism*), portraying the soul as a transcendent, immaterial substance that only accidentally inhabits the body (Adamson, 2007; Adamson & Pormann, 2015; Arroisi et al., 2023; Stefaniuk, 2022). The body serves merely as an instrument enabling the soul to interact with the material world through sensation, desire, and motion (Adamson, 2007; Puspita, 2023).

Although he accepts the Aristotelian description of the soul as the principle of life for a natural body, al-Kindī insists that this relationship remains incidental. Bodily faculties can constrain the soul's intellectual ascent and thus must be governed through reason (Adamson & Pormann, 2015; Arroisi et al., 2023; Druart, 1993; Stefaniuk, 2022).

Because the soul is simple, divine, and immaterial, it survives bodily dissolution and returns to the intellectual realm near the Creator. Al-Kindī evokes Qurʾānic verse "*Now We have removed your veil, so your sight today is sharp*" (Qurʾān 50:22) to illustrate the soul's clear perception once freed from corporeal impediments (Adamson, 2007; Arroisi et al., 2023; Puspita, 2023).

The Soul and the Intellect

In *Risāla fī al-ʿAql*, al-Kindī presents his most systematic theory of rational activity, outlining four types of intellect: the First Intellect, the Second Intellect, the Potential Intellect,

and the Actual Intellect (Adamson, 2007; Adamson & Pormann, 2015; Stefaniuk, 2022). This hierarchy describes the progression of the soul from sensory engagement to complete intellectual actualisation. Table 2 summarises al-Kindī's four types of intellect.

Table 2: Al-Kindī's Four Types of Intellect

Type of Intellect	Description	Examples of Application
First Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-awwāl*)	The transcendent First Cause; always in act; source of all intelligible forms. Enables the lower intellects to know.	Contemplating metaphysical truths such as the existence or unity of the First Cause.
Second Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-thānī*)	Realm of universal intelligible, contains genera, species, abstract concepts. Provides the content known by the human intellect.	Understanding abstract universals like "justice," "humanity," or geometric forms.
Potential Intellect (*al-ʿaql bi'l-quwwa*)	The human mind as potentiality: capable of knowing but not yet actualised. Prepared to receive forms.	A learner capable of grasping mathematical principles before fully understanding them.
Actual Intellect (*al-ʿaql bi'l-fiʿl*)	The intellect in act, having fully apprehended intelligible forms. Represents intellectual perfection.	Demonstrating mastery by proving a theorem or understanding metaphysical principles without sensory aids.

For al-Kindī, the rational faculty is both the soul's essence and the foundation of moral and spiritual refinement. Reason must govern bodily impulses, enabling alignment with divine attributes (Druart, 1993; Haque, 2004; Zhuldyz et al., 2023). Intellectual contemplation purifies the soul, while the purified soul more fully apprehends universal truths (Adamson, 2007; Ivry, 1974; McCarthy, 1964; Rahman et al., 2022; Stefaniuk, 2022). Thus, intellectual discipline and ethical self-mastery are inseparable dimensions of human perfection.

The Soul and al-Rūḥ

Al-Kindī does not explicitly define the relationship between the soul (*al-nafs*) and the spirit (*al-rūḥ*) (Adamson, 2007; Druart, 1993; Ivry, 1974). Some contemporary authors draw parallels between the two concepts because *rūḥ* in Islamic thought signifies divine origin and life-giving power (Haque, 2004; Puspita, 2023; Stefaniuk, 2022), leading to claims that *nafs* may be identified with, or emanate from, *rūḥ* (Kamaruddin, 2014; Rahman et al., 2022). Yet such interpretations reflect later theological frameworks, not al-Kindī's own writings.

In his philosophical psychology, the soul is a simple, immaterial, and noble substance deriving from the Creator (Adamson, 2007; Adamson & Pormann, 2015; Arroisi et al., 2023; Druart, 1993; Puspita, 2023; Rahman et al., 2022; Stefaniuk, 2022). By contrast, al-Kindī adopts the Greek distinction between psychē (immaterial soul) and pneuma (material spirit), using *rūḥ* to correspond to the latter in physiological contexts (Adamson, 2007; Gutas, 2014; Pormann & Savage-Smith, 2007). His notion of *rūḥ nafsānī* refers to a subtle corporeal substance responsible for voluntary motions, distinct from the rational soul (Arroisi et al., 2023; Ivry, 1974; Stefaniuk, 2022).

Thus, while both terms carry connotations of divine vitality, al-Kindī maintains a conceptual distinction between the soul and *al-rūḥ*: the soul is immaterial and eternal, whereas *rūḥ* may also denote a physiological life-force associated with embodiment.

The Soul and al-Qalb

Al-Kindī's view of the heart (*al-qalb*) diverges from broader Islamic traditions that treat it as the locus of spiritual perception and wisdom (Haque, 2004; Stefaniuk, 2022). Rejecting Aristotle's heart-centred psychology, he follows Galenic medicine in locating perceptual, imaginative, and cognitive faculties in the brain (Adamson, 2007; Arroisi et al., 2023).

Nonetheless, the *qalb* retains symbolic and ethical significance. Al-Kindī associates affective states such as sadness with the heart (Adamson, 2007) and exhorts readers to "humble your heart," indicating its role in moral cultivation (Adamson & Pormann, 2015). Thus, while the *qalb* represents an ethical and emotional centre, it is not, in al-Kindī's system, the physiological seat of perception or intellection (Adamson, 2007; Arroisi et al., 2023).

AL-KINDĪ'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE EARLY UNDERSTANDING OF MENTAL HEALTH, HUMAN NATURE, AND COGNITIVE THEORY

Al-Kindī sought a synthesis of Aristotelian logic, Plotinian metaphysics, and Islamic monotheism, demonstrating that reason and revelation share a single aim which is the knowledge of truth (Ivry, 1976). This approach laid the groundwork for later thinkers like al-Fārābī and Avicenna, though they developed the tradition further in their own ways (Rahman et al., 2022). Al-Kindī offers valuable insights into human nature and well-being that resonate with and, in some cases, even prefigure modern psychological theories and practices, especially through his intricate understanding of the Soul (Arroisi et al., 20230. By blending Greek philosophical traditions with Islamic thought, he established a metaphysical and epistemological foundation for early Islamic psychology that continues to resonate until today (Arroisi et al., 2023).

According to Adamson (2007), although al-Kindī is widely known as a philosopher, he also merits recognition as an early contributor to the field of psychology, particularly in areas that correspond today to mental health and cognitive psychology. His analyses of the soul, emotions, perception, and cognition provide significant insights with clear implications for contemporary psychological discourse (Adamson, 2006; Ivry, 1974). This section highlights how al-Kindī's works laid early foundations for several areas of psychological and philosophical inquiry, including the understanding of mental health and cognitive therapy, a holistic and spiritual view of the human nature, theories of sleep and dreams, theories of vision, and his significant influence on later scholars.

Early Understanding of Mental Health and Cognitive Therapy:

One of al-Kindī's significant contributions is his recognition that mental health concerns are a universal aspect of human experience (Puspita, 2023) and that they may be addressed through cognitive, ethical, and spiritual strategies (Groff, 2004). He analysed psychological states such as sadness (*ḥuzn*), identifying their causes and proposing remedies long before the emergence of contemporary psychotherapy as a formal discipline (Haque, 2004). Although modern readers might notice similarities between al-Kindī's descriptions of excessive sadness and what we now classify as neurotic distress or depressive tendencies (Groff, 2004; Puspita, 2023), it is important to stress that his understanding is rooted in a very different intellectual tradition. Al-Kindī's attribution of prolonged sadness to cognitive factors

(e.g., believing that worldly matters are permanent or truly ours) reflects a philosophical and spiritual framework rather than a clinical or empirical one (Puspita, 2023; Haque, 2004).

In *The Device for Dispelling Sorrows*, al-Kindī formulates what may be viewed as an early cognitive theory of emotion, arguing that it is not external loss itself but our mental evaluation of it that generates sorrow (Haque, 2004). His well-known assertion that "sorrow is not within us; we bring it upon ourselves" (Hamarneh, 1965; Haque, 2004) resonates with Stoic reflections and appears superficially similar to modern cognitive-behavioural perspectives (Groff, 2004). Yet it is essential to emphasise that these similarities should not be taken as equivalences. Modern psychology, having largely moved away from metaphysical inquiry, rests on empirical methods and secular frameworks, whereas al-Kindī's approach is grounded in a philosophical anthropology that sees the soul as immortal, ethically perfectible, and oriented toward the divine. Because these foundations differ so profoundly, it would not be academically fair to equate al-Kindī's ideas with contemporary psychological theories or practices.

The present study is therefore not intended to compare al-Kindī's works with modern clinical models; rather, it aims to show that centuries before psychotherapy emerged, al-Kindī was already articulating profound insights into human cognition, emotional suffering, and the cultivation of well-being. His counsel to cultivate rational habits (Hamarneh, 1965; Puspita, 2023), moderate desires through reason (Puspita, 2023), and redirect one's attachment toward enduring virtues rather than transient possessions (Haque, 2004) illustrates a sophisticated therapeutic outlook embedded within early Islamic philosophical thought (Arroisi et al., 2023).

While some of al-Kindī's recommendations resemble what modern psychology calls cognitive reframing, values clarification, or behavioural training (Groff, 2004; Haque, 2004; Puspita, 2023), these resemblances are thematic rather than methodological. They simply underscore that al-Kindī identified psychological mechanisms that later became systematised in modern therapy. Table 3 provides a structured overview of where such thematic parallels appear, while equally emphasising the deep conceptual differences between al-Kindī's metaphysical framework and the secular foundations of contemporary psychology. His work ultimately demonstrates that mental health, for him, was inseparable from ethics, metaphysics, and the cultivation of the soul. This is an integrated vision that continues to offer valuable insights for contemporary discussions within Islamic psychology.

Table 3: al-Kindī's Contribution to Psychotherapy:

al-Kindī's Works	**Similarities with Modern Psychology**	**Differences**
For al-Kindī, sadness (*al-ḥuzn*) is "the pain of the soul resulting from valuing sensible and corruptible objects" (Druart, 1993). Emotional distress does not arise from external events themselves, but from the *false belief* that material goods, relationships, or worldly conditions are stable, permanent, or absolutely possessed (Groff, 2004). Because	***Cognitive Theory of Emotion:*** In modern psychology, cognitive theories similarly argue that emotions arise primarily from appraisals or interpretations, not from events themselves (Beck, 1964; Lazarus, 1991). A person's thoughts about a situation, rather than the situation per se, shape the emotional response (Clark & Beck, 2010).	Although al-Kindī's view anticipates certain mechanisms later articulated in cognitive psychology, the foundations of his model differ significantly from modern therapeutic frameworks. Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) is pragmatic, empirically oriented, and secular, focusing on modifying maladaptive cognitions to reduce symptoms. Its conceptual foundation lies in

the sensible world is transient, attachment to it inevitably produces sorrow when loss occurs. Thus, for al-Kindī, emotional suffering is fundamentally a metaphysical error, that is based on a mistaken appraisal about the nature of reality, the soul, and the impermanence of worldly things.	Distressing emotions persist when individuals hold maladaptive evaluations or beliefs, which can be modified through systematic cognitive intervention (Beck, 1964; Lazarus, 1991).	observable behaviour and cognitive processes, without reference to metaphysics, cosmology, or the soul. By contrast, al-Kindī's emotional theory is rooted in a Platonic and Islamic metaphysical worldview in which the soul is immortal, immaterial, and oriented toward the eternal (Druart, 1993). Emotional disturbance arises not merely from distorted thoughts but from a mistaken attachment to transient, corruptible objects and a failure to recognize the soul's transcendent nature. The remedy, therefore, is not only cognitive reframing but reorienting one's values and desires toward what is permanent and divine.
In *The Device for Dispelling Sorrow* (*al-Ḥīlah li-Dafʿ al-Aḥzān*), al-Kindī teaches that possessions are merely things on loan from the Creator and will inevitably be returned (Groff, 2004). By reframing loss as the return of borrowed property, he reduces its irrational emotional impact such as shame, despair, or excessive grief, and promotes a more rational, spiritually grounded cognitive shift (Groff, 2004; Jayyusi-Lehn, 2002).	***Cognitive Reframing:*** Cognitive therapies similarly focus on identifying and challenging false beliefs and maladaptive appraisals. Emotional distress is understood to arise not from events themselves but from the individual's interpretation of those events. Through cognitive re-appraisal, clients learn to replace distorted thoughts with more balanced and adaptive evaluations (Beck, 1964; Lazarus, 1991; Clark & Beck, 2010).	Al-Kindī's therapeutic strategy is grounded in a metaphysical and spiritual worldview, often requiring detachment from material possessions and bodily needs, which he views as impediments to the soul's tranquility (Puspita, 2023). In contrast, modern techniques such as CBT prioritise adaptation to worldly functioning, aiming to improve daily coping, behavioural effectiveness, and psychological well-being without requiring metaphysical commitments.
Al-Kindī emphasises the necessity of practicing steadfastness (*al-ʿazm:* persistence of opinion in action) by training the soul in commendable habits, beginning with small tasks and gradually increasing their difficulty (Druart, 1993; Jayyusi-Lehn, 2002; Puspita, 2023). This method anticipates behavioral therapy by outlining a process of progressive habituation to virtue, building moral resilience through repeated, disciplined action.	***Behavioural Prescriptions:*** Behavioural approaches use gradual exposure and habituation techniques grounded in classical (Pavlov, 1927) and operant conditioning (Skinner, 1938). In exposure-based interventions, individuals confront feared or avoided situations in manageable steps that progressively increase in difficulty, reducing emotional reactivity through habituation and inhibitory learning (Foa & Kozak, 1986). Similarly, behaviour modification emphasises shaping adaptive behaviours through small, incremental changes reinforced over time (Kazdin, 2001). This graded progression mirrors al-Kindī's emphasis on cultivating virtue through incremental practice and the disciplined training of the soul.	Al-Kindī's therapeutic aim is not merely behavioural adaptation but the overcoming of innate dispositions including temperamental tendencies shaped by astral influences and bodily humours (Druart, 1993). His model therefore integrates moral psychology with cosmology and natural science. In contrast, modern behavioural therapies are secular, empirically based, and non-metaphysical, focusing on observable behaviour change without reference to celestial or humoral determinants.

Al-Kindī recommends engaging in introspection and rational contemplation (*naẓar*) on universal and immutable truths as a means of avoiding sadness (Arroisi et al., 2023; Haque, 2004). He teaches that intellectual reflection helps detach the individual from immediate emotional attachments by redirecting attention toward higher, abstract realities. This method functions as an intellectual defence mechanism, allowing the soul to transcend unstable worldly emotions (Druart, 1993; Haque, 2004).	***Cognitive Strategies:*** Modern approaches similarly employ introspective and reflective strategies, such as monitoring one's internal states, examining thought patterns, and engaging in guided self-reflection. These techniques cultivate metacognitive awareness, allowing individuals to gain psychological distance from emotionally charged situations and re-evaluate their cognitive responses (Beck, 1976). Such strategies are foundational in cognitive therapy and mindfulness-based cognitive interventions, where noticing and reassessing internal experiences is essential for emotional regulation and cognitive change (Segal et al., 2002).	For al-Kindī, contemplation aims at accessing objective metaphysical truths such as the nature of being, the soul, and ultimate reality as part of "First Philosophy" (Arroisi et al., 2023). Modern psychological introspection, by contrast, focuses on subjective experience, emotional regulation, and cognitive restructuring rather than metaphysical knowledge. The goals, therefore, diverge: al-Kindī seeks intellectual ascent toward eternal truths, whereas modern psychology seeks improved self-regulation within lived experience.
Al-Kindī asserts that reason (the rational aspect of the soul) must take supremacy over non-rational desires and impulses in order to prevent affliction and moral deviation (Puspita, 2023). The imperative to use the Rational Faculty (*al-quwwah al-ʿaqliyah*) to dominate harmful passions such as anger (*al-quwwah al-ghaḍabiyyah*) and desire (*al-quwwah al-shahawāniyyah*) reflects his belief that emotional regulation requires intellectual mastery and disciplined self-governance (Puspita, 2023; Rahman et al., 2022).	***Rational Emotive Approach (REA):*** Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT), developed by Ellis (1962), emphasises the primacy of reason in regulating harmful emotions. REBT teaches that irrational beliefs generate dysfunctional emotional responses and that individuals can reduce distress by identifying, disputing, and replacing these irrational cognitions with rational alternatives (Ellis, 1962). This approach highlights the role of logical analysis, cognitive dispute, and rational self-instruction in countering destructive emotions, similar to al-Kindī's emphasis on using reason to constrain impulsive passions (Dryden, 2003).	For al-Kindī, the domination of reason over the passions is not merely a psychological technique but part of a metaphysical and ethical project aimed at purifying the soul and attaining closeness to the Creator (Arroisi et al., 2023). In contrast, REBT is secular, therapeutic, and pragmatic, concerned with reducing emotional distress and improving daily functioning without appealing to metaphysical truths or spiritual transcendence.
Al-Kindī teaches that one should pursue eternal, intelligible realities in the *World of the Intellect* (*ʿālam al-ʿaql*) rather than transient sensible things (Druart, 1993; Haque, 2004). He presents a hierarchy of values in which rational and enduring goods, such as knowledge and virtue, are inherently superior to corruptible, sensory goods such as wealth, pleasure, or social status (Druart, 1993). Orienting the soul toward what is eternal promotes genuine flourishing and protects the	***Values Clarification:*** Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) emphasise values clarification, encouraging individuals to identify and commit to values that promote psychological flexibility, well-being, and long-term stability (Hayes et al., 2012). ACT distinguishes between enduring, chosen values and fleeting desires or impulses, guiding clients toward goals aligned with health, meaning, and personal integrity (Hayes et al., 2012). This process	For al-Kindī, the ultimate fulfilment of values is metaphysical perfection and the immortality of the soul, attained through alignment with eternal truths and closeness to the Creator (Arroisi et al., 2023). This spiritual and religious telos lies beyond the scope of secular therapeutic models such as ACT or CBT, which aim primarily at functional well-being rather than metaphysical realisation.

individual from sorrow rooted in worldly attachments.	mimicked al-Kindī's emphasis on prioritising higher-order, stable goods over transient, sensory ones.	

Holistic and Spiritual View of the Person:

Al-Kindī's conception of mental health was holistic, in the sense that he did not separate the spiritual, intellectual, and emotional aspects of the self. For him, optimal well-being ("a calm soul") required harmony between one's beliefs, one's character, and one's lifestyle (Adamson, 2007; Fakhry, 1987; Gutas, 1998; Puspita, 2023). In contemporary psychology, there is growing recognition of the importance of spiritual and existential factors in mental health. Al-Kindī anticipated this by grounding psychological well-being in the alignment of the soul with higher truths (Adamson, 2007; Fakhry, 1987; Gutas, 1998). He effectively suggests that an individual's mental disturbances can be alleviated by reconnecting the soul to its spiritual purpose (knowledge of the eternal) and disentangling it from excessive worldly anxieties (Puspita, 2023). Modern approaches like Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) or meaning-centred therapy echo these themes, encouraging individuals to commit to deeper values and accept the uncontrollability of certain outcomes (Hayes et al., 2012). This aligns with al-Kindī's emphasis that peace of mind comes when the soul finds rest in what is meaningful and eternal, rather than remaining in constant turmoil over what is fleeting and beyond one's control.

Furthermore, al-Kindī implicitly recognised what we know today as the psychosomatic connection (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 2002). This concept elaborates on the way the state of the Soul (mind) can affect the body and vice versa. By classifying sadness as an "illness" and speaking of cures, al-Kindī was treating psychological illnesses with the same seriousness as physical ailments (Puspita, 2023). He also noted that emotional disturbances like fear and anger have bodily manifestations and can even contribute to physical sickness (Adamson, 2007; Ivry, 1974). While his remedies were largely cognitive and spiritual, he acknowledged the interplay of mind and body, which aligns with the holistic approach in health psychology today that treats the person as an integrated whole.

Theory of Sleep and Dreams:

Al-Kindī's treatise *Fī Māhiyyat an-Naum wa ar-Ru'yā* (*On the Essence of Sleep and Dream*) describes sleep as a natural state in which the soul's practical faculties withdraw from sensory and bodily activities, thereby allowing the imaginative faculty to function independently (Najati, 2002). During wakefulness, the soul remains engaged with external senses; however, when these senses are dormant in sleep, the imaginative power (*al-quwwa al-mutakhayyila*) becomes dominant, generating dreams (*ar-ru'yā*) from residual sensory impressions and spiritual influences (Adamson, 2007; Najati, 2002). In this framework, sleep is described as a condition where the animal soul (*an-nafs al-hayawāniyya*) recedes from its lower functions, while the rational soul (*an-nafs al-nāṭiqa*) can still receive true visions or distorted images, depending on its purity and the physical state of the sleeper (Adamson, 2007).

Building on this, al-Kindī's *De Somniis* (On Dreams) interprets dreams as natural phenomena linked to the imagination (*khayāl*) and the soul's operations when freed from sensory distractions (Adamson, 2007; Druart, 1993). He argued that the soul's imaginative

faculty stores images that emerge during sleep, aligning with the Aristotelian view that the soul can function imaginatively when bodily senses are inactive (Adamson, 2007). Al-Kindī distinguishes four types of dreams: *Ar-Ruʾyā at-Tanbīʾīyah* (prophetic dreams) that convey true knowledge of future events*, Ar-Ruʾyā ar-Ramzīyah* (symbolic dreams) requiring interpretation, *Ar-Ruʾyā Dhikrīyah* (recollecting dreams) dreams replaying past experiences, and *Ar-Ruʾyā Badaniyyah* (false dreams) false dreams arising from physical imbalances (Najati, 2002).

Theory of Vision:

Al-Kindi's contributions to the theory of vision primarily advanced the extramission (visual ray) theory, aligning him with the "perspectivist" tradition that included figures like Euclid and Ptolemy (Lindberg, 1976). He refined earlier Euclidean optics by arguing that the visual ray forms a continuous cone, not discrete lines, to explain the continuous perception of the visual field (Adamson, 2007). His most significant innovation was his explicit articulation of "punctiform analysis," positing that visual rays originate from every point on the surface of the eye and radiate in all directions (Adamson, 2007; Lindberg, 1976). This enabled him to geometrically explain observed phenomena such as why objects appear clearer at the centre of the visual field and when closer, due to a greater number of visual connections from the eye to the object (Adamson, 2007). Although Al-Kindi used this principle to support his extramission view, it proved to be a fundamental concept for Ibn al-Haytham's (Alhazen's) later intromission theory, thereby laying crucial groundwork for subsequent optical science (Lindberg, 1976). This rigorous approach to optics exemplifies Al-Kindi's broader philosophical commitment to mathematical methodology as essential for understanding the natural world (Adamson & Pormann, 2015).

Influence on Later Scholars:

Al-Kindī's ideas about the soul and mind directly influenced later scholars who wrote more explicitly on psychological disorders and their treatment, such as Abū Zayd al-Balkhī (Adamson, 2007; Fakhry, 1987). Al-Balkhī, often cited as a pioneer in cognitive therapy for his book *Masālik al-Abdān wa-l-Anfus* ("*Sustenance of Body and Soul*"), likely drew on the general intellectual climate that al-Kindī helped establish such as the one where psychological well-being is seen as part of philosophical ethics and medicine (Badri, 2013; Gutas, 1998). Al-Balkhī classified obsessional disorders and depression in ways that resonate with al-Kindī's descriptions of sorrow and anxiety. The continuity suggests that al-Kindī was part of the genesis of a distinctly Islamic psychology tradition, one that modern researchers are now studying and reviving (Cucchi, 2022; Haque, 2004; Mayi & Tahir, 2025). Recognising al-Kindī's role helps contemporary psychologists appreciate the historical depth of concepts like cognitive restructuring and holistic health in non-Western contexts. It reminds us that the idea of psychotherapy is not entirely new or Western; Muslim scholars like al-Kindī were dealing with mental well-being and devising interventions centuries ago. His systematic exploration of the soul's faculties and their relationship to human behaviour places an essential foundation for Islamic psychology, blending Greek philosophical insights with Islamic principles to advance theories of reason's governance over passion, emotional well-being through cognition, and habituation in character development (Arroisi et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

Abu Yūsuf Yaʿqūb ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī emerges as a foundational figure in the development of Islamic philosophical psychology, distinguished by his successful integration of Greek philosophical insights within an Islamic monotheistic worldview. His extensive reflections on the nature, faculties, and interaction of the soul provide one of the earliest holistic frameworks for understanding human nature that unifies the physical, rational, ethical, and spiritual dimensions of the person into a coherent vision of well-being.

At the heart of al-Kindī's system is the conviction that the soul shapes personality, moral character, and intellectual development. By articulating the soul's relationship to cognition, emotion, and self-governance, he laid a conceptual foundation for areas that today correspond to psychotherapy, cognitive appraisal, emotional regulation, and ethical self-cultivation. His emphasis on the intellect as the pathway to virtue and psychological stability situates mental health within a broader metaphysical and ethical horizon, extending beyond the limits of purely medical or behavioural models.

The continued relevance of al-Kindī's thought lies in its capacity to inform contemporary efforts to develop holistic and Islamically grounded approaches to psychology. His analyses of sadness, cognitive errors, habituation, and the interplay between reason and passion anticipate enduring concerns in modern therapeutic discourse, while his discussions of dreams, imagination, and perception enrich the historical understanding of cognitive theory. Revisiting al-Kindī's intellectual legacy thus offers valuable resources for advancing contemporary conversations on human cognition, character, and well-being, and affirms the significance of early Muslim scholarship in shaping a more integrated and spiritually attuned psychology for the modern world.

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Reviewing Al-Balkhī's Concept of the Soul and Its Relevance for Developmental Psychology

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ABSTRACT

The work of the 9th-century Muslim scholar Abū Zayd al-Balkhī offers a profound historical and theoretical resource for contemporary developmental psychology. He articulated a sophisticated framework on the intricate relationship between the soul and body, centred on the dynamic interplay between the nafs (psyche) and the qalb (heart) to achieve holistic well-being. This study employs a qualitative methodology, integrating narrative review and historical textual analysis, to examine al-Balkhī's concept of the soul. This paper argues that al-Balkhī's conceptualization provides a robust framework for understanding spiritual resilience and cognitive agency as central components of human development, offering a valuable complement to modern biopsychosocial models. The analysis reveals that his model offers crucial insights into the cultivation of a virtuous character and provides a mechanism for how individuals can navigate adversity across the lifespan. Consequently, this paper explores the theoretical implications of al-Balkhī's concept of the soul for understanding physical, cognitive, and socioemotional development. Ultimately, this study positions al-Balkhī's work not merely as a historical artefact but as a vital and relevant paradigm for advancing a more holistic and cross-culturally informed science of human development.

Keywords: *Al-Balkhī, Body and Soul, Developmental Psychology, Mental Health, Nafs and Qalb, Psychological State*

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary field of developmental psychology, while dominated by Western theoretical frameworks, is increasingly recognising the value of cross-cultural and historical perspectives to achieve a more holistic understanding of human flourishing. In this search for diverse intellectual traditions, the work of 9th-century Muslim polymath Abū Zayd al-Balkhī emerges as a particularly rich and relevant source. His sophisticated integration of medicine, philosophy, and theology produced a cohesive model of the human psyche that predates many foundational concepts of modern psychology.

Of his extensive writings (Haque, 2020), Masālih al-Abdān wa al-Anfus (Sustenance of the Body and Soul) holds primary relevance for psychology. In this seminal text, al-Balkhī investigated the complex interplay of cognition, anxiety, and mood disorders, pioneering therapeutic approaches that many modern scholars identify as precursors to cognitive therapy (Awaad & Ali, 2016). Building upon this historical foundation, this paper argues that al-Balkhī's sophisticated conceptualisation of the soul - encompassing the dynamic relationship between the *nafs* (psyche) and the *qalb* (heart) - offers a cohesive biopsychospiritual framework with profound implications for modern developmental psychology (Saeed, Ahmed Sr., Kakamad, & Najmadden, 2024). Through this examination, the study will elucidate the

implications of his holistic model for contemporary theories of individual behaviour and mental processes, with particular attention to its relevance for development across the lifespan.

To substantiate this claim, the paper is structured as follows. First, it will examine the biographical and intellectual context of al-Balkhī's life to understand the foundations of his knowledge. Following this, it will provide a detailed analysis of his philosophical framework, defining his key concepts of the soul. The paper will then place this framework in a comparative dialogue with foundational Western developmental theories. Subsequently, it will explore the implications of al-Balkhī's model for developmental psychology before concluding with a synthesis of the findings.

ABŪ ZAYD AL-BALKHĪ: LIFE AND INTELLECTUAL FORMATION

Abū Zayd Ahmed ibn Sahl al-Balkhī was born in 849 CE (235 AH) in the village of Shamistiyan, within the province of Balkh, Afghanistan - a region renowned as a vibrant crossroads of culture and learning- and passed away in 934 CE at the age of 85 (Badri, 2013). Historical accounts describe him as a quiet and contemplative individual who preferred solitude over social engagement. This introspective temperament became a defining characteristic of his identity as a brilliant, yet reserved, scholar (Badri, 2013; Al-Hamawi, 1980).

Following his initial education from his father, al-Balkhī relocated to Baghdad, the era's undisputed intellectual epicentre. During an intensive eight-year period, he pursued a comprehensive education in both religious and secular sciences. His studies under the renowned polymath Abū Yūsuf al-Kindī, often called “the philosopher of the Arabs,” were particularly formative. Under al-Kindī's guidance, al-Balkhī was immersed in the intellectual currents of the Translation Movement, which brought Greek, Persian, and Indian texts into the Arabic-speaking world. This exposure was not merely academic; it involved a rigorous synthesis of Hellenistic philosophy - particularly the works of Aristotle and the Stoics - with Islamic theological principles. This provided him with a thorough foundation in a wide array of disciplines and shaped his multifaceted expertise (Badri, 2013).

While al-Balkhī's early recognition stemmed from his contributions to geography - notably establishing the "Balkhi School" of terrestrial mapping - his most enduring legacy lies in the field of mental health. In the 9th century, at a time when mental distress was often attributed to supernatural causes, he made seminal contributions by differentiating between neurosis and psychosis and introducing early forms of cognitive therapy. This pioneering work in medicine and psychology was a direct result of his deep intellectual curiosity and introspective nature (Saeed, Ahmed Sr., Kakamad, & Najmadden, 2024).

Upon returning to Balkh, he served as a writer (kātib) for Prince Ahmad ibn Sahl ibn Hashim al-Marwazi, having deliberately declined a ministerial role to avoid the distractions of high office. This position was consistent with his reserved personality, affording him the solitude necessary for deep study and reflection while still keeping him engaged with the administrative and intellectual matters of the court. He remained dedicated to his research and writing throughout his long and productive life (Badri, 2013).

Given his rigorous intellectual training under al-Kindī, his lifelong dedication to scholarship, and his profound introspective disposition, al-Balkhī was uniquely positioned to develop a comprehensive framework concerning fundamental psychological concepts. This unique synthesis of personal disposition and profound intellectual training provided the direct

foundation for his sophisticated, Islamically-informed understanding of the body and soul, which will be detailed in the subsequent section (Badri, 2013).

AL-BALKHĪ'S PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

Al-Balkhī's ontological framework is founded on an interactionist dualism, positing that the immaterial soul (nafs) and the physical body are distinct yet deeply interrelated entities where the condition of one directly influences the other (Badri, 2013; Kadavath, 2024). Central to this interaction is the nafs itself, which he identifies as the locus of appetitive drive - desires, passions, and the pursuit of self-gratification. Using the example of hunger, al-Balkhī illustrates how the psyche generates cognitive strategies to mobilise bodily action, establishing a clear link between psychological processes and physical behaviour that prefigures modern theories of motivation (Deuraseh & Abu Talib, 2005).

To regulate these powerful drives, al-Balkhī introduces the *qalb* (heart) as a crucial intermediary. Transcending its physiological meaning, the *qalb* serves as the spiritual and psychological core where emotions, moral discernment, and inner perception converge. By positioning the *qalb* as the moderator of the *nafs*, al-Balkhī frames emotional and moral balance as essential for guiding ethical human action, an idea resonant with Prophetic traditions (Sahih Bukhari & Muslim). The *qalb* thus functions as the seat of moral cognition, a faculty that aligns individual desires with ethical awareness and divine guidance, anticipating modern concepts of affective regulation and conscience (Kamarulbahari, Noor, Matt & Yusoff, 2024).

Achieving a sound *qalb*, in turn, requires a holistic approach to health. Al-Balkhī proposed two integrated disciplines: al-Tibb al-Qalb (spiritual and psychological medicine) and al-Tibb al-Jismani (physical medicine). He asserted that true well-being necessitates preserving the health of both domains, arguing against the narrow focus on physical health common among his contemporaries. Therefore, a robust *qalb* – fortified by faith, moral conduct, and spiritual discipline - is paramount for achieving a balanced life (Deuraseh & Abu Talib, 2005).

This comprehensive model is grounded in a synthesised epistemology that integrates three complementary sources: empirical observation, rational deduction, and divine revelation. His use of systematic clinical observation reflects an early empiricism, while his training under al-Kindī enabled him to rationally classify disorders and devise cognitive interventions (Saeed et al., 2024). The defining feature of his system, however, is its anchoring in Islamic metaphysical principles. By treating revelation and reason as complementary, al-Balkhī established a teleological understanding of the soul, where self-knowledge is inseparable from knowledge of God (Badri, 2013; Kadavath, 2024; Liedstrand, 2023).

From this integrated framework, a clear axiology emerges, centred on the imperative to safeguard both body and soul from corruption. His work, Masālih al-Abdān wa al-Anfus, demonstrates that psychosomatic health arises from the harmonious interplay of the self's physical and psychological dimensions, both ultimately oriented toward the divine (Badri, 2013). Ultimately, al-Balkhī's legacy is twofold: he stands as a foundational figure in the history of psychology, and his work provides a timeless paradigm for contemporary developmental psychology by framing human development as the cultivation of the soul toward moral and spiritual maturity.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH WESTERN PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES

A comparative analysis of al-Balkhī's psychotherapy with foundational Western theories reveals both striking parallels and profound divergences. His framework, while not a developmental theory in the vein of Jean Piaget or Lev Vygotsky (Santrock, 2024; Boyd & Bee, 2015) offers a compelling counterpoint. Whereas Piaget mapped the maturational stages of cognitive development - focusing on the universal structure of reasoning that evolves with age - al-Balkhī was concerned with correcting the pathological content of thought at any stage of life. This conceptual divergence has significant implications for understanding an individual's cognitive agency. Piaget's stage theory implies that certain logical errors are inevitable and insurmountable until a new developmental stage is reached, limiting the scope for immediate intervention (Siegler,1994). In contrast, al-Balkhī's framework presumes an individual possesses the inherent rational capacity to self-correct, regardless of their life stage. The therapeutic goal is not to await cognitive maturation but to actively guide the individual in applying their existing cognitive abilities to challenge and amend their own faulty beliefs (Haque, 2004a). His therapeutic method is a clear precursor to modern cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), which aims to repair faulty thinking - a principle that directly anticipates Aaron Beck's (1976) model of cognitive distortions. Thus, while Piaget and Vygotsky explain how cognitive architecture is constructed, al-Balkhī provides a historically rich framework for repairing it, confirming that the core principles of CBT have deep cross-cultural roots.

The contrast becomes even more pronounced when compared with the psychodynamic theories of Sigmund Freud and Erik Erikson (Santrock, 2024; Boyd & Bee, 2015). Freud attributed neurosis to unconscious conflicts rooted in early life, requiring therapies that excavate the subconscious. This model posits a locus of pathology that is, by definition, inaccessible to the individual's direct awareness, positioning the therapist as the primary agent of interpretation and change. Al-Balkhī, in stark opposition, located the source of neurosis in conscious, albeit illogical, thought processes. This distinction is critical: where Freudian therapy seeks to uncover hidden trauma through a process often dependent on the therapist's expertise, al-Balkhī's method empowers the individual by treating the problem as an accessible and correctable pattern of thought (Arroisi & Himaya, 2023). For instance, in treating social anxiety, a Freudian approach might investigate repressed childhood experiences of shame. Al-Balkhī's method, conversely, would focus on identifying and rationally challenging the patient's conscious, irrational beliefs, such as the fear that "speaking up will inevitably lead to ridicule. This technique is a clear antecedent to the cognitive restructuring central to modern Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). Similarly, while Erikson framed development as a series of psychosocial crises, al-Balkhī's analysis of depression as profound sorrow over the past focuses on the cognitive mechanism of processing events rather than the resolution of a life stage. This emphasis on conscious cognition provided a more agentic pathway to well-being that predates the Western cognitive revolution by centuries.

Finally, al-Balkhī's work complements Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory by elucidating the interplay between the internal and external worlds (Bronfenbrenner,1979). Bronfenbrenner argued that development is shaped by nested environmental systems; al-Balkhī acknowledged this by advising patients to avoid external triggers (the "microsystem"). However, his primary contribution lies in modelling the internal cognitive mediation of these external factors. While Bronfenbrenner masterfully outlines the external systems that influence an individual, al-Balkhī provides a specific mechanism for how

these events are processed internally to produce either psychological health or distress.

This distinction has profound implications for understanding both cognitive ability and socioemotional development across the lifespan. Bronfenbrenner's model, by emphasising the power of external systems, can inadvertently diminish the role of individual cognitive agency. In contrast, al-Balkhī's framework posits that an individual's cognitive ability is the ultimate filter through which all environmental influences must pass. This empowers the individual, suggesting that cognitive skills like rational self-talk and belief restructuring are critical tools for navigating socioemotional challenges posed by any system – from familial conflicts in the microsystem to societal pressures in the macrosystem. His work thereby enriches the person-environment model by emphasising that while the environment presents challenges, it is the individual's cognitive response that ultimately shapes their psychological state. Consequently, socioemotional development is framed not as a passive outcome of environmental forces, but as an active, lifelong process of cultivating the cognitive discipline needed to achieve resilience and well-being, regardless of external circumstances.

IMPLICATION OF AL-BALKHI'S CONCEPT OF SOUL IN DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

Drawing from al-Balkhī's holistic view of the soul, this section explores the significant implications of his framework for contemporary developmental psychology. While modern theories provide robust models for psychosocial and environmental influences, al-Balkhī's work offers a unique and complementary focus on internal spiritual resilience and conscious cognitive agency. This analysis will demonstrate how his concepts inform our understanding of physical, cognitive, and socioemotional development throughout the human lifespan.

First, his framework introduces a crucial spiritual dimension often underemphasised in dominant developmental theories. Frameworks like Erikson's psychosocial stages (Santrock, 2024) or Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner,1979) masterfully explain how external experiences shape development. For example, Erikson's theory predicts that a child suffering paternal abuse might develop core traits of shame and doubt. While this accurately diagnoses the problem, al-Balkhī's work offers a vital supplement by focusing on internal mediation. His model posits that an individual's spiritual health - centred on the *nafs* (psyche) and *qalb* (heart) - can moderate adverse outcomes. A strong spiritual foundation, grounded in Islamic principles, can empower an individual to navigate adversity constructively (Haque, 2004b). Socioemotionally, this principle extends across the lifespan, suggesting that a fortified *qalb* can help an adolescent resist negative peer influences to maintain a stable identity, or allow an older adult to achieve integrity by finding spiritual meaning in the face of physical decline and loss. It proposes that holistic development requires not just a safe environment but also a fortified spiritual core, offering a theologically congruent model for promoting resilience (Kadavath, 2024).

Second, al-Balkhī's emphasis on conscious cognition presents a powerful alternative to psychoanalytic determinism and serves as a direct antecedent to modern cognitive therapies. In Sustenance of the Body and Soul, he argues that neurosis is induced by irrational thinking that can be corrected by "unlearning" maladaptive habits (Badri, 2013). This stands in stark contrast to Freudian theory, which attributes neurosis to unconscious conflicts. Whereas the Freudian model can imply a degree of determinism, al-Balkhī's concept empowers the

individual by locating psychological distress in conscious, and therefore mutable, thought processes. This has profound relevance for developmental psychology, as it suggests that detrimental behaviours learned in childhood are not immutable. Cognitively, this agency is critical at every life stage: it allows an adolescent to actively restructure negative self-perceptions during identity formation, a mid-life adult to reframe career or personal setbacks, and an older adult to challenge despondent thoughts about ageing (Awaad & Ali, 2016). His work thus provides a foundational pillar for Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), demonstrating that positive developmental trajectories can be achieved through cognitive restructuring (Awaad & Ali, 2016; Kamarulbahari et al., 2024).

Finally, al-Balkhī's integration of the *nafs* expands the modern biopsychosocial model into a more comprehensive biopsychospiritual framework. Contemporary psychology acknowledges the mind-body connection, but al-Balkhī introduced the pivotal role of the *nafs* as an immaterial entity governing thought, feeling, and behaviour. The state of the *nafs* - whether prone to evil (al-ammarah) or tranquil (al-mutma'innah) - directly shapes personality. The key to elevating the *nafs* is the purification of the *qalb* (heart), the centre of one's spiritual essence. This model directly addresses the physical dimension of development by formalising a psychosomatic link. For al-Balkhī, chronic negative emotional states like anger or anxiety, which stem from a disordered *nafs*, are not merely psychological - they are precursors to physical illness. This has direct implications for physical health across the lifespan, suggesting that the spiritual discipline of purifying the *qalb* can mitigate stress-related diseases in adulthood and promote healthier physiological ageing. This adds a crucial mechanism for character development that transcends simple behaviour modification. For developmental psychology, this implies that cultivating a virtuous character is an active, lifelong spiritual practice centred on purifying the *qalb* to achieve positive behaviour, emotional tranquillity, and consequently, physical well-being (Santrock, 2024; Boyd & Bee, 2015).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the work of the 9th-century polymath Abū Zayd al-Balkhī represents more than a historical curiosity; it offers a cohesive and remarkably modern framework for human psychology. By identifying irrational beliefs as the source of psychological distress and advocating for their conscious "unlearning," he established a clear antecedent to modern cognitive therapies (Awaad & Ali, 2015). Crucially, his framework was not limited to cognition. By stressing the intricate balance between the soul (*nafs*) and the body, and positioning the *qalb* (heart) as the spiritual core that mediates this relationship, he forged a truly biopsychospiritual model of human nature.

This holistic framework holds profound implications for developmental psychology. Al-Balkhī's concept of unlearning habits directly informs modern interventions for fostering positive development. More importantly, his emphasis on the *nafs* and *qalb* introduces a rich spiritual dimension that challenges the predominantly secular assumptions of many Western psychological models. This offers not only a congruent framework for Muslim psychologists but also provides a valuable paradigm for cross-cultural psychology, demonstrating how non-Western traditions can enrich our universal understanding of human flourishing. By providing a model where purifying the heart across the lifespan builds resilience and inner tranquillity, his work invites future research into the interplay between spiritual practices and mental well-being. Consequently, al-Balkhī's philosophy is not merely of historical interest but stands as

an essential and timeless paradigm for comprehending and advancing a truly holistic science of human development.

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Understanding the Soul: Abu Bakr al-Razi's Foundational Contributions to Psychology

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the foundational contributions of Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi (854-925 CE), a 9th-century Persian polymath, to the development of psychological thought, with a focus on his conceptualisation of the soul (nafs) and human behaviours. Unlike later scholars such as Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, Abu Bakr al-Razi advanced a holistic framework that integrated physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of human life. The article employs a conceptual and historical analysis of his writings in medicine, philosophy, and ethics to illuminate the epistemological, ontological, axiological, and teleological (EOAT) foundations of his psychology. Epistemologically, al-Razi emphasised reason, systematic observation, and clinical experience, advocating knowledge grounded in evidence rather than speculative metaphysics. Ontologically, he proposed a layered understanding of the soul, namely rational, animal, and vegetative, highlighting the dynamic interplay between body and psyche. His axiology underscored moral integrity, moderation, and compassion in human interactions, particularly in patient care, while his teleological perspective linked human flourishing with ethical conduct, mental well-being, and societal welfare. Al-Razi pioneered early principles of psychotherapy and psychosomatic medicine, introduced humane medical practices, and articulated a sophisticated model connecting mental and physical health. By revisiting his legacy, this article demonstrates how classical Islamic thought provides a culturally grounded, spiritually informed framework for contemporary psychology, especially in integrating ethical, cognitive, and affective dimensions. The study affirms the enduring relevance of al-Razi's holistic vision for scholars and practitioners seeking to advance human-centred, ethically guided psychological theory and practice.

Keywords: *Abu Bakr Al-Razi, Epistemology of Psychology, Medicine of the Soul, Islamic Psychology, Soul*

INTRODUCTION

Psychology has emerged as a field of knowledge dedicated to understanding, explaining, and predicting the nature and dynamics of human functioning. Traditionally, it concerns the study of the human mind and behaviours, exploring mental processes, emotions, cognition, motivation, and actions. Over time, the scope of psychological inquiry has evolved, reflecting shifting paradigms, worldviews, and intellectual traditions across different historical periods. While contemporary psychology often emphasises empirical research rooted in Western epistemology, a broader historical view reveals that various civilisations have made significant contributions to the development of psychological thought (Deuraseh & Abu Talib, 2005).

Despite its advancements, mainstream psychology faces notable limitations. Current approaches, often grounded in "General Psychology," have been criticised for their

ethnocentric and decontextualised nature, as they predominantly rely on research conducted with Western, educated, industrialised, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) populations (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). This focus risks overlooking the rich diversity of human experiences shaped by non-Western cultures, philosophical traditions, and religious worldviews (Kim, Yang, & Hwang, 2006). Furthermore, the field tends to privilege measurable, observable behaviours, frequently marginalising subjective dimensions such as consciousness, spirituality, meaning-making, and existential concerns. Such limitations underscore the need for integrating culturally grounded and spiritually informed perspectives, including insights derived from the Islamic intellectual heritage (Allwood, 2011; Marsella, 2010).

One particularly influential scholar from the Islamic Golden Age (8th–14th century) is Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariya Al-Razi (854-925 CE), a Persian polymath, physician, and philosopher. His work provides foundational insights into the understanding of the human psyche, grounded in medicine, philosophy, and ethics. Al-Razi conceptualised human beings as integrated wholes, encompassing the body, soul (*nafs*), reason, and moral character. His holistic approach to psychology predates many modern discussions on mental health, well-being, and the ethical dimensions of human behaviours.

Despite the growing recognition of cultural and spiritual factors in human behaviours, mainstream psychology remains largely dominated by secular, reductionist paradigms. This dominance creates a significant knowledge gap in understanding the human psyche in a holistic and ethically grounded manner. The limited integration of non-Western and spiritually informed perspectives in contemporary psychological theory therefore necessitates a study that analyses the work of Muslim scholars whose contributions offer valuable insights into the holistic nature of human beings.

The objective of this article is to present the findings of a study that focused on the conceptual and theoretical analysis of Al-Razi's contributions to psychology, with particular emphasis on his understanding of the soul (*nafs*), its role in human behaviours, and its broader epistemological, ontological, and axiological implications. Rather than engaging in empirical investigation, this study seeks to revisit, interpret, and critically assess Al-Razi's ideas in order to enrich contemporary discourse.

The contribution of this article lies in demonstrating the relevance of Al-Razi's holistic framework for contemporary psychology, particularly in integrating spiritual, ethical, and cultural dimensions into the study of human behaviours. By revisiting his work, the article provides a foundation for culturally and spiritually informed psychological theory, offering an alternative to the reductionist and secular approaches that currently dominate the field. Ultimately, this analysis underscores the value of interdisciplinary scholarship and highlights how historical perspectives can inform modern psychological theory and practice, enriching both conceptual understanding and applied approaches to human well-being.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employs a historical-conceptual methodological approach to examine Abu Bakr al-Razi's contributions to psychology, particularly his understanding of the soul (*nafs*) and human behaviours. By integrating historical analysis with conceptual interpretation, the

study traces the intellectual and cultural context of the 9th-10th century Islamic Golden Age, situating al-Razi's work within the medical, philosophical, and ethical discourses of his time. The historical-philosophical lens allows for a critical assessment of al-Razi's writings, including *Kitāb al-Ḥāwī*, *Kitāb al-Manṣūrī*, and *Kitāb al-Ṭibb al-Rūḥānī*, as well as his engagement with classical Greek sources such as Aristotle, Plato, and Galen, and with Islamic scholarly traditions.

Conceptual analysis focuses on elucidating the epistemological, ontological, axiological, and teleological (EOAT) dimensions of al-Razi's psychology. The study systematically examines how al-Razi integrated reason, empirical observation, and ethical reflection to construct a holistic understanding of human functioning. Sources are assessed based on their authenticity, coherence, and relevance to al-Razi's psychological framework, considering both primary texts and authoritative secondary literature. Comparative analysis is employed selectively to highlight distinctions and parallels with contemporaneous scholars, such as Ibn Sina and Al-Balkhi, thereby clarifying al-Razi's originality and contributions.

PERSONAL AND EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Al-Razi (865–925 CE / 251–313 AH), known in the Latinised world as *Rhazes*, was one of the most celebrated Muslim polymaths of the Islamic Golden Age. Born in the ancient city of Rayy (present-day Rey, near Tehran, Iran), Al-Razi lived during a period of flourishing intellectual activity across the Muslim world. He died at the age of 73 in 925 CE in his hometown after a long and productive life as a physician, philosopher, and scientist (Nayernouri, 2008).

Multidisciplinary Scholar

Al-Razi's scholarly contributions spanned a wide range of disciplines, including medicine, chemistry (alchemy), philosophy, ethics, and psychology. He was initially trained in music and reported to have worked as a jeweller and money changer, a background which helped him develop skills in observation and precision. Later, after suffering from an eye condition resulting from chemical experimentation, he sought medical treatment that piqued his interest in medicine. This marked the beginning of his journey into the medical sciences (Amr & Tbakhi, 2007; Badawi, 2004).

He formally studied medicine under the renowned scholar Ali ibn Rabban al-Tabari, author of *Firdaws al-Hikmah* (Paradise of Wisdom), and completed his medical training at Muqtadiri Hospital in Baghdad, one of the leading centres of medical learning at the time. He eventually became chief physician at both the hospitals in Rayy and Baghdad, earning recognition for his innovative and holistic approach to healing (Haque, 2004).

Career and Legacy

Al-Razi is regarded as one of the greatest physicians of the medieval Islamic world. His most famous medical work, *Kitab al-Hawi* (The Comprehensive Book), served as a major medical reference in Europe for several centuries. He also authored *Man la Yahduruhu al-Tabib* (For One Without Access to a Physician), a pioneering manual for self-care that addressed common ailments and treatments accessible to laypeople (Nutton, 2004).

A unique feature of Al-Razi's medical approach was his emphasis on psychological well-being alongside physical health. He understood that emotional and mental states could significantly affect physical illness and recovery, a perspective far ahead of his time. His holistic view of healing combined medication, ethical conduct, and mental clarity, elements central to both physical and psychological treatment.

He is widely acknowledged as one of the earliest practitioners of psychotherapy, having written extensively on the relationship between physical and mental health. He utilised cognitive and moral techniques to treat emotional disturbances, thus integrating psychology into the broader practice of medicine (Haque, 2004).

Zeitgeist (Intellectual Environment)

Al-Razi lived during the height of the Abbasid Caliphate, a time when Baghdad became a hub of knowledge production, particularly in medicine, philosophy, and the natural sciences. Hospitals, libraries, and translation centres like the *Bayt al-Hikmah* (House of Wisdom) provided fertile ground for scholars to engage with Greek, Persian, and Indian sciences. Medical knowledge, especially from Greek sources such as Galen and Hippocrates, was being critically examined and expanded upon by Muslim scholars. Al-Razi played a significant role in this transformation, often challenging the doctrines of Greek medicine and promoting empirical observation over blind adherence to ancient authorities (Tschamouroff, 2006).

Philosophically, this era was dominated by Aristotelianism, which many Muslim philosophers, such as Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and later Ibn Rushd (Averroes) sought to reconcile with Islamic theology. However, Al-Razi stood apart in his more Platonically inspired perspective, especially concerning the nature of the soul. He often criticised Aristotelian dogma and emphasised reason and observation as the primary tools for understanding the world (Druart, 1996).

Influences and Intellectual Positioning

Al-Razi's thought was influenced by both Islamic and classical Greek sources. His primary influences included Ali ibn Rabban al-Tabari, from whom he learned both medicine and spiritual philosophy. The other scholar is Al-Balkhi, an early pioneer in mental health, likely influencing Al-Razi's approach to psychosomatic medicine (Badawi, 2004). He was also influenced by Socrates and Plato, whose ethical and metaphysical ideas, especially on the soul, shaped Al-Razi's psychological framework. Aristotle was also an influence though engaged critically, as Al-Razi opposed some of Aristotle's metaphysical assertions (Druart, 1996).

Unlike many of his contemporaries who merged Aristotelian philosophy with Islamic theology, Al-Razi maintained a rationalist stance. He avoided metaphysical speculations that lacked empirical grounding and was critical of prophetic revelation as the sole source of truth. This led to strong opposition from other Islamic philosophers and theologians, some of whom accused him of excessive rationalism or even heresy (Shawer, 1973; Adamson, 2021). The latter refers to *a belief or opinion that goes against established religious doctrine (*Esposito, 2003). Nevertheless, his originality lay in his independent and critical thinking, which allowed

him to lay the foundations for early psychological theory, rooted not just in faith or tradition, but in observation, ethics, and scientific reasoning.

HIS SCHOLARSHIP IN PSYCHOLOGY

Al-Razi (was a pioneering Muslim scholar whose vast intellectual legacy encompasses over 200 works in philosophy, alchemy, astronomy, theology, logic, and particularly medicine and psychology (Haque, 2004; Amr & Tbakhi, 2007). Among Muslim physicians of the 9th and 10th centuries, Al-Razi stands out not only for his scientific rigour but also for his psychological insight, which anticipated concepts in modern mental health and psychotherapy.

Al-Razi's contribution to psychology is embedded in his integrative view of health, which saw the human being as a composite of body, soul, mind, and morality. He was one of the earliest physicians to explore the emotional and cognitive dimensions of illness and to advocate psychological interventions in addition to physical treatments. His concern for mental health was ahead of his time and had a significant influence on both Islamic and later Western medical traditions (Haque, 2004; Badawi, 2004).

Psychological Perspective in a Medical Framework

Al-Razi's approach to psychology was grounded in his clinical experience and philosophical worldview. He maintained that emotions such as anxiety, sadness, envy, anger, and desire could disrupt physical health and must therefore be addressed as part of the healing process. He believed that reason and self-discipline were essential tools for regulating such emotions and achieving mental well-being. Thus, his work represented one of the earliest integrations of cognitive, behavioural, and ethical principles in therapeutic practice (Gutas, 2001).

Al-Razi did not separate mind and body but rather viewed them as interdependent components of the human being. In contrast to modern dualist approaches, he embraced a holistic understanding of the self, echoing themes found in both Greek philosophy and Islamic thought. His insights filled a critical epistemological gap in understanding the human soul **(***nafs***)** and its connection to behaviour and illness, especially in the medical context (Pormann & Savage-Smith, 2007).

Intellectual Conflicts and Criticism

Despite his originality, Al-Razi's views were controversial. His critique of Greek philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato, especially their metaphysical assumptions, was seen as radical. Unlike his contemporaries, who sought to harmonise Greek thought with Islamic teachings, Al-Razi insisted on empirical observation and rational inquiry over speculative reasoning. This brought him into intellectual conflict with figures like Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Al-Biruni, who criticised his rejection of metaphysical hierarchy, his scepticism of mathematics in scientific explanation, and his independent rationalism (Shawer, 1973).

Ibn Sina, for instance, accused Al-Razi of being overly speculative and lacking originality in his metaphysical arguments, while Al-Biruni challenged his religious and philosophical positions. Nonetheless, these critiques testify to Al-Razi's intellectual independence, and his works continued to circulate widely in both the Islamic and European worlds (Shawer, 1973; Gutas, 2001).

KEY WORKS RELATED TO PSYCHOLOGY

Kitab al-Mansuri fi al-Tibb (The Book of Medicine for al-Mansur)

This ten-volume medical encyclopaedia was written for the Samanid ruler Al-Mansur ibn Ishaq and became widely known in Europe as *Liber Al-Mansuri*. It presents an extensive treatment of medical topics based on Al-Razi's clinical experience and critical engagement with earlier Greek medical authorities. In this work, Al-Razi combined observational medicine with philosophical reflections. He discussed the role of the soul in health and illness, challenging the ideas of Aristotle and Plato. He also introduced innovative medical theories while emphasising the need to integrate mental and emotional well-being into treatment. The book demonstrates his interdisciplinary approach, where the mind and soul are essential to understanding disease causation and recovery (Amr & Tbakhi, 2007; Pormann & Savage-Smith, 2007).

Kitab al-Hawi (The Comprehensive Book)

Also known as *Liber Continens* in Latin, *Kitab al-Hawi* is a monumental compilation of Al-Razi's medical notes, case histories, and clinical observations, coupled with excerpts and critiques of other medical writings. Though not structured as a formal textbook, it served as a practical manual for physicians. The book includes detailed descriptions of neurological and psychiatric disorders, such as melancholia and mania. He records early medical case histories, providing psychological observations of patients. The book contains the earliest known clinical description of smallpox and measles, illustrating his attention to detail and observation (Amr & Tbakhi, 2007; New World Encyclopaedia, 2015). The book also critiques Aristotle's and Plato's metaphysical assumptions in favour of empirically driven reasoning. This compilation was widely used in Europe during the Middle Ages and significantly shaped early European medical psychology.

Kitab al-Tibb al-Ruhani (The Medicine of the Soul)

This treatise stands as Al-Razi's most direct engagement with psychological and ethical issues. In *Kitab al-Tibb al-Ruhani*, he argues that the soul, like the body, requires healing and care. The book outlines the importance of reason and ethical conduct in regulating emotions and desires. Besides, it also discusses practical advice on combating negative traits such as anger, grief, envy, arrogance, and greed. The book provides a form of early cognitive-behavioural intervention, advocating rational reflection and ethical self-awareness as tools for psychological health. In this regard, Al-Razi's psychological framework integrates moral philosophy, spiritual development, and mental health. His ethical and psychological reflections were not only therapeutic but also aimed at fostering personal growth and self-regulation (Shawer, 1973; Haque, 2004).

Al-Razi's Lasting Impact on Psychology

Al-Razi's scholarship in psychology laid the groundwork for integrative, person-centred approaches to mental health. His contributions bridged medical and psychological knowledge, pioneering the practice of integrating emotional, behavioural, and ethical considerations in health care. He advocated for rational self-governance, moral virtue, and critical reflection as central to healing and well-being. He also critiqued dominant philosophical paradigms and established an independent framework that emphasised empirical observation and practical application. His influence extended beyond the Islamic world, shaping medieval European medicine and psychology, especially through Latin translations of his major works. By acknowledging the centrality of the soul (*nafs*), reason, and ethical behaviour in human functioning, Al-Razi emerges as a foundational figure in the development of psychological thought, offering insights that remain relevant in contemporary psychology.

AL-RAZI'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF PSYCHOLOGY

Al-Razi, who is recognised as one of the greatest Arabic-Islamic physicians and philosophers, made substantial contributions to both the physical and psychological dimensions of human well-being. His medical innovations enhanced the quality of life for individuals and communities, while his rationalist philosophy influenced scientific and intellectual developments not only in the Islamic world but also in medieval Europe (Amr & *Tbakhi*, 2007). His contributions to the epistemology of psychology, the theory of how psychological knowledge is acquired, offer valuable insights into the interplay between reason, empirical observation, and ethics.

Understanding Al-Razi's Epistemological Orientation

Epistemology, in the context of psychology, refers to the sources, methods, and justification for acquiring knowledge about the human psyche, behaviours, and mental processes. Al-Razi's epistemological framework was grounded in reason (‘*aql*) and empirical observation, diverging from speculative metaphysics and mystical traditions that were prevalent among some scholars of his time.

1. Primacy of Reason in Acquiring Knowledge

Al-Razi asserted that reason is the central tool for understanding the world and the human condition. He emphasised that knowledge must be grounded in rational inquiry, supported by observation and experimentation. According to Al-Razi, reason was not merely an abstract philosophical principle but a practical method of inquiry applied across medicine, ethics, and psychology (Shawer, 1973). He believed that rational thinking allows individuals to distinguish between truth and falsehood and forms the foundation of scientific progress. He stated that reason is the gift of God to humans, enabling them to grasp the truths of this world and attain mental and physical health (Shawer, 1973).

Al-Razi also recognised the limitations of reason. He argued that rational thought should not be applied to matters of the unseen (*ghayb*), such as metaphysical realities beyond human perception, because such domains transcend empirical verification. Therefore, he

cautioned against the excesses of speculative reasoning and rejected mysticism (*tasawwuf*) that relied on esoteric or subjective experiences to claim knowledge (Druart, 1996).

2. Empirical Observation and Clinical Evidence

In addition to rational analysis, Al-Razi relied heavily on empirical data, gathered through his medical practice. His use of case histories was especially pioneering. In his medical treatises, particularly *Kitab al-Hawi*, he documented numerous clinical cases that reflected not only physical symptoms but also psychological and emotional states (Amr & Tbakhi, 2007). These case studies served both as diagnostic tools and pedagogical models for future practitioners. This approach to psychology was evidence-based, emphasising the role of direct patient observation, systematic documentation, clinical reasoning, and individualised treatment plans. In doing so, Al-Razi laid the groundwork for what would later be recognised as clinical psychology and psychosomatic medicine.

3. Ethical Rationalism and Psychological Well-being

Al-Razi believed that psychological balance could be achieved through rational ethics. In his work *Kitab al-Tibb al-Ruhani* (The Medicine of the Soul), he argued that emotional disorders such as grief, anxiety, and envy stemmed from irrational thoughts and moral failings. Moral failings occur when reason (*ʿaql*) does not moderate impulses, desires, or emotional responses. Thus, his epistemology extended to the moral domain, where ethical reflection and character development were integral to mental health. His approach resonates with the cognitive-behavioural tradition in contemporary psychology, which also identifies distorted thinking and maladaptive beliefs as causes of emotional dysfunction (Haque, 2004).

This epistemological framework directly informs Al-Razi's conceptualisation of the tripartite soul, where the rational, animal, and vegetative components of the human psyche are understood not only through moral and ethical reasoning but also through empirical observation, clinical experience, and systematic reflection, illustrating how knowledge acquisition and the understanding of human nature are inseparably intertwined.

Table 1: Key Principles of Al-Razi's Epistemology in Psychology

Principle	Description	Modern Equivalent
Rational Inquiry	Knowledge must be pursued through reasoning and logic.	Rationalism / Cognitive Approaches
Empirical Observation	Clinical practice and documentation form the basis for understanding illness and behaviour.	Evidence-Based Practice
Case-Based Analysis	Use of patient histories for diagnosis, treatment, and learning.	Clinical Case Studies
Ethical-Moral Cognition	Psychological health is tied to ethical reasoning and self-discipline.	Moral Psychology / CBT
Caution Toward Metaphysics	Avoidance of speculative interpretations of unseen realities.	Philosophical Naturalism / Empirical Skepticism

Al-Razi's contribution to the epistemology of psychology reflects a balanced, rigorous, and humanistic approach to understanding mental and emotional life. He emphasised reason as the gateway to truth, insisted on empirical validation through observation and clinical

experience, and integrated moral and ethical considerations into psychological well-being. His rejection of speculative metaphysics and mysticism positioned him as a rationalist physician-philosopher, whose epistemological stance helped define a scientific and ethical framework for psychology, centuries before the discipline formally emerged.

Scholars have debated Al-Razi's position within Islamic intellectual history, particularly accusations of excessive rationalism or even heresy, due to his emphasis on reason and empirical observation over strict adherence to traditional dogma (Druart, 1996; Pormann & Savage-Smith, 2007). Some argue that his rationalist tendencies reflected a tension between philosophy and revelation, challenging orthodox views of prophetic knowledge, while others contend that Al-Razi harmonised reason and faith by treating revelation as a complementary source of guidance for moral and spiritual development (Nasr, 2007).

Another point of critical discussion concerns Al-Razi's stance on prophecy and divine knowledge. While he advocated for rational inquiry and empirical investigation, he did not dismiss the authority of revelation outright; rather, he interpreted scriptural teachings through the lens of reason, suggesting a dynamic epistemological approach where intellect and revelation mutually inform human understanding (Druart, 1996). Al-Razi's intellectual relationship with contemporaries such as Ibn Sina (Avicenna) further illustrates scholarly debates. Some interpret Al-Razi as a rival to Ibn Sina, particularly in metaphysics and psychology, criticising Ibn Sina's Neoplatonic leanings as overly speculative. Others highlight how Al-Razi's empirically grounded approach complemented Ibn Sina's philosophical framework, offering alternative pathways for integrating medicine, ethics, and the study of the soul (Pormann & Savage-Smith, 2007). By engaging with these differing perspectives, scholars can better appreciate the complexity and nuance of Al-Razi's thought. This critical approach situates his work within broader epistemological, ontological, and axiological debates in Islamic psychology, demonstrating how historical interpretations inform contemporary understandings of the soul, morality, and holistic human well-being.

AL-RAZI'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE ONTOLOGY OF PSYCHOLOGY

Ontology in psychology concerns the nature, structure, and components of human existence, including mind, soul, emotions, and behaviour, and how these elements interrelate. Al-Razi made a profound contribution by conceptualising the human being as an integrated entity comprising body, soul, intellect, and moral agency. Unlike many physicians of his era who focused primarily on the physical, Al-Razi expanded medical inquiry to encompass spiritual and rational dimensions (Druart, 1996). His ontological framework, while engaging with Platonic and Galenic thought, offered an original, holistic perspective that anticipated contemporary integrative approaches to mental health and well-being.

Three Components of the Soul

Al-Razi categorised the soul into three interrelated but distinct components: rational (divine) soul, animal (irascible) soul, and vegetative soul (Druart, 1996; SEP, 2012).

The Rational (Divine) Soul (al-nafs al-nātiqa / al-nafs al-ilāhiyya)

The rational soul is the highest dimension, seat of reason, intellect, moral judgement, and self-awareness. It resides in the brain, which functions as its instrument, facilitating sensation, voluntary motion, imagination, cognition, and memory. The rational soul itself is immaterial, self-subsistent, and survives death, seeking spiritual purification through knowledge, virtue, and moral discipline. Its faculties include:

a. *Al-wahm* (imagination): Receives data from the five senses.
b. *Al-fikr* (cognition): Responsible for reasoning and understanding.
c. *Al-hifz* (memory): Responsible for retention and recall.

Al-Razi emphasised rational-spiritual therapy alongside medical treatment, highlighting the need for moral and intellectual cultivation.

The Animal (Irascible) Soul (al-nafs al-ghaḍabiyya)

Situated in the heart, the animal soul governs emotions, instincts, and motor responses. Its operations are mediated through bodily humours, which influence temperament and behaviour (Pormann & Savage-Smith, 2007). The functions of this soul include:

a. Voluntary motion, including intentional actions like walking or speaking.
b. Sensation, encompassing the perception through the five senses.
c. Imagination, memory, and passion, entailing processing mental images, retaining knowledge, and triggering emotional drives.

Though instinctual and subject to corruption via humoral imbalances, the animal soul informs unconscious behaviour and emotional reactions while remaining subordinate to rational guidance.

The Vegetative Soul (al-nafs al-nabātiyya)

Located in the liver, the vegetative soul regulates biological growth, reproduction, digestion, and metabolism. Active in plants, animals, and humans, it underpins higher-order functioning by maintaining the body's life processes (Druart, 1996; SEP, 2012).

The Brain in Al-Razi's Psychology

Al-Razi recognised the brain as the central organ for perception, thought, and movement, but stressed its subservience to the rational soul. Knowledge and learning were thus intellectual and spiritual necessities. Al-Razi advanced early neuroanatomical and clinical insights into lesions (Amr & Tbakhi, 2007):

a. Identified 7 cranial nerves and 31 spinal nerves.
b. Classified spinal nerves into cervical, thoracic, lumbar, sacral, and coccygeal segments.
c. Employed clinical observations to localize nervous system.

His integration of empirical neurology, ethics, and spiritual ontology laid the foundation for psychosomatic medicine and highlighted the interdependence of rational, emotional, and physiological dimensions. This intricate interplay between the brain as a

physiological instrument and the rational soul as the guiding immaterial entity is further illustrated in the following synthesis table, which summarises Al-Razi's tripartite ontology of the soul, detailing each component's location, functions, vulnerabilities, and ethical-psychological roles.

Distinctions Between Soul, Nafs, and Psyche

In psychological and philosophical discourse, terms such as soul, *nafs*, and psyche are often used interchangeably, but their meanings and implications differ across intellectual traditions. Clarifying these distinctions is essential for understanding Al-Razi's contribution to the study of human nature and behaviour.

Soul (Rūḥ)

In classical Islamic and philosophical thought, the soul (*rūḥ***)** is considered the immaterial, divine component of human existence. The soul is often associated with life-force, spiritual consciousness, and the capacity for moral and intellectual development. Unlike the body, which is perishable, the soul is immortal and accountable before God (Qur'an, 17:85). In Al-Razi's framework, while the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nātiqa)* is distinct from bodily functions, it operates in harmony with the body, guiding ethical behaviour, intellectual reasoning, and spiritual development. The *rūḥ* is thus the overarching, unifying principle that transcends biological or emotional states.

Nafs

The Arabic term *nafs* is often translated as "self" or "psyche," but in Islamic psychology, it denotes the composite of psychological, emotional, and ethical dimensions of a human being. Al-Razi elaborated a tripartite model of nafs:

a. Rational (Divine) *Nafs* (*al-nafs al-nātiqa*): It is responsible for reasoning, ethical discernment, and intellectual pursuits. Located in the brain, it guides self-regulation and moral behaviour.
b. Animal or Irascible *Nafs* (*al-nafs al-ghaḍabiyya):* It governs emotions, desires, and instinctual drives. Situated in the heart, it interacts with bodily humours and affects temperament.
c. Vegetative *Nafs* (*al-nafs al-nabātiyya*): It regulates fundamental life processes such as growth, reproduction, and metabolism, located in the liver.

The *nafs*, therefore, refers to the dynamic, functional aspects of the soul that mediate between bodily needs, emotional impulses, and rational thought. It is the operational manifestation of the soul in everyday life, integrating cognition, emotion, and ethical reasoning (Druart, 1996; Pormann & Savage-Smith, 2007).

Psyche

The term psyche, rooted in Greek philosophy, broadly refers to the mind or the totality of mental functions, including consciousness, cognition, perception, emotion, and will. Modern psychology adopts the term to study mental processes empirically and theoretically. In a sense, the psyche is analogous to the *nafs* in that it encompasses cognitive and affective dimensions; however, it does not inherently include the ethical or spiritual dimension that *nafs* carries in Islamic thought. While the psyche emphasises mechanisms of mental functioning and observable behaviour, the *nafs* situates these functions within a moral, ethical, and teleological framework.

Table 2: Distinctions and Overlaps of the Terms Ruh, Nafs, and Psyche

Concept	Core Meaning	Key Function	Emphasis
Soul (*rūḥ*)	Immortal, divine essence	Spiritual consciousness, ultimate moral and intellectual development	Transcendence, immortality, metaphysical
Nafs	Self or psyche in functional terms	Cognition, emotion, instinct, moral regulation	Integration of body, mind, and ethics; operational human life
Psyche	Mental or psychological processes	Cognition, emotion, perception, volition	Empirical, behavioural, and cognitive mechanisms

Al-Razi's conceptualisation aligns with the Islamic understanding of the *nafs* while bridging classical notions of the soul with early notions of psychology (*ʿilm al-nafs*). Unlike purely secular or Western frameworks, his model emphasises moral development, rational reflection, and spiritual purification, integrating the functional (*nafs*), experiential (psyche), and transcendental (*rūḥ*) dimensions of human life.

Al-Razi's model anticipates contemporary integrative approaches in psychology, including biopsychosocial and mind-body frameworks. The *nafs*, like the psyche, interact with biological systems, emotions, and cognition. Yet, unlike secular psychology, it incorporates ethical reasoning and spiritual purpose (*tazkiyah*), linking mental health to moral and spiritual well-being (Haque, 2004). His distinction between the rational, animal, and vegetative components parallels modern discussions of cognitive, affective, and physiological domains while situating them within an Islamic teleology oriented toward human flourishing. In sum, Al-Razi provides a holistic model where the soul (*rūḥ*) represents the eternal, transcendent dimension, the *nafs* operationalises the soul in cognition, emotion, and behaviour, and the psyche corresponds to observable and measurable mental processes. This framework does not only clarify terminological distinctions but also demonstrates the value of integrating ethical, spiritual, and cultural dimensions into the scientific study of human psychology.

Table 3: Al-Razi's Ontology of the Soul

Soul Component	Location	Key Functions	Vulnerabilities	Role in Ethics and Psychology
Rational (Divine)	Brain	Reason, cognition, imagination, memory	Moral corruption if untrained	Guides moral development; seeks spiritual purification
Animal (Irascible)	Heart	Emotions, instincts, voluntary motion, sensation	Emotional imbalance due to humoral disturbances	Influences behaviour; must be moderated by rational soul
Vegetative	Liver	Growth, reproduction, nutrition, metabolism	Biological fragility	Supports life systems, enabling higher-order functioning

The above table outlines the components of the soul according to Al-Razi's tripartite model, depicting his ontological framework and illustrating the distinct functions of each aspect of the human psyche. The "location" column indicates the physical or conceptual locus associated with each soul component. While the soul itself is immaterial in Al-Razi's philosophy, the assigned "locations" link mental or spiritual faculties with anatomical structures, reflecting his psycho-physiological approach. This demonstrates the connection between abstract psychological concepts and bodily functioning, bridging philosophy, medicine, and psychology. The "Key Functions" column specifies the primary roles and activities of each soul component, highlighting their functional differences and interdependencies. The "Vulnerabilities" column identifies potential weaknesses or imbalances in each component, emphasising the need for interventions, ethical guidance, and self-discipline. Understanding these vulnerabilities clarifies the sources of psychological or moral failure and justifies strategies to promote holistic well-being. Finally, the "Role in Ethics and Psychology" column explains how each soul component influences moral behaviour, psychological health, and human development. This linkage illustrates the practical implications of Al-Razi's theory, showing how each aspect of the soul affects behaviour, ethics, and psychological functioning, making his framework relevant for contemporary psychology and the management of human behaviour.

Al-Razi's ontological framework positions the human being as a multi-layered, integrated entity, where body, soul, and intellect interact in a complex, interdependent system. The rational soul governs ethical and intellectual faculties, the animal soul modulates emotions and instinctual drives, and the vegetative soul sustains biological life. His model bridges spiritual philosophy, medical theory, and ethical psychology, emphasising the balance among these dimensions for holistic well-being. By linking the tripartite soul to neurological and humoral systems, Al-Razi offers an interdisciplinary approach that resonates with contemporary integrative psychology. The EOAT (epistemological, ontological, axiological, teleological) dimensions are evident throughout: knowledge is gained through observation and reason (epistemology), the human being is a composite of rational, emotional, and biological elements (ontology), moral and ethical excellence is prioritised (axiology), and the ultimate goal is spiritual purification and human flourishing (teleology). This framework underscores the value of classical Islamic thought in informing modern psychology, particularly in fostering a holistic, ethically grounded, and spiritually sensitive understanding of human behaviour.

AL-RAZI'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE AXIOLOGY OF PSYCHOLOGY

The term axiology refers to the study of values, including ethics (what is right) and aesthetics (what is desirable or good) (Frankena, 1973). In psychology, axiology underlies the moral orientation of scholars and practitioners, influencing how they acquire knowledge, apply methods, and treat individuals (Hill, 1997). Al-Razi's contributions to axiology are deeply embedded in his rationalist ethics, balanced worldview, and humanistic medical practice (Amr & Tbakhi, 2007; Druart, 1996). He advocated for a psychology that integrates scientific knowledge, moral virtue, and compassionate care. These values are evident in his writings such as *Kitab al-Tibb al-Ruhani* (The Medicine of the Soul) and his holistic approach to mental and physical health (Shawer, 1973; Gutas, 2001).

His Value System (Ethics)

Al-Razi's work was informed by a value system rooted in reason, moderation, and human dignity. He rejected extreme asceticism (or self-denial), excessive mysticism (or overly spiritual practices), and dogmatic religiosity (rigid belief or narrow interpretation) that, in his view, distorted the role of human intellect (al-ʿaql) in navigating life (Druart, 1996; Haque, 2004). He followed an eclectic approach, combining the thoughts of Plato, Aristotle, and Galen while maintaining critical independence (SEP, 2012). The following points highlight Al-Razi's notion of the soul,

a. The Immortality of the Soul and Its Need to Liberate Itself from Bodily Passions. Al-Razi held that the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqa*) is immortal, self-subsisting, and distinct from the body. It survives death and has an existence independent of physical form. For Al-Razi, the soul originally existed in a pure, cosmic state but became contaminated due to its entanglement with the material world and bodily passions (Druart, 1996). Liberation of the soul involves freeing it from excessive attachment to corporeal desires, which cloud its rational function and moral clarity. This spiritual liberation is not achieved through mysticism or extreme asceticism, but through the right use of reason, ethical discipline, and philosophical reflection (Shawer, 1973; SEP, 2012).

b. The Importance of Knowledge, Discipline, and Balanced Living as Tools for Soul Purification. Al-Razi emphasised that the soul can only return to its pure state through knowledge (*ʿilm*), moral discipline, and moderate living. He regarded philosophy as a vital tool in soul purification because it cultivates rationality and detachment from bodily temptations. This is elaborated in his work *Kitāb al-Tibb al-Rūḥānī* (The Medicine of the Soul), where he discusses the spiritual and ethical healing of the soul through self-knowledge, restraint, and reflection. A disciplined life, grounded in wisdom and moderation, helps align the soul with truth and divine order (Amr & Tbakhi, 2007; Al-Razi, in Gutas, 2001).

c. The Idea that Happiness is Not in Extremes but in Moderation and the Right Proportion of Pleasures and Needs. Al-Razi advocated for a life of moderation (*iʿtidāl*), believing that true happiness (*saʿādah*) arises not from indulgence or denial, but from balance. He rejected both extreme asceticism and excessive indulgence, arguing that both distort the soul's rational capacity and disrupt mental and physical well-being (Shawer, 1973). His ethical outlook was grounded in the

principle of the golden mean, where pleasures are acknowledged but must be pursued in proportion and with ethical intent. This balance is crucial to nurturing the soul's harmony and fulfilling its divine purpose (Druart, 1996).

Al-Razi classified diseases into three types, (a) easily curable, (b) treatable, and (c) incurable. According to him, not all illnesses could be addressed through medication. He emphasised good nutrition, healthy thinking, and emotional assurance as integral to healing (Ahmed, 2010). He criticised overly rigid asceticism and instead promoted a rational and joyful life, known as *"happinessism"*, where material comfort is not rejected but moderated with virtue (Afesh, 2018).

Valuable Practices (Aesthetic Dimension)

Al-Razi's ethical values translated into practices that reflected humane, empirical, and therapeutic care, making him a precursor to modern psychosomatic and psychotherapeutic methods.

a. Holistic Approach to Illness

Al-Razi believed in the interplay between physical health and mental integrity. He argued that an imbalance among the three souls would result in mental disorders, such as delusions, obsessions, or irrational behaviours (Afesh, 2018). Rational neglect, such as ignoring the pursuit of knowledge, would lead to emotional and physiological deterioration. He advocated the following (Haque, 2004).:

i. Psychological support as part of physical treatment.
ii. Gentle and simple medication, if necessary.
iii. Patient-centred assurance and verbal encouragement to boost recovery.

b. Treatment of Mental Illness

Al-Razi established a dedicated department for mental illness in the Baghdad hospital that he led. It was one of the earliest such institutions in history. He treated patients with epilepsy, hydrocephalus, paralysis, and psychosomatic conditions. His work marked a shift from mysticism to science-based mental health care (Amr & Tbakhi, 2007).

c. Empathy and Respect in Patient Care

He practised core humanistic values by providing financial aid to patients upon discharge, resembling today's psychiatric aftercare. Another practice is by offering free treatment to the poor, guided by compassion. He also provided training for students through direct patient interaction and structured learning pathways.

d. Training of Medical Professionals.

Al-Razi introduced tiered clinical training, where medical students learned through practical patient engagement in "circles of responsibility": The first circle dealt directly with patients, the second circle involved unresolved cases, while the third is when Al-

Razi himself intervened if prior levels failed. This system illustrates experiential learning, patient-focused care, and organisational clarity. They are applicable today in medical education and Industrial/Organisational psychology settings.

AL-RAZI'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE TELEOLOGY OF PSYCHOLOGY

Teleology concerns the purpose or goal of human life. In psychology, it refers to the ultimate aims of psychological well-being, behaviour, and human existence. Al-Razi's teleological outlook was anchored in the belief that the human soul is meant to be liberated from worldly entanglements through the use of reason, ethical living, and knowledge acquisition. He viewed the rational soul as an immortal, self-subsisting entity that strives toward purification and return to its original, untainted state. Rational soul is free from bodily passions and material distractions (Druart, 1996; Shawer, 1973). This liberation aligns with a higher spiritual purpose, reflecting Al-Razi's integration of moral philosophy and metaphysical psychology within a teleological framework.

The Ultimate Purpose of the Soul

According to Al-Razi, the rational soul is eternal and divine, temporarily encased in a body to undergo moral and intellectual refinement. Its ultimate goal is to attain intellectual perfection; free itself from bodily desires; and return to its original, cosmic state. This is aligned with God's mercy and transcendent truth (Druart, 1996). Stated another way, Al-Razi believed the soul's journey toward liberation and perfection is part of a divine plan, guided by God's compassion and ultimate reality. The rational soul has the ability to think, seek knowledge, and purify itself as a gift of divine mercy. God, out of His compassion, equips the soul with reason and moral responsibility so that it can rise above bodily temptations and fulfil its higher purpose. This vision is not only metaphysical but practical in that the soul must struggle against base desires and imbalances by cultivating virtues, rational thought, and compassionate action.

Integration of Psychology and Moral Development

Al-Razi viewed psychology not merely as a science of behaviour, but as a means to elevate character through self-regulation; guide individuals toward a virtuous and moderate life; and help the soul to fulfil its divine purpose. This befits with Islamic notions of *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul), though Al-Razi's approach remained rationalist and philosophically universal, allowing his insights to benefit both Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals.

Philosophy as the Means to Liberation

According to Al-Razi, philosophy (*ḥikmah*) is the primary instrument through which the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqa*) can attain liberation from ignorance, moral weakness, and attachment to bodily desires. He considered philosophy not merely as an abstract discipline, but as a practical and transformative path toward personal purification and intellectual elevation (Druart, 1996). Through rigorous engagement with natural sciences, logic, ethics, and metaphysics, the soul gradually strengthens its reasoning capacity and moral clarity, which are the essential qualities for achieving its full potential.

Al-Razi urged individuals to study the sciences and cultivate wisdom as a way of achieving intellectual and spiritual refinement. In his view, the pursuit of knowledge is a sacred duty, and philosophical inquiry plays a central role in healing the soul from false beliefs and harmful passions. This intellectual path leads to what he saw as three key teleological aims in psychology:

a. Health and Psychological Equilibrium. Philosophy helps in achieving mental balance, which is necessary for the treatment of emotional and psychological disorders. This includes understanding the causes of mental distress and applying reason and moderation to restore harmony within the self (Amr & Tbakhi, 2007).
b. Moral Guidance and Character Building. Al-Razi emphasised the ethical function of philosophy. By practising virtues such as temperance, justice, and sincerity, the individual develops good character (*akhlāq*) and lives in harmony with others. Philosophy, in this sense, becomes a method of moral education (Shawer, 1973).
c. Transcendence and Soul's Return to the Divine. The ultimate purpose of philosophical discipline, according to Al-Razi, is to liberate the rational soul from bodily constraints and allow it to return to its original, divine state. He believed that this return was possible only when the soul reaches intellectual perfection and detachment from worldly distractions, aligning with the truth and God's mercy (Druart, 1996; SEP, 2012).

Al-Razi's contributions to axiology and teleology reveal that his psychological thought was both scientific and spiritually purposive. He emphasised balance and moderation in ethical life; human dignity, care, and empathy in treatment. The rational and spiritual development of the individual as the purpose of existence. These principles resonate with both classical Islamic thought and contemporary holistic psychology, making Al-Razi a foundational figure in the ethics and aims of mental health and personal development.

AL-RAZI'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE SCIENCE OF THE SOUL (*ʿILM AL-NAFS*)

Based on the comprehensive material above, Al-Razi's contribution to the understanding of the Science of the Soul (*ʿIlm al-Nafs*) is both foundational and multifaceted, integrating philosophical inquiry, medical expertise, and spiritual insights. His work provides one of the earliest systematic treatments of the soul from an Islamic perspective. Below is a highlight of his contributions:

a. Defining the soul as central to human existence by emphasising that the soul (*nafs*) is not secondary to the body but its principal and governing element. He rejected a purely materialistic view of human nature. As discussed earlier, he proposed a tripartite structure of the soul, namely
    i. Rational/Divine Soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqa or al-nafs al-ilāhiyyah*), located in the brain, responsible for reasoning, ethics, self-control, and knowledge.
    ii. Animal Soul (*al-nafs al-ḥayawāniyya*), located in the heart, responsible for emotions, anger, and passions.
    iii. Vegetative Soul (*al-nafs al-nabātiyya*), located in the liver, governing biological processes like growth and nutrition.

b. Bridging psychology and medicine, evident in his major medical encyclopaedias, Kitāb al-Ḥāwī and Kitāb al-Manṣūrī. Al-Razi operationalised his understanding of the soul in the diagnosis and treatment of both physical and mental disorders. This holistic approach indicates an understanding of the mind-body-soul connection long before such models were developed in modern psychology.

    i. He was among the first physicians to document case histories of mental illnesses, thereby contributing to empirical psychiatry (Amr & Tbakhi, 2007).
    ii. He advocated for special hospital wards for mental illness, introducing what we may now call early psychiatric care (Amr & Tbakhi, 2007).
    iii. He emphasised the use of reassurance and encouragement in treatment, prefiguring contemporary psychotherapeutic methods (Haque, 2004).

c. Rational inquiry and spiritual liberation by championing rationalism and empirical inquiry as tools for understanding the human condition (Shawer, 1973). His epistemological framework was grounded in intellectual discipline (*ʿaql*), moral conduct, and spiritual purification (*tazkiyah al-nafs*). He believed that the rational soul is self-subsisting and immortal, capable of liberation from the body's entanglement through knowledge and moral development. This liberation journey, which mirrors the Qur'anic narrative of the soul's return to its Creator, reveals the teleological orientation of his psychology (Druart, 1996; Haque, 2004).

d. Integrating ethics in soul sciences. In Kitāb al-Ṭibb al-Rūḥānī (The Medicine of the Soul), Al-Razi directly addressed the axiology of psychology, including the regulation of passions (e.g., anger, greed, lust); the cultivation of virtues like compassion, humility, and moderation; and a balanced lifestyle that avoids both hedonism and extreme asceticism. He saw ethical training as therapeutic, asserting that the moral rectitude of the soul influences physical and mental well-being (Shawer, 1973; Haque, 2004; Druart, 1996).

e. Pioneering neuroanatomical study in understanding the soul, as seen in his detailed observations of the brain. Al-Razi linked specific faculties of the soul, such as perception, imagination, and memory, to corresponding brain functions, demonstrating an early recognition of the relationship between mental processes and neurological structures. He described the cognitive triad, namely imagination (*wahm*), cogitation (*fikr*), and memory (*ḥifẓ*) (SEP, 2012). He documented cranial and spinal nerves, pioneering applied neuroanatomy in clinical settings (Amr & Tbakhi, 2007). His model shows an early form of a biopsychosocial-spiritual approach, where physiological, mental, and spiritual health are interrelated.

Based on the above, it could be concluded that Al-Razi's contributions to the Science of the Soul (*ʿIlm al-Nafs*) are profound and enduring. This shows that Al-Razi is not only a physician and philosopher but as one of the foundational figures in the development of psychology from an Islamic perspective, a discipline deeply rooted in revelation, reason, ethics, and purpose. His legacy includes:

a. An integrated model of the soul based on Islamic metaphysics and Greek rational traditions.

b. Pioneering work in clinical psychology and psychiatry, emphasising case-based reasoning and humane care.
c. Ethical and spiritual principles that informed both the practice and purpose of soul sciences.
d. A vision of human flourishing (*falāḥ*) that harmonises physical health, moral character, and spiritual ascension.

CONCLUSION

Al-Razi stands as a towering figure in the intellectual history of Islamic civilisation whose contributions continue to inspire modern scholarship in psychology. Unlike many of his contemporaries who focused predominantly on physical health, Al-Razi emphasised the centrality of the soul as an essential component of human existence. His tripartite model of the soul, comprising the rational (or divine), animal, and vegetative souls, offered a holistic framework that integrates mental, physical, and spiritual dimensions of human life.

Epistemologically, Al-Razi championed the use of reason, observation, and clinical experience as pathways to psychological understanding. He rejected excessive mysticism and unfounded speculation, promoting a rationalist but ethically grounded approach to human nature. Ontologically, he expanded the field of psychology by emphasising not only behaviour or cognition but also the immaterial and eternal aspects of the human soul.

Axiologically, Al-Razi's ethical orientation shaped his practices. He viewed healing as a moral act requiring empathy, balance, and intellectual integrity. His approach to treatment went beyond physical symptoms to include emotional support, patient dignity, and the promotion of moderate, virtuous living. He was a pioneer in recognising the psychosomatic connection, promoting psychotherapy-like interventions centuries before the term was coined. His belief in the soul's capacity for liberation through intellectual and moral cultivation reflects a deeply teleological view of human purpose.

Moving forward, Al-Razi's legacy provides a valuable model for integrating spirituality, ethics, and scientific rigour in the study and practice of psychology. In today's fragmented and often materialistic psychological paradigms, revisiting his contributions offers an opportunity to reimagine a more comprehensive, human-centred psychology, one that recognises the soul, mind, and body as an integrated whole. His work invites contemporary scholars, particularly within Islamic and global non-Western contexts, to decolonise the discipline of psychology and reclaim indigenous intellectual heritage. By advancing research and practices that are culturally anchored, spiritually aware, and ethically robust, we not only honour Al-Razi's pioneering contributions but also revitalise the moral and metaphysical dimensions of modern psychology.

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Emanation, Intellection, and Virtues: Al-Fārābī's Conception of the Soul *(al-Nafs*)

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ABSTRACT

What do we really mean by "soul"? Which of its concepts are we invoking in the teaching and learning of psychology - the soul as a psychological construct of the West or as the spiritual essence grounded in the Islamic intellectual tradition? To truly obtain a comprehensive view of the soul, this paper argues that we must turn to the work of classical Muslim scholars. As such, we approached the above questions from al-Fārābī's thoughts by first considering his life, major works, and contributions. Second, we focus on his ontological, epistemological, and axiological stances, which are central because the way he perceives reality, knowledge, and values informs his view of the soul. We then discuss al-Fārābī's conception of the soul in terms of its nature, structure, and development. For him, the soul is seen as an immaterial substance that emanates from the First Cause, which is then elevated by intellection, composed of body, soul, and spirit, and perfected through the pursuit of virtue. His classification of five types of soul and their developmental trajectory is also discussed. Rather than retrofitting the works and thoughts of Muslim scholars into contemporary psychology, we argue for a framework grounded in the Islamic teachings, tradition, and history. To understand this premise better, we end with a discussion of the parallel between al-Fārābī's views on the soul and those of recent efforts in Islamic psychology.

Keywords: *Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, Islamic, Nafs, Psychology, Religion, Soul*

INTRODUCTION

What do we really mean by "soul" in the context of understanding human nature, mind, and behaviour? This question is perennial, dating back to ancient Greece and even earlier. It is a core subject for theological and philosophical inquiries and addressing it has been central to the understanding and development of psychology as the field exists today. A modern scientific approach to this question would be to address the soul in terms of the mind or consciousness that shapes our cognition of the observable natural world. This approach, in turn, moved the field to focus on the study of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, which rely on evidence-based and objective approaches, and are often investigated using empirical, testable models.

In their article, Noor and Ahmad (2025) argued that because science deals with what can be observed and measured, it gives us a limited view of reality - one that is shaped by what can be empirically tested only. As such, it does not, and could not, address noumena, i.e., the underlying reality beyond our perception. Therefore, what science describes is not necessarily the same as what is. While it may offer a coherent model of the world, science neither captures the full range of human experience nor presents the complete picture of reality, let alone the inner workings of human nature. That is why contemporary psychology, for all its empirical

rigour, remains ill-equipped to account for the interior depth, purpose, and spiritual orientation that define the human nature and self in their fullness.

Should we speak of the soul in the quest for understanding human nature? The answer is a resounding yes, and to do so, we must return to the root of what soul means in the Islamic tradition and history and recognise the need to inject the soul back into contemporary psychology. Being grounded in the divine source, various information on human nature has been explained by Muslim scholars and philosophers by referring to the Qur'ān and Hadith. To grasp the full depth of human nature, we must therefore engage seriously with these resources. Scholars such as Said Nursi viewed that the exclusion of revealed knowledge or divine information in explaining human nature would only cause psychology to be half-true knowledge (Abdul Rahman, 2020). Any serious inquiry into the soul that ignores this tradition is not only incomplete but may also be fundamentally misguided. Hence, psychology, if it is to truly understand what it means to be human, must restore the soul to its rightful place, not at the margins but at the very centre of its inquiry.

To consider the foundational understanding of the soul in the Islamic tradition and history, this paper contends that al-Fārābī offers us a comprehensive account of its definition, conception, and development. A man of many talents and accomplishments, al-Fārābī was not only a renowned philosopher, logician, physicist, and musician, but also the author of over 130 works (Bakar, 2018; 2019). His approach to human nature weaves together ideas from various disciplines such as philosophy, logic, metaphysics, theology, and politics, giving us a profound and holistic view of the soul. It is thus not surprising that his writings and views on the soul and the philosophy of mind are not compiled in specific sources. Instead, they are contained in his copious philosophical, metaphysical, and political writings, particularly *Kitāb arāʾ ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍilah* (Principles of the Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City), *Kitāb al-siyāsat al-madanīyah* (The Political Regime), *Kitāb mabādiʾ al-mawjūdāt* (The Principles of Existents), and *Risālah fi'l-'aql* (The Treatise or Epistle on the Intellect).

Being influenced by the peripatetic tradition, al-Fārābī's philosophical ideas contain elements of Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism. However, his understanding of several concepts, such as imagination, happiness, and society, departs from the Greeks as he embedded rational and philosophical Islamic principles and reasoning in his discussions. Furthermore, the existing literature on him has often confined his ideas of the soul to eschatological and political perspectives, without considering how he defined, structured, and explained what the soul is. For this reason, there is a vital need to have a closer look at what insights al-Fārābī's works on the soul can offer to the teaching and learning of psychology, and this paper sets out to address this need.

The Position of this Paper

This paper deliberately sets out to summarise al-Fārābī's explanation of the soul in a structured, reader-friendly manner, while offering a comprehensive exposition of his ontological, epistemological, and axiological positions. The reason for taking this approach is rooted in the importance of clarity, accessibility, and intellectual focus. Al-Fārābī's writings are conceptually rich but often embedded in complex philosophical discourse. By presenting his work in an accessible manner, this paper makes his thoughts on the soul intelligible to a wide readership, while preserving its depth and potential relevance for cultivating a sound human psyche.

A caveat to this paper is that it is not a critical analysis of al-Fārābī's work. While critical analysis has its scholarly value, it can divert the discussion toward debates on accuracy, limitations, or contradictions, rather than staying with the constructive task of understanding his perspective on the soul. Here, the purpose is comprehension and exposition, not critique. Furthermore, this paper is not a discourse of how al-Fārābī's ideas align or contrast with modern psychological theories and movements. Such comparisons, though intriguing, would risk shifting the focus away from al-Fārābī's own framework. They would inevitably frame his thought through a Western or scientific lens; hence, potentially distorting his original intent and making his philosophy appear either deficient or merely a precursor to modern theories. The present focus is on preserving the integrity of his philosophical insights as they are and allowing al-Fārābī to be understood on his own terms.

Finally, the paper does not engage with a discussion of how to integrate al-Fārābī's thought into empirical psychology. While such discussions are valuable within specialised research, they are premature at this stage, as they presuppose an already accessible and well-understood account of al-Fārābī's ideas. By focusing exclusively on summarising his conception of the soul, this paper ensures that al-Fārābī's philosophy of the soul can be grasped in its full integrity, which, in turn, could lay the groundwork for future studies that may indeed attempt integration or comparison.

In this regard, it is practical to have a background on al-Fārābī's life, major works, and contributions first before delving into his thoughts and writings on the soul. His ontological, epistemological, and axiological stances need to be understood, too, as they are related to his view of the soul. Central to this discussion are his views on emanation as the structure of reality, intellection as the path to knowledge, and virtue as the foundation of ethical life. The next part of the paper, which forms the crux of this work, examines al-Fārābī's conception of the soul. The paper ends with a discussion of how his thoughts and works can further inform recent efforts in Islamic psychology.

AL-FĀRĀBĪ'S LIFE AND BACKGROUND

Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ṭarkhān ibn Awzalagh al-Fārābī, also known as Abū Naṣr, Alfarabius, Alpharabius, Abunaser, Avenasser, or Abynazar, was born in al-Fārāb, Khurāsān, Turkestan (now known as Kazakhstan) around 257 H (870 CE) during the Islamic Golden Era in the 9th to 12th centuries (Bakar, 2018). For someone who has made quite a mark in various areas, little is known about his personal life as he did not leave an autobiography (Netton, 1998). Therefore, accounts of his life are sketchy and complex, but it is known that he studied linguistics, religion, fiqh (jurisprudence), *tafsir* (the exegesis of the Qur'ān), and arithmetic in his early life (Bakar, 2018; 2019). During this period, too, he learned several languages, including Arabic, Turkish, and Persian.

In pursuit of more knowledge, al-Fārābī went to Baghdad and Harrān when he was 40 years old to study logic, advanced fiqh, and philosophy with scholars such as Abu Bishr Matta ibn Yunus and Yūḥannā ibn Ḥailān. Records also indicate that he knew the Greek language and spent some time in Constantinople (Bakar, 2018; 2019). He then returned to Baghdad and lived most of his adult life there. It was during this period that he produced a prolific body of work, particularly in harmonising philosophy and religion as well as in translating, explaining, and integrating Greek philosophy with Islam, especially in theology, logic, and physics. Another important contribution of al-Fārābī to the field of logic was his work in categorising

it into two *takhayyul* (imagination or idea) and *thubut* (proof) (Alwali, 2018). Through these works, he rose to the eminent position in the field and gained the title of al-Mu`allim al-Thani, i.e., the Second Master or the Second Teacher, after Aristotle (Bakar, 2018; Netton, 1998).

Realising the growing political turmoil in Baghdad, al-Fārābī moved to Aleppo in 330 H (942 CE) and became part of the literary circle in the court of the Syrian ruler, the Hamdanid Prince Sayf al-Dawlah (Bakar, 2019). In this circle, the Prince had gathered a most distinguished group of poets, philologists, philosophers, and other scholars. Despite being amongst an elite group, al-Fārābī lived a quiet life, preferring to spend time alone (*`uzlah*) and avoiding the materialistic life (*zuhud*) to focus on his meditation and thinking. He was known to wander on his own in the countryside to reflect and to write - an atmosphere conducive to a natural inclination towards Sufism. With the exception of several short travels abroad, al-Fārābī remained in Syria until his passing in Damascus in 339 H (950 CE) at the age of 80. Records show that he was buried at a cemetery outside the city's southern or minor gate (*al-bāb al-saghir*), and Prince Sayf al-Dawlah himself attended and led the funeral prayers in honour of the scholar (Bakar, 208; 2019; Madkour, 1963). For a more comprehensive account of al-Fārābī's life and works, readers are encouraged to consult Bakar (2018), Bakar (2019), and Fakhry (2014), which have extensively covered these topics.

AL-FĀRĀBĪ'S NOTABLE WORKS

Al-Fārābī was credited as the second outstanding representative of the Muslim peripatetic (*mashshä'i)* school of philosophy after al-Kindi (Marmura, 1983). This credit stems from his works in giving Islamic philosophy its orientations as well as in his devotion to education, logic, philosophy, mathematics, literature, languages, politics, fiqh, and music. He was also the first to separate philosophy from theology. Throughout his life, al-Fārābī produced extensive writings and discussions on various topics. Based on a compilation by Bakar (2018; 2019), we can broadly classify his body of works in, but not limited to, seven categories:

i. First, he wrote a vast amount of treatises on the philosophical curriculum and its method, particularly on logic. Some examples of these works include *Risālat fī sudira bihā al-kitāb* (Treatise with which the Book Begins), *Risālat fī jawāb masā'il su'ilā 'anhā* (Treatise on Answers to Questions Put to Him), and *Risālat fī qawānīn sinā' at al-shi'r* (Treatise on the Canons of the Art of Poetry).

ii. The second category includes writings and commentaries on Plato's and Aristotle's thoughts, such as *Sharḥ kitāb al-samā' al-tabi'i li-Aristutālīs* (Commentary on Aristotle's Physics), *Sharḥ kitāb al-samā' wa'l-'ālam li- Aristutālīs* (Commentary on Aristotle's Book of the Heavens and the Universe), *Sharḥ maqālat al-iskandar al-afrudīsī fi'l*-nafs (Commentary on Alexander of Aphrodisias' Treatise on the Soul), *Falsafat Aristutālīs* (The Philosophy of Aristotle), *Kitāb falsafat aflātun wa ajzā'h*ā (The Philosophy of Plato and Its Parts), as well as *Kitāb al-jam' baina ra'yai al-hakīmain Aflātun al-ilāhī wa Aristutālīs* (The Book of Harmony Between the Ideas of the Two Sages, the Divine Plato, and Aristotle).

iii. Third, al-Fārābī wrote a number of writings on specific and technical subjects such as physics and metaphysics. His works under this category include *Risālat fi'l-khalā'* (Treatise on the Vacuum), *Kalām fī a'dā' al-hayawān* (Discourse on Animal Organs), *Kalām fi'l-haiz wa'l-miqdār* (Discourse on Space and Measure), *Maqālat fī maʿānī al-*

ʿ*aql* (Treatise on the Meanings of the Intellect), *Ta'liqāt fi'l-hikmah* (Explanatory Remarks on Wisdom), *Kitāb fī zuhür al-falsafah* (On the Appearance of Philosophy), *Maqālat fī aghrād mā ba'd al-tabī'ah* (Treatise on the Aims of Aristotle's Metaphysics), *Fuṣūṣ al-hikam* (Bezels of Wisdom*), Kitāb fi'l wāḥid wa'l-waḥdah* (The Book on the One and Oneness), and *Kitāb fī usul ʻilm al-tabī'ah* (The Book on the Principles of Physics).

iv. Al-Fārābī's significant works also include compendia of scientific discussions such as *ʻIḥṣā' al-ʻulūm* (The Enumeration of the Sciences), *Risālah fi'l-ʻaql* (The Treatise or Epistle on the Intellect), and *Kitâb al-hurûf* (The Book of Letters). He also wrote on alchemy and the interpretation of dreams in a treatise called *Fī wujub sanā at al-kīmiyā'* (On the Necessity of the Art of Alchemy).

v. The fifth category of al-Fārābī's writings consists of polemical works and refutations of the views on particular aspects of natural philosophy such as *Kitāb al-radd 'alā jālīnus fī mā taawwalahu min kalam Aristu* (Book of Refutation of Galen's Interpretations of Aristotle's Discourse), *Al-radd 'alā Ibn al-Rāwandī fī ādāb al-jadal* (Refutation of Ibn al-Rāwandī's Account of Dialectic), *Al-radd 'alā Yahyā al-nahwi fī mā raddahu 'alā aristu* (Refutation of John the Grammarian's Criticism of Aristotle), and *Al-radd 'alā al-Rāzi fi'l-'ilm al-ilahī* (Refutation of al-Rāzi's Metaphysics).

vi. Al-Fārābī also spent his life focusing on political philosophy, the science of society, and ethics in society. In this regard, he wrote the monumental *Kitāb arāʾ ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍilah* (The Principles and Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City), *Fuṣūl al-madani* (Aphorisms of the Statesman), *Kitāb al-siyāsat al-madanīyah* (The Political Regime), and *Kitāb mabādiʾ al-mawjūdāt* (The Principles of Existents). Other works in this category include *Kitāb al-millat al-fādilah* (The Book of the Excellent Community), *Talkhīs nawāmīs Aflātün* (Epitome of Plato's Laws), *Risālat fi'l-siyāsah* (Epitome on Politics), *Kitāb taḥṣīl al-saʿādah* (Attainment of Happiness), and *Kitāb al-tanbīh ʿalā sabīl al-saʿādah* (The Exhortation to the Way to Happiness).

vii. Finally, al-Fārābī was also a music theorist and a performer, with notable books such as *Kitāb al-musiqa* (The Book of Music), *Kitāb fi'l nuqra, Kitāb al-tiihsa al-iqa*, and *Kitāb al-musiqi al-kabir* or The Grand Book on Music (Naroditskaya, 2009). His other works, such as *Maqālat fī maʿānī al-ʿaql* (Treatise on the Meanings of the Intellect), also touched on music therapy, in which he discussed the therapeutic effects of music on the soul. Besides contributing to the knowledge of musical notes and writing music treatises, he was an inventor of several musical instruments, including the five-string oud (a short-neck lute instrument) and *qānūn* (an instrument like a harp) (Azizbek et al., 2021). It was also reported that he could play his instruments so well as to make people laugh or weep at will (Alwali, 2018).

It is fortunate that much of al-Fārābī's works have survived, despite the passage of time. A total of 117 are preserved, including 43 on logic, 11 on metaphysics, 17 on music, medicine, and sociology, seven on ethics, seven on political science, and 11 are commentaries (Editor In Chief, Qatar Medical Journal, 2011). We can see that al-Fārābī' framed his thoughts and writings in Neoplatonist terms befitting the period. The uniqueness of his works, however, lies in the way that he did so by reconciling Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy with Islamic doctrine. Consequently, al-Fārābī had not only influenced the worldview of other Muslim scholars such as Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Bājjah, al-Ghazālī, and Mullā Ṣadrā,

but he was also instrumental in the development of philosophical ideas in Asia and Europe, as reflected in the works and thoughts of Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (or Maimonides), Spinoza, and Leo Strauss (Brague, 1998; Netton, 1992; Whittingham, 2007; Yuldashev, 2020).

EMANATION FROM THE FIRST: THE ONTOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF AL-FĀRĀBĪ'S PHILOSOPHY

The nature of existence, reality, and knowledge are the main focal features of al-Fārābī's works. According to him, ontology is the discourse that deals with *mawj*ud (i.e., being or existent) and its attributes. There exist many beings (*mawjudāt*) in various grades and degrees of perfection that can be ordered in a hierarchy in which the higher ones influence the lower. His distinctive account of the hierarchy of beings is predominantly discussed in *Kitāb al-siyāsat al-madanīyah, Kitāb mabādiʾ al-mawjūdāt*, and *Kitāb arāʾ ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍilah*. For al-Fārābī, God, who is Perfect and the cause of the existence of all other beings, is placed at the top of the hierarchy. This is followed by the angels, the celestial bodies, and the terrestrial bodies (Bakar, 2019). This hierarchy of beings is described more specifically in terms of six principles (*mabādi'*), beginning with God as the First Cause (*al-sabab al-awwal*) and descending through the Second Causes (*al-asbāb al-thawāni*), Active (or Agent) Intellect (*al-'aql al-fa'āl*), soul (*nafs*), form (*surah*), and matter (*māddah*) (Bakar, 2019). The first three principles are independent and immaterial, while the final three are attached to bodies (López-Farjeat, 2024).

God, in al-Fārābī's thinking, is the First Cause - a unique, perfect, uncaused, and necessary being who exists by acting as the object, subject, and act of its own intellection. Following the notion of emanation (*fayd*), all other beings "flow out from" the First (*al-awwal*) because God is the source of all existence. For al-Fārābī, everything that exists (unless later found to be a product of man's will or desire) comes from God, and things that emanated from the First progressed as intellects or incorporeal entities (Ali, 2023; Wain, 2012). It follows that we cannot understand the world or anything without comprehending the knowledge of the First Cause and all its qualities.

The Second Causes, which proceeded from the First Cause, are incorporeal because, being an overflowing of the First, they share its nature. However, they progressed to material entities with physical forms and matter (Ali, 2023; Wain, 2012). The knowledge produced here is the knowledge of the immaterial existents, their specific qualities and rank, and their functions (Al-Fārābī, 1985). The overflow then descends from the Second to become another incorporeal intellect called the Third that constitutes the celestial bodies and spheres, such as the planets, stars, and heaven (*Jannah*) – all of which have their own soul. In al-Fārābī's view, *Jannah* extends beyond the sphere of the stars and includes the afterlife (*akhirah*). The process where the emanation of the Second Causes flows to the Third yielded the knowledge of celestial substances and the qualities of each of them (Al-Fārābī, 1985).

This emanation of intelligences goes on successively until there are a total of ten emanations, nine heavens, and nine souls altogether: i.e., the First Cause, the Second and the 'First Heaven;' the Third and the Fixed Stars; the Fourth and Saturn; the Fifth and Jupiter; the Sixth and Mars; the Seventh and the Sun; the Eighth and Venus; the Ninth and Mercury; the Tenth and the Moon; and finally, the last intelligence known as *al-'aql al-fa''āl* or Active (or Agent) Intellect (Wain, 2012). From this intelligence, flows the soul as well as the *hyle* or *ḥayy*

as the prime matter of corporeality to make a body (Netton, 1998). In this Tenth Intelligence, there is a sublunary world with plants, animals, humans, four elements (fire, air, water, and earth), minerals, and matter (Davidson, 1992). Figure 1 summarises al-Fārābī's approach to emanation.

Active Intellect represents human intelligence, or the rational faculty, which constitutes the theoretical and practical parts. With the theoretical part, humans can acquire true knowledge of things, while the practical part enables humans to obtain knowledge and skills by means of their will. In *Kitāb arāʾ ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍilah* and *Kitāb al-siyāsat al-madanīyah*, al-Fārābī posits that Active Intellect enters the rational faculty and turns it into an Actual Intellect by transforming perceptions stored in the imaginative faculty into actual intelligible thoughts (Davidson, 1992). In Actual Intellect, the participation of Active Intellect allows human beings to grasp the first principles of understanding and the construction of intelligibles (Taylor, 2012). For al-Fārābī, the rational faculty is responsible for human cognition in all aspects, including about knowledge of the natural bodies, knowledge of the creation of humans, knowledge of how the faculties of the soul come to be, and knowledge of how the Active Intellect sheds light on them so that the first intelligibles, as well as will and choice, can arise (Bonelli, 2009).

The Active Intellect also constitutes the soul as its incorporeal substance. The soul is regarded as the principle of life with several faculties, ranging from the most basic functions that are common to all life to the most sophisticated, complex faculty that allows cognition. When the soul receives emanation from the Active Intellect, its virtues are completed, and the entity exists as a combination of form and matter (*Note: al-Fārābī's notions about rational and imaginative faculties, as well as the soul, are deliberated further in subsequent discussions of this paper).* A summary to illustrate the relationships between the intellects and types of the soul is provided in Figure 2).

In his treatises, al-Fārābī stated that those with a greater proportion and most developed Active Intellect are natural rulers. Using the Prophet ﷺ as an example, al-Fārābī explained that the Prophet ﷺ was most open to a higher intellect and more sensitive and wiser in managing society. In this regard, he associated Active Intellect with knowledge of rulers and revelations (*wahy*). He maintained that people in a virtuous city must possess the knowledge of eight things: (i) knowledge of the First Cause and its qualities, (ii) knowledge of the Second Causes, (iii) knowledge of celestial substances, (iv) knowledge of natural bodies, (v) knowledge of the creation or generation of man, (vi) knowledge of the first ruler and how 'revelation' (*wahy*) is brought, (vii) knowledge of the rulers who must take his place when he is not available, and (viii) knowledge of the excellent city and its people as well as the felicity their souls must ultimately reach (Bonelli, 2009).

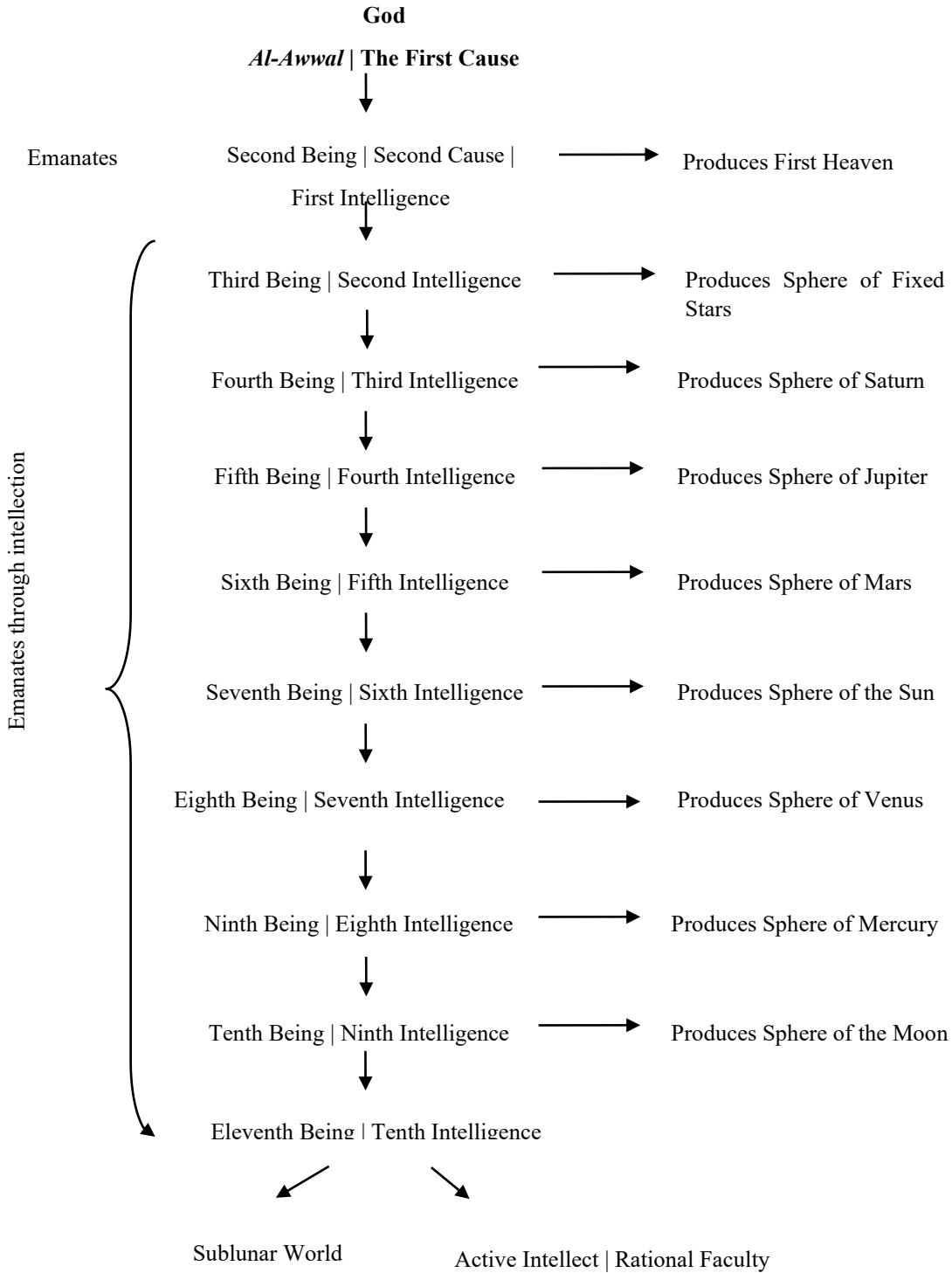

Figure 1: Al-Fārābī's approach to emanation.

INTELLECTION: THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL APPROACH OF AL-FĀRĀBĪ

Consistent with his theory of the hierarchy of beings, al-Fārābī placed a high value on revelation as a source of knowledge and reason (*`aql*) (Bakar, 2019). He followed up on his ontological views of the intellects by advocating that we approach reality through three means,

i.e., (i) senses (*al-quwwat al-ḥāssah*), (ii) imagination (*al-quwwat al-mutakhayyilah*), and (iii) intellect (*al-quwwat al-nāṭiqah*) in his *Kitāb arāʾ ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍilah*. His epistemological approach holds that all knowledge starts from the senses; that is, we can know something exists when we detect it using our sense organs, perceive and interpret it in the brain in the form of logic and reason, and act out via bodily engagements and processes of choice. According to him, our sensory systems play a central role in detecting and processing the signals received from the environment (loosely called "knowledge"). Knowledge gathered at this stage is known as "knowledge of facts" and concerns individual objects. Following a process of abstraction, knowledge derived from the senses is then developed into intellectual knowledge that deals with universal concepts (Cellamare, 2020). It is at this stage, according to al-Fārābī, that we acquire knowledge through the power of imagination and the power of thought.

The power of imagination refers to the ability to compose and combine new images with other images stored in the faculty of representation (*al-muṣawwirah*). In *Fuṣūṣ al-hikam*, al-Fārābī's theory of the imaginative faculty contrasted five internal senses (*al-ḥawāss al-bāṭinah*). The first involves the faculty of representation (*al-quwwat al-muṣawwirah*), which preserves the forms of sensible objects received from the external senses. However, some forms cannot be perceived by the external senses in the world, and thus, cannot be preserved by *al-quwwat al-muṣawwirah*. For this reason, the second internal sense, i.e., the faculty of estimation *(al-quwwat al-wahm*), exists. This faculty will perform the function of perceiving the non-sensible forms connected with the individual sensible objects that the external senses cannot perceive. The non-material entities perceived by *wahm* are then retained by the faculty of memory (*al-quwwat al-ḥāfiẓah*). Al-Fārābī asserted that the last internal sense is creative in nature due to its compositive function. By compositive, he meant the ability to produce new composite images out of the images stored in the representative faculty through the process of combination (*khalṭ* or *tarkīb*) and separation (*tafṣīl*) (Bakar, 2019). In humans, this faculty is known as *al-quwwat al-mufakkirah* (rational imagination), whereas in animals, it is called *al-quwwat al-mutakhayyilah* (sensitive imagination).

The functions of the imaginative faculty (i.e., retention, composition, and estimation of images) lend themselves to *al-quwwat al-nāṭiqah*, i.e., the power of thought or the intellect or the rational faculty. For Al-Fārābī, *al-quwwat al-nāṭiqah* enables us to learn about the world, and through it, the soul of the learners is raised to the level of the rational human (Al-Tālbī, 1993). In *Risālah fi'l-'aql*, he posited that there are several degrees of intellect. The first degree is the Potential Intellect (*al-'aql bi'l-quwwah*), also known as Material Intellect (*al-'aql al-hayūlānī*), which refers to the human being's natural disposition to receive intelligible forms (Bakar, 2019). The Potential Intellect then transforms to an Actual Intellect in relation to the intelligible forms it received. This intellect, which consists of intelligibles abstracted from matter, does not depend on the imaginative and sensitive faculties (Bakar, 2019).

When actual intellect can think the intelligibles within it and itself, it becomes what al-Fārābī calls *al-'aql al-mustafāḍ* (Acquired Intellect). Humans attained the highest degrees of human perfection when the Actual Intellect and Acquired Intellect become united (*muttahidah*), i.e., "*when the Acquired Intellect participates in the reality of the Active Intellect without being essentially identified with the latter*" (Bakar, 2019, p. 63). The degree of this perfection, however, depends on the extent of the intelligible forms received from the Active Intellect (Bakar, 2019). The Acquired Intellect, therefore, is the most developed form of the

human intellect. In his *Kitāb arāʾ ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍilah*, al-Fārābī regarded those who achieve this state and have perfected the imaginative faculty, along with having other characteristics such as a healthy body and a proper moral disposition, as *Imāms* or wise persons (Oschman, 2020). This achievement of understanding and intellect, in turn, yields the greatest happiness – a topic that is discussed next.

VIRTUES: THE AXIOLOGICAL POSITION OF AL-FĀRĀBĪ

The concept of happiness is central to al-Fārābī's discourse and shapes his axiological position. For him, the ultimate goal of human existence is to attain perfection in the present life (*al-sa'ādat al-dunyā*) and supreme happiness (*al-sa'ādat al-quswā*) in the hereafter (Bakar, 2019). Al-Fārābī holds the view that ultimate happiness is achieved when a human being has perfected imaginations, practical faculties, and theoretical faculties, thus achieving the status of *al-ʻaql al-mustafāḍ* (Bakar, 2025; Walker, 1994). In the words of al-Fārābī himself, the highest rank of happiness is achieved when the soul is "*united as it were with the Active Intellect*" (Al-Fārābī, 1964, pp. 79.5-79.15; Al-Fārābī, 1985, pp. 15.11).

In *'Ihsâ' al-ʻulûm*, al-Fārābī suggested that happiness constitutes four virtues, namely theoretical virtues (*al-faḍā'il al-naẓariyah*), deliberative virtues (*al-faḍā'il al-fikrīyah*), artistic virtues (*al-faḍā'il al-ṣinā'īyah*), and ethical or moral virtues (*al-faḍā'il al-khuluqīyah*). These virtues are related to the states of the soul by which a person does good deeds (Bakar, 2019). For example, theoretical virtues belong to the theoretical part of the rational faculty, while deliberative as well as artistic virtues belong to the practical intellect part of this faculty. Finally, ethical or moral virtues occur when the appetitive faculty heeds the practical intellect, giving rise to other virtues, such as temperance, generosity, courage, and justice (Bakar, 2019).

Al-Fārābī believes that happiness can be attained through integrating *al-taʿakkul* or thinking and reasoning activities with *al-afʿal al-iradiyah* or motivation. Thinking can remove the mind-object from the material entering the substance, reaching a state known as *al-kamal fi al-wujud*, or existentially complete, in which there is no psychological dependence on materials (Najati, 1993). This is what he meant in *Kitāb taḥṣīl al-saʿādah* when he stated that true happiness arises when the soul attains its highest state of perfection, in which it no longer relies on material things to feel complete or whole.

Al-Fārābī further posited that humans, as social beings, rely on the help, support, and cooperation of others to survive and thrive in life, as well as in their endeavour towards attaining a perfect life and happiness. For this reason, he emphasised the importance of having good relationships with others, as a good moral balance among people can foster the soundness of society.

THE NATURE OF THE SOUL ACCORDING TO AL-FĀRĀBĪ

So, how is the soul formed according to al-Fārābī? Discussions in previous sections indicate that he views the universe and all its contents as eternally dependent on the First Cause for their existence; of which the process comes forth by undergoing emanation (*fayd*) in a procession of intellects corresponding to the spheres of the heavens, ending at the sphere of the moon, with each body having its own soul. The final, immaterial entity called Active Intellect (*al-ʻaql al-fa''āl*), resides with responsibility for the world below the sphere of the moon, including a special responsibility for the rational beings, namely, humans. Human beings,

however, do not naturally possess all that is needed to be rational and knowing. Therefore, they depend on *al-'aql al-fa''āl* (Active Intellect), which originates from the First Cause, to realise their nature as intellectuals, endowed with the rational faculty (Taylor, 2012).

Having gained an understanding of the ontological, epistemological, and axiological positions that underpinned al-Fārābī's thoughts and works, we can now discuss his conceptualisation of the soul. As one of the forefront of the Islamic peripatetics, al-Fārābī was in alliance with the Greek predecessors in their understanding and discussion of the soul. For instance, similar to Aristotle, he describes the soul as the form or actualisation of a natural organic body that potentially has life, and he believes that the soul is responsible for the capacities or operations of the human body (López-Farjeat, 2024). He also asserts that immaterial things, such as the soul, can be studied and understood through the senses. While the body is measurable, has different faculties, belongs to the world of Creation, and is limited by time and space, the soul has unique qualities that set it apart from the body.

Al-Fārābī did not explicitly discuss whether or not he believes that the human soul has an innately pure, immaculate, or good nature (*fiṭra*). Nor did he contend that psychological state and mind need to be harmonious with *fiṭra*. However, he did regard the human soul as the first completion or perfection (*kamāl awwal*) for the physical body, which is natural, mechanistic, and with life energies (López-Farjeat, 2024; Najati, 1993). Al-Fārābī points out that human beings have a higher faculty, i.e., the intellect or rationality, which enables them to attain intelligibles in the act. This rational part of humans can realise itself to such a degree of perfection that it no longer requires the body and can come very close to reaching the status of a separate being (López-Farjeat, 2024).

On this point, there is a debate over whether al-Fārābī regards the soul as immortal. Records of his works, such as *Risālah fi'l-'*aql and *Kitāb al-siyāsat al-madanīyah*, demonstrate his views on the soul's ability to detach itself from the sensitive, appetitive, and imaginative faculties and exist independently of the body. This process, in turn, transforms the rational soul into an eternal, imperishable intellect that can survive after death. On the other hand, in *Kitāb arāʾ ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍilah*, he does not make any clear distinction between the soul and the body. For him, the body is matter, and the soul is form. The form cannot exist without matter, and the soul cannot exist by itself; hence, it perishes with the body. From this perspective, it seems that al-Fārābī regards the soul as not existing separately or independently from the body.

THE STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOUL ACCORDING TO AL-FĀRĀBĪ

Al-Fārābī sustains that all living beings have a soul and constructs a hierarchical model comprising five types: *al-nafs al-nabatiah* (vegetative soul), *al-quwwat al-ḥāssah* (sensitive soul), al-*nafs al-nāṭiqah* (rational soul), *al-quwwat al-mutakhayyilah* (imaginative soul), and *al-quwwat al-nuzū'iyah* (appetitive soul).

In *Fuṣūl al-madani* (Aphorisms of the Statesman), al-Fārābī stated that the lowest, vegetative soul is the part of the soul that has eight sub-faculties: (i) nutritive, (ii) digestive, (iii) attractive, (iv) retentive, (v) distinguishing, (vi) expulsive, (vii) growth, and (viii) reproductive or generative. Nutritive faculty (*al-ghadziyah*) refers to the process of nourishment of living beings. It has a ruling faculty located in the heart, which governs other auxiliary and subordinate faculties distributed in other bodily organs (Ali & Qin, 2020). The

digestive faculty (*al-hāḍima*) breaks down and converts nutrients from the food we eat into the blood that is capable of nourishing the whole body. These nutrients are transported around the body via the attractive faculty (*al-ǧāḏiba*). While the retentive faculty (*al-māsika*) preserves the nutrients that our body needs, the distinguishing faculty (*al-mumayyiza*) differentiates the amount and types of nutrients to meet the needs of the body. Excessive or unwanted nutrients that are not needed by the body are then flushed out in the form of waste products by the expulsive faculty (*al-dāfiʿa*). The whole nutriment process subsequently stimulates growth (i.e., *al-munammiyah*, the faculty by which our body develops in size) and reproduction, in which descendants are produced through the generative faculty (*al-muwallidah*).

The second type of the soul is *al-quwwat al-*ḥāssah or the sensitive soul, which concerns the part that senses objects in the world via the five sense organs. It is the source of moral sentiments such as our perceptive (*al-quwwat al-mudrikah*) and motive (*al-quwwat al-muharrikah*) faculties. *Al-quwwat al-mudrikah* is further divided into two: *al-hawas al-kharijiah* (external sensation) and *al-hawas al-dākhiliyah* (internal sensation). Like the vegetative soul, the sensitive soul has a ruling faculty, which is the heart, together with the five senses as its auxiliaries (Ali & Qin, 2020).

Al-nafs al-nāṭiqah or the rational soul represents the third type in the model. Residing in the heart and encompassing all faculties, including the brain, it has the functions of deliberation (*rawīyah*) (Ali & Qin, 2020; Bakar, 2019). Humans use the rational faculty to receive the images of intelligibles - thus acquiring the sciences (*al-'ulūm*) and the arts (*sinā'āt*), which, in turn, enable them to distinguish between good and evil (Wain, 2012). In other words, the rational soul can receive the imprints of intelligibles and rule other faculties of the soul.

The rational soul is partly theoretical (*naẓarī*) and partly practical (*'amalī*). The theoretical part is the faculty by which we acquire the knowledge of the things that can neither be created nor altered by human beings. It plays a role in the reception of the forms of intellectual objects as well as in the acquisition of ultimate truth (Bakar, 2019). In contrast, the practical part deals with the things that can be created and changed by human agency. This includes the acquisition of new skills (*mihnīyah*) and reflection *(fikrīyah*), which involve deliberation (*rawīyah*) and the making choices and decisions about possible courses of action. It is through the practical mind that we know what should be done, what to be avoided, or whether "it is possible or not, and if it is possible, how it must be done" (Dunlop, 1952, p. 98).

Al-quwwat al-mutakhayyilah (the imaginative soul) combines the impressions of the sensibles gathered by our sense organs and processes them by associating and dissociating the data in many different ways (Ali & Qin, 2020). For example, the eyes provide sensory information. When sensation is no longer present, the perception will not be there either; however, the image remains in the *al-quwwat al-mutakhayyilah* so that it can be retrieved or recalled. Therefore, we can deduce that al-Fārābī formulates the imaginative soul as performing three functions. First, it retains the images captured by sensory organs and continues their existence even after they no longer appear to the senses; second, it composes and divides the retained images to form new images; and third, it represents objects with the images of other objects, which may encompass bodily temperaments, emotions and desires, and immaterial realities (Ali & Qin, 2020; Black, 1996). From this perspective, we can imply that the imaginative soul bridges the sense-perception faculty to a symbolic representation of the thought impression, and to some extent, behavioural actions. However, unlike other parts of

the soul, it does not have auxiliaries or subordinates other than the sense-organs that it governs. Nevertheless, it too resides in the heart (Ali & Qin, 2020).

Finally, *al-quwwat al-nuzū'iyah* or the appetitive soul is best understood as the part of the soul that deals with desires, feelings, and emotions. It provides the motive power that enables the soul to activate the body, thereby producing actions such as seeking what the soul considers desirable and avoiding what it perceives as harmful or adverse (Black, 1996). Things acquired through sense-perception, representation, or reason, as well as the actions that follow thereafter, will not be executed unless the appetitive faculty desires them. The heart houses the ruling faculty of the appetitive soul - it decides which desires have priority and which responses best suit them. Whatever decisions are made, they are to be executed by bodily organs that represent the subordinates of the ruling faculty (Ali & Qin, 2020).

In summary, we attempt to illustrate the stages and development of the soul according to al-Fārābī in Figure 2.

THE STAGES OF THE SOUL ACCORDING TO AL-FĀRĀBĪ

From our discussions of al-Fārābī's structure and development of the soul, we can see that he emphasises the importance of knowledge to the extent that he regarded the level of intellect, i.e., rational soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqah*), as the highest soul in humans. For him, the lowest soul was merely vegetative, embracing life, nutrition, and growth. Above this were the sensitive and appetitive souls, embracing cognitive functions such as sensation, perception, and memory for the former, whereas desires, pleasure, and pain for the latter. At the same time, the imaginative soul serves as an intermediary between the sensitive and rational souls (Bakar, 2019).

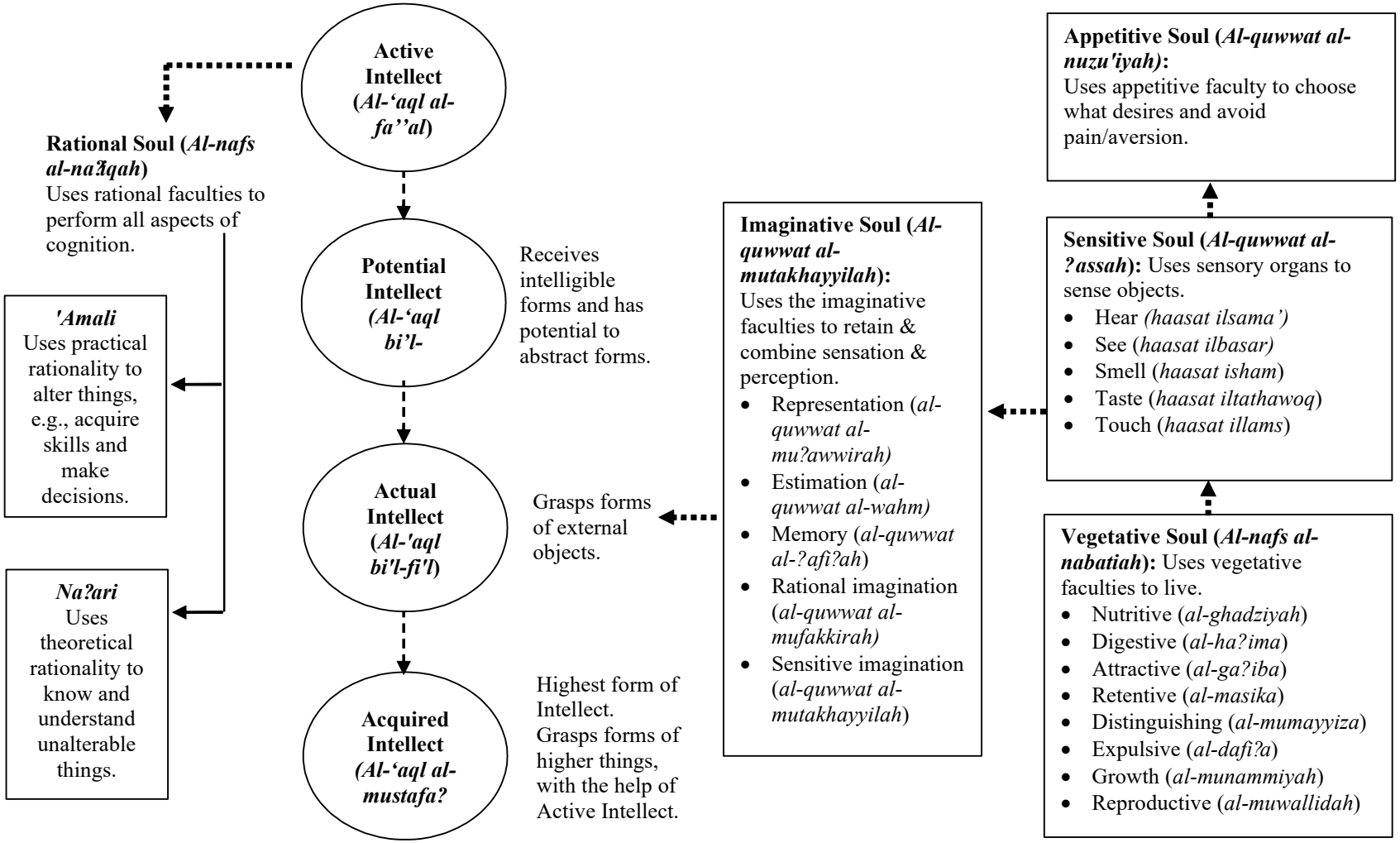

Figure 2: The soul according to al-Fārābī

In *Kitāb arāʾ ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍilah* and *Kitāb al-siyāsat al-madanīyah*, al-Fārābī compares the living body to a virtuous city (*al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*). Specifically, he says that a city is determined by the moral habits of its people, emphasising that there can be no virtuous city without virtuous citizens and no virtuous citizens without virtuous souls. We can further extend this theory to imply the different stages of the soul. According to him, having acquired some knowledge, a person can decide whether to pursue the righteous life or live the unrighteous one. Only by reflecting on what is right and virtuous can a person come closer to the Active Intellect, the truth, and perfection. When a person gains theoretical virtues, intellectual knowledge, and practical moral values, he or she becomes a virtuous citizen who is becoming perfect in moral behaviour and soul (*al-insān al-kāmil*).

In a virtuous city, al-Fārābī believes that happiness is achieved when citizens live in cooperation, support, and harmony with themselves, with other people, and with nature. To survive in this city, the citizens must be capable of higher knowledge and act on this higher knowledge to live morally and virtuously. Al-Fārābī posits that philosophy and religion provide the correct knowledge and actions that can lead people to become virtuous citizens, and that such knowledge and actions will lead to ultimate happiness (*refer to previous discussions of this paper for an explanation of this knowledge*). According to him, only virtuous citizens will achieve eternal happiness, and only the soul of a thinking and righteous person can live forever. Accordingly, only wise, virtuous people understand the concept of happiness.

As complex as it seems at first glance, al-Fārābī believes that all people are capable of perfection and suggests that everyone ought to acquire knowledge about everything (Al-Fārābī, 1985). The ruler's duty, therefore, is to establish a virtuous society by healing the souls of the people, establishing justice, and guiding them towards true happiness (Bakhtiar, 2019). In this regard, he insists that the rulers of a virtuous city must be wise and morally upright, as well as capable of leading people to happiness in such a way that they support one another and collectively work to reduce evil in society. In short, he believes that a virtuous society can emerge only under the leadership of individuals who themselves embody wisdom and virtue.

When it comes to rulers and leadership, al-Fārābī is unequivocal - ruling is not a matter of mere power or strategy, but of moral and intellectual excellence. He outlines a clear vision of the kind of person a ruler must be - one who not only holds authority but also possesses a natural disposition toward justice, wisdom, and virtue. Put differently, the ideal ruler, in al-Fārābī's view, is guided not by ambition or coercion, but by the innate quality of a virtuous character and a sincere commitment to the good. Again, central to his philosophy is the notion of the perfect human being (*al-insān al-kāmil*), i.e., a figure who has fully actualised both theoretical and practical virtues. Theoretical virtues complete one's intellectual understanding, while practical moral virtues perfect one's conduct. Together, they shape a leader not only fit to govern but also to inspire. In such a society, these virtues must not remain abstract ideals. Instead, they must be embedded within the souls of those who assume responsibility for political leadership, thereby transforming them into role models for other people (Tanabayeva et al., 2015). In this light, al-Fārābī's concern is not just about political organisation but also about personal as well as social perfection within his vision of the virtuous city.

In addition to the virtuous city, al-Fārābī identifies three other broad categories of cities that stand in stark opposition to the virtuous one. These include (i) the ignorant city (*al-madīnah al-jāhilah*), (ii) the immoral city (*al-madīnah al-fāsiqah*), and (iii) the erring city (*al-madīnah al- ḍāllah*); with each having corresponding characteristics of the soul. In the ignorant

city, the citizens are unaware of the First Cause and have a lack of knowledge about virtue and happiness. Their souls are contaminated and will decay into nothingness. More troubling is the immoral city. Here, the citizens do know the virtues and good but wilfully choose otherwise. They follow the aims of the ignorant cities and succumb to desires such as pleasure, wealth, or domination. The souls of the people who inhabit immoral cities are contaminated, making them unable to attain happiness. Within the ignorant and immoral cities, al-Fārābī posits six sub-types of cities, as depicted in Table 1.

Al-Fārābī also adds a further category: the erring city, in which citizens were given an imitation of happiness and virtues that diverged from the true representations of happiness. This distortion occurs because the rulers of such cities deceive their citizens into pursuing goals that differ from the virtues (Khalidi, 2003). Here, the rulers are immoral while the citizens are ignorant. In all these cases, al-Fārābī emphasises the moral consequences of the soul becoming contaminated and incapable of reaching its highest end. For citizens of these non-virtuous cities, the ultimate destination is not happiness but misery. Although al-Fārābī did not specify their final metaphysical fate, it is clear that without the cultivation of virtue through right knowledge and righteous leadership, the soul is left to perish in confusion and despair.

Table 1: Al-Fārābī's theory of virtuous city (*al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*)

City	Characteristics
Virtuous city (*al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*)	Citizens of this city have theoretical virtues, intellectual knowledge, and practical moral values. Correct knowledge and actions lead people to become virtuous citizens; hence, a perfect human being or soul.
Ignorant city (*al-madīnah al-jāhilah*)	Citizens of this city tend to focus on the pleasures and riches. They lack knowledge of virtue and happiness. The souls of the people who live in this city are contaminated and will decay into nothingness.
Immoral city (*al-madīnah al-fāsiqah*)	Citizens of this city know the virtue and good but choose to pursue the aims of the ignorant city. The souls of the people who inhabit this city are contaminated, making them unable to attain happiness.
Erring city (*al-madīnah al- ḍāllah*)	Citizens of this city have been given incorrect imitations of happiness by their rulers. The souls of the people who live in this city missed the right path due to faulty judgments.
Sub-Set of Ignorant and Immoral Cities	
Indispensable city (*al-madīnah al-ḍarūrīyyah*)	Citizens of this city tend to focus on acquiring the bare necessities for subsistence and safeguarding the body.
Vile city (*al-madīnah al-nadhālah*)	Citizens of this city tend to pursue wealth and prosperity. They aspire to acquire the excesses of what is needed for subsistence and safeguarding the body. The souls of the people in this city face moral deprivation due to the desire to obtain wealth, material prosperity, and an abundance of things.
Base city (*al-madīnah al-khissah*)	Citizens of this city tend to seek sensual pleasures (e.g., food, drink, and copulation) or imaginary pleasure (e.g., play or amusement) or both. Those

	who possess more resources and wealth for play and pleasures are regarded as the best and the happiest people.
Timocratic city (*al-madīnah al-karāmīyyah*)	Citizens of this city respect those persons who gain honour, glory, and fame. Al-Fārābī asserts that this city is the best among the ignorant cities. However, their love of honour and fame will eventually turn their city into a despotic city.
Despotic city (*al-madīnah al-taghallub*)	Citizens of this city tend to pursue domination and subjugation. They love to achieve domination over others.
Democratic city (*al-madīnah al-jamā'īyyah*)	Citizens of this city seek multiple objectives, mainly to attain freedom and safeguard that freedom. Because it is a free, non-homogeneous society, there will be citizens who excel in good character as well as those who excel in evil deeds.

SO, WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

We started this paper by questioning the meaning of the soul. The dictionary definition of the nonphysical aspect of a human being that is considered responsible for the functions of the mind and individual personality (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2023) requires critical reflection. From our perspective, the soul should be understood from the viewpoints of Muslim scholars, in this case, al-Fārābī, as they traverse distinct aspects, ranging from body-soul-spirit to selfhood and virtues. In this section, we discuss two reasons why this is so.

First, modern science typically regards human beings as material organisms and reduces consciousness, thought, and emotion to mere byproducts of neural activity within the brain. This reductionist view, while powerful in explanatory scope, leaves little room for metaphysical dimensions of human existence. In contrast, al-Fārābī envisions the soul not as a neural phenomenon but as an immaterial substance emanating from the First Cause through a hierarchy of intellects. For him, the human being, who comprises body, soul, and spirit, attains true perfection and happiness through the cultivation of virtue and the actualisation of the rational faculty.

Yet, al-Fārābī does not propose a radical dualism. According to him, the soul, while immaterial, cannot exist separately or independently from the body. Rather, humans are understood as "embodied consciousness" who need form, matter, body, soul, and spirit to exist. This body-soul-spirit view resonates with what Noor and Ahmad (2020; 2025) describe as the "outward-in-between-inward" structure of human nature. Their interpretation challenges the assumption that the soul is a singular, uniform entity. Instead, they present it as a subtle substance that bridges the corporeal and the spiritual, drawing qualities from both.

Describing the soul as "the in-between," Noor and colleagues (Noor & Ahmad, 2020; Noor & Ahmad, 2025; Noor & Berisha, 2025) highlight its paradoxical nature. Like the body, which is made from the earth, the soul can be heavy, unaware, and ignorant. On the other hand, like the spirit, which comes from the divine, the soul is full of light, awareness, and intelligence. As such, human nature reflects this in-between state, constantly shifting between opposites and never fixed. This framing not only expands our understanding of al-Fārābī's metaphysics but also invites a more integrative reflection on the complexity of the human soul, one that neither science nor traditional theology fully captures in isolation.

Second, al-Fārābī's view about attaining perfection (*al-insān al-kāmil*) as the ultimate goal of human existence implies the need to return to one's primordial disposition (*fiṭra*). As humans live their lives, they draw out and develop the soul's potential by acting in accordance with their original disposition. The peak of this actualisation is attained when an individual is spiritually sound, awake, and conscious of God. Because contemporary psychology has, for the most part, left out these aspects of human condition, it must bring back the transcendent, spiritual heart experience into the field, particularly the part where we need to remember the spark that God breathed into Adam (Qur'ān 15:29, 32:9, 38:72) and which is imprinted onto his heart that makes us human in the highest sense of the word. It is within this context that Noor and Berisha (2025) assert that the modern conception of the self is fragmented and urge for reintegration of spiritual insights by returning to the religious traditions. Without acknowledging the vertical dimension of transcendence, our understanding of the self and soul will remain incomplete.

Furthermore, the Islamic traditions in general, and al-Fārābī's view in particular, tend to focus on "virtues" rather than on "values". The former refers to good moral traits or qualities that shape a person's character and behaviour, whereas the latter are the beliefs a person has about what is right and wrong and what is most important in life. Focusing on virtues over values matters because virtues are stable, can shape who we are, and provide moral boundaries to guide behaviours. In contrast, values are subjective, abstract, and personal, and can vary widely between individuals and cultures. Nevertheless, being virtuous does place limits on personal freedom. Virtue demands self-restraint, guided by conscience and a sense of responsibility. However, this is not a loss but a refinement. Virtue turns freedom into something meaningful, i.e., the freedom to choose what is right over what is easy. In this way, the limits virtue imposes elevate humans, helping us live with purpose, integrity, and moral clarity.

CONCLUSION

Recent efforts in Islamic psychology, such as Rothman's refined Islamic model of the soul (2018; 2022), the Traditional Islamically Integrated Psychotherapy framework by Keshavarzi et al. (2021), and the role of the *nafs* in Islamic psycho-spirituality by Rassool and Keskin (2025), represent promising attempts to bridge the gap between modern psychology and Islamic understandings of the human psyche. However, even these authors acknowledge the limits of such efforts, especially when dealing with something as vast, complex, and infinite as the soul. This is where recourse to Muslim scholars such as al-Fārābī becomes essential. His conception of the soul as an immaterial substance that strives toward perfection through reason and virtue offers not only philosophical depth but also a coherent framework that could enrich the emerging psychological and therapeutic models. By revisiting al-Fārābī's thoughts and works about the soul, this paper contributes to the ongoing effort to provide a more robust, theologically grounded framework for Islamic psychology that is both spiritually resonant and intellectually rigorous.

In this paper, we begin with al-Fārābī's life and influences, followed by a discussion of his scholarly contributions and notable works. His ontological, epistemological, and axiological positions are also discussed to contextualise his thoughts on the nature, structure, development, and stages of the soul. Finally, the implications of his works for Islamic psychology are presented. To this end, it is hoped that al-Fārābī's life, ideas, and works, especially on the soul, have been summarised and discussed in a structured manner.

Scholars have noted that al-Fārābī's various views and works are not always consistent with each other, perhaps purposely because of the target audience of his work or because of subsequent developments in his thinking, or for other reasons (Davidson, 1992; Taylor, 2012). Nevertheless, what is consistent in his thinking is that the existence of the soul is acknowledged, with the notions that internal and external senses, imagination, and rationality/intellect give accurate impressions of reality. Recognition of the perceptual knowledge and primacy of feelings in understanding the world leads to the appropriate interpretation of rational knowledge. Rationality/intellect, in turn, acts as the organiser of the soul.

How the soul is conceptualised and taught in schools and universities can significantly influence the way individuals perceive their being, experience their social reality, and live their lives. When contemporary psychology stripped out the soul in its approach and curricula, a proper understanding of this concept was lost, thereby creating difficulties in explaining why humans behave and think in a certain way. By including the works of Muslim scholars, such as al-Fārābī, into psychology, a more comprehensive explanation of the human mind, behaviour, and emotions is provided that can support the development of a sound human psyche. A word of caution, however, must be emphasised. This effort is not an attempt to rewrite the history of psychology. It is instead an invitation to consider al-Fārābī's ideas when discussing psychological concepts and theories, or even to revive his ideas with renewed contemporary practices.

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Abu 'Ali Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ya'qub (Miskawayh): Miskawayh's Conception of the Soul

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the development of the soul (al-nafs) and the philosophical conception of it through the works of Miskawayh, an Islamic thinker and philosopher. Drawing from the primary ethical treatise, the Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq, the article delineates Miskawayh's intellectual background and his contributions to the development of the soul. The article attempts to explore the soul from the epistemological, ontological and axiological dimensions, and provide an illustration of Miskawayh's thoughts interwoven with the Aristotelian and Platonic perspectives. Significant to the development is Miskawayh's view on the three faculties of the soul, i.e. the nutritive, spirited and rational, and the process of attaining supreme happiness through a perfected soul. The parallels between Miskawayh's thoughts and contemporary psychology are also highlighted, demonstrating how several notions in his conception of the soul are present in areas such as personality and positive psychology. This article therefore aims to underscore the relevance of Miskawayh's notion of the soul in contemporary discussions related to the shaping of one's character, wellbeing, and ethical development.

Keywords: *Miskawayh, Development of the soul, Psychology, Supreme happiness*

INTRODUCTION

In understanding the conception of soul in the Muslim world, it is paramount to explore the contributions of Abu 'Ali Ahmad ibn Muhammad Ibn Ya'qub or also known as Miskawayh. Being known as an Islamic ethicist in the 11th century, Miskawayh had pioneered the fields of ethics and moral philosophy, emphasised the growth of the psychological well-being, as well as offered psycho-spiritual treatment methods of depression and anxiety. Most importantly, his contributions in the exploration of the nature of the soul as expressed in the *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* has profoundly impacted the Arab and Islamic thought.

This article attempts to outline Miskawayh's thoughts on the nature and development of the soul based on his work, the *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*. The article begins by providing a brief account of Miskawayh's background, as well as his prominent works and contributions. The article will next move into Miskawayh's notion of the soul, by highlighting on the nature and development of it. In general, the aim of this article is to provide an overview of Miskwayh's philosophical reflections on the conception of soul based on his own historical and philosophical terms.

BACKGROUND AND BIOGRAPHY

Abu 'Ali Ahmad ibn Muhammad Ibn Ya'qub, or Miskawayh, was born in one of the most prominent periods of Islamic civilisation, also referred to as the "Golden Era" (Jamal al-Din, 2001). During the period, Miskawayh was regarded as one of the most prominent figures in the study of morality, history and theology of the Buwahid Persia (Siddiqui, 2001). Also known as Maskawayh, records have shown that he is often misperceived as Ibn Miskawayh. The title (*laqab*) Miskawayh is known to be his, and placing him as *Ibn*, or *son* of Miskawayh is incorrect as the *laqab* is not of his father's nor grandfather's (Omar, 2016). It is, therefore, more appropriate and thus rightful to address him as Miskawayh here.

Born in Rayy (in an area in Tehran today) around 320/932, Miskawayh spent a large portion of his life in the period of the Abbasid reign, which spanned from 132 to 656 AH (750-1258 AD). He flourished throughout the fourth century AH, together with the scientific environment, and his contributions had extended to approximately 20 years into the fifth century (Jamal al-Din, 2001), which is evident in his date of death on the 9th of Safar 421/16th February 1030 (Omar, 2016). During this era, Muslims were notable for their contribution to the many branches of knowledge.

Miskawayh was deeply attracted to Greek philosophy, whose books were heavily translated into Arabic during his era. Literature argued that his philosophical and ethical writings relied heavily on Greek sources (Abu Bakar, 1989; Leaman, 1998, Haque, 2004; Omar, 2003). The great Greek philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato were among Miskawayh's major sources of reference. However, he was also receptive to other thinkers such as Pythagoras, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Bryson, and Porphyrius (Jamal al-Din, 1992). Understanding that Miskawayh was familiar with the Greek language, it was reported that he completed many of the Greek literature in its original form, except for a few including Aristotle's *The Virtues of the Soul* or also known as *Kitab Fada'il al-Nafs*. This source was translated by Abu 'Uthman al-Dimashqi, one of the most trusted translators mentioned by Miskawayh (Omar, 2003).

Also known as the first Muslim moralist, Miskawayh establishes his views (both secular and religious) based on the Platonic trichotomy of the soul and utilises Platonic's four cardinal virtues (i.e., justice, prudence, courage, and self-restraint) (Leaman, 2021). Together with Stoic and Aristotelian thoughts (Leaman, 2021), Miskawayh had employed the Platonic template and woven it within the Islamic tenets to produce works on Islamic ethics. Additionally, according to Wakelnig (2011), the Hierarchy of Being elaborated in the Neoplatonic teachings also became the framework for Miskawayh's worldview.

According to literature, Platonism has played an integral part in Miskawayh's ethical stand. To illustrate, Miskawayh's discussion on the soul and its fate after death, is considered as neo-Platonic (Fakhry, 1975). In the discussion of the soul, Miskawayh had maintained Plato's concept of duality of the soul and body. To elaborate, the view propagates that ethics should be used to learn about oneself in the Socratic way, i.e. the soul should be identified together with a man's essence. Additionally, according to Fakhry (1975), Miskawayh also focuses on the Platonic themes of immortality, as well as the trichotomy of the soul as a groundwork for his ethical worldview.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND NOTABLE WORKS

Like many other eminent scholars in the Islamic tradition, Miskawayh had also produced many writings in different bodies of literature, particularly history, philosophy, philosophical theology (Topkara, 2017), as well as psychology (Haque, 2004). Among the topics that was thoroughly explored by Miskawayh was the conception of the soul or *al-nafs*.

Also known as the first to author an ethico-philosophical treatise in the Islamic world, Miskawayh attempted to elaborate on the vices and virtues at a great length in the *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* or The Refinement of Character (Marcotte, 2012). Heavily drawn from Greek philosophy and Islamic literature, according to Topkara (2017), the magnum opus, *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, paints the eclectic nature of ethics through the intertwined ideas from Aristotle, Plato, and Galen. Although it is deeply influenced by the Aristotelian ethical treatise, *Ethica Nicomachean*, the *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* had applied a Platonic interpretation to Aristotle's philosophy. In short, the *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* consists of six sections, i.e., the principle of ethics, human nature and its state of origin, goodness and its types, love and friendship, justice, as well as the soul and its healthy state (Omar, 2003).

Miskawayh's other great works in ethics also include the *al-Fawz al-Asghar* (The Diminutive Triumph), which bears three important sections, i.e., God, the Soul, and the Prophecy. To elaborate, the *Fawz al-Asghar* is considered as a work on theology and metaphysics, and the three sections denote the philosophical interpretation of the three fundamental aspects of Islam which revolve around the existence of God, life after death, and prophethood (Omar, 2003). Among all three discussions, the Soul had the biggest bearing as it became a foundation to later discussions on the refinement of character, especially in his *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* (Marcotte, 2012). Marcotte (2012) noted that *Fawz al-Asghar* additionally elaborates on the soul, particularly on the affirmation of its resurrection, as well as the nature of its happiness. A similar subject was also examined in the *Risalat al-Nafs wa al-'Aql* (Epistle on the Soul and the Intellect) (Marcotte, 2012).

AL-MISKAWAYH'S PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHTS ON THE SOUL AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

The Epistemological Aspect of Miskawayh's Thoughts on the Soul

In producing his many works, Miskawayh had chosen to base his thoughts on ethical grounds (Omar, 2003), propagating that ethics enables one to become good and is not limited within theoretical knowledge alone (Omar, 2016). He also emphasised that virtues, which are the goals of ethics, are real as they represent deeds and actions (Omar, 2016). This is evident in the manifestation of ethics within an individual, where the potential virtues should be translated into actuality through appropriate actions and deeds. Therefore, one who remains true to himself and honest produces a trustworthy man, as well as how a just man is produced by being just to himself and others.

From an epistemological light, Miskawayh argued that the soul acquires knowledge through the rational soul. Beginning with sensory perception, the knowledge attained by the rational soul advances to the universal and intellectual truths, which shapes one's moral knowledge. By introspection and deliberating on one's behaviour, man is believed to be cultivating his virtues. In the *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, Miskawayh argued that the soul and body are different, where the differences lie in the soul's rationality which can distinguish between truth

and false and comprehend any other contradicting forms (e.g. sensible or intelligible, big or small, near or distant) (Fakhry, 2004). The excellence or virtue of the soul therefore rests on its pursuit of knowledge and the values cultivated by it.

The Ontological Aspect of Miskawayh's Thoughts on the Soul

Miskawayh had numerous views on human existence, which he elaborated in his works. According to Radez (2019), Miskawayh's idea of existence is described as *providence* and *invention*, which are in line with the Islamic teachings and the Qur'ān. The former refers to the purpose of creation and the benefits to mankind, while the latter denotes that all creations are invented by God. Radez (2019) added that the following logic is an inventor must precede every invention. This shows the strong connection between the ontological aspect of soul and religion from Miskawayh's perspective.

Miskawayh believes that the soul is separate from the body, immaterial and immortal. It uses the body but does not decompose alongside one's physical being. Miskawayh's idea of the immateriality of the soul was further elaborated by Adamson and Portmann (2012) which was found to be coherent with the Aristotelian argument. Miskawayh argued that the mind is not easily overwhelmed by excessively intelligible things as opposed to powerful sensibles such as bright light or strong scents. This explains the nature of the soul, which is from a higher spiritual realm and not from physical elements.

The connection between the physical and metaphysical aspect of the soul was also established by Miskawayh in his works. In the *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* (Miskawayh, 10th century BCE/1968), Miskawayh highlighted that a man's soul consists of three faculties i.e. the appetitive, irascible, and rational; and the rational is the highest among all three. Miskawayh also viewed a human being's existence as both perfect and purposeful (Abu Bakar, 1989). By adopting Aristotle's philosophical thought, Miskawayh noted that immediate perfection in humans relies on a man's judgment which generates actions according to his reasoning. A human's distant perfection, in contrary, is aimed to achieve happiness, wisdom, and virtue (Abu Bakar, 1989). These acknowledge Miskawayh's notion of the soul as a hierarchical faculty that governs the body, and the rational state of the soul makes humans unique and noble. The uniquely human soul is therefore the onset to the refinement of human character.

The Axiological Aspect of Miskawayh's Thoughts of the Soul

As an eminent scholar in the field of ethics, Miskawayh emphasised on the importance of the soul to strive and achieve ethical perfection. The human soul should be perceived as the starting point for humans to search for good. In the *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* (Miskawayh, 10th century BCE/1968), Miskawayh adopted Aristotelian's position when he asserted that only the soul is capable of cultivating virtues. Since he perceives the soul's highest purpose is to seek for happiness, Miskawayh continued to outline the relationship between the body and soul in relation to achieving happiness by commenting on Aristotle's stance on happiness in his *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq.* Miskawayh believes that happiness should be a man's end, and the prerequisite in attaining the goal is through the constant struggle against oneself (Ansari, 1963). Since happiness or *al-sa'ada* appeared to be an important value to Miskawayh, he had discussed the subject at length in his *Kitab al-Sa'ada* (Ansari, 1963), which consists of both the theoretical and practical aspects of ethics. The *Kitab al-Sa'ada* became a frequent reference in Miskwayah's *Tahdhib Al-Akhlaq* to complete his work on the important concept of happiness (Ansari, 1963).

Happiness was also described by Miskawayh as the completion of virtues. Since virtues are attained through actions and deeds, happiness may also be achieved through performing good acts and exhibiting the virtues through daily activities. According to Omar (2016), virtues should be appropriately performed on others, as it is not possible for a virtuous man to demonstrate his virtues only on himself. Like other virtues, happiness, as described by Omar (2016), could not be attained only within the capacity of oneself but also within the connection and bond with others. This entails the importance of living within a society where dealings and communication occur within the community. An earlier review on Miskawayh's concept of happiness by Ansari (1963) on the matter suggested that in completing happiness, Miskawayh believes that a certain extent of material or external fulfilments are needed apart from spiritual elements per se, which include wealth, friends, health, as well as social success. Such interconnections may explain Miskwayh's emphasis on social institutions such as society and the government and the importance of fulfilling one's needs through the help of another.

Happiness is achieved through a healthy relationship between the body and soul. By introducing the idea of *al-saʿāda al-ʿaẓma* or supreme happiness, Miskawayh claimed that ancient philosophers classified happiness into two kinds: one that is attained in this world and the other that is accomplished when the soul separates from the body (Topkara, 2022). The former is not considered as complete happiness due to Miskawayh's belief that if the soul is attached to the body, the bodily impurities will hinder the soul from achieving true happiness. Vices are also deemed as deforming the soul and leading it astray from happiness. Therefore, Miskawayh believes that the process of self-restraint is paramount for the soul to cultivate good traits and develop its virtues (Haque, 2004).

THE NATURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOUL ACCORDING TO AL-MISKAWAYH

The soul (*al-nafs*) is an important subject that Miskawayh carefully explored in several of his works. From the many works he had produced, the *(Tahdhib al-Akhlaq wa-Tathır al-Aʿraq* (The Refinement of Character), which was also known as one of his prominent contributions to ethical literature, was centred on the discussion of the soul (Omar, 2017). This chief ethical treatise fulfilled Miskawayh's contribution in understanding the soul to develop excellent states of character. Miskawayh began by establishing a metaphysical foundation of the soul, afterlife and prophethood in his work *Al-Fauz al Asghar*. He then continued with an extensive discussion of the soul in the *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* and devoted the first section of the work on it. This extension was explainable from a metaphysical perspective as Miskawayh believed that the soul is the essence and symbolises man's perfection in relation to God, himself, and the society (Radez, 2019).

In view of the initial stage of the soul, Miskwayah posits that it is designed with innate capabilities and has the capability of developing virtues. This is coherent with Miskawayh's definition of the soul as an indestructible and incorporeal entity that is created by God and is destined to reside in physical bodies (Siddiqui, 2001). The soul is developed by achieving balance through the harmonisation of the impulses with reason and allowing the rational faculty to navigate the lower states. By adopting the Platonic and Aristotelian view of the tripartite structure of the human soul (i.e. nutritive, irascible, and rational states) (Omar, 2018), Miskawayh highlighted that only intellect is performed through the soul's essence, while the other two are fulfilled through the physical body. Miskawayh also argued that all creations experience the spiritual urge to return to God and that their development is a constant process toward God (Siddiqui, 2001). Additionally, Salleh, Embong, Noruddin, and Kamaruddin (2015)

noted that according to Miskawayh, the spiritual value owned by man is the force behind his body (also known as the immortal spirit or *ruh*); the *ruh,* is further manifested through the body as life, sensation, movement, reasoning, cognition, and discretion. This therefore implies the important role of the immortal spirit in shaping a man's character holistically.

The three hierarchies of the soul by Miskawayh and its relation to Plato's trichotomy of soul is also important to understand the development of soul. According to Fakhry (1975), the theory on the trichotomy of the soul has been refined by earlier Muslim scholars such as Al-Kindi and Al-Razi to suit Aristotelian's psychological framework. Like Plato who classified the soul into three categories, i.e., the rational, spirited, and appetitive, Miskawayh categorised the soul into the rational, spirited, and nutritive, or also known as *al-natiqa*, *al-ghadabiyya*, and *al-shahawiyya* respectively (Omar, 2017). The Platonic conceptualises that the rational is the capacity of the mind in making decisions and reflecting on both the good and the bad, while the spirited soul concerns one's emotions such as love, anger, honour, and animosity. On the other hand, the nutritive involves an individual's biological needs such as drink, food, sexual intercourse, and other desires. In Miskawayh's comments, he believes that the rational faculty functions through physical organ, i.e., the brain; while the second (spirited) is related to the heart, and the third (apetitive) is manifested through the liver (Omar, 2017).

Miskawayh has also connected Plato's trichotomy of the soul with Islamic guidance, as reflected in his discussion on the Qur'ānic teachings related to the soul. According to the Qur'ān (n.d.), the soul may be classified into three types, i.e., *nafs ammara* or the imperative soul, to which is susceptible to evil (12:53), the nafs *lawwama*, also known as the self-reproaching soul, which reprimands the self for indulging in worldly desires and aims for moral perfection (7:52), as well as nafs *mutma'inna* (the peaceful soul) which is the highest level of the human soul, which is liberated from vices and rests in God's grace (89:2). According to Omar (2017), Miskawayh had highlighted the similarities between the Qur'ān's view of the soul with Plato's trichotomy theory. Miskawayh agrees that the nafs *ammara* may be likened to Plato's idea of the appetitive soul as both souls are the lowest in state, constantly instigating man to engage in evil acts. Next, Miskawayh finds that *nafs al-lawwama* may be coherent to the spirited soul, which Plato argues to desire dominance and evoke emotions. This makes it more aware of the good and bad and hence, responsive to moral training. Thirdly, Miskwayh acknowledges that the rational soul is in line with the concept of nafs *al*-mutmainna in the Qur'ān. He believes that this faculty is the source of discernment and reflection and is created pure and noble as well as capable of constraining the other parts of the soul (Omar, 2017). Miskwayah's discussion on the Platonic trichotomy of the human soul, woven with Islamic principles, indicates that Miskawayh strived to comprehend other theories from the Islamic lens in his works.

In achieving the final stage of a man's development of the soul, Miskawayh argued that it must experience the process of moral and intellectual expansion. This is coherent with Aristotelian thought that the *entelechy* or the striving to achieve a full realisation of a man's potential is what drives the development of every being. This concept by Aristotle heavily influences Miskawayh's notion of the falāsifa (Topkara, 2022). Based on the falāsifa, Miskaawayh suggests that man should perfect his ability to achieve rational judgments. This can only be done by adopting philosophy as a tool in perfecting one's character, and the soul must be the medium for it. Miskawayh believes that to achieve happiness, man should perfect his theoretical and practical divisions of philosophy as it helps to realise a human being's full potential.

The highest state of the soul, which is *al-sa'ada* or happiness, is therefore achieved when the soul has been purified through moral and intellectual development. Miskawayh elaborates on the three forms of happiness i.e., the happiness ensuing from the environment, the happiness of the physical body, and the happiness of the soul (Wakelnig, 2011). He suggested that the first two kinds of happiness are not ends by themselves; rather, they are the means to attain the ultimate happiness (Wakelnig, 2011). Although happiness from the environment and physical body are in nature inclined towards worldly desires, they are significant in supporting the soul to achieve the supreme happiness. In his *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, Miskawayh also outlined the definition of happiness as suggested by Aristotle, according to five categories (Topkara, 2022). First, happiness is referred to as the health of body and the well-functioning senses. If a man has a moderate temperament, therefore his five senses (i.e. hearing, sight, touch, smell, and taste) are good. Second, one has good fortune when he spends his money to support goodness around him. The third category describes the joy of holding a good reputation among the virtuous. Fourth, happiness is defined as garnering success in a man's affairs (i.e. the fulfilment of a man's plans). Lastly, the fifth category claims that possessing sound thinking (*ṣaḥīḥ al-fikr*), good judgment (*jayyid rā'y*), and sensible beliefs in both religious and non-religious areas (*salīm al-iʿtiqādāt fī dīnihi wa ghayr dīnihi*). It is important to note, however, that Miskawayh interpreted the fifth category from a religious perspective as it is unlikely for Aristotle to raise such an argument (Topkara, 2022).

IMPLICATIONS TO THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOLOGY

The core concepts of Miskawayh's outlook on the soul is seen to show relevance to contemporary psychology. The concepts by Miskawayh that will be discussed in relation to contemporary psychology are the soul's tripartite nature, its ability to develop through intellectual and moral means, and its goal of seeking for happiness or *al-sa'ada* through knowledge and virtue. The discussion will also connect Miskawayh's concept of soul to few other psychological concepts.

The notion of the soul as existing in three faculties and is capable to be developed is one of the significant notions in Miskawayh's discussion of the soul. Based on the concept of the nutritive, spirited, and rational soul, Miskawayh argues that personality is the byproduct of the conflict between the irrational and rational faculties (Siddiqui, 2001). He believed that the rational will triumph over the irrational soul, and its success will develop a strong moral conscience, which serves as the basis of *khulq* or personality. Personality, from Miskawayh's lens, is therefore viewed as an acquired capability and is regarded as a habit of action which aims to cultivate virtues.

The study of personality is paramount in psychology, as it helps man understand human nature. Psychology began with the study of consciousness, which was advocated by Wilhelm Wundt and other psychologists of the late 19th century (Schultz & Schultz, 2009). As the field of psychology grew, personality was yet considered as a distinct area, and it was only formally included in psychology in the late 1930s, by the efforts of Gordon Allport from Harvard University. Selected modern theoretical personality models in psychology may be parallel to Miskawayh's structure of the soul (i.e. nutritive, spirited and rational). Literature shows that many models that guide human behaviour rests on dual processes. However, there is a need to introduce a motivational element that serves as a behavioural catalyst, as proposed by Strack and Deustch (2004). According to them, a triple system cognitive model involves a reflective-impulsive-affective model. To compare with Miskawayh's view of the soul, the model proposed

by Strack and Deutsch (2004) concerns one's impulsive system (analogous to the nutritive soul), reflective system (likened to the rational soul), and the motivational/affective system (like the spirited soul). In view of modern psychology, an imbalance in the nutritive and spirited soul may precipitate unhealthy mental states. Personality is therefore accomplished by regulated emotional systems which are governed by higher reasoning, like Miskawayh's view of the rational soul governing both the nutritive and spiritual faculties.

Another core concept in the development of the soul from Miskawayh's perspective is happiness or *al-sa'ada.* Miskawayh defined *al-sa'ada* as a notion that embraces happiness, success, perfection, and prosperity Ansari (1963). In a broader sense, *al-sa'ada* refers to the realisation of a desirable end, which is naturally accompanied by pleasure or happiness. The end encompasses every aspect of life, which includes the end to all the activities of the soul (Ansari, 1963). In contemporary psychology, Maslow's theory of Self-Actualisation is deemed parallel to Miskawayh's view on happiness. According to Maslow, self-actualisation forms the pinnacle of one's hierarchy of needs (Guynn, 2021). To attain self-actualisation, an individual must fulfil the lower needs such as food, shelter and affection. The individual may begin his process of self-actualisation by constructing an honest understanding of themselves and the world and releasing himself of the lower needs and societal pressures.

Miskawayh's view on happiness as the apex of man's development of the soul is seen comparable to the concept of self-actualisation. For Miskawayh, supreme happiness is accomplished when the soul achieves intellectual perfection and is virtuous. It is therefore natural for a perfected soul to attain ultimate happiness as it has gained moral clarity and is free from inner turmoil, which makes it harmonious and balanced. Like Maslow who believes that an individual must fulfil his lower needs to attain self-actualisation (Neto, 2015), Miskawayh argues that supreme happiness can only be accomplished through a process of education and the strive for virtues. The highest state of the soul is manifested in a coherent, wise and purposeful state, and this concept is analogous in both Miskawayh's and Maslow's thoughts.

In the process of achieving supreme happiness, Miskawayh emphasised on the perfection of soul through the cultivation of virtues. It is important that man can control their emotions and establishing traits to hinder the soul from vices (Haque, 2004). By regulating impulses and restraining reactive emotions, the soul is learning to regulate the nutritive and spirited faculties. This allows the rational faculty to govern the soul by exercising ethical reasoning and evaluating behavioural consequences. With regards to emotional regulation, in modern psychology, research suggests that poor emotional control is correlated to higher physical, emotional, and social distress, while positive emotions can break an individual's stress cycle and increases longevity (Compare, Zarbo, Shonin, Van Gordon, & Marconi, 2014). Fredrickson (2001) added that positive emotions are found to effectively help individuals in adapting to life challenges. Parallels between Miskawayh's conception of the soul and contemporary psychology are therefore evident, where Miskwayh's argument on the cultivation of virtues through the training of emotional systems may be likened to today's concept of emotional regulation. The development of the soul, guided by reason, is believed to lead to harmony and emotional stability, which is coherent to the notion of cognitive regulation in achieving good psychological wellbeing.

Literature has also shown that discussions related to today's concept of psychotherapy were found in Miskawayh's works including the *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* (Jamal al-Din, 2001). According to Haque (2004), Miskawayh explored the concepts known at present as "self-reinforcement" and response cost. He suggested that feeling guilty for submitting to one's vice

(*nafs al-ammarah)* can be compensated through any psychological, physical, or spiritual means such as donating to the poor or fasting (Haque, 2004). This concept is analogous to the behavioural modification technique in behavioural intervention, known as token economy or (TE). Widely used in improving behavioural dysfunction in children, the TE uses tokens for desired behaviour (i.e., positive contingency reinforcement) and withdraws tokens (response cost) as a reaction to inappropriate behaviours. Although it appears punitive, the underlying notion to both concepts is for an individual to understand the consequences of his behaviour. The ability to evaluate one's actions is paramount in character development and the cultivation of virtues.

CONCLUSION

Known to produce multiple works in many areas including ethics and morality, Miskawayh was described as both religious and studious. His contribution of the *magnum opus* like the *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* has become central in the studies of ethics until the present. Miskawayh's elaborate discussion on the development of soul, and the new perspectives of the Aristotelian and Platonic concepts mark a shift in classical Islamic thought. Miskawayh's goal in the conception of the soul has also shed light to the essence of happiness, which has been profoundly discussed in his works. His philosophical views have been absolute, and they reflect his spiritual sense as a Muslim. Most importantly, the parallels between Miskawayh's thoughts on the soul and contemporary psychology signifies an early contribution to Islamic moral philosophy.

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Ibn Sina's Classical View of Soul through the Ontological, Epistemological, and Axiological Philosophical Framework, and Its Contemporary Relevance

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ABSTRACT

Abu Ali al-Husayn ibn Abdullah ibn Sina was one of the great Muslim thinkers and philosophers in the Islamic Golden Era. Narratives of his early life influences that set the stage for his later development and some of his major works are presented. The depiction of soul by Ibn Sina is outlined in comparison to Aristotle, setting the stage for the discussions of his philosophical framework of soul, the ontological, epistemological, and the axiological contexts. Ontologically, the soul is depicted as a form (surah) of the body, claiming the vegetative, animal, and rational faculties. Epistemologically, the soul acquires knowledge through the abstraction process and will experience an ultimate interaction with the Agent or Active Intellect (al-'aql al- fa'al), ascending from potentiality to actuality. Axiologically, the soul's value lies in its potential for perfection, ascension towards divine realities via a value-based journey. The contemporary relevance of Ibn Sina's axiology, ontology, and epistemology framework of the soul to contemporary psychology, particularly offering a distinctive alternative to the dominant paradigms are presented.

Keywords: *Axiology, Epistemology, Ontology, Ibn Sina*

INTRODUCTION

"Shaykh al-Rāīs," or "Leader among Wise Men," is the famous appellation commended to Abu Ali al-Husayn ibn Abdullah ibn Sina (970-1037CE), presenting him as the greatest Islamic philosopher-scientist and a seminal figure in the realm of arts and science (Nasr, 1968). He was born in Afshana, a village adjacent to Bukhara, the capital city of the Samanid dynasty, within the Transoxiana region (Inati, 2001). His father, Abdullah ibn Sina, was a governor in Kharmayathnah, a suburban village of Bukhara (Rizvi, n.d.; Inati, 2001; Gutas, 2016). His mother Sitarah was a Tadjik woman in origin, and she bore two other siblings to al-Husyan or Ibn Sina, Ali and a brother, Mahmud, five years younger than him (Inati, 2001; Goodman, 2006; Amr & Tbakhi, 2007). Ibn Sina spent his last few years in Isfahan, died there, but was buried in Hamadan, the capital city of Hamadan province in Iran (Amr & Tbakhi, 2007; Gutas, 2016).

INTELLECTUAL NURTURING: THE ROLE OF FAMILY AND CULTURE

Ibn Sina's intellectual development and contributions were profoundly shaped by the scholarly influence of his father and the flourishing intellectual milieu of the Samanid Dynasty (819 – 999 CE) (Bosworth, 1996), which together provided a critical foundation for both his theoretical and practical advancements in knowledge. Assuming the pivotal role of a father

who recognised his son's exceptional intellect at an early age, he took deliberate steps to nurture it. As a provincial governor and a follower of the Ismaili sect, his father actively created a stimulating intellectual environment by inviting scholars to their home, transforming it into a "meeting place for men of learning" (O'Connor & Robertson, 2003). This exposure offered young Ibn Sina early access to scholarly discourse and cultivated his intellectual curiosity. In addition, his father arranged for him to receive instruction in Arabic literature and the Qur'an, which he had fully memorised by the age of ten (Britannica Encyclopedia, n.d.; Gutas, 2014). Upon learning of Mahmud Massahi, an Indian greengrocer reputed for his skill in arithmetic, his father ensured that Ibn Sina received tutelage under him (Gutas, 2014). At the age of thirteen, Ibn Sina began studying medicine – combining theoretical learning with practical experience in treating patients – and continued until the age of sixteen. Two physicians, Abū-Manṣūr al-Ḥasan ibn-Nūḥ al-Qumrī and Abū-Sahl ʿĪsā ibn-Yaḥyā al-Masīḥī, were among his primary teachers during this period, evidence that he did not learn medicine on his own (Ullmann, 1970, as cited in Gutas, 2014). His father also invited a philosopher, Abū-ʿAbdallāh an-Nātilī to stay in their home purposefully to educate his children with the philosophy subject. While learning philosophy with an-Nātilī, he also learned *Eisagoge*, a publication on the Byzantine Law, Euclidean geometry and mathematics, and Ptolemy *Almagest*, a second century mathematical and astronomical treatise, strengthening his knowledge of logic, physics, and mathematics (Gutas, 2014). He even managed to outdo an-Nātilī in many aspects of his philosophical and logic understanding and mostly were left alone to comprehend the subjects of his study. He also studied *fiqh* or Islamic Law with Isma'il al-Zahid, a notable Hanafi jurist who resided in the same town of Bukhara (Goodman, 2006).

In his effort of comprehending philosophy, he utilised the major instrument common to the philosophy curriculum – logic, to reach the truth and avoid misconceptions. Syllogism, a form of logical reasoning, was central to this. Ibn Sina experimented with categorical syllogism, built up of two premises and a conclusion (Rizvi, n.d.; Gutas, 2016). Practically he will find the common or middle term that is shared by both premises but did not appear in the conclusion. For example, in the syllogism "All men are mortal" and "Socrates is a man," the middle term is "man." It connects the major term ("mortal") and the minor term ("Socrates") to reach the conclusion that "Socrates is mortal." Ibn Sina extensively studied and improved upon Aristotle's logical works, including his syllogistic (Rizvi, n.d.). He also developed a system of hypothetical logic, which was more advanced than the previous systems. While Aristotle had briefly mentioned the need for further study of syllogisms based on hypothesis, Ibn Sina's work took this seriously and created a systematic framework for them (Gutas, 2014). This allows him to steadfastly incorporate the Islamic theology into his philosophical understanding of the Aristotelian and Neo-Platonism, thus contributing to his own conception and formulation of philosophical understanding unlike that of Aristotle nor that of the Neo-Platonism.

Ibn Sina also extensively reviewed the Aristotelian treatises, comprehending its content on being, substance, cause, essence, and first principles (Politis, 2021). He faced grave difficulties understanding the Aristotelian materials even after 40 times reviewing and memorising them (Gutas, 2014). Only after he was exposed to the document prepared by al-Farabi on the synthesis of the Aristotelian work, did he manage to comprehend it in its totality. Al-Farabi's work provided a structured framework and commentary that likely helped Ibn Sina synthesise complex Aristotelian concepts into a coherent system.

The Samanid Dynasty environment on the other hand provided him the foundation for his significant academic and practical experiences by offering access to elite libraries, learned contemporaries, scholarly discourse, and leadership position as well as medical practice opportunities where he was able to exert his influential outlook of knowledge to others and explicitly practised his medicinal skills. At the age of 18, he secured his first post as a physician at the Samanid court during the reign of Nuh Ibn Mansur (Gutas, 2014). The Samanid court is very active in recruiting and attracting scholars and physicians, thus Ibn Sina was provided with direct patronage and access to the highest echelons of knowledge and power. These opportunities shaped his early works and career as a philosopher-physician. Within the period of 17 to 21-years of age, he was described as owning the privilege of unparallel access to a vast, organised repository of global knowledge, enabling him to develop comprehensive synthesis capability and original thought. He was granted an unlimited access to the Sultan's library that housed some rare manuscripts apart from its massive book collection.

He began writing at the age of 17, completing the "Compendium on the Soul" (Majmū'), composed of 10 chapters of short treatises on the soul, dedicated to his employer, Nuh Ibn Mansur (Goodman, 2006). At the age of 21 (around 991 CE), he completed Philosophy for Arūdī (Al-Hikma al-Arūdiyya), written for the essayist Abūl-Hasan al- Arūdī, 20 volumes of "The Import and the Substance" (al-Hāsil wa'l-Mahsūl – A jurisprudence work), and "Good Work and Evil" (al-Birr wa'l-'Ithmn – a work on ethics) for Abu Bakr al-Baruqi (Afnan, 1958; Goodman, 2006; Reisman, 2013). His life journey along the years reaching up to the 1000 CE was portrayed as depicting numerous correspondence and disputes between him and prominent scholars such as al-Biruni (Montgomery & Wilson, 2024). This is evidence that the Samanid era fostered free exchange of ideas and scholarly networks between cities. The culture of intellectual debate and peer interaction contributed to Ibn Sina's refined arguments and expanded perspectives. The cumulative effect of a supportive ecosystem allowed sustained, deep, and broad intellectual output. The two major factors of his family tutelage and the Samanid Dynasty's dynamic cultural and intellectual environment created a polymath of him, authoring hundreds of works across philosophy, medicine, astronomy, and mathematics, to name a few.

Based on his experiences, Ibn Sina no doubt developed himself to be a worthy scholar. The output of his studies was a unique synthesis of these intellectual traditions. During his childhood, although he was exposed to the Isma'ili doctrine, he ultimately did not subscribe to it (Inati, 2001; Gutas, 2014). Despite reading Aristotle's Metaphysics over 40 times and studying al-Farabi's commentary (On the Objects of Metaphysics) on the subject, Ibn Sina developed his own distinct metaphysical system, which was more than a mere repetition of their ideas (Gutas, 2014; Falcon, 2021; Politis, 2021). While he staunchly subscribed to the Neoplatonic theory of emanation, his version was not deterministic. He integrated the concept of a Creator with Divine Volition, making his emanationist cosmology unique (Inati, 2001; Swanstrom, 2013).

MAJOR WORKS

Ibn Sina is an eminent polymath having made profound and original contributions to a massive array of discipline of knowledge – medicine, metaphysics, philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, psychology, logic, music, poetry, and other natural sciences (Gutas, 2024;

Flannery, 2025). He authored an estimated 450 works, with roughly 240 surviving today (O'Conner & Robertson, 2003).

His monumental work is primarily evident in his two major writing of the "Canon of Medicine" (Al-Qānūn fī al-ṭibb) and "The Book of Healing" (Kitāb al-shifāʾ). These two books had profoundly shaped the scientific and philosophical thoughts for centuries. The writing process of these two *magnum opuses* marked an itinerant episode of life for Ibn Sina where he moved from place to place – from Bukhara to Gurganj (Khwarizm), Gorgan (Jorjan), Rayy, Isfahan, and Hamadhan – searching for employment, stable living environment, and patronage (Afnan, 1958; Reisman, 2013). His intellectual prowess was indeed tested when the Samanid Dynasty collapsed in 1004 CE, creating a turbulent time for him. Many accounts stated that his writing process was never smooth, coloured by constant move to multiple places and effort to sought support of the *Emir* of the intended places for "political" safety and patronage (Afnan, 1958, Gutas, 2016).

It was claimed that he started writing the "Canon of Medicine" in 1012 CE (when he was 32 years of age) while in the city of Gorgan (also known as Jorjan) – in the Caspian region in Iran, then continued his writings in Rayy – a medieval city south of modern Tehran, and completed it in Hamadhan where he died (Nasser, Tibi, & Savage-Smith, 2009). This *magnum opus* housed some of his pioneering work in identification of the contagiousness of such diseases as tuberculosis and dysentery (Hajar, 2013). His methodological rigour is captured in the book, emphasising treating patients in a controlled environment to deter any confounding variables and understanding the nature and quality of drugs, which resulted in the introduction of seven rules, a crucial groundwork for what is now known as evidence-based medicine (Nasser, Tibi, & Savage-Smith, 2009).

His second *magnum opus* "The Book of Healing" (Kitāb al-shifāʾ) presented a unified classification of all knowledge. Considered as a major philosophical and scientific work, it is an encyclopaedia covering three major divisions of Logic, Theoretical Philosophy, and Practical Philosophy (Gutas, 2024). The Logic section is divided into nine parts. The Theoretical Philosophy division is further divided into three major parts of Physics (sub-divided into eight parts – part six dedicated to Soul, based on Aristotle de-Anime), Mathematics (divided into four parts), and Metaphysics (entailing two parts – Universal Science based on Aristotle metaphysics which studied the being as being, first philosophy, and natural theology, and metaphysics of the rational soul). The practical Philosophy division is further divided into four parts (Gutas, 2024). He likely began composing "The Book of Healing" around 1014 CE and completed it by 1020 CE, a period corresponding with his years of relative stability in Isfahan (Goodman, 1992). This book practically synthesised Greek and Islamic thought into a coherent system. The content was influenced by the synthesis of the ancient Greek philosophers such as Aristotle, Hellenistic thinkers such as Ptolemy, and earlier Persian/Muslim scientists and philosophers, such as Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, and Al-Bīrūnī, to result in a unique Ibn Sina's own conception and conclusion.

After "The Book of Healing," he was asked to write a brief account of the philosophical subjects, which he did by collecting and putting together – at times even splicing together – material from his earlier writings and produced "The Deliverance" (al-Najāt) (Rahman, 1952). "The Deliverance" is also divided into four parts of Logic, Physics, Metaphysics, and Mathematics – The first three prepared by Ibn Sina and the last prepared by his disciple Abu Ubayd al-Jūzjānī (Inati, 2001). Ibn Sina's contribution to the conception of soul, and indirectly

to the body of knowledge of *'ilm al-nafs*, largely was from "The Book of Healing" – part six on the soul and Book II, Chapter VI of "The Deliverance" (Rahman, 1952).

He wrote "General Observations" (Kitab al-Arsād al-Kulliyya) and "Provenance and Destinations" (Kitab al-Mabda' wa'l-Ma'ād) around 1012 or 1013 in Jurjan (Goodman, 2006; Hashemi & Esmaili, 2022). The "Provenance" part of the "Provenance and Destinations" book basically dealt with "… place of origin of all being" while the "destinations" part dealt with the "… place of return of the rational soul" (Gutas, 2014, p. 20). This book is considered as his ultimate independent metaphysics work though initially, he was extremely exposed to Aristotle's metaphysics and this stand of his was mostly repeated in "The Book of Healing" and "The Deliverance" (Afnan, 1958; Gutas, 2014).

"The Book of Remarks and Admonitions" (al- Ishārāt wa 'l-Tanbīhāt) is another of Ibn Sina's most profound and comprehensive works, often considered the culmination of his philosophical thought. The book was attempted around early 1030s and was divided into four parts – Logic (Part One), Physics (Part Two), Metaphysics (Part Three), and Part Four (Mysticism)(Godman, 2006). The presentation of the content was either in the form of "Remarks" (Ishārāt) or "Admonitions" (Tanbīhāt). When Ibn Sina uses *Ishārāt,* he is presenting his own views and insights, offering "pointers" to the reader. When he uses *Tanbīhāt*, he is providing "admonitions" or "warnings" against the common errors and faults of other philosophers.

DEFINITION OF SOUL

Man is created of dual nature – the material (organic body) and immaterial (inorganic body - soul) (Rahman, 1952; al-Attas, 2024). A major concern for this dual nature notion is how do both agencies interact with one another. The definition of soul by both Aristotle and Ibn Sina will be reflected before further deliberation is made on the interactions between the two agencies. Aristotle's definition is included to illustrate how Ibn Sina's conception of the soul differs from that of Aristotle's. For Aristotle, the soul (psyche) is defined as the "first entelechy" or actuality of a natural, organic body that has the potential for life (Sachs, n.d.; Inati, 2001; Wisnovsky, 2005). This definition emphasised two principal elements in a human being: 1) potentiality (*dynamis* or a real existing power within a thing) and 2) actuality (*entelecheia/energeia* or being-at-work – active ongoing process of a thing fulfilling its purpose) (Britannica, n.d.; Cohen, 2020; Mahoney, 2020). Soul is thus, a form or system to the body's matter, the very essence of the body's life and being. It is simply the organising principle that enlivens the body (it provides the material body the capacity to perform its functions, such as growing, sensing, and thinking), hence it is thus inseparable from the body (Black, 2006). A corpse, for instance, still has all its physical parts of a living body, but it has lost its organising principles, thus, it is no longer a living being. Similarly, a soul cannot exist independently of the body it gives life to.

The *dynamis* element depicts any raw material that has inherent ability to be actualised or the potentiality, capacity, or power of a thing to be something else (Inati, 2001; Cohen, 2020; Mahoney, 2020). For instance, a piece of wood has the potentiality (dynamis) to become a table and a human being, by its nature, has the potentiality for life. This potential is a real capacity within these entities that can be developed under the right circumstances.

The *energeia* element, on the other hand, depicts the realisation of the *dynamis* or the active ongoing process of a thing or an entity fulfilling its purpose of being. For instance, the actuality of the piece of wood is when it has been made into a table. It has realised its potential to become a finished object. The actuality of the human being is when it is alive. The soul is the first actuality that makes the body living and gives it the capacity for life. The living of a human being is the fulfilment of the potential for life inherent in the body's physical components. In specific, the soul is the "first entelechy" when it is responsible to animate the living being even though no activities are happening in a particular point of time – a human being in deep sleep still has an intact soul (his first "actuality") even though the body is not actively performing its functions. The actual performance of the body, such as thinking, pondering, or any other physical activities are specifically known as the "second entelechy" (Inati, 2001; Cohen, 2020). A person's ability to think is the first entelechy, while the act of thinking itself is the second entelechy. The second entelechy is the actual performance or dynamic realisation of a potential, in contrast to the first entelechy, which is the stable capacity for that performance. A person has the first entelechy of sight (the stable, underlying capacity to see) but the act of seeing something is the second entelechy – a merely passing, dynamic activity that is fully realised only when it is happening (hence it is considered as temporary and dynamic, not a permanent state of being). Once the act is over, the person returns to the state of owning the capacity for sight but not actively seeing.

If the command of Aristotle's first and second entelechy are taken as the comparison milieu to the extant content of mainstream psychology as a science that focuses on observable and measurable context of human being's mental processes and behaviour, indeed, the second entelechy has been successfully addressed, empirically. Nonetheless, the normative failure here seemingly is to bring about the first entelechy to comprehensively encapsulate the essence of a human being. Thus, men are being described and dealt with as discreet entities merely tied down to their functionalities without having a stable and solid essence to which those functionalities are tied. In other words, men are not dealt as a whole, but rather, as entities displaying an array of discreet functions.

Ibn Sina defined soul as the first perfection of a natural organic body capable of accomplishing the activities of life (Sebti, 2012; Baghirov, 2024). When Aristotle used the term 'form' of an organic body in describing soul, Ibn Sina used 'perfection' of a body instead, indicating his diversion from Aristotle. A form must be inherent in a matter thus inseparable from the matter. When the soul is described as a perfection, an argument of substance dualism can be used to describe its possibility of independency of the body (McGinnis, 2010; Baghirov, 2024). The term first perfection is a translation from the term *al-kamal al-awwal*. The use of the term 'perfection' by Ibn Sina gives a slightly different connotation than the term 'actuality' used by Aristotle. The former is a more evaluative term implying an ideal, finished, or complete state of a thing's nature or purpose (Innati, 2001). The latter, on the other hand, implies a neutral actuality, a condition of a thing's nature that is actualised, but there still can be some form of imperfection in the quality of its actuality. 'Perfection' implies a state of ideal and complete realisation, the highest form of actuality, one that is fully complete and without defect. 'Actuality', on the other hand, is seemingly neutral, and it merely connotes that a potential has been fulfilled regardless of the quality of the fulfilment. For example, a student who completes his degree has actualised his potential to learn, but if he graduates with poor grades, that

actuality is imperfect. Perfection would be the ideal state of a student who has fully mastered all his subjects and achieved the highest possible level of knowledge and skill.

In this regard, when comparing Ibn Sina's conception of soul via the worldview of 'perfection' to the extant worldview context of the mainstream psychology, the former is assumed as fundamentally metaphysical and teleological. Ibn Sina's view is deeply rooted in an idealist understanding of a unifying and a complete soul in its wholeness. The latter is fundamentally empirical (therefore a science), hence, less metaphysical and teleological (Inati, 2001). It is more of a descriptive science operating by fragmenting and breaking its construct of study focusing on the intricate, interconnected, and often contradictory parts of the human experience, unlike Ibn Sina who focused on a single, unifying ideal of being.

Another major difference between Ibn Sina and Aristotle is on the immortality nature of soul. When Aristotle described the soul as an actualised form of the body, thus inseparable, it is thus immortal (Innati, 2001; Black, 2006). Ibn Sina promoted the notion of immortality of the soul since it is described as an immaterial substance independent of the body (substance dualism paradigm). While the soul depends on the body for its initial creation, it does not depend on it for its continued existence. Upon death, the soul is claimed to retain its individuality and persist living (Black, 2006). Illustrating the context of the soul retaining its individuality is this example; The soul of a person who dedicated his life to virtue and scholarship will retain the specific perfections he had achieved, and his soul's state will be distinct from that of someone who lived a corrupt life. This means that after death, souls are not uniform but exist at different levels of perfection, providing a philosophical basis for the concepts of a final judgment or afterlife.

In the context of 'second actuality' proposed by Aristotle, Ibn Sina similarly proposed a slight variation to it – 'second perfection' (Rahman, 1952; Inati, 2001). The first perfection is the soul itself, which gives the potential for life activities, while second perfection is the actual performance of those life activities. A sleeping person still has a soul. His body is not actively sensing or thinking, but it has the potential to do so because it is informed by the soul. The soul is the 'first perfection' that makes the person a living human being, even when they are not actively doing anything. The 'second perfection' is the actual activity that the soul enables. It is the real-time execution of the powers given by the first perfection. When an individual is thinking, his intellect is in operation and when he is seeing or hearing, his senses is in operation. As the term perfection connotes the most idealistic situation where an individual can actualise himself, the 'first perfection', the highest level, will be conceptualised as the specific, ultimate, and ideal form that allows an individual to function perfectly according to the *fitrah* of being a human being (Rahman, 1952). Since 'first perfection' is specific to an individual being, the 'second perfection' indicates the degree of which an individual can actualise that will vary in comparison to another individual. A soul's 'second perfection' in an individual's life, is a process where he will strive to his level of ideal perfection.

IBN SINA'S PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE SOUL ONTOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Ontology concerns the nature and structure of being or existence (Guarino, Oberle, and Staab, 2009). In philosophical inquiry, it examines what kinds of things exist and what it means

for something to exist, whether in physical of non-physical form. Within the scope of this paper, the ontological discussion of the soul explores its nature and mode of existence, its relationship with the body, and the question of its immortality.

Ibn Sina described soul as the 'first perfection,' a substance with duality as its nature, and posited it as an immaterial substance separate from the body (Black, 2006). He argues that the soul is not merely a function of the body, but an independent entity that governs it and can survive its death (Inati, 2001). The soul is also postulated as a self-subsistent substance holding a unique creation of the active or agent intellect (al-'aql al-fa''āl), the true cause of the human existence (Black, 2006).

The Nature and Existence of the Soul – Actuality and Potentiality

Ibn Sina begins by defining the soul as the "first perfection" of a natural, organic body (Sebti, 2012). This means the soul is the form that gives a body the potential to perform life activities (such as growth, sensation, and thought). This is a functional definition that establishes the soul's role as the principle of life. The discussion on the actuality and potentiality may be referred in the previous section of "Definition of Soul."

Substance Dualism, Immortality, and Conjunction

Ibn Sina also argues that the human soul is an immaterial substance, not a body or a power within a body and able to exist independently of the body (Black, 2006; Kaukua, 2015). His most famous argument for this is the "Flying Man" thought experiment. The explication of this experiment posed a major question of when a man is completely deprived of any sensory stimulation, would he still be able to affirm his existence. Even in this state, the person would be conscious of their own existence, without being aware of their physical form. Ibn Sina claimed that a man would affirm his self (dhāt) or "thatness" (annīya), but they would not affirm any of their limbs, organs, or external things (Mc Ginnis, 2010; Gutas, 2013; Kaukua, 2015). In other words, one would affirm his self without affirming any physical dimensions either in length, breadth, or depth. This proves that the soul is a substance distinct from the body and is not dependent on physical experience for its existence. The soul is a complete substance in itself, not a quality or accident of the body. Its existence is not contingent upon matter, allowing it to be immortal and unchangeable. The soul acts as the efficient, formal, and final cause for the body's activities, but it is not a matter from which the body is made.

Agent or Active Intellect, Concomitant Creation, and Individuality

Ibn Sina's stand on the immortality of the soul is also connected to the notion that it does not pre-exist the body (as suggested by Plato) (Avicenna, 2009). Soul is created at the moment when the body is ready to receive it and thus, each soul is unique and is tied to the specific body from its inception – capturing the individuality aspects of the soul (Black, 2006). The human soul is perfected or created by the Agent or Active Intellect (al-āql al-fā'al) (McGinnis, 2010; Gutas, 2024). Agent intellect creates the human soul at the same exact time a physical body is biologically ready to receive it. It is a process of simultaneous (concomitant) creation where the soul is brought into existence to inform or give life and form to a specific, unique body (Marmura, 2008). The immortality of the soul is a condition whereby it endures

or survive the death of the physical body it ensouled, a body that was originally created in conjunction with it.

Since it is stated that the agent intellect creates the human's soul, ontologically, there is a connection between it and the soul. Agent intellect is described as a distinct and separate divine substance, the final and direct cause for the human soul (Avicenna, 2009; Marmura, 2008). It is not a form of power or energy that belongs to human, instead, it is a separate immaterial substance in its own self that acts upon the human intellect, bringing about the process of intellectually establishing perception. It is, however, the lowest of the other separate immaterial intelligences (the other nine celestial intelligences) on Ibn Sina's emanative cosmology (Avicenna, 2009; McGinnis, 2010). Nevertheless, the agent intellect is the highest level of intellection that the human soul can connect with, in comprehending intelligible and universal. It is the bridge between the immaterial, divine world and the material, sublunar world of human experience. The human soul, through its intellectual faculties, strives to unite with the agent intellect to actualise its potential for knowledge. Similar to the agent intellect, all of these intelligences are pure immaterial minds and are not physical bodies or forces. Their perpetual intellectual activities allowed them to understand intelligible (anything that can be grasped by the intellect) and universals (specific types of intelligible). Their very act of existence can be described as that of act of thought. The human soul by nature is able to reach the intelligible realm and, in particular, to create contact with the active intellect, in its quest to comprehend intelligible and universal (Menn, 2013). Hence, the agent intellect serves as the major cause for the actualisation of all human knowledge (Avicenna, 2009).

Soul and Eschatology

Ibn Sina also posited that the establishment of the perfection state of the soul in the afterlife is not uniformed, dependent upon how it established itself in its worldly life (Marmura, 2008). This differentiated afterlife context serves as the foundation of the final judgment and the hereafter, fashioned in support of the very nature of man's soul. Man can either achieved intellectual perfection of moral perfection as the soul's afterlife state (Black, 2006; Marmura, 2008). The former depicts the soul's achievement in perfecting or actualizing its intellectual potential by acquiring knowledge and grasping intelligible and universals, while the latter merely depicts the soul's success in purifying itself from the bodily desires, passions, as well as vices (Black, 2006). Based on these dual perfection notions, soul attains its perfection via the simple but abstract terms of happiness and pain in the hereafter (McGinnis, 2010). Hereafter happiness in the soul perfection context is accustomed to the achievement of both intellectual and moral perfection, where the soul managed to discipline its earthly existence and attained a pure intellectual state of contemplating the higher intelligences, and ultimately God – a perfect and purified soul (Black, 2006; McGinnis, 2010). Hereafter pain on the other hand is the opposite of happiness where the soul managed to achieve its perfection to a certain extent, retaining its complete sense of self, but still aware of its inability to achieve pure intellectual state it should achieved due to its spiritual impurities – perhaps suitable to be labelled as imperfect or sullied soul (Marmura, 2008; Avicenna, 2005). Perhaps, an ultimate state of a man's soul can possibly be described as to perfect itself by acquiring all possible intelligible and universal truths and achieve unification with the state and nature of the agent intellect.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Epistemology is the part of philosophy that studies the nature, origin, and limits of human knowledge itself – what it is, where it comes from, and what we can know (Britannica, 2024). In the context of this paper, it is referring to how the soul acquires knowledge and what does that process reveals about the soul's nature. It is a theory that connects how we know things with what and who we are.

Hierarchical Organisation of the Soul and Its Faculties

Ibn Sina suggested his epistemological understanding of the soul by positing that the soul is the seat of perception, imagination, and intellection (McGinnis, 2010). He described soul as a single immaterial substance with various powers or faculties in a hierarchical organisation from the lowest vegetative soul, animal soul (owning the perception and imagination power of faculties), to the highest tier of the rational soul (possessing the intellection faculty or power) (Avicenna, 2009; Black, 2006; McGinnis, 2010). Vegetative soul is the most basic level of soul responsible for essential bodily functions such as reproduction, growth, and nutrition, and this part of the soul dependent upon its bodily matter and cannot function or even exist without it (Rahman, 1952; McGinnis, 2010). The animal soul will subsume the faculty of the vegetative soul and uphold additional faculties of motive and perceptive (sometimes the terms power of sensation, imagination, and voluntary movement are interchangeably used) (Rahman, 1952; McGinnis, 2010). Likewise, it is also dependent upon the bodily matter to function. Rational soul or what Ibn Sina termed as intellect is the highest level of human's soul. It possesses all lower faculties plus its unique defining faculties of practical versus theoretical intelligences (McGinnis, 2010: Gutas, 2014). The rational soul is considered immaterial and does not need a bodily organ for its core activity of comprehending universals (Rahman, 1952).

Ibn Sina described the "animal soul" as owning two faculties – the motive and perceptive faculties (McGinnis, 2010). The motive faculty uphold two different functions of: 1) generating impulses or appetence (or appetite), which is triggered when a desired or disliked image is registered in the imagination. This appetency has two sub-faculties – one for seeking things imagined to be pleasant or useful and desirable (desire) and another for avoiding things imagines to be harmful or destructive (anger); 2) executing active functions of distributing physical power through the nerves and muscles to result in the execution of one's movement (Rahman, 1952).

The perceptive faculty on the other hand is responsible for apprehending the external world and is divided into external and internal senses. The external senses are the five familiar senses – sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell, faculties located in specific organs and nerves in the brain that perceive the forms of things transmitted to them (e.g., the eye as an external sense organ perceives the form of the tree – its shape, size, and colour based on how these forms are transmitted to one's eye. The perception happens when the forms are imprinted on the eye's internal structures, allowing one's visual faculty to register them. Ibn Sina described the internal sense of the animal soul perceptive faculty as a bridge between the external senses and the rational soul, each of them hold a specific function and a designated location in the ventricles of the brain (Rahman, 1952; Gutas, 2024). There are five faculties of the internal

senses: 1) common sense (*al-hiss al-mushtarak*) (also labelled as "fantasia"), 2) retentive imagination (*al-khayaliyya*)(or also known as form-bearing faculty), 3) compositive imagination (transformed into cogitative faculty in man) (*al-mutakhayyaila*), 4) estimative (al-wahmiyya), and 5) memorative/recollective (al-hafiza) (Avicenna, 2005; McGinnis, 2010).

Ibn Sina described the rational soul as an immaterial and indivisible substance with a structure that is not defined by physical parts but by its functional stage of development and its relationship with a separate divine entity known as active or agent intellect (Rahman, 1952; Avicenna, 2005; McGinnis, 2010). This is his major break from Aristotelian philosophy that emphasised the soul as the form of the body, thus inseparable.

The structure of the rational soul, thus, can be understood as a developmental process with each stage representing a transition from potentiality to actuality in comprehending universal knowledge (this is unlike the transition from potentiality to actuality discussed in earlier sections that represent the actualisation of material existence). This developmental process is also known as the internal structure of the rational faculty and they are hierarchical in nature, where each stage represents a progressive ascension from a state of pure potential to one of full actuality, with each level or stage building upon the one before it (Rahman, 1952; Avicenna, 2005). McGinnis (2010) deliberated the three stages as: 1) Material or potential intellect (al-'aql al-hayūlānī) – the lowest of the three stages representing pure potentiality akin to a blank slate that has no knowledge but only the capacity to acquire it. It is considered the foundational stage on which all other intellection development is built; 2) Dispositional intellect (sometimes labelled as in habitu intellect) (al-'aql bi'l-malakah) – the intermediate level where it has actualised some of its potential by acquiring basic, self-evident truths. It is no longer a pure blank slate because it has a acquired some intellection "habit" and is always contemplating and considering universal truths. The knowledge now resides in the soul, ready to be used (it is still considered as "latent"). The knowledge is stored, or "present," in a state of potentiality that can be triggered into actuality when needed; and 3) Acquired intellect (al-'aql al-mustafād) – an advanced state of potentiality. This is where the human intellect is "actually" thinking and has a richer repertoire of concepts and systematic knowledge. At this point the soul no longer just possesses knowledge as a latent "habit," it is now actively contemplating and in direct union with the universal truths (the intellect has yet to achieve its final and perfect conjunction with the agent or active intellect). Davidson (1992), on the other hand, though in agreement with McGinnis (2010) on Ibn Sina's work on the developmental process of the rational soul, utilised the term "actual intellect" (a translation of al-'aql al-fi'li) in place of acquired intellect. He stated that Ibn Sina utilised another term, "acquired intellect with culmination" (or "holy intellect"), to indicate the human intellect achieving a perfect disposition and can readily establish a conjunction or unification with the agent or active intellect. Hence, in totality, there are actually four level of the rational soul developmental process: 1) material or potential intellect, 2) dispositional or in-habitu intellect, 3) actual intellect, and 4) acquired or holy intellect (Davidson, 1992).

The intellectual development of the rational soul is not a purely internal or self-contained process but is dependent on an external, immaterial being as well, the agent or active intellect (al-aql al-fa'al) (Avicenna, 2005; Hasse, 2013). This is a crucial part of the soul's epistemological structure. Ibn Sina proposed that the agent or active intellect – the final entity of the celestial intelligences, is the ultimate source of all intelligible forms. The human intellect

does not abstract these forms from material objects as Aristotle believed (Shields, 2020). For Aristotle, the universal concept is inherent in the particular object. The human intellect, through its sensory faculties and internal senses, actively abstracts the universal form directly from the sensory data of a physical object. The form of "horseness," for example, is latent within every individual horse. The intellect's job is to strip away the matter (e.g., this specific horse's colour, size, and location) to reveal the universal or common form of a horse, despite all other attached characteristics to it, which is then only intelligible to the mind. In this model, the human intellect is the sole and active agent of abstraction. Unlike Aristotle, Avicenna, who was influenced by Neoplatonism, proposed a different model. He believed that the agent intellect, a separate, immaterial entity, is the ultimate source of all universal forms (Davidson, 1992; McGinnis, 2010; Hasse, 2013). The human intellect's role is not to abstract the universal from entity of matter, but to prepare itself to receive the universal concept. The process of abstraction, using the internal senses, will make ready the human soul. Once the soul has been sufficiently prepared, the agent intellect emanates the universal form, illuminating the human mind with the concept. Avicenna likened the agent intellect to the sun, which illuminates both the universal concepts and the human intellect, making knowledge possible (Rahman, 1952). The sun (agent intellect) is the source of light (knowledge), and the eyes (the internal senses) must be open and ready to receive that light, but they don't produce it themselves.

Active and Passive Power of Human Intellect

In Ibn Sina's epistemological paradigm, the relationship between the passive and the active power is central to the understanding of how the human soul and intellect acquire knowledge. The passive powers handle the initial reception and storage of sensory data, while the single active power manipulates this data to prepare the soul for higher, universal knowledge. Ibn Sina postulated the main idea that human soul prepares itself to receive knowledge from the active intellect, which acts as a "giver of forms" (wāhib al-ṣuwar)(Davidson, 1992). Thus, the process of knowing is not merely an internal, self-sufficient process but an external, celestial one where the human soul prepares itself to receive knowledge from a divine, external source of the agent or active intellect.

In this context, Ibn Sina epistemologically deliberated the intellect in terms of its nature of activity, differentiating between its active and passive states or power (McGinnis, 2010). The passive powers – the common sense, formative imagination, estimative faculty, and retentive/recollective faculty – belong to the animal soul and are tied to the physical body and its senses. These faculties are the foundational, preparatory stage for all knowledge. They are passive because their function is to merely receive and store impressions from the material world. For example, the common sense simply unifies what the eyes see and what the ears hear, while the imagination simply stores these unified images. They do not generate new information from scratch but serve as a source for sensory experience. The passive power is what makes the transition from not knowing to knowing possible for the rational soul. Of the five faculties of the internal senses, the faculties of common sense and retentive passively receive forms and retain forms consecutively, while the estimative and retentive faculties passively perceive and retain intentions successively (Davidson, 1992; Hasse, 2013).

The compositive imagination faculty of the internal senses is the bridge between the animal and rational souls (Davidson, 1992). It is the only active power among the internal

senses. It manipulates the passive data and thus, it begins to emulate the creative function of the rational soul. Its role is to take the passively received and stored "forms" and "intentions" (like a horse and the idea of wings) and actively combine or separate them to create a new, imaginative idea (like a winged horse). The active power of the intellect basically will advance the perceptual process by eventually acting upon it. The intellect with its active power moves beyond simple perception and storage toward a more complex, creative function. Its ability to combine and separate forms (e.g., creating an image of a fictitious winged horse based on the understanding of the characteristics of a horse and the ability of a common winged animal) is a vital step. In reference to the soul, this active manipulation prepares the soul to move beyond mere sense perception, its ultimate core characteristic. It is the part of the soul that comprehends intelligible forms (universal concepts) which are not derived from the senses but are received from the Agent or Active Intellect (Rahman, 1952). The active and passive powers of the animal soul provide the necessary raw material and practice in manipulation, preparing the rational soul to achieve its highest perfection, the final and complete conjunction or unification with the Agent or Active Intellect, the source of all true knowledge (McGinnis, 2010).

AXIOLOGICAL (VALUE-BASED) FRAMEWORK

Axiology is the philosophical study of value (Britannica, n.d.). It investigates the nature of what is good, desirable, and valuable, as well as the standards for judging the value. For Ibn Sina, a good life is not just about being a good person, it's the way one's soul gets better and finds its way back to God. The best thing one's soul can do is to become perfect, and to do that, it has to be ethical and wise.

The Perfection of Soul as the Ultimate Good

Ibn Sina depicted the axiological framework when he described the soul embracing a value that it has to be perfected to achieve its "ultimate good" (al-khāyr al-aqŝā) as stated in the Metaphysic of Healing book, Book Nine - "On the emanation of things from the first governance and the return to Him," Chapter Two - "That the proximate mover of the heavens is neither a nature nor an intellect but a soul, and that the remote principle is an intellect," item 17 stated that the "… ultimate good necessitates the [state of] remaining at the highest degree of perfection that belongs to a thing permanently." (Avicenna, 2005, p. 314). The final destination of the soul, thus, can be concluded as to gain Divine or Holy Intellect, a state of "acquired intellect with culmination or conjunction" (Davidson, 1952). On this note, the understanding of the soul has to be not that of a static entity; instead, it is a dynamic substance that begins in an empty state of potentiality, ready to be fully actualised. Its purpose is to ascend a value-based hierarchy of existence, moving from a low state of potentiality to a high state of perfection. This perfection is achieved through the soul's own activity and is considered the ultimate purpose of human existence. This state of perfection is never tied to any forms of material gains, instead, it is tied to the soul's development of intellection and ethical virtues.

The Return of Soul to Divinity, an Ethical Self-Cultivation Journey

The soul's journey to perfection is profoundly ethical in its nature. The soul has to strive to embrace moral virtues, which in turn can purify it, making it more capable of intellectual and spiritual ascension (Davidson, 1992). The soul ultimate purpose, what known as the

perfection, is to free itself from the bodily influence and connect or return to its divine origin. This is supported by the exact statement in The Metaphysics of Healing, Book Nine - **"**The emanation of things from the first governance," Chapter Seven, titled "Concerning "the return," [the hereafter]," item 25 specified that " … if the soul is separated from the body with no previous attachment to the direction above them, indicative of not attaining perfection and higher happiness, thus it remains unfulfilled, it will suffer a real misery when all the bodily dispositions being directed downwards, there will be no celestial materials for the soul's action" (Avicenna, 2005, p. 356). This statement clearly depicts the value of soul is connected to its divine origin with the phrase "… previous attachment to the direction above them indicative of not attaining perfection and higher happiness, thus it remains unfulfilled …" The phrase "celestial materials" is also indicative that the soul can't be detached from its divinity element or its spiritual origin, the true depiction of the soul's nature. When an individual practices ethical self-cultivation, such as practising justice, patience, and self-restraint, he is preparing his soul to receive knowledge from the Agent or Active Intellect. This process finishes in a state of "conjunction" (ittiṣāl) or unification with the divinity, representing the soul's ultimate value and its return to its purest of spiritual origin (McGinnis, 2010).

CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF IBN SINA'S CONCEPTION OF THE SOUL

Contemporary mainstream psychology is primarily a scientific and empirical field that focuses on the study of behaviour and mental processes (Myers & DeWall, 2020). It is largely rooted in a biopsychosocial model which views human experience as a product of interacting biological, psychological, and social factors (Frankel, Quill, & McDaniel, 2003). Such context of the extant mainstream psychology implied the rigorous use of research method in its commitment to scientific and empirical approaches. Its heavy biologically grounded emphasis a strong orientation on neuroscience, genetics, and neurochemistry to explain human's actions and thoughts. The emphasis on measurable phenomena leads to a preference for observable data and quantifiable processes, exhibiting reductionist tendencies (Gleitman, Fridlund, & Reisberg, 2011). Such tendencies inclined to break down complex phenomena like consciousness and personality to simpler, more fundamental components like neural pathways or chemical reactions. If consciousness and personality, for instance, are reduced to its fundamental component of neural pathway or chemical reactions, the subjective, qualitative richness of human experiences is lost. Such scientifically rigorous approach almost always fails to answer fundamental questions that largely relate to consciousness, such as, why does a particular neural activity produce specific subjective personal experience associated with it. Additionally, a chemical reaction does not have a purpose, but yet, humans are driven by a sense of purpose and meaning. By reducing human motivation to biological drives, psychology may overlook the teleological and axiological dimensions of human life. In summary, the focus on what is easily measured can create a most profound loss on the unique human aspects of the soul and mind, such that the extant psychology discipline offers a precise, but potentially incomprehensive picture of what is meant to be a human.

Ibn Sina's philosophical framework of the soul is largely not aligned with the extant mainstream psychology's current materialist and empirical focus. His concepts of an immaterial soul, an external Agent Intellect, and a value-based cosmic hierarchy exist outside the typical scope of modern psychological inquiry. However, his work can add to contemporary psychology by offering a more holistic and comprehensive framework for understanding the

human person. Mainstream psychology is fundamentally committed to the scientific method, focusing on observable behaviour, neural processes, and measurable mental states. Ibn Sina's core ideas, such as the immateriality of the soul proven by the “Floating Man” thought experiment, are metaphysical claims that cannot be empirically tested. The concept of an external Agent or Active Intellect as the source of universal knowledge also falls outside the bounds of a science that seeks internal, biological explanations for cognition. Despite the fundamental differences, there are points of conceptual resonance. Ibn Sina's emphasis on the senses as the starting point of knowledge acquisition aligns with empirical psychology (Avicenna, 2005). His recognition of distinct internal faculties like the compositive imagination and memory anticipates modern cognitive psychology's modular view of the mind.

Ibn Sina’s framework can enrich contemporary psychology by reintroducing a holistic, purposive dimension to the study of the human being. By positing the soul as an immaterial substance distinct from the body, Ibn Sina’s philosophy challenges the reductionist tendency to equate the self with the brain. This can open up a more profound discussion on consciousness, identity, and the mind-body problem, issues that mainstream psychology often finds difficult to address. Mainstream psychology, particularly fields like positive psychology, is increasingly interested in concepts like well-being and meaning. Ibn Sina’s axiological framework, where the soul’s progression toward perfection is the ultimate good, provides a rich, teleological model for this. It suggests that psychological health is not just the absence of illness but the active pursuit of one's highest potential. Ibn Sina’s view that ethical self-cultivation is essential for intellectual development offers a model for integrated therapeutic practices. It suggests that psychological well-being is not separate from moral development, encouraging a more holistic approach that considers a person's values and spiritual life as integral to their mental health.

The argument that psychology must be strictly materialistic to be scientific is a philosophical assumption, not a scientific law. Sayer's (1992) work provides a critique of reductionism across the social sciences. He argues that reducing complex phenomena to their simplest physical components is a methodological choice, not a necessary condition for scientific inquiry. In the context of psychology, this means that a scholar's decision to focus solely on neural pathways or chemical reactions is based on a philosophical commitment to materialism, not on the inherent limitations of the scientific method itself. The scientific method can, in principle, be applied to non-material phenomena through systematic observation of subjective experience and its effects, which is a key point in philosophical debates about consciousness. In this context, a certain understanding had to be built up emphasising that science is not limited to the physical phenomenon only. The scientific method that entails the processes of observation, hypothesis, and verification, while often applied to the physical world, its principles can be adapted. For example, in fields like consciousness studies, subjective experience can be systematically observed and analysed, even if it's not a physical and empirical entity. Another instance of the extant mainstream psychology focusing only on the brain, will create a form of reductionism, where complex phenomena are oversimplified. As Avicenna's “Floating Man” argument suggests, the immediate awareness of the self cannot be reduced to a physical brain, indicating a reality beyond mere material-based understanding.

The situation calls for a more comprehensive science that is not about rejecting science, but about what should be included in a true science of a being. A true comprehensive discipline of psychology should not shy away from certain immaterial aspects of a being and his experiences. What it takes is to redefine the scope of extant psychology. Ibn Sina's framework for instance suggested a more integrated approach that studies the human being as a whole – to include the body, the mind, and the soul. This broader definition allows for the study of phenomena like spirituality, purpose, and selfhood, which are central to human well-being and cannot be fully explained by brain activity alone. Incorporating Ibn Sina's idea does not mean that the mainstream psychology's focus on neuroscience and empirical research should be abandoned. His framework can provide guiding questions for research. For example, his concept of ethical self-cultivation can be a framework for studying the psychological benefits of virtue, and his idea of the soul's purpose can inform research in positive psychology and meaning making, which has now been considered a fundamental human process (Cleveland Clinic, n.d.; Seligman, 2011).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Ibn Sina's philosophical genius, cultivated in the rich intellectual environment of his youth, culminated in a profound and systematic conception of the soul that continues to resonate today. His work on the soul's ontological independence, its epistemological ascent, and its ultimate axiological purpose provides a comprehensive framework that is notably absent from much of contemporary psychology.

While mainstream psychology has provided invaluable insights through its commitment to empirical science and the biopsychosocial model, it often falls short in addressing the most fundamental questions of human existence. By reducing consciousness to neural pathways and purpose to chemical reactions, it overlooks the very aspects of life that make it most meaningful. Ibn Sina's framework, in contrast, offers an alternative – a robust model that not only acknowledges the self as an immaterial reality but also embeds ethics and spiritual purpose as integral to human well-being.

Ultimately, a more comprehensive and inclusive science of the human being demands that we look beyond the confines of purely physical inquiry. The enduring legacy of Ibn Sina lies in his timeless wisdom, reminding us that to truly understand the human mind, we must also understand the nature of the soul. By integrating his holistic framework into modern psychological thought, we can transcend the limitations of reductionism and embark on a new, more complete journey to understand the human psyche in all its complexity.

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Integrating Al-Ghazali's Insights of Soul to the Study of Human Cognition

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ABSTRACT

Al-Ghazali (1058-1111), one of the most influential scholars in Islamic intellectual history, offered profound insights to the understanding of the human soul (nafs) through his integrative approach. This paper explores Al-Ghazali's intellectual legacy, with a focus on his conception of the soul drawing from his biography and corpus of works such as Ihya' Ulum al-Din (The Revival of the Religious Sciences) and Maʿārij al-Quds fī Madārij Maʿrifat al-Nafs (The Ascension of the Holy in the Steps of Knowing the Soul). *The discussion traces Al-Ghazali's philosophical thoughts on the epistemological, ontological and axiological perspectives underpinning his conception of soul. The final section considers the contemporary relevance of Al-Ghazali's thought to the modern study of human cognition. This paper calls for a renewed engagement with classical Islamic conceptions of human nature to expand the epistemological boundaries of the modern study of mind and behavior.*

Keywords: *Al-Ghazali, Axiology, Epistemology, Ontology, Soul, Human cognition*

INTRODUCTION

Al-Ghazali is widely recognised as one of the most prominent, prolific, renowned, and distinguished scholars in the Muslim world (Griffel, 2014, Ali and Almulla, 2023). He is considered as one of the greatest classical Muslim thinkers whose ideas remain relevant across time and fresh to be discussed in modern times. The present paper aims to describe and discuss the thoughts of Al-Ghazali, particularly his thoughts on the nature and development of the soul and how it can be integrated to the contemporary study of human cognition.

The first part of the paper describes his biography and scholarly contributions to the understanding of soul. This is followed by his philosophical foundations on the nature and development of the soul relating to the epistemological, ontological and axiological aspects of knowledge. The paper concludes with a discussion and suggestions on how Al-Ghazali's insights might be meaningfully integrated into contemporary study of human cognition.

In the following paragraphs, Al-Ghazali's biography and some of his notable works and contributions are described. The description draws on a range of widely consulted scholarly and reference sources including the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (n.d), the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Nakamura, n.d.), and *Encyclopædia Britannica* (n.d.). Where relevant, details on Al-Ghazali's background and notable works are supplemented with some academic reference works, as indicated below.

Background and Biography

The full name of Al-Ghazali is Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad. He was born in the year of 1058 CE, 450 *Hijra.* His birth town is Tabaran, which is located in a small village named Ghulazah. This village is in a district of Tus, in Khurasan, currently known as Iran. It was said that the name "Al-Ghazali'" was due to his origin i.e., a small village named Ghulazah (Syafril, 2017), while in other writings (e.g., Elkhaisy-Friemuth, 2006), it is said that the name of Al-Ghazali is due to his father who worked as a spinner (*Ghazzal*).

Al-Ghazali belongs to a family who put very high regard on learning and quest for knowledge. His early education started with his own father in his birthplace in Tus. He learned basic religious knowledge, the Qur'ān, and Prophetic traditions with his father. His father passed away while he was still at a young age, and his guardian, who took over to take care of him, sent him to get a proper education. At the age of 15, he continued studying Arabic language and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh)* under his tutor al-Radhkani. Three years later, he travelled to Jurjan, a flourishing centre of learning at that time and continued studying for another two years. Al-Ghazali spent some years of study under some scholars such as Imam Haramayn al-Juwayni, who was the most famous theologian and master of Islamic jurisprudence of his time in Nishapur. This means that even from an early age, Al-Ghazali has committed himself to the pursuit of knowledge at a great educational institution as well as under the teaching of a great scholar in the area.

In the year of 478 *Hijra,* when he was about 28 years old, he started to work under the leadership of Nizam al-Mulk. Nizam al-Mulk was a powerful vizier or a high-ranking political advisor for the Turkish Sultans, the rulers for the great Seljuk empires. Nizam al Mulk's name was also closely referred to as the founder and patron of a series of educational centres in Iran and Iraq, which were called after his name Nizamiyyah. At the court of Nizam al-Mulk, Al-Ghazali lived the life of a 'court jurist'. He took part in political debates, learned about political disputes and argumentation and wrote books. In addition, he pursued his core interest in studying philosophy, in particular, Greek and Islamic philosophy. He studied the philosophical thoughts of Aristotle, Plato and Plotinus, as well as those of Ibn Sina and al Farabi thoroughly. It was Nizam al-Mulk who noticed Al-Ghazali's outstanding scholarship and intellectual ability, and because of that, he appointed him as a professor at the Nizamiyyah University of Baghdad, the most famous and one of the most reputable learning institutions in Baghdad at that time (Makdisi, 1961, Kaya, 2023). With the appointment, Al-Ghazali had attained a position of great importance and was most sought after in the academic world in his early 30s. Since then, his name continued to be known as a man with great intelligence. His fame spread and became the pride of that distinguished educational institution.

Al-Ghazali's intellectual journey is marked by a crucial turning point. After serving for several years in a prestigious academic position, he underwent a profound paradigm shift at the age of 38 years old, leading him to have a different outlook towards life. This shift of paradigm experienced by Al-Ghazali was referred to as a crisis (Albertini, 2005), and in some other writings (e.g., Rosmizi & Yacel, 2016, Marmura, 2002, Abdul Razak & Fatah Yasin, 2024)), it was explicitly termed a severe spiritual crisis or a soul-searching journey. This spiritual crisis which emerged at the height of his academic and professional success reflect a deep internal conflict between his engagement with the material world and his yearning for ultimate truth

and fulfilment in the hereafter. Despite his vast knowledge, great intellectual ability and celebrated academic position that he owned, he began to feel that all those are external, highly materialistic and were meant only for the present world. He felt those worldly affairs had diverted him from the absolute truth, and due to that, he started to embark in a spiritual, soul-searching journey in search of the absolute truth, certainty and inner peace.

The spiritual crisis that Al-Ghazali experienced may have resulted from the powerful influence of Sufism in his life. At a very young age, he was surrounded by people who were Sufis. His father was a Sufi, and after his father's death, Al-Ghazali was sent to learn from a great Sufi al-Radhkani. Nizam al Mulk, his leader and mentor at Nizamiyyah institution, was also inclined towards Sufism. Hence, with this close link to Sufism combined with the hunger to achieve pure spiritual truth, he left behind his high rank and renowned position of influence and other worldly possessions and secluded himself from public life.

In his late 30s, he started to leave his distinguished career in Baghdad and travelled to various Muslim countries such as Damascus, Jerusalem and Mecca in the pursuit of unveiling truth After about 11 years in seclusion and spiritual journey, he returned to teaching by re-joining Nizamiyyah College in Nishapur. Not long after that, he went back to his hometown Tus and opened his own *madrasah* or religious school. On his return to Baghdad, he was a philosopher and a theologist who have attained spiritual certainty. He led an active spiritual public life who devoted himself to teaching, writing and sharing his personal spiritual experiences.

Al-Ghazali's depth of knowledge across multiple disciplines including philosophy, theology, politics, human psychology and spirituality and the sagacity of his writings underscore the remarkable breadth and depth of his intellectual and spiritual engagement. According to Watt, 1963), he can be viewed as the prototype of the Muslim intellectual. Owing to this exceptional scholarship, he was honoured with several distinguished titles throughout Islamic history. He was known as "*Hujjatul Islam*" or "*Al-hujjah al-Islam*" (The proof of Islam) (Rahman and Yücel, 2016, Marmura, 2002), "*Zayn al-din*" (The Ornament of Faith), "*Al-mujaddid*" (a reformist or renewer), and according to Sa'ari (1999) and Rahman and Yücel (2016), his great stature is comparable to the standard of the four *Imams* of *Sunni Mazhab* in Islam.

Al-Ghazali was indeed an outstanding and distinguished scholar. Al-Ghazali passed away in 1111 or 505 Hijra at the age of 53 in his hometown Tus. He led a remarkable life devoted to the pursuit of knowledge, spiritual refinement and intellectual reform. His legacy continues to inspire reflections and offer guidance in addressing intellectual and spiritual challenges of the modern days.

Notable Works and Contributions

Al-Ghazali was a prolific Muslim thinker and scholar with multiple expertise. He excelled as a philosopher, theologian, jurist, and at the same time a great *Sufi*. He was acknowledged as an expert in the field of philosophy, theology, jurisprudence (*fiqh)* and legal theory (*usul al-fiqh)*, ethics and Sufism (Musrifah, 2019). His ability to embody these diverse roles stemmed from his vast encyclopaedic knowledge and insightful writings across each

discipline of knowledge. While the full scope of his works is too extensive to detail here, the following highlights represent Al-Ghazali's most notable and enduring contributions related to soul, many of which are considered seminal works in Islamic thought.

Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn (The Revival of the Religious Sciences)

Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn is considered as one of Al Ghazali's most renowned work. It was written during his spiritual solitude (Garden, 2014, Abdul Razak & Fatah Yasin, 2024) and its contents reflect the intellectual and spiritual transformation that he experienced during his period of seclusion. *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* is encyclopaedic in nature, covering a wide range of knowledge, including Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), theology *(ʻaqidah*), Sufism (*tasawwuf*), ethics, moral, and philosophy. The corpus of *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* is said to represent a series of new interpretations of Islamic thoughts in the sense that it advance people's understanding not only in general knowledge but in worship, ethics, morality, behaviour, purification of soul and spiritually destructive acts and conditions (Rosmizi & Yacel, 2016). In a similar vein, the book is regarded as very influential, and it was due to this greatest work that Al-Ghazali was known as *'Al Mujaddid'* (The Renewer) of the century (Garden, 2014).

Ihya' Ulum al-Din consists of four volumes, each of which comprises of ten chapters. The first volume is commonly known as The Book of Worship or devotional practice (*Rub'al-ibadat)*. It deals with knowledge, belief, and individual forms of worship such as purity, prayer, charity, fasting, pilgrimage and so forth. The second volume is The Book of Worldly Affairs (*Rub'al-adat*), which deals with social responsibility and customs. The third and the fourth volumes are The Book of Destructive Evil (*Rub'al-muhlikat*) and The Book of Constructive Virtues (*Rub'al-munjiyat*), respectively. It is in both of these volumes Al Ghazali wrote about many aspects of the human soul or self (*nafs*). The third volume is devoted to a key section called *Kitab Sharh 'Ajaib al-Qalb* (Marvels of the Heart) and it is in this section that Al-Ghazali wrote extensively about the four core faculties, namely the human heart (*qalb*), the soul (*nafs*), the spirit (*ruh*), the intellect *(ʻaql*). Al-Ghazali also wrote about the vices or diseases (*muhlikat*) that lead to the destruction of one's soul in the third volume, while the fourth volume presents the virtues and practices (*munjiyat*) that purify and elevate soul toward salvation (Ghazali.org, n.d).

Kimiya al Sa'adah (The Alchemy of Happiness)

Another notable book written by Al-Ghazali is *Kimiya al Sa'adah* (The Alchemy of Happiness). This is one of the great works that serves as a concise and simplified summary of *Ihya' Ulum al-Din.* The book is divided into four parts, mirroring the four volumes of *Ihya' Ulum al-Din,* but in a much shorter version. The first part is on self-knowledge, which according to Al-Ghazali becomes the key to knowing God, while the second part deals with the purification of the soul. Part three of the book focuses on the conduct of worldly responsibilities and the final part maps out the spiritual path to God and the ultimate destiny of the soul. In short, in this book Al Ghazali describe how happiness or *sa'adah*, defined not as worldly pleasure, but as nearness to God, can be achieved by means of soul purification and transformation from the base self (*nafs*) into a pure and luminous soul. Al-Ghazali emphasises that the essence of eternal happiness resides in the soul's journey of self-knowledge, soul purification and spiritual transformation.

Maʿārij al-Quds fī Madārij Maʿrifat al-Nafs (The Ascension of the Holy in the Steps of Knowing the Soul)

This essential work of Al Ghazali focuses almost entirely on the soul, its nature, diseases, purification and its ultimate journey toward God. This writing, which serves as a complement to his *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* is where Al Ghazali defined the four synonymous terms for the soul, which are heart (*qalb*), spirit (*ruh*), self (*nafs*) and intellect (*'aql*). In this book, Al-Ghazali emphasises the primacy of self-knowledge as a pathway to divine proximity. He asserts that *"he who knows himself knows his Lord (man 'arafanafsahu faqad 'arafa rabbahu)* (Al-Ghazali.org, n.d).

Mishkat al 'Anwar (The Niche of Lights)

This is one of Al-Ghazali's most spiritually and philosophically significant works (Al Ghazali, 1998). Through the metaphor of light, Al-Ghazali discussed the metaphysical and spiritual dimensions of human existence represented by a hierarchy of reality in which God is the only True Light, and all created beings reflect that light to varying degrees based on their spiritual purity. Al-Ghazali discusses how the human soul, particularly the heart (*qalb*), can serve as a polished mirror that reflects divine truth. However, when obscured by worldly distractions and desires, the soul is veiled from reality. The heart is purified through remembrance (*dhikr*), discipline, and inner reflection and becomes receptive to higher knowledge. In this way, Al Ghazali offers not just a metaphysical theory but a deeply personal and transformative path toward awakening the soul to its divine origin.

In sum, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), *Kimiya al Sa'adah* (The Alchemy of Happiness), *Maʿārij al-Quds fī Madārij Maʿrifat al-Nafs* (*The Ascension of the Holy in the Steps of Knowing the Soul*) and *Mishkāt al-Anwār* (The Niche of Lights) collectively reflect the intellectual breadth and spiritual depth of Al-Ghazali's engagement with the human soul. Each work, in its own way, reveals his profound commitment to integrating reason, revelation, and spiritual practice in understanding the self. Together, they form a coherent and timeless body of thought that not only addresses the inner workings of the soul but also offers enduring insights into human nature, purpose, and the path toward inner peace and closeness to God. These works, along with many others in Al-Ghazali's corpus continue to serve as foundational references for many from the classical era to the present day.

CORE THEMES IN AL-GHAZALI'S PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHTS

Al-Ghazali is widely recognised as one of the most influential thinkers in the Islamic intellectual tradition. His philosophical thoughts integrate theology, mysticism, and rational inquiry. His works reflect a deeply integrated vision of human existence, one that harmonises the spiritual and rational dimensions of life. Central to his philosophy is the view that knowledge, existence, and ethical orientation are interconnected, with each playing a vital role in the development of the self and its relationship with Allah. This integrated framework is grounded solidly on *Tawhidic* theology, encompassing three foundational pillars of classical philosophy: ontology, axiology and epistemology. In the following section, each of these philosophical foundations is explained in relation to the discipline of psychology, with

particular emphasis on how each contribute to an understanding of human nature, values and processes of knowing.

Al-Ghazali's Ontological Perspective

Ontology refers to the philosophical study concerned with the nature of being. An ontological perspective explores fundamental questions about what it means to exist and what constitute reality (Lowe, 2002). Within the discipline of psychology, ontology addresses core questions about the nature of a human, what it means to be human and what constitutes the essence of a human and how these foundational aspects shape behaviour, consciousness and identity.

Al-Ghazali's ontological view can be traced from his writing on the first part of *Maʿārij al-Quds fī Madārij Maʿrifat al-Nafs (The Ascension of the Holy in the Steps of Knowing the Soul).* He wrote on the creation of human being with its dual nature and the relation of each one of them to the other. According to Al-Ghazali, human being is created by Allah with both physical and spiritual entities. The latter, the spiritual substance of man is referred to as the soul. In the first book in the third volume of *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* that is The Marvels of the Heart, Al-Ghazali describes the soul as a subtle, luminous and spiritual entity *(latifa rabbaniya ruhaniya)* (Shammas, 1963, Al Ghazali, 1986, 2005, p 18). The soul originates from the divine command, and it represents the true essence of a human being. Al-Ghazali firmly asserts the primacy of the soul in defining what it means to be a human. For Al-Ghazali, the essence of the human being lies not in the physical body but in the immaterial soul and because of this, this component is explained in detail in the other section of this paper. The other component of man is the physical body, which according to Al-Ghazali is temporal and perishable. The body serves merely as the vehicle or instrument through which the soul operates during worldly life.

Al-Ghazali's Axiological Perspective

Axiology is the philosophical study of values. It addresses questions related to what is considered as good, meaningful or worthy of pursuit (Rescher, 2013). In the context of psychological discipline, axiological perspectives helps shape one's understanding of the purpose and creation of human being, what are they for and what make them valuable.

According to Al-Ghazali, the ultimate aim of human's creation is to attain proximity to God and the soul is equipped for this noble purpose (Al-Ghazali, 1985). The soul is endowed with the capacity to reason and acquire knowledge that will lead to certainty and absolute truth. Central to this is Al-Ghazali's concept of *tazkiyatunnafs* (purification of soul), in that the soul needs to purify itself and strive to ensure its journey to bring man closer to God.

Al-Ghazali's Epistemological Perspective

Epistemology refers to the philosophical study that is concerned with the nature, origin and limits of human knowledge (Audi, 2011). It examines fundamental questions such as how knowledge is acquired, what counts as true knowledge and how certainty or truth is attained. In psychology, epistemological concerns are reflected in the study of how human beings acquire, process and validate knowledge (Sandoval, Greene, & Bråten, 2016).

Al-Ghazali's epistemological foundation of knowledge put equal emphasis on both revealed knowledge as found in the Qur'ān and the hadith of the Prophet as well as on acquired knowledge, which come from human interactions with nature (Ali, 1994, Alam, 2021). According to him, human beings are capable of finding certainty or absolute truth through multiple sources of knowledge including sensory perception (*hissiyah*) and rational intellect (Poya & Rizapoor, 2023). However, Al-Ghazali argued that knowledge of senses and knowledge of intellect are both limited and not sufficient to bring man to the true knowledge.

Al-Ghazali affirms the role of intuition which is a deeper and inner form of knowing rooted in the Oneness of God (*Tawhid*) as one the primary source of knowledge (Hasib, Zarkasyi and Muslih, 2024). All in all, Al-Ghazali's epistemological thought is theocentric or God-centred in nature. He argued that the human soul, by its very nature (*fiṭrah*), is created with an inherent awareness of God. As mentioned in the Quran 7:172 *" And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam – from their loins – their descendants and made them testify of themselves, [saying to them], "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we have testified". [This] – lest you should say on the day of Resurrection, "Indeed, we were of this unaware."* (Sahih International, 1997, Quran 7:172). Therefore, the pursuit of knowledge is essentially a return to this absolute truth. This perspective offers a spiritually rich framework that integrates reason, experience, and divine revelation. In this way, all forms of knowing are in a unified quest for divine understanding and spiritual fulfilment.

THE NATURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOUL ACCORDING TO AL-GHAZALI

Definition and Nature of the Soul

Al-Ghazali's ideas on the nature and development of the soul can be understood primarily from one of the volumes for his *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences) as well as his seminal works *Maʿārij al-Quds fī Madārij Maʿrifat al-Nafs (The Ascension of the Holy in the Steps of Knowing the Soul*)*, Al-Risalah al-Laduniyyah and al-Miskat al-Anwar* (Sa'ari, 1998). The third volume of *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* consists of a book called *Kitab Sharh 'Ajaib al-Qalb* (Marvels of the Heart) and it is in this book that Al-Ghazali wrote extensively about the human heart (*qalb*), the soul (*nafs*), the spirit (*ruh*), the intellect (*'aql*). Similarly, in *Maʿārij al-Quds fī Madārij Maʿrifat al-Nafs* (*The Ascension of the Holy in the Steps of Knowing the Soul),* Al-Ghazali argue that these four components are not separate entities. Rather they are of the same essence but with different functions. Al-Ghazali also wrote on the body (*jism*) and the knowledge *('ilm*), and how these are related to the soul. This book also consists of his explanation of diseases or vices of the heart that lead to the destruction of one's soul. He also wrote about the soul in his other significant works, such as *Al Risalah al Laduniyyah* and *Al-Miskat Al-Anwar* (Sa'ari, 1998).

Al-Ghazali, in many of his writings, consistently describe the soul as a subtle, luminous and spiritual entity *(latifa rabbaniya ruhaniya)* (Shammas, 1963, Sa'ari, 1998, Al Ghazali, 2005). The soul is a subtle, non-material substance, an inward component of man, hidden and invisible that becomes the core of human identity and the seat of knowledge. It is in itself and is not located in any part of the body (Elkhaisy-Friemuth, 2006). It is regarded as the 'King' to the body as it is the one that directs the body to act in accordance with what has been prescribed by the religion. It is the soul that brings individuals closer to Allah or away from Him (Ali,

1995). Al Ghazali asserts that the true essence of man lies in its spiritual component that is the soul.

The Four Faculties of the Soul and their Interactions

In the book of Marvels of Heart, Al-Ghazali wrote about the four faculties of the soul or the spiritual component of human being. They are the heart (*qalb*), intellect (‘*aql*), soul (self/*nafs*) and spirit (*ruh*). In Al-Ghazali’s works, these four concepts are used synonymously and are at the centre of this understanding of the essence of being human. Al-Attas (1990) reaffirmed these by saying that these concepts are different terminologies but can be used interchangeably to represent the spiritual component of man, i.e., the soul. In some other writings (e.g., Rothman & Coyle, 2018), these four aspects are said to represent the structures of the soul. They serve different functions or qualities, but they are all integrated and signify a subtle spiritual entity (Haque, 2004; Rothman & Coyle, 2018).

In his conceptualisation of the soul as *nafs* (self), Al-Ghazali, as cited in Sa’ari (2002), referred it to as *“a lustful force connected to the whole body jointly and is the place of origin of the blameworthy characteristics”* (page 103). This view corresponds to the Quranic notion of *nafs al ammarah bil su’,* which refers to the *nafs* that commands to evil, as mentioned in Surah Yusuf verse 53 (12:53). It denotes the state of self that is inclined to worldly desire and pleasure and may distract individuals from the remembrance of Allah. According to Al-Ghazali, this lower form of *nafs* is rooted in two fundamental drives of desire (*shahwah* or *hawa*) and anger (*ghadab*). These lower impulses are likened to internal enemies that can destruct the soul and distancing individuals from their divine origin.

Al-Ghazali conceptualised the *nafs* not just with those negative attributes. He asserts that, the *nafs* is capable of transformation and spiritual elevation. The *nafs* can be purified and be in its highest state perfection. This type of *nafs* is described in the Quran 89:27 *“[To the righteous it will be said], “O reassured soul”* (Sahih International, 1997, Quran 89:27). *Nafs muthmainnah,* referred to as the reassured soul or the soul at rest. Thus, the human self (*nafs*), by its very nature, contains both lower and higher tendencies. On one end, it is drawn to desires and impulses similar to those of animals and at the other end, it has the potential to rise toward purity and be in close divine proximity. Al-Ghazali also recognises another type of *nafs* that is *nafs al lawwamah*, the self-reproaching or self-blaming soul, which is consistent to what is stated in the Qur’ān 75:2 *“And I swear by the reproaching soul [to the certainty of resurrection]”* (Sahih International, 1997, Quran 75:2). This type of *nafs* is described to involve constant self-accountability and ethical struggle.

On the basis of the above, Al-Ghazali’s conceptualisation of the soul through the notion of *nafs* presents it with a dynamic and transformative nature. The *nafs* moves along a spiritual continuum and is capable of both moral decline and elevation. It has the potential to ascend from its base and desire-driven state to a level of perfection which is characterized by inner peace and spiritual excellence. This progression toward perfection, according to Al-Ghazali is made possible through the process of *tazkiyatunnafs* or purification of soul which involves disciplined spiritual practices, ethical conduct and conscious detachment from worldly attachments. Through this journey of self-purification, the *nafs* can be refined to reflect divine attributes and fulfil its higher purpose in drawing nearer to God.

Another subtle spiritual entity of the soul in Al-Ghazali's framework is spirit (*ruh*). In *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, Al-Ghazali wrote it as the driving force that is infused into the body by God. The *ruh* occupies the body and operates through it. The *ruh* allow individuals to perform bodily actions. In Marvels of the Heart, he further characterises the *ruh* as the *subtle, tenuous substance in the human being that knows and perceives* (page 7). In his other work, *'Risālah al-Laduniyyah,'*, he refers to the *ruh* as originating from God, carrying a divine command or trust of God (*al ruh al amri*), consistent with what is stated in the Quran 15:29 *"And when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My [created] soul, then fall down to him in prostration"* (Sahih International, 1997, Quran 15:29). Unlike the body, or aspects of self that undergo change, the *ruh* is not subject to change, decay or death. It will leave the body when the body dies and returns to its divine source that is the God. Al-Ghazali, however, did mention in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* that as the Hadith and the Quran kept the details of *ruh* in silence, hence no detailed description of *ruh* is provided. This is in line with the Quran 17:85 *"And they ask you [O Muhammad], about the soul. Say, the soul is of the affair of my Lord and mankind have not been given of knowledge except a little"* (Sahih International, 1997, Quran 17:85). For this reason, he refrains from offering detailed analysis and instead acknowledges the divine secret surrounding the true nature of *ruh*.

Al-Ghazali also identified the intellect (*'aql*) as a central spiritual faculty of the human soul. It is this faculty that differentiates human beings from animals. He devoted a sizeable section in the Book of Knowledge of *Ihya Ulum'al din* to a discussion on the nature and function of human intellect. According to Marmura (2002), Al-Ghazali speaks about the intellect *('aql*) as the privileged tool for receiving divine illumination. This is the intellectual faculty of man, which serves the main function to reason (Watt, 1963). This reasoning ability possessed by man represents the highest function of the soul, and it is with this function that the soul acquires a divine-like quality (*rabbaniyyah*) (Al Ghazali.org, n.d).

Al-Ghazali wrote quite extensively about the *'aql,* which he referred to as rational soul in his other writings such as *'Risālah al-Laduniyyah,'*. As Burhanuddin (2017) explains, Al-Ghazali's position as a philosopher, theologist, and at the same time Sufi, leads him to use different terms to describe the rational dimension of soul. For example, in Qur'ānic term, this rational soul corresponds to '*an nafs al-muthmainnah*' (the tranquil soul) and '*al ruh al-amr'* (the divine command spirit). From a Sufi perspective, this rational soul is often referred as the *qalb* or the spiritual heart, while for philosophers or *hukama'*, this type of soul is understood as '*an nafs an-nathiqah'* (the rational soul), highlighting its capacity for abstract thought and metaphysical understanding (Burhanuddin, 2017)

Moreover, in *'Risālah al-Laduniyyah*, Al-Ghazali wrote on the classification of intellect. He describes the *'aql* in the form of natural intellect (*al-aqlul-ghariziy*), i.e., the one that is revealed by God to man. This form of natural intellect is tied to the Islamic concept of *fitrah*. According to Al-Ghazali, man is born with the knowledge of God, and it is through this natural intellect that man has the knowledge to recognise the truth, which is absolute. In addition to natural intellect, Al-Ghazali acknowledges another form of intellect known as experiential intellect, (*ʿaql al-tajribi*) i.e., the intellect that is acquired or comes from one's dealing with life experience. Ultimately, Al-Ghazali's view of the intellect reflects his broader conceptualisation of the soul as an entity designed for growth, accountability, and

transcendence, guided by divine revelation and directed toward closeness with Allah (Al-Ghazali, 1985, Marmura, 2002).

Al-Ghazali placed particular emphasis on an aspect of the soul that he termed as '*qalb'* or the heart. His conception of the *'qalb'* is a direct reflection of his Sufi orientation, where the heart is seen as the spiritual core and true essence of the human being. The *qalb*, according to Al-Ghazali, is not just a cone-shaped organ of flesh situated on the left side of the chest. It is the one that he clarifies as *latifa* (subtle), *rabbaniyya* (divine), and *ruhaniyya* (spiritual), the one that serves as the seat of spiritual perception, self-awareness and ultimately attain knowledge of God.

In the third volume of his *Ihya' Ulum al-Din,* Al-Ghazali elaborates that it is through this *qalb* that allows man to know God, draw closeness to Him, and strives toward the ultimate purpose of existence. However, the heart can be corrupted by the lower self (*nafs al ammarah bil su'*) and bring the soul away from perfection. Al-Ghazali also write extensively in his *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* about the vices or *muhlikat* of the *qalb*, such as greed, envy, pride and anger. All these are the illnesses of the soul that can keep one's away from the truth and focal to the downfall of human character. Al-Ghazali write not only about the sources that make the *qalb* miserable. In the same book, he also wrote on the *munjiyat* or treatments of those soul illnesses as a way to purify the *qalb* to bring it back to its divine essence.

Drawing from *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* and other works, it becomes clearer that Al-Ghazali views the soul as created by Allah, an immaterial and spiritual essence within every human being. Although invisible and immaterial, it plays the most vital role as it is the essence of one's being, the one that shapes human thought, behaviour and spiritual destiny. While the soul can be described through its different functions, it remains the same essence and form the spiritual core of the human being and working in tandem with the physical body. In Al-Ghazali's thought, it is this dual nature of man, the body and the soul, that defines what is means to be human. Clearly, Al-Ghazali upholds and affirms the position of the soul as the most essential, fundamental, and central to the nature of man.

INTEGRATING AL-GHAZALI'S INSIGHTS TO CONTEMPORARY STUDY OF HUMAN COGNITION

Al-Ghazali is no exception to the long-standing intellectual tradition of exploring the nature of the human being (Ali, 1995, Haque, 2004). His valuable insights have made significant contributions not only to philosophy and theology, but also to psychology, including its modern sub-discipline of cognitive psychology.

Cognitive psychology focuses on the scientific study of various mental processes, collectively known as mind or cognition (Goldstein, 2015, 2019). It investigates the various mental processes involved in processing environmental stimuli such as perception, attention, memory, knowledge formation, reasoning, decision making and problem solving. From a cognitive perspective, human behaviour is understood as the outward manifestation of these internal cognitive processes. Consequently, any attempt to describe, explain, predict and control of human behaviours requires a thorough understanding of the mechanism underlying human thought (Neisser, 1994, Goldstein, 2019, McBride et al., 2022).

The present paper argues that Al-Ghazali's conception of the soul, its structure, faculties, and purpose offers a philosophical and spiritual perspective that enriches this understanding. In the following paragraphs, the way to integrate Al-Ghazali's thought to the contemporary study of human cognition is discussed. First, it discusses how his axiological, ontological, and epistemological foundations can provide an integrated framework for studying cognition. Second, it argues for the inclusion of the soul as a necessary component in understanding the full complexity of human cognitive functioning. Ultimately, understanding cognition through Al-Ghazali's lens offers a more holistic view of human cognition and allows one to see the mind not merely as a processor of information, but as a spiritual faculty with the capacity for growth, awareness, and transcendence.

The Axiological, Ontological and Epistemological Foundations as a Framework for Studying Human Cognition

Al-Ghazali's philosophical thoughts offer a comprehensive and integrative framework for understanding human cognition. Central to his thoughts are the three foundational philosophical dimensions of knowledge, i.e., ontology, axiology and epistemology, all of which provide a meaningful basis for exploring the core concerns of cognitive psychology.

Central to Al-Ghazali's ontological view is the belief that human beings consist of an outward form (j*asad*) and an inward spiritual self or soul. Al-Ghazali sees the soul as the true essence of the human self. It is this spiritual essence that connects man to the divine. As such, cognition and consequently all behaviour depend on the spiritual state of an individual (Ali, 1995). Al-Ghazali posits that the heart (*qalb*) is the core of human consciousness and is capable of receiving divine inspiration (*ilham*) and perceiving metaphysical truths beyond sensory data (Ali, 1995).

The ontological foundation of cognitive psychology gives a comprehensive and a meaningful picture of the nature and essence of being a human including what human cognition is all about in Islam. It enriches modern cognitive psychology and affirms that cognition is not merely a function of neural or material mechanisms but is rooted in a spiritual substance that transcends physical existence. The soul, in the form of heart is the seat of cognition (Al-Ghazali, 1985). It is dynamic, as it develops, ascends, or deteriorates depending on one's ethical and spiritual state. Hence, understanding cognition from an ontological perspective, in Al-Ghazali's framework, necessitates acknowledging the spiritual reality of the soul and its central role in shaping human thought and behaviour (Shehu, 2000; Griffel, 2014).

From Al-Ghazali's axiological perspective, all knowledge originates from Allah and is ultimately pursued for the purpose of knowing and attaining a deeper understanding of Him (Al Ghazali.org,n.d). Accordingly, the quest for cognitive psychology knowledge should begin with the intention (*niyyah)* to attain knowledge about Allah. Both students and educators are thus encouraged to engage with cognitive psychology not as an end in itself, but as a means of drawing nearer to Allah, the Absolute Creator of all beings (Hasib, Zarkasyi and Muslih, 2024). This orientation transforms the study of human cognition into a spiritual endeavour, wherein the pursuit of such knowledge becomes a means of attaining divine guidance (*hidayah*) from Allah and fostering a deeper closeness to Him. Therefore, the axiological foundation rooted in Al-Ghazali's thought, in that knowledge of human cognition goes far beyond the aim of

Western cognitive psychology discipline which attributes one's cognitive nature and ability solely to the influence of heredity and environment is valued as a means toward divine proximity.

Essentially, knowledge of human mind or cognition should be attained for the purpose of knowing the self and his Creator. Within the framework of cognitive psychology, axiological reflection helps determine the purpose and direction of cognitive functions, namely, what they are for and what makes them valuable. Al-Ghazali places significant emphasis on the moral and spiritual value of human cognition. He does not regard knowledge as an end in itself but as a means to achieve self-purification, ethical conduct, and closeness to God (Griffel, 2014). In *Iḥyā' ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, he writes extensively about the importance of sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*), humility, and the correct intention (*niyyah*) behind the pursuit of knowledge (Al-Ghazali, 2007), which are all related to the functions of the *qalb*. The cognitive faculties, as Al-Ghazali (1964) states in *Mīzān al-ʿAmal*, must be directed toward realising truth, refining the soul, and attaining eternal well-being. When cognition serves these higher purposes, it becomes a path to salvation. However, when cognition is misused for worldly and material gain, it results in spiritual ruin. This axiological dimension challenges the often value-neutral stance of contemporary cognitive psychology and invites a reassessment of the ends toward which cognitive efforts are directed. For Al-Ghazali, the value of knowledge lies in its ability to transform the self and align it with divine truth (Nasr, 2006).

Al-Ghazali's epistemological framework situates the study of human cognition in both rational inquiry and spiritual insights. According to Al-Ghazali, the acquisition of knowledge begins with sensory perception (Al-Ghazali, 2000, Poya and Rizapoor, 2023). This view aligns in part with foundational assumptions in modern cognitive psychology, which views perception as the gateway to cognitive processing (Goldstein, 2019, McBride et al., 2022). Al-Ghazali acknowledges that the external senses such as sight, hearing and touch play an essential role in forming the basis for empirical knowledge. To him, these are windows to the spiritual heart (Al-Ghazali.org, n.d*)*. This parallels contemporary understanding of sensory input as the first stage in information processing, forming the raw data from which higher-order cognitive functions such as memory and reasoning operate (Goldstein, 2015).

However, in Al-Ghazali's epistemological basis, knowledge acquired through sensory and rational inquiry alone is insufficient and cannot lead to genuine knowledge or absolute certainty. For Al-Ghazali, certainty arises through a higher form of cognition, which he describes as intuitive knowledge (*ma'rifah*) (Hasib, Zarkasyi and Muslih, 2024). This knowledge is gained by the purified heart through spiritual refinement, revelation (*wahy*) or divine inspiration (*ilham*) and is only accessible to those who have undergone spiritual discipline (Kalin 2010, Hasib, Zarkasyi and Muslih, 2024). Therefore, while rational inquiry is a necessary component of human understanding, in Al-Ghazali's thought, it must be complemented and ultimately guided by divine illumination (Griffle, 2014, Marmura, 2002). This distinction marks a critical divergence from the secular empiricism that characterizes much of contemporary cognitive psychology, offering instead an epistemology that integrate reason, sense perception and spiritual insight into a unified pursuit of truth.

In short, Al-Ghazali's emphasis on the purpose of cognition (axiology), the spiritual essence of the human being (ontology), and the layered pathways to knowledge through both

reason and spiritual insight (epistemology), provides a richer and more holistic view to understand human cognition.

Inclusion of Soul in the Understanding Human Cognition

Another essential point for cognitive psychology as a scientific discipline to benefit from the works and ideas of Al-Ghazali is on the inclusion of the soul in the study of human cognition. Through many of his writings (e.g *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn, Sharh ʻAjaib al-Qalb*), Al-Ghazali consistently reminds on soul as the vital component and true essence of human being. His insights highlight dimensions of human cognition that extend beyond observable behaviour, pointing to the inner faculties of the heart (*qalb*), spirit (*ruh*), self (*nafs*) and intellect (ʻ*aql*). This perspective can complement the contemporary cognitive psychology discipline, where information-processing models are widely used to explain how the human mind operates (Mayer, 2024). By situating cognition within both spiritual and psychological frameworks, Al-Ghazali's thought offers a broader lens for understanding the cognitive processes such as perception, memory and reasoning. This suggests that a meaningful understanding of cognition requires perspectives that account not only for how we think, but also to why we think and what purpose our thinking ultimately serves. In this regard, the classical insights of Al-Ghazali offer a more holistic view by framing cognition as an integrated spiritual function of the soul.

The spiritual component of man, i.e., the soul, is the true essence of man. Hence, any description, explanation, prediction, and control of human behaviour has to be understood by referring to and including this spiritual component of man (Abubakar, 2000). While the soul is not accepted as part of contemporary cognitive psychology as its main subject matter, the inclusion of the soul in understanding human cognition has to be in the foreground. The understanding of man's behaviour and mental processes will never be complete without understanding how the soul can influence human behaviour. It is, therefore, highly essential to include the soul in the cognitive psychology discipline. In particular, the understanding of internal mental processes will not be complete if discussion and topics relating to the soul are excluded.

In addition, in many of Al-Ghazali's writings, he emphasised that the heart (*qalb*) is not merely a physical organ but a subtle spiritual faculty that governs human perception, reasoning and consciousness. This spiritual heart possesses a profound and mysterious connection with the physical heart and the human faculty of intellect, which encompasses the intellective, rational and cognitive capacities and directly influences one's ability to grasp true knowledge rather than mere utilitarian know-how. Hence, it is the pure heart (*qalb*) that plays a pivotal role in shaping cognition and guides the soul towards perfection and divine connection. In light of this essential function, the heart (*qalb*) ought to be considered a central focal point in of the scholarly discourse of Islamic cognitive psychology. Understanding cognitive psychology through this lens shifts the focus toward understanding the *qalb* as a dynamic, spiritual entity, the one that is capable of perceiving truth, discerning right from wrong, and facilitating a meaningful relationship with the Creator. Approaching cognition through this lens expands the discipline's epistemological foundations and also enriches its ethical and spiritual dimensions.

In sum, by recognising the soul as the seat of cognitive activity, Al-Ghazali's framework invites a more comprehensive view of the human mind as the one that integrates perception, memory, and reasoning with purpose and spiritual orientation. For cognitive psychology, the inclusion of the soul in the study of cognition does not replace scientific

inquiry but rather broadens its scope, enabling a more holistic appreciation of how and why human beings think, act, and ultimately seek truth.

CONCLUSION

Al-Ghazali remains one of the greatest and most distinguished classical Muslim thinkers throughout his lifetime and is still praised and renowned in modern days. His ideas and teachings have enlightened many, including non-Muslim scholars and are very much relevant for the current time. He was a man with a deep, and profound gnostic insight, has a profound and comprehensive understanding and thorough analysis of any issues, and has produced great and influential works that touch upon multidisciplinary areas. Going through his life experience and his passion for spiritual knowledge is indeed an inspiration to all involved in academia and beyond. Although the term 'cognitive psychology' did not exist in any of his works, Al-Ghazali's psycho-spiritual insights into human cognition have significantly shaped Islamic understandings of the self and continue to contribute meaningfully to the evolving discipline of Islamic psychology.

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Ibn Bājjah's Conception of the Soul and the Reconstruction of Human Psychology

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a comprehensive conceptual exploration of the works of Ibn Bājjah (Avempace, 1085–1138 CE), focusing on his philosophical conception of the soul and its significance for the reconstruction of human psychology. It situates Ibn Bājjah within his intellectual milieu and highlights the breadth of his scholarship across philosophy, medicine, logic, astronomy, and particularly metaphysics and psychology. The goal is to present his model of the soul and self in a clear, systematic way by reading it through epistemological, ontological, axiological, and theological lenses, with attention to how reason (ʿaql), moral action, and remembrance of Allāh relate to human perfection. This conceptual paper is important because Ibn Bājjah remains marginal in contemporary psychological discussions, despite offering a holistic framework that links cognition, ethics, and spirituality rather than treating the mind as value-neutral or purely functional. The paper discusses Ibn Bājjah's intellectual context, his tripartite theory of the soul (nutritive, animalistic, and rational), the implications of this structure for understanding human behaviour, ethical action, and spiritual refinement. Ibn Bājjah's analysis of human action as a hierarchical process moving from sensory perception and imagination to desire and rational judgment is highlighted and his contributions contemporary psychology (i.e., positive psychology, social psychology, and cognitive psychology) is articulated. The paper concludes that Ibn Bājjah presents a comprehensive and purpose-driven or teleological view of the study of soul and self (ʿilm al-nafs), where genuine human happiness and fulfilment arise when rational intellect governs desire, allowing the soul to reach intellectual excellence and the ultimate fulfilment lies in knowing and turning toward Allāh.

Keywords: *Avempace, Axiology, Contemporary Psychology, Epistemology, Ibn Bajjah, Ilm an-Nafs, Nature of Soul, Ontology*

INTRODUCTION

The study of the soul and self (ʿilm al-nafs) has long occupied a central place in classical Islamic thought, offering a profound exploration of human nature, consciousness, and moral development. One of the most influential figures in this tradition is Ibn Bājjah (Avempace), an Andalusian philosopher, physician, and polymath whose works bridged rational inquiry and spiritual reflection. Drawing upon both Aristotelian philosophy and Qurʾānic principles, Ibn Bājjah articulated a comprehensive model of the soul comprising the nutritive, animalistic, and rational faculties, each corresponding to stages in human development (Mustofa, 2007). Through key works such as *Kitāb al-Nafs* and *al-Tadbīr al-Mutawaḥḥid*, he examined the path of the self from sensory experience to intellectual illumination, emphasising the role of reason, solitude (ʿuzlah), ethical conduct, and the remembrance of Allāh (dhikr Allāh) in attaining human perfection (Muslih et al., 2025). Despite this rich intellectual heritage, Ibn Bājjah's distinctive contributions remain largely absent from contemporary psychological discourse.

This lack of interdisciplinary engagement limits the potential contribution of Ibn Bājjah's thought to current understandings of wellbeing, self-development, and the cultivation of human potential. In light of this gap, the present article revisits Ibn Bājjah's theory of the soul through epistemological, ontological, axiological, and theological lenses, and considers how his conception of *al-nafs* offers meaningful insights for contemporary discussions on reason (*'aql*), selfhood, and human flourishing.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF IBN BĀJJAH

Ibn Bājjah's real name is Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-Ṣāʿigh. He was born in Saragossa in the north of Spain during the years 475–480 AH, and he died in Fez (Morocco) in Ramaḍān 533 AH (1138 CE). He is known as Ibn Bājjah, which means "silver" in the language of French Moroccan. In the Western world he is known as Avempace. His family came from the al-Tujīb bloodline, known very well in gold businesses and trading. He is thus an al-Tujībī. He lived during the reign of the kingdom of al-Murābiṭūn in the Barbary states (now divided into Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli), a kingdom founded by a Muslim leader named Yaḥyā ibn Ibrāhīm al-Jaddālī. Ibn Bājjah had lived in three eras of the Murābiṭūn, namely Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn (483H/1090M), ʿAlī ibn Yūsuf (499H/1106M) and Tāshfīn ibn ʿAlī (573-539H/1143-1145M). The zeitgeist of these reigns has great influence on Ibn Bājjah's thoughts and scholarly works.

Ibn Bājjah was well-versed in philosophy, mathematics, physics, botany, astronomy, logic, psychology, politics, grammar, literature and music. His thoughts and works had great influence on other Muslim scholars, especially Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 581/1185) and Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198). Historians view him as a person who was knowledgeable and capable in various sciences. Among his contemporaries, Ibn Bājjah was acknowledged as great as Ibn Rushd in the Maghrib (West), and as great as al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā in the Mashriq (East). Ibn Bājjah was an excellent writer and linguist. He was a poet for the al-Murābiṭūn dynasty led by Abū Bakr Ibrāhīm ibn Tafalwīt. In addition, Ibn Bājjah was also a music expert and a reliable ʿūd (gambus) player. Ibn Bājjah was also a ḥāfiẓ (memoriser) of the Qurʾān. Ibn Bājjah was a doctor by profession, mastering various sciences, hence deserving the title polymath. He was once appointed a minister when Abū Bakr Ibrāhīm came to power in Saragossa. In the field of philosophy, Ibn Bājjah is equated with al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and Aristotle. In fact, Ibn Bājjah is a major figure in the history of Arabic philosophy. Scholars of his contemporaries regarded him as one of the greatest Arab philosophers and as a leading scholar who pioneered the introduction of Aristotle's philosophical ideas and theories after Ibn Sīnā. He was also actively involved in the efforts to document commentaries on the works of Aristotle.

Ibn Bājjah lived during the reign of the al-Murābiṭūn, a period known for its suppression of philosophers' thoughts. Lawlessness and chaos swept across the country, enemies accusing each other of committing heresy in order to gain prominence and the sympathy of the people. Ibn Bājjah's enemies branded him a heretic, ascribed to him as a drafter of corrupt faith, and of weak faith. He experienced many trials and sufferings and reproaches. They tried several times to kill him, but Allāh saved him from the assassination attempt. According to one narration, he died because he was poisoned by a rival doctor named Abū al-Aʿlā Ibn Zuhri, who was jealous of his intelligence, knowledge, and fame. Ibn Bājjah died in the month of Ramaḍān in 533 AH / 1138 AD in Fez and was buried next to the tomb of Ibn ʿArabī.

THE WORKS OF IBN BĀJJAH

Ibn Bājjah produced many works in various fields. The works that he produced numbered approximately 31 works (Goodman, 2020). Ibn Bājjah's original works were written in Arabic and have been translated into Hebrew and Latin. The original manuscripts and translations are preserved in the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford, the Berlin State Library in Germany and the Escorial Library in Spain. There are two well-preserved manuscripts of Ibn Bājjah in the libraries of Oxford and Berlin. Ibn Bājjah wrote many essays; most of them, however, are missing and only a very small number of his works survived. Many of his works that survived are only in the form of treatises (short notes) and short commentaries, and many of them are untitled.

Ibn Bājjah wrote many essays in the fields of science, logic and philosophy (Najātī, 2002). He also produced many essays explaining the books of Aristotle and Galenos, as well as books on medicine and engineering. Ibn Bājjah also wrote on psychology. Many of Ibn Bājjah's works and writings available to us today are in fact from his student Abū Bakr Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn ʿAzīz, who is popularly known as Ibn al-Imām. Ibn al-Imām was the one who collected the whole books written by Ibn Bājjah and compiled them into volumes. This compilation has become the primary source of reference for the disciples of Ibn Bājjah. However, many of his works are incomplete and, according to Ibn Ṭufayl, many of Ibn Bājjah's works are separated from their final parts (Terkan, 2005).

Among the famous works of Ibn Bājjah are al-Tadbīr al-Mutawaḥḥid (The Governance of Solitary), Risālat Ittiṣāl al-ʿAql bi-l-Insān (Letter on the Union of the Intellect with Human Beings), al-Risālah al-Wadāʿ (The Valedictory Letter or The Letter of Bidding Farewell), al-Risālah al-Akhlāq (The Letter of Ethics), al-Tardiyyah (Poetry of Praise), Kitāb al-Nabāt (Book of Plants), Kitāb al-Nafs (The Book on Soul), and Risālah fī l-Ġāyah al-Insāniyyah (Treatise on the Objective of Human Beings). In relation to psychology, his work Risālat al-Wadāʿ discusses divinity, human existence, nature and a description of medicine. Likewise, Risālat Ittiṣāl al-ʿAql bi-l-Insān contains discussion on human intellect (ʿaql) and reasoning (Mahadzir et al., 2019).

One of the most notable works of Ibn Bājjah is Kitāb al-Nafs (The Book of Soul). The book explicates issues related to the human soul, its relation with Allāh, and the highest achievement of human existence (i.e., the ultimate human happiness). This issue was heavily influenced by the ideas of Greek philosophical thought. For this reason, Ibn Bājjah made many reviews of the works and writings of Aristotle, Galen, al-Fārābī and al-Rāzī. Kitāb al-Nafs is, in fact, the result of the description and explanation of Aristotle's writings, namely *De Anima* (al-Maʾṣūmī, 1992). Ibn Bājjah studied these writings in detail and, as a result, Aristotle's philosophy is presented according to a more Islamic and monotheistic view. Kitāb al-Nafs is always attributed to Ibn Bājjah's original and independent work as well as a commentary on the works of Aristotle. There are eleven chapters in this book which describe in detail the human soul. All of these chapters talk about humans and life. To Ibn Bājjah, humans cannot live unless something moves them (Sudarmono, 2017). Therefore, when the soul and the person are connected and complete each other, this ultimately makes a human live and lead a human life.

Besides Kitāb al-Nafs, among the greatest works of Ibn Bājjah are al-Tadbīr al-Mutawaḥḥid and Risālat Ittiṣāl al-ʿAql bi-l-Insān, which emphasise the classical theme of aspects of the intellectual movement from a state of potential to an actual state and the final

contact of reason acquisition with an active mind, which is only the privilege of a small number of people who are able to achieve it (Zaini, 2015). Through Ibn Bājjah, Aristotle's philosophy has changed its face into the face of Islam. Ibn Bājjah had studied and understood Aristotle's philosophy well and because of this, the issues he put forward often inclined to Aristotle's view. In spite of this, Ibn Bājjah tried to process Aristotle's metaphysical problems according to the Islamic view. Therefore, according to Ibn Bājjah, Allāh is not only moving but Allāh is the Creator and regulator of the entire universe.

Ibn Bājjah's philosophical thought turned into a life ethic that protested materialistic and worldly views and it became a practice during his time. This is clear in Ibn Bājjah's work on Ādāb al-ʿUzlah (The Way of Seclusion). In his opinion, if we see general ignorance, then we must abstain at least in thought. Ibn Bājjah wrote several descriptions or commentaries on Aristotle's essays related to manṭiq (logic), metaphysics and others. He also often referred to Plato, Aristotle, Galen, al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and al-Ġazālī in his books. His works were largely in the field of philosophy and all of them were written in Arabic and then translated into Hebrew (Jewish), then into Latin and finally into English.

However, Ibn Bājjah's idea of metaphysics (i.e., the nature of existence) from an Islamic point of view has been criticised as imperfect (Sunʿiyyah, 2017). A more perfect explanation of metaphysics can be seen in the philosophy of Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd. Both Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd were influenced by Ibn Bājjah. Despite the imperfection, in his book al-Tadbīr al-Mutawaḥḥid (The Governance of Solitary), he affirmed that only through holding and believing in the existence and the power of Almighty Allāh alone will a human being find happiness and peace in his life. This book also discusses the theme of self-isolation. Ibn Bājjah's work was judged by Ibn Ṭufayl as an incomplete work (Terkan, 2005), however, Ibn Bājjah's works on solitude inspired Ibn Ṭufayl to harmonise religion, philosophy and science. Ibn Ṭufayl thus took the initiative by writing a work on the story of Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān, a story that illustrated how knowledge obtained through observation, experiment, and reasoning does not contradict divine revelation. Table 8.1 below summarises the notable works of Ibn Bājjah:

Table 8.1. The notable works of Ibn Bājjah

Title	Brief Description
Tadbīr al-Mutawaḥḥid (The Governance of Solitary)	This book consists of 17 chapters containing philosophical studies of human actions and mental powers with emphasis on the life of the individual in society.
Kitāb al-Nafs (The book on Soul)	This book contains his exposition of the nature of the Soul under eleven discourses (chapters) each of which is intended to explain a specific dimension of soul.
Risālat al-Wadāʿ (Essays on Bidding Farewell)	This book narrates about divinity, human existence, nature and medicine.
Ittiṣāl al-ʿAql bi-l-Insān (The Union of the Intellect with Human Beings)	This book discusses the relationship between men and reason.
Fī al-Mutaḥarrik (The Moving)	This book discusses the human instinct and the language that serves as the basis for thinking.
Risālah fī l-Ġāyah al-Insāniyyah (Treatise on the Objective of Human Beings)	This book discusses the purpose of human creation.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHTS OF IBN BĀJJAH

Ibn Bājjah is a major figure in the history of Arab philosophy. Scholars of his contemporaries have regarded him as one of the greatest Arab philosophers and as a leading

scholar who pioneered the introduction of Aristotle's philosophical ideas and theories after Ibn Sīnā (al-Maʾṣūmī, 1992). Ibn Bājjah was also an Andalusian philosopher involved in providing commentaries on the works of Aristotle. He was, in fact, the first person in al-Andalus to begin a period of writing philosophy books. Ibn Bājjah had broad insight into the philosophy of Aristotle and Plato, and he was interested in the opinions of Eastern Muslim philosophers, such as al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. Ibn Bājjah's thinking is similar to that of al-Fārābī in terms of his interest in solitude, reflection, and rational reasoning (Santosa, 2015). His interest and works, founded on the writings of Aristotle, Plato, al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, led to his own philosophical thoughts that are discussed here from the lens of epistemology, ontology and axiology.

Ibn Bajjah on Epistemology

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy of science that deals with the study of knowledge, in particular the theory of knowledge, with underlying questions of what knowledge is and how knowledge is acquired and developed (Ponterotto, 2005). In terms of epistemology, Ibn Bājjah postulated that knowledge cannot be acquired by the senses alone but by active intelligence (al-Maʾṣūmī, 1965). Active intelligence, according to Ibn Bājjah, is the highest function of human intellect and the type of intelligence that gives glory to Allāh the Almighty (Haque, 2004). This means an active intellect is the kind of intellect that strongly connects to one's belief in tawḥīd (oneness of Allāh). That is, one's ability to relate each piece of information and reasoning to the existence of Allāh and the wonders of His creations. Ibn Bājjah asserted that humans are capable of active intellect with the help of knowledge and if they are clean from the ugliness of society. He further commented that society can paralyse the thinking power of the individual and prevent him from achieving intellectual perfection.

Knowledge acquisition according to Ibn Bājjah is a combination of senses and reason. In the matter of knowledge of facts, he used the rational - empirical method. However, regarding the truth of the existence of Allāh he used philosophy and philosophical reasoning. According to Ibn Bājjah, the truth itself can be obtained by humans when humans are in ʿuzlah (solitary; Shihab, 2018), and sound knowledge obtained through active intelligence enables one to attain prosperity and build character and personality. Ibn Bājjah's view on the origin of the emergence of knowledge is similar to that of Piaget, a Western psychologist who lived in 1896–1980 AD, who stated that humans know something through their senses (Sitorus & Idris, 2012). Of course, judging from his lifetime, Ibn Bājjah's opinion emerged long before Piaget's opinion. Ibn Bājjah argues that the emergence of knowledge begins with the senses that capture images of sensory objects and store the images in the collective senses after the sensory objects disappear from the senses. Then, the senses send them to the imagination, where the mind perceives all universal meanings. According to him, the path of knowledge is the path that ascends from the senses to the mind. Sensing is, therefore, an important initial stage for the process of thinking or rational reasoning. This is because, according to Ibn Bājjah, something that has not been sensed through something similar to it or on which it is based, is impossible to imagine and think about. Thus, if a person does not have one of the senses, he automatically experiences a lack of knowledge. Therefore, epistemologically, Ibn Bājjah stressed the role of the senses and active reasoning (reasoning in conjunction with Allāh the Almighty) as the way to acquire knowledge, ultimately leading to the recognition of divine order and truth.

Ibn Bajjah on Ontology

Ontology is a branch of philosophy of science that deals with the question of what is the nature of reality and being, and in what kind of structures and classifications (Ponterotto, 2005). In this regard, Ibn Bājjah believed that everything that exists is divided into two, namely the moving (the body) and the not moving (the spirit). What moves is matter, which is limited in nature, and the cause of its movement comes from an unlimited force, namely reason (Mustafa, 2007). Correspondingly, to achieve closeness to Allāh, Ibn Bājjah recommends doing three things, namely: (1) making our tongues remember Allāh and glorify Him, (2) making our organs and body act according to the insight of the heart, and (3) avoiding anything that divert the heart from remembering Allāh. Ibn Bājjah admired al-Ġazālī and stated that al-Ġazālī's method enabled people to gain knowledge of Allāh, and that this method was based on the teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣallā llāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam). In spite of this, initially Ibn Bājjah rejected the Ṣūfī concept that the ultimate human end is the pleasure which results from witnessing the divine world internally. In support of his view, Ibn Bājjah mentioned among other things that, if the pleasure of the internal senses were the ultimate human end, then reason (which is a higher power than the internal senses) as well as its knowledge would be superfluous and futile (Protama, 2018).

Although Ibn Bājjah criticised al-Ġazālī, in the end, he agreed with al-Ġazālī's view. Ibn Bājjah said that the final stage of the progress of the human mind and spirit is not total humanity, but the perfection of this blessing occurs through the nūr (light) bestowed by Almighty Allāh in the bosom of the intellect (Hanif, 2019). This light is the same as the light described by al-Ġazālī; this light is regarded as the key to knowledge acquisition. Ibn Bājjah added that whoever obeys Allāh, then Allāh will reward him with that reason. On the other hand, whoever is disobedient, Allāh will close him from the light, so that he is in darkness and ignorance. Therefore, ontologically, to Ibn Bājjah, the nature of being can be categorised into the body (the moving) and the spirit (the force). The spirit attains its ultimate happiness by knowing its Creator, Allāh the Almighty, through remembrance and obedience, and it continues to endure permanently even after its separation from the body.

Ibn Bajjah on Axiology

Axiology is another branch of philosophy that deals with the role and place of values and morality. In this regard, Ibn Bājjah classifies human actions into animal actions and human actions (Mahadzir et al., 2019). Animal actions are actions that are primarily motivated by instinctive motives driven by desire and speculation. Human actions are actions based on reason that are not affected by desire or speculation. According to Ibn Bājjah, only people who act under the influence of mind (rationality) and justice alone and have nothing to do with the animal aspect of themselves can be respected for their actions (Sundasorno, 1997). Hence, values and morality according to Ibn Bājjah depend on the motive behind the human action. It can thus be interpreted that actions driven by desire and speculation and in the absence of reason are indeed actions that are the opposite of values and morality. Therefore, axiologically, Ibn Bājjah believes that values and morality lie in reason and justice.

IBN BĀJJAH ON THE NATURE OF SOUL

According to Ibn Bājjah, the soul is the perfection of the body and the human soul is different from the human body. He believes that, unlike the body, the soul does not undergo

changes and ageing. In this sense, Ibn Bājjah further explicated that the soul is spiritual and eternal (Zuhara, 2018). This means, even after death, in the hereafter, it is the soul that will receive recompense, both rewarding pleasure (heaven) as well as torment and punishment (hell). The human soul, Ibn Bājjah believes, develops from the plant to the animal and finally to the rational life. Hence, the soul according to Ibn Bājjah can be classified into the nutritive soul, the animalistic soul and the rational soul. The first two, according to Ibn Bājjah, are non-rational and the totality of all parts of the soul is the human soul.

The Nutritive Soul

The nutritive soul, according to Ibn Bājjah, is a field in the soul that serves to drive the process of growth, nourishment and reproduction (al-Maʾṣūmī, 1992). The power of nutrition, or the soul that feeds, is the first perfection of the mechanistic and nourishing body. In all breathing bodies there is a force that forms new cells supplied from the nutrients that come from food. This force replaces the damaged parts in the body so the body can survive. In other words, in every living being there is a force which drives excess food to replace worn-out parts of the body and the remaining part is moved by growth, and this force is the nutritive soul. The nutritive soul according to Ibn Bājjah is the lowest state of the soul responsible for sustaining life through growth and nourishment. It nevertheless plays a crucial role in regulating the heart as the centre of bodily vitality. This means this faculty of the human soul that functions for nourishment and growth is similar to those of plants and animals.

The Animalistic Soul

With the progress from the plant to the animal life, which Ibn Bājjah termed the sensitive life, one moves from mere vegetation to sensation, movement and desire. First, sensation is acquired by the five external senses, namely vision, hearing, smell, touch and taste. In addition to these five senses, Ibn Bājjah also coined the term "collective sense". The details of Ibn Bājjah's discussion of the five senses and the collective sense have been illustrated in Najātī (2002), as follows:

i. Vision

The faculty of vision is the initial perfection of the eye and is the seeing soul. The power of sight is the power in the eye by which colour can be perceived. The eye can perceive colour through the air. Air is not able to help the eye in the process of perception except with light, because light is an important condition for perceiving colour. According to Ibn Bājjah, the centre of the eye is in the retina.

ii. Hearing

Hearing is the perfection of the sense of hearing. The power of hearing perceives the effect that takes place in the air due to the collision of two objects colliding with each other, and that process is the source of the sense of hearing.

iii. *Smell*

Olfaction is the capture of the meaning of smell, namely the smell perceived by the sense of smell in the nose when the animal breathes air. Everything that contains taste also contains odour. Therefore, the taste of everything is known by its smell. The sense of smell is very important for animals that are being targeted as prey; and most animals use it in their life. This sense organ is weak in humans but very strong in animals, because animals really need it.

iv. Taste

The sense of taste senses the taste of everything. Taste moves the moisture of the mouth or saliva, so it receives it like the air receives colour. Moisture stimulates the sense of taste. The moisture of the mouth is different from the essence of taste so that the taste does not hinder the recipient of the taste that contradicts it. Therefore, a sick person sums up all feelings as bitter, because the moisture in his mouth is bitter. Taste plays a crucial role in animals' search for food, consequently, animals rely primarily on this sense to evaluate what is edible, making minimal sensory input sufficient for locating and capturing prey.

v. Touch

Touch is the power to understand the object being touched. The senses of touch are the flesh and skin around the body and the nerves spread over both of them.

Collective Senses

According to Ibn Bājjah, if an object is perceived by more than one of the five senses, a collective sensory faculty must exist to apprehend these combined sensory qualities, known as the collective senses. The collective sense perceives multiple sensory attributes of an object. For example, an apple has taste, smell, colour, heat, cold and determines that each of these qualities is different from one another.

Imagination and Desire

Besides sensation, the forces of the animalistic soul are imagination and desire. Regarding imagination, Ibn Bājjah defined imagination as the place where the highest forms of all that can be sensed become understood. Ibn Bājjah classified two kinds of sensory objects: first, the special objects related to each sense organ, such as colours for sight and sound for hearing; second, the objects that are not sensed by the sensory organs but are sensed by the collective sense, for example length and shape. To Ibn Bājjah, the traces of the sensory objects that are still present in the collective senses move the imaginative power so that it can capture these traces when the sensory objects disappear from the sense organs in the form of fantasies (Najātī, 2002). Imagination, therefore, functions as the imitation of sensory objects, and the representations formed within the imaginative faculty correspond to the perceptions previously apprehended by the collective sense. Further, imagination is not only found in humans, but also in most animals. With this force, animals perform various movements such as the motion of desire and make many skills such as pollination by bees and surviving underwater for spiders.

Regarding desire, Ibn Bājjah defined desire as the mental force that moves animals and humans toward what they like and away from what they do not like (Najātī, 2002). The first

mover for animals is desire, which is of two types and has two opposite actions. First, maḥabbah, which means liking or love and is a source of effort and pursuit, for example the power of appetite such as eating and anger. Second, karāhiyyah, which means dislike or hatred and is the basis for escape or the act of leaving, for example fear and boredom (Sitorus & Idris, 2012). Desire is activated by the imaginative faculty in both animals and humans when the movement is animalistic; however, in humans as rational beings, the primary mover is an idea, which may be either correct or erroneous. According to Ibn Bājjah, human action originates not in the body but in a sequential psychological–intellectual process whereby an idea is mentally represented through imagination, unified by the collective sense, transformed into desire, and only then translated into bodily movement. Animals are motivated solely by imaginative desire (*shawq khayālī*) grounded in sensory representation and oriented toward pleasure or survival, whereas humans uniquely possess intellect (*ʿaql*), enabling them to act not only from imagination but also from rational desire (*shawq ʿaqlī*) directed toward truth and moral goodness. Imaginative desire and rational desire contradict each other, because the former draws the soul toward immediate, pleasure-based impulses while the latter directs it toward truth, virtue, and perfection, and the dominance of one over the other explains moral struggle, ethical failure, and spiritual development. In sum, the animalistic soul is driven by sensation, imagination and desire; hence its nature is non-rational and very instinctive.

The Rational Soul

The rational soul is the reasoning faculty, a place where everything has its meaning. By acquiring thought (reasoning), one rises to the level of rational speculation, in some noble individuals, to the level of a universal divine soul. The latter stage represents the highest level of human perfection. Ibn Bājjah further added that the intellect is either potential (theoretical) or actual (practical). Humans and animals are the same in terms of mental powers except for the rational power or the power of reason, which belongs only to humans (Santosa, 2015). The sensory and imaginative powers only perceive objects, while the rational powers perceive abstract things. Rational power is not always actual. Rational power is sometimes potential and sometimes actual. Changing from potential to actual is information that is obtained by the soul through sensory objects, and which is depicted in the imagination. The rational power performs reasoning with its attention on imaginary objects so that it can grasp general meanings or something rational with the help of illumination of the Active Intellect. According to Ibn Bājjah, reason has great value. He views that humans can know everything, know themselves, and know the Active Intellect with their minds (Bučan, 2016). The stages in making contact with the Active Intellect are not spiritual in nature but are grounded in rational reasoning or thinking power. To Ibn Bājjah, the perfect state of the human soul is when the mind comes into contact with the Active Intellect (i.e., reasoning founded on the concept of *tawḥīd*, also known as divine intellect) that then reaches the level of what he termed the "acquired intellect", that is, the accumulated knowledge possessed by a person (al-Maʾṣūmī, 1965).

In addition to the above, Ibn Bājjah defined sensory power as the process of receiving the perception of the perceived object image. On this basis, sensing is the reception of the senses to images of sensory objects in a way that is free from matter. The liberation of the perceived images has several levels, and each level is called *nafs* (soul) and *quwwah nafsāniyyah* (spiritual or psychic power) (Hanif, 2019). Among these levels are the senses, imagination, and logic, which are the highest levels. Ibn Bājjah further asserted that there are

two kinds of sensory objects. First, special objects related to each sense organ, such as colour for sight and sound for hearing. Second, the objects that are not sensed by the external sense organs but are sensed by the collective senses (fantasy), such as length and shape. Ibn Bājjah further added that sometimes the senses make mistakes and lie, for example, sick people feel food that is different from the actual taste.

As per Ibn Bājjah's classification of human actions into animal actions and human actions, animal acts are actions that are based on the fulfilment of needs that are purely physical. For example, eating is classified as an animal act insofar as it is used solely to fulfil appetitive needs. Eating is classified as a human act as long as the act is based on the intention to maintain body strength and achieve blessings in life. The basis of the difference between the two, for Ibn Bājjah, is not in the actions but in the motives. If it is driven by animal desire, it means animal action, but if the action is based on reason, then it is a human act. The speciality of humans compared to other creatures is the power of thought that is the source of their actions. All actions and behaviour that are based on common sense are called *ikhtiyāriyyah* (humane or voluntary actions), for example eating and drinking which are carried out with the aim of maintaining life and achieving virtue in life. If a person's actions are based only on his thoughts for the sake of truth, then his actions are more divine, i.e., actions that are carried out on the basis of intellectual satisfaction in order to be able to relate to Allāh. This requires virtue that transcends formal virtues. So that if the mind has decided something, it is not opposed by the animal soul. Basically, the animal soul is subject to reason, except for humans who deviate from their human nature, so that their behaviour resembles that of an animal. In order to subdue the animal aspect of himself in order to achieve a higher goal, he must begin by carrying out his human aspect. Figure 1 below summarises Ibn Bājjah's idea of the nature of the soul and its forces.

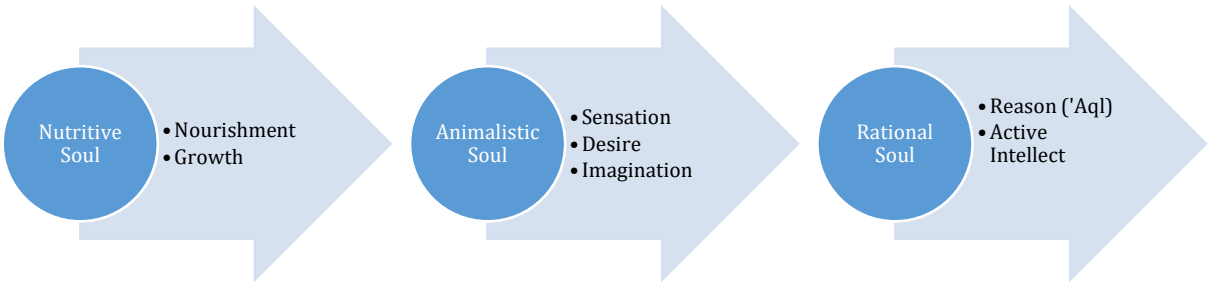

Figure 1. The nature of soul and its forces according to Ibn Bājjah

IBN BĀJJAH ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOUL

Ibn Bājjah has comprehensively explained the nature of the soul although many of his works are incomplete due to his early death. Ibn Bājjah also affirms that the intellect (*ʿaql*) bestowed on human beings and the relationship of the servant with the Almighty Allāh as the Creator of the universe are inseparable (Zuhara, 2018). It is connected through perfect thinking, i.e., the Active Intellect, leading to the perfection of human creation resulting in knowing

oneself and then knowing the Creator, the Almighty Allāh, and at the same time believing in Him (īmān). Ibn Bājjah discussed the development of the soul based on the concept of *al-nafs* (self). He emphasised the interconnection between the self (*al-nafs*), intellect (*ʿaql*), knowledge and oneness of Allāh (*tawḥīd*) in explaining the development of the soul. The details of Ibn Bājjah's discussion on the development of the soul have been illustrated by Mahadzir et al. (2019) and are explicated here in the following paragraphs.

Man is created and endowed with intellect (*ʿaql*) that enables human beings to weigh, think, and distinguish between the good and the bad, as well as the beneficial and the harmful. Therefore, those who believe in Allāh and do good will be rewarded by Allāh with reward (*thawāb*) and paradise, and as for the disbelievers and those who commit evil, they will be punished in hell for their sins. Humans are created by Allāh as servants (*ʿibād*) and vicegerents (*khalīfah*) on earth. Human beings, as servants of His creation, need to be aware of the responsibilities and trusts that are commanded and will even be held accountable in the hereafter. Thus, Ibn Bājjah stated that the development of the soul through the concept of *tawḥīd* should be a part of human life in order to maintain its status as *khalīfah* on this earth. The scientists in the past mastered various fields of knowledge, but they still connected their hearts with Allāh. Ibn Bājjah stated that every knowledge will definitely be based on *tawḥīd* or oneness of Allāh (Pratama, 2018). This is because all knowledge belongs to Allāh which is bestowed on each of His servants through inspiration and also experience. For example, the inspiration, experience and teachings that Allāh gave to human beings through the story of Qābil and Hābil (Cain and Abel).

Accordingly, based on the concept of al-nafs (self), Ibn Bājjah stated that the main foundation in the development of the soul through Islamic thought is the belief that Allāh is the Creator, Administrator and Ruler of the universe as a whole. Allāh is the only God who created humankind and life. High conviction that Allāh as the Creator has devised the perfect discipline or *sharīʿah* to follow. According to the Islamic law (*sharīʿah*) of Allāh, this does not mean coercion, but rather a precise awareness that Allāh is truly Rich, Just and Most Perfect. The failure of man to obey the commands of Allāh in the field of *sharīʿah* indicates the failure of man to know his own Creator. In sum, the development of the soul based on the concept of al-nafs according to Ibn Bājjah will produce human beings who always connect themselves with Allāh, in fact affirming that all things belong to Allāh. Thus, man must be aware that everything in this world will not last, and everything belongs to Allāh; from Allāh we come and to Allāh alone we will return.

Ibn Bājjah defined *al-nafs* (self) in two ways, namely habit (*ṭabīʿah*) and spirit (*rūḥ*). Both of these are present in humans. Habits, for example, are seen by Ibn Bājjah as traits or dispositions that are carried by human beings. Habits cannot stand on their own; instead they need to be in the living human being. This is because, with human habit, the person moves and does something. As for the soul, Ibn Bājjah saw that it also had to be attached to the human body. The spirit alone is incapable of doing anything; instead, the spirit needs the body to do something. The human body cannot move without the spirit. This means that both need each other. The combination of spirit, body and habit completes the human self which Ibn Bājjah interpreted as the perfect *al-nafs*.

Furthermore, according to Ibn Bājjah, human perfection is found in two states, namely internal and external perfection. Internal perfection is human ingenuity that is neither demonstrated nor taught. On the other hand, external perfection is ingenuity and wisdom that is translated for the common good. Thus, Ibn Bājjah's definition of *al-nafs* becomes more complex. This is because Ibn Bājjah examined every inch of the term *al-nafs*, the result of which formed man. Ibn Bājjah also asserted that the development of the soul is also associated with the development of *al-nafs* as a whole. In explaining the development of *al-nafs* in its entirety, Ibn Bājjah insisted that human beings endowed with intellect should translate it into something that is thought to relate to behaviour and deeds. In this context, Ibn Bājjah states that human beings are always ready to receive knowledge. The process of receiving knowledge proves that human beings have a mind. Thus, the mind is utilised to think, learn something, remember and so on. Strictly speaking, the process of receiving knowledge and thinking to get answers will make the human being perfect.

Ibn Bājjah also said that whoever does not know the origin of something through his thoughts, then all his knowledge is wrong. This is where *tawḥīd* or Oneness of Allāh began to be linked in the mind of Ibn Bājjah. This is because everything must have an origin. Thus, man must think about its origin. Humans who think will surely get the answer. This is because the origin of human beings is that they are created by Allāh, as has been recorded in the Qurʾān through Sūrat al-Insān verses 1 to 3: *Has there [not] come upon man a period of time when he was not a thing [even] mentioned? Indeed, We created man from a sperm-drop mixture that We may try him; and We made him hearing and seeing. Indeed, We guided him to the way, be he grateful or be he ungrateful.* Knowledge is a light that will surely illuminate the mind until it finds the origin of something. According to Ibn Bājjah again, every intellect in man is hidden. Thus, when a person knows and learns something, at that time the mind will be more perfect. When the human mind is translated into action, it will prove that everything has a Creator (Allāh). Therefore, thinking about the existence of the self will lead to knowledge of the existence of God (Allāh).

Ibn Bājjah divided human beings into two groups. First, the group known as "manūsia ḥayawān" or "al-insān al-bahīmī", i.e., humans from this group are those who like to follow desire (hawā) and are guided and controlled by it. The second group is people who think theoretically and use common sense and act guided by perfect common sense. According to Ibn Bājjah, human beings may be distinguished according to whether their actions are governed by desire or intellect. Those described as *al-insān al-bahīmī* are individuals who allow desire (*hawā*) to dominate their behaviour, thereby functioning in a manner analogous to animals despite their human form. In contrast, truly human individuals are those who engage in theoretical reflection, exercise sound judgment, and act in accordance with rational and ethical principles. For Ibn Bājjah, it is this second group that fulfils the authentic demands of human life, as their disciplined intellect enables the emergence of genuine insight or inspiration (*ilhām*) grounded in reason rather than impulse.

Ibn Bājjah also talked about the senses found in humans in explaining the development of the soul. Ibn Bājjah divides the human senses into three parts, namely the sense of feeling, the sense of sharing and the sense of imagination. According to Ibn Bājjah, the sense of feeling is the human heart that gives birth to feelings and desires. The senses that share are the senses that use all the human senses. The third sense is the sense of imagination. In this case, it is the

sense of imagination that has equipped the animal because the animal is not endowed with intellect. As such, animals use these imaginative senses to live and also strive for survival such as hunting, mating and so on. Thus, it is this sense of imagination that makes these animals more perfect. Al-Ġazālī states that humans are also included in the group of animals. But human beings are distinguished by the presence of this heart, intellect and kindness that make human beings special. In the meantime, Ibn Bājjah distinguishes between humans and animals. This is because the advantage of the human being is in his intellect that can determine whether something is right or wrong.

According to Ibn Bājjah, knowing something has two delights. First, the delicacy in confidence when a person knows something is true or false. Second, the delicacy of knowing something new. In conclusion, Ibn Bājjah, in explaining the development of the soul, stated that the lowest human being cannot be equated with animals at all because the human being is still capable of living in a society. Apart from that, Ibn Bājjah also thinks that the main purpose of the power of the intellect is to produce wisdom. Therefore, according to Ibn Bājjah, the main motivator of human beings is the intellect and the intellect can be used to reach a goal and desire and share with others. Thus, the result of the combination of *al-nafs* and the intellect moves the sense of feeling, the sharing senses along with the senses of high imagination that produce the philosophy of human life and civilisation. According to Ibn Bājjah, every human action, when viewed from the soul, can be categorised into three forms: (1) occasional, or only physical; the majority, (2) there are times when the act is born from the particular spiritual (sense of perception, imagination and memory); the knower, and (3) actions resulting from universal spirituality; this is the perfect form of the soul which shows its absolute unity between body and spirit; the happy state. For this reason, Ibn Bājjah emphasised that people who act only depending on matter (body) are abominable and despicable, while those who act depending on the soul or spirituality (form) are people who are superior and noble. Figure 2 below depicts the development of the soul or self (*al-nafs*) according to Ibn Bājjah.

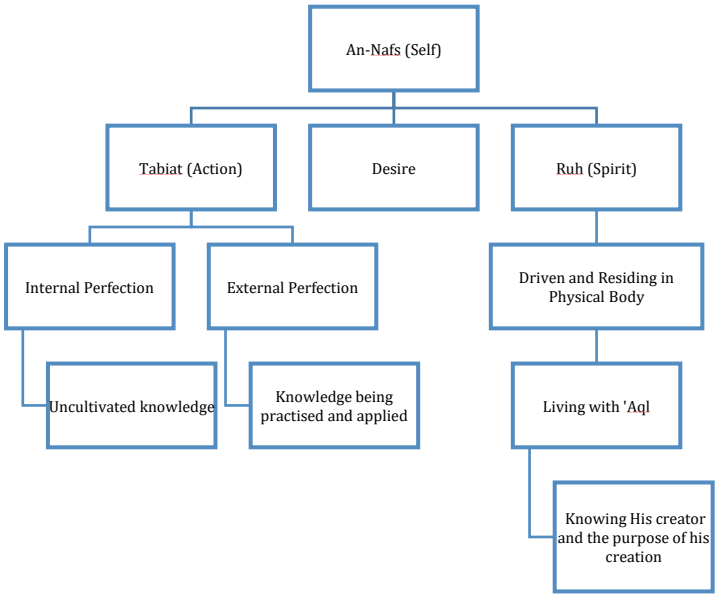

Figure 2. Development of soul or self (an-nafs) according to Ibn Bājjah

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF IBN BĀJJAH TO CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOLOGY

Ibn Bājjah argued that psychology or *ʿilm al-nafs* is the most noble science, and it is an important introduction to arrive at other sciences, especially the science of *maʿrifat* Allāh (knowing the Almighty Allāh). Note that, psychology here does not refer to the modern or contemporary psychology that has been defined for example by Cicarelli and White (2025) as the scientific study of behaviour and mental processes. This definition is insufficient for Ibn Bājjah's conception of *ʿilm al-nafs*. His study of the self encompasses the ontological reality of the soul, its ethical orientation, and its teleological aim toward human perfection and the Divine power, rendering it inherently normative rather than value-neutral. Interpreting Ibn Bājjah's psychology (*ʿilm al*-nafs) solely through a modern scientific lens therefore risks obscuring its integrated philosophical and spiritual dimensions which are central to his understanding of the human self. To Ibn Bājjah, it is impossible for a person to know the various principles of science if he or she does not know the soul and its essence. If one does not know the condition of the soul and its essence, then one does not believe in all matters even more. In addition, psychology, according to Ibn Bājjah, provides the power of taking premises (i.e., written words as a precursor to drawing a conclusion or a proposition that supports and strengthens the conclusion), which is a prerequisite for all the natural sciences for those who study the sciences (i.e., scientists). Furthermore, the wisdom of civilisation cannot be elaborated systematically without knowing the problems of the soul. Despite the difference between the modern psychology and *ʿilm al-nafs*, Ibn Bājjah's works are very relevant to contemporary psychology, especially his works on happiness, solitude and memory. These works are relevant to the following fields of psychology:

Positive Psychology

Ibn Bājjah discussed the happy personality or the happy individual in relation to the concept of happiness, solitude, following the sunnah and possessing noble character. These four concepts are interrelated to create a happy person (Sitorus & Idris, 2012). First, to Ibn Bājjah, happiness can be achieved through rational reasoning; rational reasoning is the way for humans to reach their natural perfection and realise the highest happiness. In fact, the goal of philosophical thought, according to him, is the unity of the human mind with the Active Intellect, where at that time humans become part of the realm of reason and can create happiness for themselves. Ibn Bājjah once criticised the Ṣūfīs by saying that the Ṣūfīs think that the understanding of the greatest happiness sometimes occurs without a learning process, namely by concentration and always remembering. He also criticised al-Ġazālī, who views that the rational world will not be revealed to humans except with seclusion. After that, man will see the divine light, so he feels great pleasure. Ibn Bājjah said that indeed al-Ġazālī underestimated the problem when he thought that happiness can be obtained by someone through the path of possession of the essence with the *nūr* (light) that Allāh bestows on the heart. Whereas the truth is that pure rational reasoning that is not tainted by sensual pleasures is the only way to see Allāh, while Ṣūfistic knowledge, which consists of sensory images, is actually a barrier to achieving *maʿrifat* Allāh, because it covers the face of reality.

In the end, however, Ibn Bājjah embraced the orientation of Ṣūfism after he had criticised it and embraced the notion of divine illumination of the human mind, which can bring true happiness to him. In light of this, Ibn Bājjah's concept of happiness is different from the

one in contemporary positive psychology that has defined happiness as positive emotions and the absence of negative emotion (Campton et al., 2020), as it goes beyond positive emotions with connections to Allāh the Almighty.

Social Psychology

In relation to social psychology (i.e., the study of how people behave and make decisions when they interact with others or live within a society; Cicarelli & White, 2025), according to Ibn Bājjah, a country can be divided into a perfect state and an imperfect state. The former would have a virtuous city whose members are all complete in knowledge, while the latter owns a non-virtuous city where the contrary is the case (Latif, 2019). Additionally, Ibn Bājjah described two alternative functions of the state, which are to assess people's actions in order to guide them to achieve their desired goals and to devise ways of achieving certain goals. This is because he believes that some people prefer to rule and some others prefer to be ruled. Ibn Bājjah further adds that the perfected person (the knowledgeable and the happy individual) may reside in either a virtuous city or a non-virtuous city. When residing in a non-virtuous city, the perfected person must live in solitude although isolation in itself is undesirable because the perfected person may appear as a stranger whose opinion contradicts the majority's opinion. Ibn Bājjah also suggested that the perfected person living in a non-virtuous city must minimise social contact and, whenever possible, migrate to a virtuous city.

Furthermore, Ibn Bājjah warned that society can paralyse the ability of individual thinking and prevent it from achieving perfection (Kohar, 2020). This is because society is covered with low deeds and lustful desires. Meanwhile, with his own strength, humans can reach high dignity through thoughts and actions. Therefore, one must isolate one's mind and soul from society, and free oneself from the ties of tradition, which is mostly controlled by superstition. Isolating thoughts and souls do not mean one does not get along with society. But one should be able to control himself and be able to control his passions, not be dragged into the stream of the lowly actions of society (Dunlop, 1945). In other words, he must be centred on himself and always feel that he is an example for people to follow, as well as a maker and drafter of legislation for society, not sinking into that society. So, the "loner" in Ibn Bājjah's concept is more emphasised on the attitude of life in society, not on the place of residence. In this sense, "loners" are always in the midst of society, no matter how damaged that society is. Ibn Bājjah's concept of solitude, therefore, may contribute to understanding how society and the living environment may influence one's behaviour, which is the central focus of social psychology. In spite of this, it is important to note that, unlike social psychology that focuses on how people's behaviour is shaped by society and interactions with others, Ibn Bājjah evaluates society normatively, focusing on whether it supports or obstructs the moral and intellectual perfection of the self (*al-nafs*).

Cognitive Psychology

Cognitive psychology focuses on mental processes such as thinking, memory, attention, and reasoning (Cicarelli & White, 2025). Ibn Bājjah has mentioned the power of memory in his book, Tadbīr al-Mutawaḥḥid (The Governance of Solitary), in a special chapter on spiritual images, namely images of sensory objects that exist in the collective senses and the power of imagination (Najātī, 2002). In contemporary psychological terms, these are called cognitive

images or mental imagery. Given the period of his life and works, Ibn Bājjah can be considered as an initiator of the concept of mental imagery. Additionally, memory to Ibn Bājjah is one of the forces that move the human's animalistic soul although, in his understanding, the act of remembering does not exist in animals because animals, unlike humans, do not have the power of reasoning (*ʿaql*). However, to Ibn Bājjah, memory is equally present in humans and animals and what distinguishes memory in humans and animals is the process of remembering, where in animals there is no mental power for it and it is purely resultant from imagination and desire. To Ibn Bājjah, remembering and memory in animals, therefore, are not associated with rational power, unlike humans, for whom remembering involves rational power because humans are created with *ʿaql*. His idea about rational power in remembering and memory is similar to the concept of elaborative rehearsal in cognitive psychology, where information that is processed in a more in-depth way can be stored permanently in long-term memory. Note, however, cognitive psychology examines mental processes such as perception, memory, and reasoning through empirical and value-neutral methods, without reference to the soul or ultimate purpose. In contrast, Ibn Bājjah situates cognition within the broader framework of *al-nafs*, viewing intellect as an ontological and ethical faculty oriented toward human perfection and the Divine. As a result, his approach is holistic and teleological, whereas cognitive psychology remains functionally descriptive.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, Ibn Bājjah's views can be recapitulated into the following points:

First, Ibn Bājjah considers psychology, or *ʿilm al-nafs*, to be the most noble of all sciences and a necessary foundation for understanding other fields of knowledge, especially the science of knowing Allāh, the Almighty Creator (*maʿrifat Allāh*). He argues that a person cannot truly understand any branch of knowledge without first understanding the soul and its nature. Without knowledge of the soul, intellectual certainty and genuine belief remain incomplete.

Second, Ibn Bājjah defines the soul as the first perfection of the body, meaning that it is the principle that gives life, organisation, and direction to the human body. He identifies several powers of the soul, including the nutritive power, the sensory power, the imaginative power, and the rational power. Each of these powers plays a distinct role in human growth, perception, thought, and action.

Third, Ibn Bājjah explains that knowledge begins with the senses. The senses perceive external objects and transmit their images to the imaginative faculty. From these images, the intellect abstracts universal meanings. Sensory perception is therefore a necessary starting point for thinking, because what has never been sensed cannot be imagined or rationally understood.

Fourth, rational reasoning is the primary means through which human beings achieve perfection and attain true happiness. Ibn Bājjah maintains that the ultimate goal of philosophical inquiry is the union of the human intellect with the Active Intellect. Through this union, human beings participate in the realm of reason, and divine illumination of the intellect enables the attainment of lasting happiness.

Fifth, Ibn Bājjah warns that society can negatively influence individuals, especially when it is dominated by moral corruption, superstition, and uncontrolled desire. Such social conditions can weaken independent thinking and prevent individuals from achieving intellectual and moral perfection. For this reason, he advocates a form of intellectual and moral withdrawal, not as physical isolation, but as protecting one's reason and values from harmful social influences.

Sixth, Ibn Bājjah affirms that Allāh grants human beings innate capacities and gifts. Some of these are naturally present, while others must be cultivated through effort and divine guidance as conveyed by the Prophets. By following prophetic teachings, individuals develop inner insight that allows them to understand the nature of beings, their origins, and their ultimate purpose, thereby recognising Allāh as the One and incomparable Creator.

Seventh, Ibn Bājjah outlines three practices essential for attaining closeness to Allāh: consistent remembrance and glorification of Allāh through speech, aligning one's actions with the moral insight of the heart, and avoiding anything that distracts the heart from divine remembrance. He emphasises that these practices must be maintained continuously throughout one's life.

Eighth, Ibn Bājjah distinguishes between animal actions and genuinely human actions based on intention rather than outward behaviour. Actions driven purely by physical appetite, such as eating solely for pleasure, are considered animal actions. However, the same action becomes human when guided by rational intention, such as maintaining health in order to live ethically and fulfil one's responsibilities.

Ninth, what distinguishes human beings from other creatures is their capacity for rational thought, which serves as the basis of voluntary action. Actions guided by reason are described as *ikhtiyāriyyah* (volitional) actions. When actions are motivated by the pursuit of truth and guided by intellect, they approach a higher, more refined level of human conduct.

Tenth, Ibn Bājjah presents a comprehensive understanding of the human self through the concept of *al-nafs*, viewing it as an integrated whole that includes intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions. Through the proper development of these dimensions, human beings are perfected and become qualified to fulfil their role as *khalīfah* (vicegerent) on earth. A clear and well-developed intellect naturally seeks truth and recognises the oneness of Allāh, affirming that the ultimate purpose of human existence lies in worship and servitude to the Creator.

Finally, Ibn Bājjah emphasises the elevated status of human beings among created beings, attributing this distinction to the intellect as the source of moral responsibility and purposeful action. Human life, he argues, is animated through the interaction of multiple elements, with *al-nafs* at its core. The development of the soul is therefore a holistic process that must be understood systematically in order to cultivate a harmonious relationship between the created servant (*ʿabid*) and the Creator of the universe.

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The Ontology, Epistemology, and Axiology of Fakhr Al-Dīn Al-Rāzī's Work on Soul and Its Relation to Character Development

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the concept of the soul and its relation to character development (akhlak) based on the works and thoughts of Fakhr al-Dīn Al-Rāzī, a renowned 12th-century Islamic scholar and theologian of the Ashʿarite school. By visiting the literature and Al-Rāzī's work, especially Kitab al-nafs wa'l-ruh. Al-Rāzī's understanding of the soul is examined through ontological, epistemological, and axiological lenses. Ontologically, Al-Rāzī presents the soul as a unique, immaterial substance that governs the body, distinct from physical organs yet intimately connected to human behaviour. Epistemologically, his methodology is deeply rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith, yet supported by rational inquiry, scientific observation, and philosophical dialectics. He locates the soul in the heart (qalb), arguing its centrality in perception, belief, and character. Axiologically, Al-Rāzī views the soul as inherently inclined toward moral perfection, with moral character functioning as the manifestation of the soul's ethical disposition. Moral excellence, he argues, is not innate but can be cultivated through knowledge, discipline, and spiritual exercise- reflecting his positive outlook on the soul. Al-Rāzī's tripartite model of the soul—vegetative, animal, and rational faculties—forms a framework through which ethical character development is possible. Ultimately, the paper argues that Al-Rāzī's theory of the soul integrates metaphysics, psychology, and ethics, offering a holistic view of human nature that is still relevant today. This paper discusses the application of Al-Rāzī's work to organisational and individual moral development through a psychological lens and suggests considering religious, spiritual, and moral aspects when approaching psychological issues.

Keywords: *Character, Fakhr al-Dīn Al-Rāzī, Ilm al-nafs, Moral excellence, Psychology*

INTRODUCTION

Fakhr al-Dīn Al-Rāzī, or Al-Rāzī, is a prominent figure, theologian, and philosopher in the Muslim world. Besides religion and sciences, he was also an expert in philosophy, history, jurisprudence, astronomy, mathematics, and medicine. Nevertheless, he is well known primarily in theology and exegesis.

Al-Rāzī's expertise in exegesis is brilliantly portrayed through his magnum opuses, such as the 32-volume *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* (the Great Commentary) and the nine-volume *Al-Matālib al'Āliyyah min al-'ilm al-ilahī* (Exalted Topics of Inquiry within Divine Science). In his The Great Commentary, he has provided an extensive commentary of the Quranic verses based on the linguistic aspects and comprehensive elaboration of the verses by relating them with other Quranic verses, the hadith, and prophetic history of the prophet and his companions,

as well as science in a way that the current time could understand the meaning and context of the verse (Saeed, 2018). Owing to his immense knowledge, sharp linguistic skills, and outstanding memory, he produced a holistic picture of the Quranic verses.

Aside from Quranic exegesis, Al-Rāzī also wrote several works that are significant to the field of psychology, particularly in understanding the soul and its relation to character development (*akhlak*). This paper aims to understand Al-Rāzī's works, their application and implications for psychology. This paper starts with introducing Al-Rāzī, followed by an analysis of Al-Rāzī's philosophical thoughts and approaches, and is followed by explaining the theory of the soul to apprehend the complexity of the human psyche. Consequently, this paper also suggests the application of Al-Rāzī's work in the psychology field. Finally, this paper concludes by providing suggestions to the psychology field based on Al-Rāzī's work.

BACKGROUND

His name is Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn 'Umar b. Al-Husayn Al-Rāzī Abu `Abd Allah al-Qurashi, al-Bakri, al-Taymi, al-Tabaristani al-Razī, born in Rayy, Iran on Ramadhan 25th, 544H/1149M (d. 606H/1210M). Although he was born as a Persian, his lineage can be traced back to the prophet's companion Abu Bakar as-Siddiq, meaning he is of Arab descent (Kafrawi & Djati, 2004).

Al-Rāzī was brought up under the influence of the Shāfi'ite and Al-Ash'arite sects. His father, Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn, had taught him theology and jurisprudence from an early age. He also learned from other prominent scholars from his hometown in jurisprudence and theology, and the chain of his teachers extends back to Imam Shāfi'i in jurisprudence & Imam Abū l-Hasan al-Ash'ari in theology. Nevertheless, as a thinker, he did not limit himself to these two sects, and sometimes chose other methods, such as philosophy as opposed to the two (Griffel, 2011), indicating openness in his methods, which he developed through private reading and learning, arguing, in describing many issues, including the soul. The significance of Al-Rāzī's works and contributions to preserving the Islamic tradition, as well as his description of the soul, can be understood through the zeitgeist, or intellectual climate, of his time, his life experiences, and his career.

Intellectual Climate

During Al-Rāzī's time, the Sunni caliphate of the Abbasid Empire favoured the Hanbali school, while opposing and persecuting other movements including Ash'arites and Mu'tazilites (Leaman, 2015). The opposition led many scholars to migrate from Baghdad to other regions beyond the control of the caliphate, such as Jibal, Khurasan, and Transoxiana (Griffel, 2007). Many of these regions were ruled by sultans who welcomed these scholars. Concurrently, Al-Rāzī's contemporaries include Ibn al-Rūshd and Ibn Al-Arabi, indicating that vibrant scholarly activities marked the period. The flourishing of scholarship in this era allowed for the exchange of knowledge through intellectual debates and extensive writings.

During Al-Rāzī's period, the Ash'arites gained considerable support from the eastern Islamic world (Griffel, 2007). Concurrently, it is also worth highlighting that the Muslim world was grappling with numerous theological disputes among various sects, including the

Maturidites, Ismailites, Hanbalites, Mu'tazilites, and Karramites sects. Al-Rāzī played a significant role in addressing these disputes, striving to revive Islam and bring Muslims back to the authentic foundation of the faith—free from the influence of the Mu'tazilites' excessive rationalism and the Shi'ites' doctrinal innovations (Ceylan, 1996). His critiques provoked strong opposition, with followers of some sects even threatening his life (Ceylan, 1996).

Nevertheless, the tensions provided an opportunity for Al-Rāzī to engage in scholarly debates with the local scholars. His intellectual pursuits took him across the Muslim world, where his remarkable scholarship and debating skills raised his reputation, attracting the sultans to approach him and enabling him to establish a patronage relationship with two contested powers: the Khwarazm and the Gūrid dynasty. These relationships granted him greater authority, allowing him to influence religious policies, teach students, and guide rationalists into Sunni Muslims (Griffel, 2007). For more information on his patronage, please refer to Griffel (2007). The detail of his scholarship is described in the following section.

Life Experiences and Career

Al-Rāzī's intellectual journey began after the demise of his father, when he travelled to Nishapur and encountered the works of Ibn Sina, which introduced him to philosophy and set him on the path (Griffel, 2011). The influence of philosophy is reflected in his work *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya fī ʿilm al-ilāhiyyāt wa-l-ṭabīʿiyyāt* (Eastern Points of Investigation on Metaphysics and Physics), as he used Ibn Sina's method of argument in approaching theological issues (Janssens, 2012). However, Al-Rāzī remained critical of Ibn Sina's theological positions (Ceylan, 1996; Janssens, 2012). After his travel to Nishapur, learning about philosophy, he returned to his hometown.

Al-Rāzī also studied under the renowned scholars such as al-Kamāl al-Simnānī in jurisprudence (Ceylan, 2006; Shihadeh, 2006) and theologian-philosopher, Majd al-Dīn' Abd al-Razzaq al-Jīlī (Shihadeh, 2006), with whom he travelled to Maragha and completed his study at a madrasah there. After completing his study, he taught in several regions such as Marand, Hamadan, and Rayy (Griffel, 2011) and authored early works like *al-Isharah fi ʿilm al-kalam (The Guiding Principle of Science of Kalam)*. Later, Al-Rāzi travelled to Khwarazm and Transoxiana, which led to a patronage relationship with the Sultan Tekish of Khwarazm, and later with the Sultan of Gūrid, Ghiyāth al-Dīn of Ghazna and his successor, Shihāb al-Dīn. Due to Al-Rāzī's scholarship, the sultans welcomed and supported him by utilising the Ash'arites approach for their religious policy (Griffel, 2007). From this patronage relationship, he settled in Herat, established a madrasah and got paid for his teaching and intellectual activity. Here is where he started writing his magnum opus, The Great Commentary.

Known for his sharp intellect and confrontational style, Al-Rāzī frequently debated scholars from various sects, successfully converting many to Sunni Islam. His unrelenting approach frequently led to public backlash and forced relocations. He passed away in Herat in 1220 CE, probably due to poisoning by followers from other sects. Further details of his life and scholarly journey can be found in Ceylan (1996), Griffel (2011), and Shihadeh (2006).

CONTRIBUTIONS AND NOTABLE WORKS

Al-Rāzī's contribution and works extended beyond theology. According to Al-Baghdadi (1990), Al-Rāzī authored many books covering a wide spectrum of disciplines, including exegesis, theology, logic, philosophy, ethics, Islamic jurisprudence, history, mathematics, cosmology, medicine, astrology, and encyclopaedia. This section highlights the four most distinguished works, which reflect the breadth and depth of his knowledge, befitting his title as the *Hujjatul Islam* (proof of Islam).

i. Quranic exegesis. Al-Rāzī's magnum opus, *Mafatih al-Ghayb* or *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* (The Great Commentary*)* was composed in his final days. Al-Rāzī utilised both logic and narrative approaches to interpret the Quran (Cooper, 1998). The tafsir weaves together prophetic tradition, philosophical analysis, and theological discourse, as well as other disciplines of knowledge and is celebrated for its comprehensiveness.

ii. Philosophy and ethics. In *Kitab al-nafs wa'l-ruh wa sharh quwahuma* or *Kitab al-nafs wa'l-ruh* (Book on the Soul and the Spirit and their Faculties), Al-Rāzī discusses the human psychology based on Islamic philosophies of ethics and metaphysics. He emphasised that the soul is the core driver of human behaviour and distinguished humans from animals by their possession of rational and moral faculties that require us to live morally and ethically. At the same time, he acknowledges the tendency of the soul to become corrupt. He also provides the 'treatment' for such issues (Shihadeh, 2006). In this book, he called for a life guided by ethical principles.

iii. Logic. In *Kitab al-Mantiq al-Kabir* (Major Book on Logic), Al-Rāzī offers a critical assessment of Aristotelian and Avicennian logic. Furthermore, Al-Rāzī also pointed out the flaws in deductive reasoning while explaining his preference for inductive reasoning.

iv. Cosmology. In *Matalib al-'Aliya* (The Higher Issues), Al-Rāzī focuses on the discussion of the physical reality of the world. In this book, he opposes the single geocentric model of the universe (i.e., our universe exists as the centre of the universe) (Elkaisy-Friemuth, 2015) and postulated the idea of a multiverse, based on the Quranic verse *in Surah Al-Fatihah*: "All praise belongs to God, Lord of the Worlds" (The Quran, 1:2), which he believed is supported by the Ash'arite theory of atomism (the universe is made of many tiny physical atoms).

From these works, it is evident that Al-Rāzī was well-versed in the vast array of knowledge of his time. He played a significant role in reconciling revelation and reason within the Islamic tradition. Although his early works emphasised on rationalism, he has also shown an inclination towards revealed knowledge in his later years (Cooper, 1998), as he realises the way of the *kalam* was unable to satiate his thirst for the answer, as he described in his own words: "I have experienced all the methods of theology and all the way of philosophy, but I did not find in them the benefit (*kalam*) which could equal the benefit I derived from the reading of the exalted Quran" (Ceylan, 1996; Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah, 1965).

The following section explores Al-Rāzī's understanding of the soul by examining the ontological, epistemological, and axiological approaches based on the Book on the Soul and the Spirit and their Faculties.

AL-RĀZĪ'S PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHTS AND APPROACHES

Al- Rāzi's Ontological Approach

Al-Rāzī describes the wisdom behind the creation of man as indicating Allah's perfection of generosity and mercy. The former is when Allah created man from dust that bears Divine lights. As for the latter, Allah entrusted man's heart with the light of gnosis, tongue with recitation of tawhid, eyes to see His sign, and ears to hear His speech, although man is composed of appetition, anger, and blameworthy habits.

Furthermore, Al-Rāzī's work covers a wide range of metaphysical concepts, ranging from the existence of God, the universe, the soul, and the living and non-living creatures. Prior to illustrating the existence of man, Al-Rāzī (1992) outlines that the existence of being can be divided into four types based on the principle of causality. They are:

a. Either affects or is not at all affected in any way

The first type of existent that affects but is not at all affected refers to Allah, the Ultimate Creator, a Necessary Being in the chain of creation for all other beings to exist. Without Allah as the primal force behind the creation of the universe, it is impossible to explain the origin of the universe without being stuck in a loop (infinite regression) (Al-Rāzī, 1992). Unlike contingent being, Allah is completely independent and self-sufficient, unaffected by anything external, requires no partner and is not subject to cause and effect. It is absurd to believe that Allah must have a creator because a Necessary Being is not defined by its predecessor (to be created is to be affected), but its capability to exist solely as its own essence. Therefore, it does not matter whether humans believe in God or not, since the existence of the Necessary Being is not dependent on the subjects that depend on its effect (Al-Rāzī, 1992). This is in line with the Quran, as mentioned in *Surah Al-Fatir* verse 15: "O mankind, you are those in need of Allah, while Allah is free of need, the Praiseworthy." (The Quran, 35:15). This type of being is usually referred to as the First Cause in the *kalam* cosmological argument for Allah as a Necessary Being for creating the universe (Kafrawi & Djati, 2004). In other words, Allah gives effect to His creation but is not affected by any of the creations.

b. Receives effects but does not affect anything in any way

The second type of existent, which receives effects but does not affect others, refers to matter (Al-Rāzī, 1992). According to Al-Rāzī (1992), this includes the incorporeal universe as it is made up of a collection of atoms that are indivisible. It is an existent that does not necessarily occupy space, but its form is receptive to space and time, such as cold, hot, moist, dry, and others. All matters are, by nature, contain absolute receptivity, obedience, and submission, as mentioned in *Surah Al-Hajj* verse 18: "Do you not see that to Allah prostrates whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth and the sun, the moon, the stars, the

mountains, the trees, the moving creatures, and many of the people?" (The Quran, 22:18). Thus, matter on its own need to receive effects from others to function or mean anything of value.

c. Affects and is also affected at the same time

According to Al-Rāzī (1992), the third kind, which affects and is at the same time affected, refers to the universe of spirits and souls. It has been established in the Islamic sciences that spirits receive effects from something else and are able to affect others as well. For instance, in *Surah Al-Dhariyat* (verses 1 to 4), the angels administer the world affairs (of winds scattering dust, clouds loaded with rain, ship gliding ease) by Allah's command. In this context, angels receive command from Allah, the highest power and their 'administration' affects man.

Al-Rāzī (1992) also made it clear that the world of spirit is of different ranks, between the Divine world and the Physical world. The highest one is the one that has lost itself in the light of Allah and hardly finds time in the corporeal world; they are the angels. The lower rank belongs to the terrestrial spirit, ranked based on nobility and debasement. The highest is the human spirit, followed by the animal spirit and vegetative faculties.

d. Neither affects nor is affected at all

The fourth kind is an existent that neither affects nor receives an effect that cannot exist for the human mind to comprehend. This type of being may be asserted as something which has no end or duration (Al-Rāzī ,1992). However, due to its mysterious nature and lack of proper means to assert its existence, Al-Rāzī stated that it exists merely as a concept and is not worth discussing since there is no example that can be referred to.

The four types of existence are the basis that Al-Rāzī uses to support his theory; human action is the act of the soul, and that the soul is immaterial, independent from the body, but makes instrumental use of the body to move (Janssens, 2012). For the ontology of the soul, we shall focus on the third kind of existence. Al-Rāzī illustrates this in Book on the Soul and the Spirit, "just as, the carpenter, for example, performs different deeds through different instruments; similarly, the soul sees with eyes, hears with ears, thinks with brain and acts through the heart. Therefore, all body parts are instruments and tools for the soul" (Al-Rāzī, 1992, p. 92).

As the soul is in the third kind of existence, where it causes change and can change, the soul can further be classified into three ranks based on appetition: the highest position belongs to those who constantly attend to the Divine World and sink themselves in the presence of Allah (Al-Rāzī, 1992). This is described in *Surah Al-Waqiah* verse 11: "These will be those Nearest to Allah." (The Quran, 56:11).

Next, the middle position admits those souls who attend to both the Divine and corporeal worlds. Souls that belong to this position can move upward via obedience and devotion. However, it is also possible for the souls to move downward as they deal with the affairs of the world and exercise sway over it (Al-Rāzī, 1992). Perhaps, humans possessing this

type of soul are considered the right-hand (*ashabul yamin*) or righteous and balanced people (The Quran, 56:27).

Lastly, the souls that belong in the last rank are those who attend to the lower world and are exceedingly occupied in seeking its pleasures. They may be described as the people of the left-hand (*ashabul syimal*) and are transgressors (The Quran, 56:41).

To conclude, humans are made up of two existents: the body (matter) and the soul (immaterial). The body or matter is unable to provide any effect as it receives effects from others to perform any motion or action. Whereas the soul acts as the main operative, which by merits of its existence allows it to give effect to the human body (matter) while also being affected by the repercussions/consequences made by the body (matter). Therefore, the body serves as an instrument for the soul to move and act, justifying human action as the act of the soul.

Man is also perfect and imperfect. As the soul is ranked, the highest will always seek Allah's pleasure and reach perfection as they are with the angels. Meanwhile, the lowest one strives only to fulfil corporeal pleasures and can descend to the level of cattle or a pig for attending appetite, or like a biting dog, a violent camel if they attend to anger (Al-Rāzī, 1992). A man can manifest all those conflicts through his character and actions. Yet, man bears to remember that he is a traveller in a world that is a temporary halt, while the goal is the hereafter and paradise, hence he needs to steer his actions towards the goal. Therefore, striving for excellence in morality and righteousness is necessary to guide one towards the goal.

Al- Rāzī's Epistemological Approach

Epistemology concerns on how knowledge is acquired and what makes it valid (Aysha et al., 2024) as well as ways a topic was study (Rahman, 2020). This section discusses the approaches Al-Rāzī adopted in outlining his understanding of the soul.

As a polymath well-versed in various disciplines, Al- Rāzī adopted a holistic approach to discuss the soul. Drawing from both revealed (*naqli*) and acquired (*aqli*) knowledge, he integrates theology, philosophy, medicine, and lived human experience. Nevertheless, his Ash'arite background shapes his prioritisation of the divine sources as the foundation of the theory of the soul.

Following his ontological view that the soul is connected to the body, he posits that the soul is placed in the heart (*qalb*) rather than brain, through which it is connected with the rest of the body. He presented six main arguments based on the Quran and Hadith. For instance, based on *Surah Al-Shu'ara,* he argues that the heart is the addressee of God and bears the consequences of human deeds. Furthermore, he added that the heart is the locus of remembrance and understanding, based on *Surah Al-Zumar*, verse 21 (The Quran, 39:21). Additionally, in his fourth argument, he argued that the objection of the commandment, prohibition, reward, and punishment is the heart, as in there lies the intellect. The argument was supported based on several *Surahs* such as *Al-Hajj* (verse 46), *Al-Araf* (verse 178), *Al-Baqarah* (verses 7, 10, 88), and *Al-Nisa* (verse 155) (The Quran, 22:46; 7:178; 2:7, 10, 88; 4: 155), which indicate that the heart is the place of intellect, understanding, ignorance, and

negligence. He further strengthens his thesis with the sixth argument, taken from both the Quran such as from *Surah Al-Maidah* verse 41 and *Al-Nahl* verse 106 (The Quran, 5:41; 16:106) and Hadith, based on Sahih Bukhari and Muslim, that the word "belief" is attributed in the heart; therefore, the agent (i.e., soul) must also be in the heart (Al-Rāzī, 1992, p. 124). Al-Rāzī presented evidence from the revealed sources to show that the soul is connected with the body through the heart. Nevertheless, this does not mean he ignored rational evidence in justifying his theory.

Beyond revealed texts, Al-Rāzī employed rational and scientific evidence, especially from medical sciences. For instance, he mentioned that the heart is the first organ to develop in a foetus and unites with the rest of the other organs in the body, making the heart the "chief organ" of the human physique (Al-Rāzī, 1992, p. 126). Thus, the soul's attachment in the heart precedes the attachment with other organs. Contemporary research supports this claim that the human heart is one of the first organs to develop and the first to display function in the embryonic stage (Bulatovic et al., 2016; Tan & Lewandowski, 2020). Hence, it is clear that Al-Rāzī integrates revealed knowledge with rational and scientific evidence to support his thesis that the heart mediates the connection between soul and body.

Al-Rāzī's holistic approach lies in his methods of argument. He favours detailed dialectic consideration for each topic he discusses by providing elaborated arguments, counterarguments, counter-counterarguments, and carefully listing and evaluating them (Adamson, 2016). In his Book on the Soul and the Spirit, Al-Rāzī begins the discussion about the human soul by introducing the types of existence, helping readers grasp the essence of existence and its character, before delving into the relationship between the soul and the body. Then, Al-Rāzī also presented not less than ten arguments to support his thesis; that the soul is different from the body by investigating the quiddity of the souls. One of them is in the second argument (i.e., man is [not] an expression of his body) to justify his thesis; the soul is one.

> If it were so that man was the expression of his body, man would have either possessed in every one of his parts, life, knowledge, power, and volition or not. Either of the two hypotheses is absurd. It is, therefore, absurd to say that man is an expression of this body. The first case is absurd because it requires that every part of the body must be living, knowing, intending, and showing energy independently, and this necessitated that man is not one living being, one powerful being, rather, he is many livings, learned and powerful beings. In this case, there will remain no connection between one man and many individuals who are related to some others by one chain. But we evidently know the absurdity of this expression, since I find myself as one essence, one living being and not many, and since by supposing that every part of this body is alive independently, none of the parts would have the knowledge of its fellow parts. It would thus be possible that one intends to move to one side, and the other to the other side. This would then, cause some parts of one and the same body to oppose some other parts, as happens between two individuals. That this is absurd is known evidently. The second case is equally absurd as it requires that one quality should exist in many places. This is evidently known as absurd. If it were permissible that one quality at a time in many places, every particle shall then be living, knowing, having power, and that matter would turn to this that one particular body should be many people and not

one. When once the absurdity becomes clear, it is confirmed that man is not this particular body (Al-Rāzī, n.d.; Al-Rāzī', 1992, p. 93-94).

The above example illustrates Al-Rāzī's holistic approach with detailed and elaborated arguments to support his thesis. He explains that if each part of the body independently possessed life and volition, then a human would not be one rational being but a multiplicity of beings, which is logically absurd. Conversely, if the body were lifeless without the soul, then man must be something beyond the body—namely, the soul itself.

Furthermore, Al-Rāzī prefers the phenomenological method (Attar, 2014) because he stressed the importance of supporting claims through demonstrative evidence or proof. Al-Rāzī always grounded abstract ideas in human experience and real-life examples. For instance, while supporting his thesis that mental pleasure is nobler than sensual pleasure, he described those sensual pleasures, such as eating, drinking, and mating, as imperfect for a man, serving as means to fulfil his needs, and only pleasurable when they remove the pain of hunger. He illustrated the proof with a situation of a hungry man; a hungry man enjoys food more than a less hungry man, but overeating may harm and inflict pain; thus, eating is no longer pleasurable (Al-Rāzī, 1992).

Moreover, he also uses analogies and questions to encourage his readers to ponder. For instance, in the thesis that mental pleasure is superior than sensual pleasure, he described evidence based on the societal norm, a story of a horse, in which the horse is judged (i.e., to be sold at a higher price) not based on eating or drinking, but the quickest, which exercises and makes charges. "If the irrational animal is judged for their merits and excellence, not by eating and drinking… what should you (man), then, think of the rational intelligent animal?" (Al-Rāzī, 1992, p. 175). The question directs readers to ponder that the soul is valued not based on the sensual pleasure, but rather by the merits it holds, particularly due to man's rational faculties.

In summary, Al-Rāzī's epistemological approach is holistic, as exhibited in how he discussed the soul from various angles, including revealed and scientific knowledge. While he anchored his theory of the souls in the Qur'an and Hadith, he reinforced it through logical reasoning, philosophy, medicine, and lived human experience. For that, he was able to harmonise the revealed and acquired knowledge. Furthermore, he also advanced in his time by using the phenomenological method, thus enabling readers to grasp his theory of the soul more clearly. Following the ontological and epistemological approach, the subsequent section will discuss the value that Al-Rāzī upholds in his theory of the soul.

Al-Rāzī's Axiological Approach

Al-Rāzī's approach in understanding the soul is centred on the path to achieving excellence in morality and righteousness, and paradise as the final destination. This is because people with excellent morality are people of the right-hand, who consistently attend to the higher world. They may enjoy pleasure without pain and peace without fear.

According to Al-Rāzī, the soul only entered the corporeal world to acquire knowledge and perform righteous deeds but can get distracted by worldly pleasures and may perform

wrongful deeds. This highlights the importance of a person's action, character, nature, and disposition; *akhlak. Akhlak* is the state of the soul that influences human action, in which good characters or good *akhlak* produce good action, while evil characters produce bad action (Rahim, 2013). Therefore, any action performed by the human body is directed by the soul, as both are connected to each other, working in tandem.

Furthermore, Al-Rāzī (1992) added that, although the human soul differs in nature or character (e.g., some are kind and tender while some are despotic and dominating) and never deviates from it, humans can change their manner by caution and training. Thus, for a human to change, knowledge is essential. In Book on the Soul and the Spirit, he states that "knowledge that leads to the path of the nearly-placed soul is the science of spiritual exercise and discipline, and knowledge that leads to the path of the right-hand is the science of morals" (Al-Rāzī, 1992, p. 83). In other words, with knowledge (i.e., the science of spiritual and moral), good characters and moral excellence are achievable and attainable (Shihadeh, 2006).

According to Al-Rāzī (1992), human naturally seek perfection and avoid imperfection, whether through power, sensory pleasure, or knowledge. The attainment of power for perfection can be seen from the human desire to dominate the lower world or turn towards the higher world. As humans engage in the lower world, they seek to dominate the corporeal world through pleasure; the perfect pleasures are appetition, coition, and possession, such as authority and wealth. On the other hand, humans also strive to avoid imperfection by avoiding pain such as hunger, loss of power, wealth, or loved ones.

However, Al-Rāzī warns that achieving perfection in the lower world will eventually lead to pain because humans essentially want unlimited power, but the lower world can never satiate their taste for power. This is because man only finds pleasure during a change of state, but not after the new state settles. For that, they will continue to seek more and never feel contented (Shihadeh, 2006). Concurrently, as the lower world is conditioned by the connection between the soul and degenerative body, humans eventually lose their power to achieve perfection, which necessitates pain.

Thus, true perfection lies in detaching from worldly desires and aligning oneself with the Divine through obedience and devotion and turning away from the lower corporeal world except for administering worldly affairs (Al-Rāzī, 1992). The higher world is everlasting, whilst the corporeal world is temporary. Therefore, those who attend the higher world will forever be bathed in the lights of the Divine as they enjoy continuity without annihilation, pleasure without pain, and peace without fear- the ultimate happiness (Al-Rāzī, 1992).

Furthermore, Al-Rāzī asserts that the attribute of knowledge also influences one's action, and this kind of perfection is perfected by theological sciences and spiritual discipline (Shihadeh, 2006). In other words, while humans by nature may behave to achieve perfection and pleasure through attaining power and fulfilment of sensory pleasure in the lower world, one mainly acts to avoid pain and achieve great pleasure in the hereafter. For that, they require knowledge of shariah (i.e., to distinguish the rightness and wrongness of actions and what should be done and avoided) and knowledge to minimise one's desire to overseek pleasures. Moreover, according to Al-Rāzī, animals and humans are judged based on merits and excellence, not by eating or drinking. The best human races possess knowledge, sciences, and

excellent manners; meanwhile, the men who have made no progress in their intellect, customs, and knowledge have grown debased and low. Therefore, intellectual pleasure such as knowledge, sciences, and excellent manners are superior to sensory pleasure like appetition and coition.

Achieving an excellent morality should be the goal for humankind. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) made it clear that he was sent to perfect the human character. This is stated in a hadith "I was sent to perfect good character" (The Hadith, Adab al-Mufrad, Book 14, Hadith 273). Thus, Al-Rāzī recognised that the perfection of the human soul is best done by perfecting our character through avoiding pain and achieving pleasure in the present world and the hereafter. Al-Rāzī, therefore, discusses achieving excellence in morality based on one's inclination and action in accordance with the principle of pleasure and pain.

In summary, to Al-Rāzī, what is good is pleasurable, and what is bad is painful. Nevertheless, the analysis of pleasure and pain should not be limited to the surface level, for instance, up to the corporeal worldly pleasure. Instead, what is considered good must avoid pain and bring pleasure in the hereafter. While it is human nature to like pleasure and avoid pain, man should strive for the ultimate pleasure. Those who can enjoy such bliss are righteous, whereas the transgressor will suffer pain, as stated in *Surah Al-Waqiah,* verses 27 and 41 (The Quran, 56;27, 41). Al-Rāzī is also optimistic, stating that one's character could change through knowledge and persistent training, i.e., abstaining from worldly pleasures. This process indicates the possibility of humans transitioning for the better by achieving excellent morality.

THE DISPOSITION OF THE SOUL ACCORDING TO AL-RĀZĪ

Nature of the Soul

According to Al-Rāzī (1992), the soul is fundamentally different from the body. In terms of essence, while the body is a matter confined to mass and space and composed of many different chemical compositions, the soul exists as its essence, not bound by mass and space. Also, the soul is not related to any genus of the physical body and its parts. As previously mentioned in the ontology approach, Al-Rāzī views the soul as a "living material substance that is diffused through the body, animating it" (Marmura, 1991, as cited in Tiryaki, 2020, p. 24). In other words, the soul administers the body and is responsible for a person being called "alive". For this reason, a dead body is considered soulless.

Moreover, Al-Rāzī dismisses any material theories of the soul associated with the Greek philosophers such as Galen and his followers, who believe that different aspects of the soul are attached to the human body, namely the liver, heart, and brain (Tiryaki, 2020). From his point of view, the immateriality of the soul and its components are not affected by physical bodily changes. This is illustrated by the stability of self-awareness over time as we grow old. For example, even when our bodies grow taller and bigger as adults, we can still relate and identify ourselves from the previous phase of human development, such as children, to show we are aware of who we are, regardless of the forms we have taken in the physical world (Al-Rāzī, 1992).

Ibn Sina had also previously tried to prove the existence of the soul through the "flying man" experiment and had been scrutinised by Al-Rāzī. Al-Rāzī argues that the sense of awareness and individual experiences in the flying man experiment are the self that is not a body (perception, for instance, is a cognitive process). Therefore, it does not prove that the soul is distinct from the body; instead, it proves that our sense of awareness (or the soul) is not reliant on our perception (Shihadeh, 2006). It is important to note here that Al-Rāzī's disagreement does not mean he did not believe the soul is distinct from the body; rather, his issue with the thought experiment is the claim that it proves the existence of the soul outside the sensory input (without the human body).

Al-Rāzī also opposes the idea that the soul is divisible into separate forms, as previously believed by other ancient philosophers, such as Aristotle, who posited that the soul has many forms, each responsible for a different function (Al-Rāzī, 1992). Instead, he believes that the soul is one and comprises three main faculties: vegetative, animal, and human, all of which exist within a complete soul (Al-Rāzī, 1992). Each faculty is responsible for many different functions in the human body, and is further explained as follows:

a. **The vegetative faculty.** This faculty is responsible for basic life functions, which provide biological sustenance to the body. Just as plants perform photosynthesis, get nutrients from sunlight, and absorb water in the ground to stay alive, the vegetative soul also plays the same role as it helps the body grow and develop through consumption. There are three subdivisions: assimilation, retention, and driving away. The first two are to assimilate and retain nutrients from the substitute (i.e., food and drinks) materials, while the latter moves the unnecessary particles that do not suit the body. This process resembles digestion. After the three completed their missions (supplying nutrients and making them part of the body), the productive and growth faculties come into play to transform or develop the body.

b. **The animal faculty.** This faculty is responsible for locomotion, perception and emotions. This faculty is how man makes sense of this world, using sensory input to form what he perceives as reality. This faculty is divided into two: motion and perception. The environment influences this faculty as the body responds to the perceived external stimuli. For instance, locomotion or movement is caused by the individual's determined will and desire, produced by their inclination towards an object, whether agreeable or disagreeable. They were produced by the faculty of appetition and anger, such that appetition attracts agreeableness, while the anger faculty drives away disagreeableness. In this sense, when a man perceives an object as agreeable, he will be inclined towards it, desire to get near it, and move towards it, and vice versa.

The animal faculty also consists of the perceiving faculty, further divided into internal and external faculties. As an external faculty, individuals perceive the environment using the five senses: hearing, sight, taste, smell, and touch. Meanwhile, for the internal faculty, individuals may act based on a judgement formed on information that is sensible (Sensus Communis) or can be not sensible but exists, such as a person's intention (Phantasy), as well as govern man's action in a particular meaning (Imaginative).

c. **The human faculty.** The human faculty maintains and controls the body (host of the soul). The human faculty plays a crucial role as a guiding force that restrains base instinct and regulates ethical behaviour. It is further divided into two: 1) the theoretical faculty provides a scientific description of all psychological phenomena and human-acquired intellect, and 2) the practical faculty focuses on maintaining our well-being. It specifies actions that should be taken to ensure the soul can achieve the highest virtue and moral excellence while avoiding transgression. This faculty is the psychological faculty.

Al-Rāzī (1992) discusses the relationship between the faculties in relation to the soul. To him, human has internal faculties (that help in realising the truth) and speculative faculties (that make man aware of what is useful and harmful for him). The latter faculty is assisted by the senses, as they are the source of understanding the world.

As for appetition, it can contribute to moral diseases or blameworthy character (*akhlak mazmumah*) such as excessive love of wealth, greed and miserliness, as well as excessive love for power and position. Therefore, the human faculty, which consists of theoretical and practical faculties, is necessary to cure these diseases by utilising the appetition in a good manner, resulting in a praiseworthy character (*aklak mahmudah*).

It can be observed that the three faculties of the soul, as postulated by Al-Rāzī, are almost similar to Aristotle's and Ibn Sina's in terms of their basic functions, but with different ideas of their properties and locations. The following diagram summarises Al-Rāzī's theory of the soul, and the next section explains the application of Al-Rāzī's work.

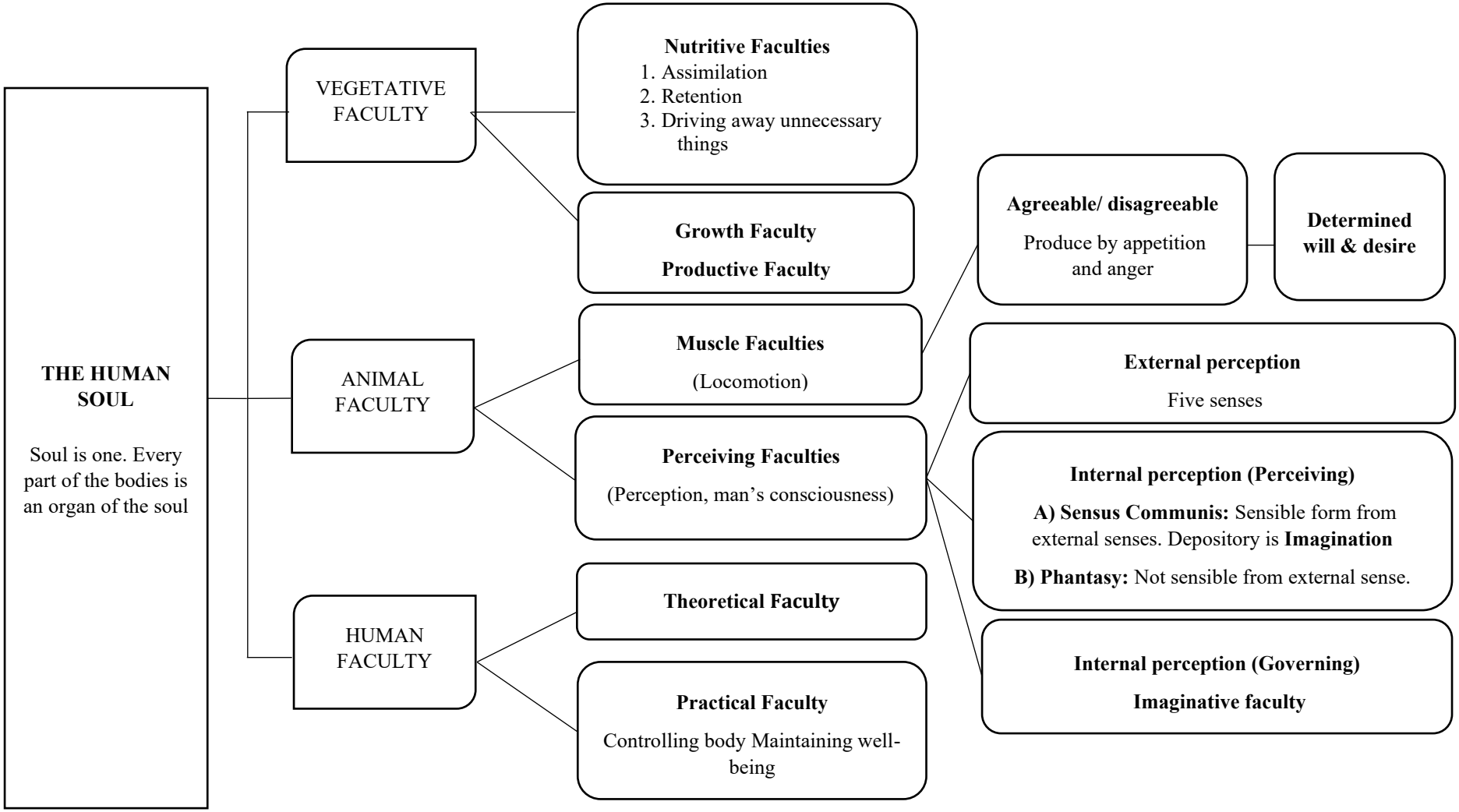

Figure 1. Summary of the faculty of the soul

AL RAZI'S CONCEPTION OF THE SOUL: APPLICATION AND PRACTICE

Soul in Relation to Wealth and Power: Application in Organisation

Al-Rāzī's exposition of the human soul in the Book on the Soul and the Spirit (1992) suggests that the soul exists not merely as a component that constitutes the human being. Rather, the soul serves to complete man as a moral and rational person that is distinguished from animals that are governed solely by appetite. He emphasises that the soul drives behaviours, while the soul enables mankind to have higher reasoning and ethical awareness, humans are also vulnerable to corruption.

Al-Rāzī (1992) recognises human pursuit of wealth and power due to the soul's innate tendency to seek perfection through them. In certain conditions, the pursuit of wealth and power is a necessity and permissible. For example, the attainment of power and wealth is necessary if it helps meet one's basic needs, such as for food, drink, clothing, and a dwelling. This is because fulfilling the basic needs enables a person to perform *ibadah*, and vice versa. Although the pursuit of basic needs is natural and even necessary, unchecked indulgence in material gain can lead to moral decay, resulting in the manifestation of blameworthy character (*mazmumah*) such as greed, miserliness, and pride. To address the moral diseases of excessive love of power and wealth, Al-Rāzī offers ways to recognise the symptoms and suggest ways to cure or control them by understanding the soul. These insights can guide personal development and ethical decision-making in organisations.

For instance, in relation to wealth, employers should consider paying employees a living wage, an amount that enables them to live with dignity and achieve personal growth (Hu & Carr, 2020). This concept of living wage aligned with Al-Rāzī's pursuit of basic needs. A living wage is important as it not only ensures employees can sustain their own lives but also supports their family members and enhances their ability to join and contribute to society, eventually improving their life satisfaction (Hu & Carr, 2020). The benefits will spill over to work in the form of improving employees' job satisfaction, job commitment (Hu & Carr, 2020), improving retention, reduce turnover rate absenteeism, overtime, and training needs which eventually benefits to organisation through reduction of cost based on the benefits and Improvement of brand reputation and morale (Searle & McWhaa-Herman, 2020).

On the other hand, small, inadequate pay can reduce societal worth, diminished self-respect (Searle & McWha-Herman, 2020), prevent employees from breaking the poverty cycle, unable to contribute fully to the organisation (Hu & Carr, 2020). If employees' pay is inadequate, they will strongly rely on government subsidies (Werner & Lim, 2016), and the low pay negatively impacts the family and society due to the inability to cushion against unprecedented events. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic affects the low-income earners and their families' health and well-being by inflicting hunger, malnutrition and mental health issues and makes them more susceptible to COVID-19 infection (Singh et al., 2021). In contrast, ensuring a stable family economy enhances children's engagement in *ibadah*, such as prayer (Chik & Abdullah, 2019). Hence, this highlight the importance of paying employees with adequate wages that meet the person's needs and allow room for growth is crucial as it benefits the individual, organisation, and society.

The decision to pay a living wage requires employers to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and resources. Concurrently, employers should also reflect on their moral characters, such as greed and miserliness, when making the decision. Following Al-Rāzī's suggestion to be aware of such traits prior to curing them, employers must be aware of greed and miserliness, so that they can overcome them by allocating their resources moderately through paying the living wage to employees. Allocating resources for purposes beyond employers' personal wealth can help them avoid being greedy and miserly. Besides, being aware of such traits can also reduce the tendency of personal bias, as employers are able to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and resources of the decision to pay a living wage in a more objective manner, without the influence of greed and miserliness. In this sense, Al-Rāzī's view on the influence of appetition, particularly love of wealth and power, supports fairer organisational decision-making.

To summarise, in the case of the pursuit of wealth and power, Al-Rāzī recognises the human need that necessitates such action. He describes the benefits of wealth and power as they can be used to help others in need. The prophetic history had also supported the importance of wealth and power, such as the wife of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), Khadijah, and companions like Abu Bakar As-Siddiq, Umar Al-Khattab, Uthman Al-Affan, and Abdul Rahman Auf, who used their wealth and position to help others and catalyse the growth of Islam. However, Al-Rāzī (1992) sternly warns against the harm they bring when one's soul is overly fond of both. The love of wealth and power, if dominating one's soul, can lead to corruption and turn away from the truth and righteousness. Optimistically, one can take action to curb diseases caused by an excessive love of wealth and power by being aware of the traits, spending on good deeds, and comparing oneself to the needy (Al-Rāzī, 1992) .

Soul, Happiness, and Moral Development

Happiness is one of the concepts that is brought forward by Al-Rāzī, primarily focuses on ultimate well-being, which, according to him, is the essence of human happiness in the form of spiritual happiness (*al-Saadah al-Ruhaniah*), rather than temporary pleasure, which is known as hedonism (Al-Rāzī, 1904 as cited in Arroisi & Hidayat). The true happiness of men is spiritual happiness as compared to worldly, temporary happiness, which is merely the fulfilment of lust (Arroisi & Hidayat, 2023). Al-Rāzī further argues that spiritual happiness represents the highest form of human contentment, far superior to the worldly happiness limited by desire (*shahwah*) (Al-Rāzī, 1904 as cited in Arroisi & Hidayat). Again, if happiness were merely about satisfying one's desires, for example, like venting anger or fulfilling carnal needs, the animals would be happier than humans. This is because animals often possess stronger instincts and appetites. Therefore, according to Al-Rāzī, true human happiness is not found in physical pleasures like eating and intimacy but in a spiritual state rooted in knowledge of God (*ma'rifatullah*), obedience, and a deep love for Him (Al-Rāzī, 1992).

The spiritual state of happiness is achieved through the perfection of the soul and a deep connection with God (Jaffer, 2015; Shihadeh, 2006). One of the ways to achieve this happiness is through *Takhalluq bi akhlaqillah*, which is the perfection of the soul. The process *(takhalluq)* could not be achieved except by filling oneself with goodness and glory and abandoning what is not good (Arroisi & Hidayat, 2023). The soul's inherent nature (*fitrah*) drives human being to acknowledge the oneness of Allah and to immerse themselves in His divine majesty. Thus,

according to Al-Rāzī, the pursuit of a closer relationship with Allah is the ultimate source of happiness. This state of happiness is achieved when one's actions are performed purely out of a sincere desire that is also pleasing to Allah.

Happiness is what every human being wants. The concept of happiness by Al-Rāzī taught human beings to seek true happiness, as ultimately, they desire eternal happiness. In pursuit of true happiness, a feeling of contentment is necessary, as we need to discern what is good from what is bad. Thus, this happiness comes along with moral development. Knowing what is good and what is bad brings us to true happiness. Recognising what is truly good allows a person to find meaning even in hardship, as life's trials test and strengthen moral and spiritual maturity.

To illustrate this, when a person experiences a significant setback in their life, such as a job loss, divorce, or serious illness, they could see these experiences as part of trials from Allah. The person's true happiness is the ultimate focus on Allah; thus, the worldly calamities can be a blessing for them. They still have and turn to prayer and contemplation to find peace, and at the same time, they work to solve their problems, but with a calm acceptance of God's decree. This adversity builds moral development because it fosters spiritual and emotional resilience, teaching the person to cultivate an inner state of peace, which is a happiness that is independent of external circumstances, such as wealth and power. Also, it helps to cultivate a deep sense of trust and reliance on Allah, hence moving the individual away from their illusion of self-control.

CONCLUSION

This paper examined Al-Rāzī's understanding of the soul. In terms of epistemology, Al-Rāzī's approach to understanding the soul is holistic as he drew his theory from both revealed (*naqli*) and acquired (*aqli*) knowledge, integrating theology, philosophy, medicine, and lived human experience. Nevertheless, his Ash'arite background shapes his prioritisation of the divine sources as the foundation of the theory of the soul.

In terms of ontology, Al-Rāzī (1992) has described that humans act according to their own initiative, and that action is the act of the soul as it governs the body, and thus, behaviour is the manifestation of the soul. Meanwhile, from an axiological perspective, Al-Rāzī presents a positive view of human nature. He posits that while the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain are the primary motives of human action, true and eternal pleasure is attainable only through moral excellence and righteousness (*akhlak mahmudah*). Therefore, individuals are urged to cultivate virtue and strive for self-improvement, consistent with Islamic teaching as stated in *Surah Al-Waqiah*, "the people of the right (righteous), how 'blessed' will they be" (The Quran, 50:8) and for that, humans can change, as in *Surah Al-Ra'ad,* "….Verily, Allah will not change the (good) condition of a people as long as they do not change their state (of goodness) themselves (by committing sins and by being ungrateful and disobedient to Allah)…." (The Quran, 13:11). The two verses highlight the blessed states of the righteous people and affirm man's capability to change and develop their character in striving towards excellent morality.

Secondly, reaching excellent morality and righteousness is possible through knowledge and constant training. Allah mentioned in the *Surah Al-Anbiya*, "And We will surely test you until We make evident those who strive among you [for the cause of Allāh] and the patient, and We will test your affairs" (The Quran, 47:31). This verse serves as a stark reminder that nothing comes easily in this world even for prophets, as Allah tested them with many trials before reaching the highest level of moral perfection to be exemplified by others.

On the final note, it is thus established, based on Al-Rāzī's work, that humans are created with two components: the soul and the body. The well-being of the soul can ensure the well-being of the body. On that matter, religion gives clear guidelines on how to nourish the souls, i.e., through righteous behaviours (*akhlak mahmudah*). In line with Al-Rāzī's holistic approach to the understanding of human nature, the psychology field can benefit from his insights. For instance, the study of personality should be extended from describing and identifying traits to building character towards righteous behaviours and a successful man in accordance with the Quran (The Quran, 18:1-11), rather than material success based on a capitalistic view. The verses clearly describe the characteristics of successful people who possess excellent morals. Furthermore, reason is crucial in guiding man to discern right from wrong and to enhance one's morality. This rational capacity, when aligned with religious guidance, offers a comprehensive framework for understanding human behaviour. Hence, integrating religion aside from the cognitive and behavioural dimensions should be considered when approaching psychological issues, as it enhances spiritual well-being and contributes to the attainment of pleasure here in this world and, ultimately, in the hereafter.

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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 Miftaḥ 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-Fawaaid* (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 *madrasahs* (schools) were built to ensure the smooth transmission and development of knowledge in Damascus, including the *madrasah* (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. *Al-Futuhat al-Qudsiyyah* (The Jerusalem Triumphs) 2. *Al-Tuhfah al-Makkiyyah* (The Precious Gift from Mecca) 3. *Al-Mawrid al-Safi* (The Clear Spring) 4. *Ma'rifat al-Ruh* (Knowledge of the Soul) 5. *Tahdhib Sunan Abi Daud* (The Neat Arrangement of the *Hadith* Collection of Abi Daud) 6. *al-Manar al-Munif fil-Sahih wal-Da'if* (The Lofty Light tower, on Authentic and Weak Hadiths), 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*) 7. *Al-Furusiyyah* (Horsemanship) 8. *I'lam al-Muwaqqi'in 'an Rabb al-'Alamin* (Informing the Drafters of Legal Documents about the Lord of All Being) 9. *Kitab al-Ruh* (The Book of the Soul) 10. *Jala al-Afham fil Salah wal-Salam 'ala khayr al-Anam* (Enlightening Minds concerning the Prayer and Invoking Blessings on [the Prophet Muhammad], Who Is the Best of Humankind) 11. *Kitab al-Salah wal-Hukm Tarikiha* (The Book of Prayer and the Legal Ruling on One Who Fails to Perform it)	1. *Ahkam Ahl al-Dhimmah* (Laws regarding the Dhimmis) 2. *Al-Turuq al-Hukmiyyah fil-Siyasah al-Shar'iyyah* (The Ways of Governance, on Islamic Law regarding Rule) 3. *Al-Kafiyah al-Shafiyah fil-Intisar lil-Firqah al-Najiyah* (The Sufficient and Healing [Poem] on the Vindication of the Saved Sect); also entitled *al-Qasidah al-Nuniyyah* (The Ode Rhyming in *Nun*) 4. Ijtima' al-Juyush al-Islamiyyah 'ala Ghazw al-Mu'attilah wal-Jahmiyyah (Mustering the Islamic Armies to Attack the Mu'attilah and the Jahmiyyah) 5. *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) 6. *Hadi al-Arwah ila Bilad al-Afrah* (The Leader of Souls to the Land of Joys) 7. *Bada'i al-Fawaid* (Amazing Benefits) 8. *Rawdat al-Muhibbin wal-Nuzhat al-Mushtaqin* (The Garden of Lovers and the Promenade of Those Who Yearn) 9. *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)	1. *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) 2. Al-Sawa'iq al-Mursalah 'alal-Jahmiyyah wal-Mu'attilah (Thunderbolts Directed against the Jahmiyyah and the Mu'attilah) 3. *Al-Fawaid* (The Benefits) 4. *Ighathat al-Lahfan min Masayid al-Shaytan* (Rescuing the Distressed from Satan's Snares) 5. *'Uddat al-Sabirin wa-Dhakhirat al-Shakirin* (Implements for the Patient and Provisions for the Grateful) 6. *Tariq al-Hijratayn wa-Bab al-Sa'adatayn* (The Road of the Two Migrations and the Gate Leading to Two Joys) 7. *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) 8. *Tuhfat al-Mawdud bi-Ahkam al-Mawlud* (The Gift of the Beloved regarding Laws Dealing with the Newborn) 9. *Zad al-Ma'ad fi Hady Khayr al-'Ibad* (Provisions for the Afterlife, on the Teachings of the Best of All People) 10. *al-Tibb al-Nabawi* (The Medicine of the Prophet)

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

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-Dhimmah* (Laws regarding the *Dhimmis*), *al-Turuq al-Hukmiyyah fil-Siyasah al-Shar'iyyah* (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).

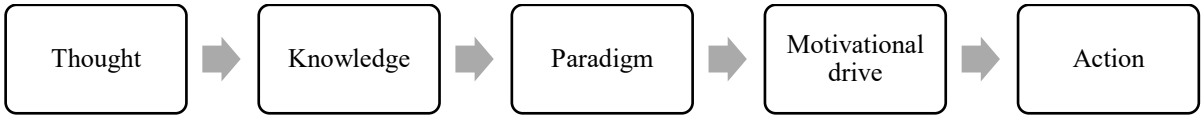

Figure 1: Ibn Qayyim's Cognitive-Behavioural Model

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, *Risalatu Ibn al-Qayyim ila Ikhwanihi* (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:

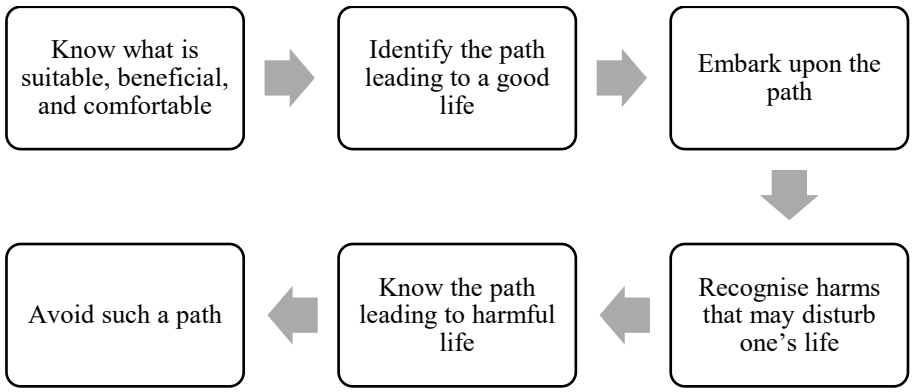

Figure 2: Steps in achieving happiness proposed by Ibn Qayyim

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 (*fiṭrah*) predisposed to truth, goodness and divine consciousness. This *fiṭrah* 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 (*shubuhat*) 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-Ruḥ* and *the Miftaḥ 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:

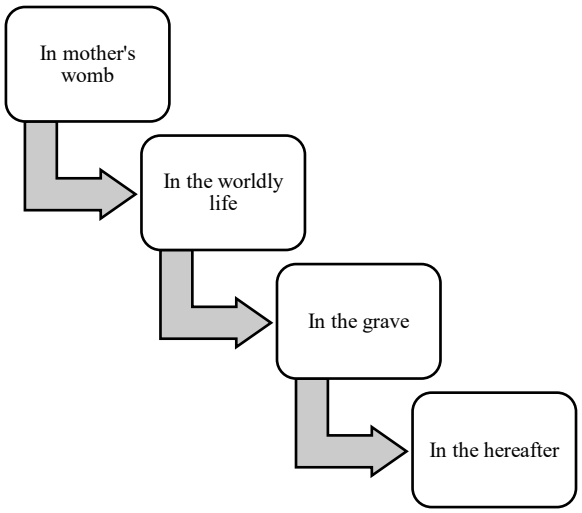

Figure 3: Stages of the soul proposed by Ibn Qayyim

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 *ʿilm 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 *Tawḥidic* framework that emphasises the unity of the spiritual, cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions of the human being. His conception of the soul (*nafs, qalb, ʿaql, and ruḥ*) 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 (*saʿadah*) 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 *Tawḥid*ic 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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