

## **The Therapy of the Heart: Ibn ‘Arabi’s Sufi Psychology in Addressing Modern Spiritual and Mental Crises**

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### **Abstract**

This article examines psycho-Sufism as a holistic therapeutic framework derived from Islamic mysticism, with a particular focus on Ibn ‘Arabi’s conception of the heart as the core of spiritual and psychological transformation. Responding to the limitations of modern psychology that often marginalize spiritual dimensions, this study argues that Sufi psychology offers an integrative approach capable of addressing contemporary mental and existential crises. Employing library research with historical and analytical methods, this article analyzes Ibn ‘Arabi’s primary works especially *al-Futuh al-Makkiyyah* and *Fusus al-Hikam* alongside relevant secondary literature. The findings reveal that the heart, in Ibn ‘Arabi’s thought, functions as the locus of divine manifestation (*tajalli*) and the primary medium for attaining *ma‘rifah*, understood as direct, experiential knowledge of God. Psychological distress is interpreted as the result of spiritual veiling caused by excessive attachment to materiality and the domination of lower desires. The study further demonstrates that psycho-Sufi therapy, grounded in practices such as *tazkiyah al-nafs*, *riyadah*, *dhikr*, and ethical transformation, operates not merely as a curative model but as a transformative process leading toward inner integration and spiritual maturity (*al-insan al-kamil*). This approach contributes to contemporary discourse by positioning Ibn ‘Arabi’s Sufi psychology as a viable conceptual and practical alternative for integrating spirituality into mental health frameworks. Ultimately, psycho-Sufism is proposed as a meaningful bridge between classical Islamic spirituality and modern psychological paradigms.

**Keywords:** Psycho-Sufism; sufi psychology; Ibn ‘Arabi; qalb; spiritual therapy; ma‘rifah

## Introduction

Psychosufism is a term that has emerged alongside the rapid development of psychology, which is considered to have marginalised spirituality in humans. This is particularly true of spirituality in Islam, which is concentrated in the field of Sufism. Psycho-Sufism emerged as a response to the demands of the modern era, particularly the need to bridge classical spiritual wisdom with rapidly developing modern psychological insights. This approach does not aim to replace traditional Sufi practices, but rather offers a psychological framework for understanding and facilitating spiritual experiences in a more systematic way.<sup>1</sup> For modern humans who are often burdened by anxiety, alienation, and existential crises, psycho-Sufism offers a relevant spiritual path. This approach emphasises that spiritual seeking is not an escape from reality, but rather a way to be fully present in it, with a harmonious heart and a clear soul.<sup>2</sup>

This is not surprising, because psychosufism, which was born from the ‘womb’ of Sufism, aims to make theories and concepts about the soul and heart according to the Sufi perspective a ‘tool’ for overcoming various human life problems related to the soul and heart. Moreover, it must be acknowledged that in Sufism there are indeed many theories and concepts for healing the human heart and soul. Psychosufistik is not only scientific in nature, but also holistic, originating from the teachings of Islam, namely the Qur’an and Hadith, and oriented towards drawing closer to Allah.

In Islam, spirituality is the object of Sufism. This means that Sufism is a science that focuses on human spirituality, which aims to cleanse oneself of all impurities and diseases of the heart (*takhalli*) and adorn it with various good morals (*tahalli*) as its method. Through *takhalli* and *tahalli*, the soul is expected to become pure and radiant so that it can emanate good morals in both *fi’ly* and *qawly*, which will have a positive effect on both a personal and social level. The application of these noble morals is a manifestation of the noble attributes of the creator, Allah SWT,

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<sup>1</sup> Nasrul Umam et al., “Hikmah and Ma‘rifah in Psycho-Sufism: Toward Social Harmony through Islamic Spirituality,” *ISRG PUBLISHERS* 3.4 (2025), 144.

<sup>2</sup> Nasrul Umam et al., “Hikmah and Ma‘rifah,” 144.

namely *tajalli*, or the manifestation of Allah's attributes on earth. Thus, humans can be called the image and mirror of divine beauty, glory, and goodness on earth. Humans at this stage are said to be *insan kamil* or perfect humans who are worthy of being Allah's caliphs on earth.

Theologically, studying Sufism can increase closeness, piety, and faith in Allah SWT. In Sufism, Allah must be regarded as a Beloved who must be loved and must not be disappointed. Therefore, the ultimate goal of Sufism is to be as close as possible to Him, *hulul* (dwelling), *ittihad* (unification), lebur, and merging with Him. Psychologically, closeness to Him makes the soul more peaceful, calm, tranquil, and humble in front of creatures, especially in front of the Creator. A Sufi is required to always purify their heart and self from all despicable, unjust, and harmful deeds with the principle of *lillahi ta'ala*, only for the sake of Allah. Therefore, the science of Sufism must be transformative in terms of the health and goodness of the human soul and heart. For this reason, for Sufis, the transformation of the soul is the most important thing in pursuing knowledge. Knowledge that does not result in the transformation of the soul will be looked down upon, even if it is theoretically perfect.<sup>3</sup> In general, Sufism teaches about spiritual life, ways to purify oneself from various diseases of the heart, temptations of lust, worldly life, ways to draw closer to the Creator, Allah, and to deepen one's understanding of His eternity until one reaches *ma'rifat* of the heart towards Allah (*ma'rifatullah*).<sup>4</sup>

In the context of Sufism, Ibn Arabi is one of the great Sufi figures who has been recognised for his knowledge and contributions in the field of Sufism, especially in the philosophical Sufism school of thought with the concept of *wahdah wujud* (unity of existence), which is a school of Sufism that discusses the essence of existence, which is only one, referring to the oneness of Allah.<sup>5</sup> The doctrine of *wahdah al-wujud* considers Allah to be

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<sup>3</sup> Khoirul Anam, "Psikosufisme dalam Tafsir Ishari (Kajian atas Tafsir Shaikh Ahmad al-'Alawi)," (tesis pascasarjana, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2019), 71.

<sup>4</sup> A. Bachrun Rifa'i and H. Hasan Mud'is, *Filsafat Tasawuf* (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2010), 30

<sup>5</sup> Mohd Zulfakar Hj Mat Jusoh et al., "Analisis Polemik Wahdah al-Wujud dalam Karya Kashf al-Asrar Syeikh Muhammad Saleh Abdullah Minangkabawi Menurut Perspektif Tasawuf," *Jurnal Usuluddin* 50.2 (2022), 46.

everything, and existence other than Him to be a reflection of the existence of Allah, and not true existence.<sup>6</sup>

Academically, Ibn Arabi was a very prolific Sufi in producing and transforming his knowledge and inspiration into extraordinary written works. Abd al-Mun'im argues that Ibn Arabi produced as many as 400 books. According to Yahya Osman, as quoted by William C. Chittick, Ibn Arabi wrote 700 books, treatises, and more than 400 collections of poetry. Afifi said that Ibn Arabi is believed to have produced 289 works by 632 AH/1234 AD. Even al-Jami argues that Ibn Arabi's works number more than 500 books. According to Brockelmann, there are 150 books by Ibn Arabi in Eastern and Western libraries, and according to Masinion, there are 439 books.<sup>7</sup> However, of Ibn Arabi's many works, there are two books that are phenomenal in the two fields of Sufism and have become the main references for Ibn Arabi's philosophical Sufism, namely the books *al-Futuh al-Makkiyyah* and *Fusas al-Hikam*. Therefore, it is not surprising that Ibn Arabi is considered an Islamic figure who has had a major influence on the intellectual life of his community for more than 700 years.<sup>8</sup>

According to Ibn Arabi, there are two elements within human beings: the spiritual and the physical. If humans are able to actualise the spiritual elements in the form of the names and attributes of Allah in their lives, then they will attain the level of *al-insan al-kamil* (perfect human). With this perfection, God seems to 'hulul' within human beings. Ultimately, God is willing to become their sight and hearing. It is at this level of perfection that a person is considered to have reached the closest and highest level to God. They are even closer to Him than the angels.<sup>9</sup>

Ibn Arabi's attention to the purity of the heart and soul must be explored, studied, and applied practically in human life. The pearls of wisdom expressed by Ibn Arabi can be considered a spring in the midst of spiritual 'drought' and human longing for the pearls of wisdom that the heart and soul yearn for.

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<sup>6</sup> Mohd Zulfakar et al., "Analisis Polemik Wahdah al-Wujud," 53.

<sup>7</sup> Syaifulloh Yazid, "Konsep Ketuhanan: Perbandingan antara Wahdat Wujud dalam Tasawuf dan Jumbuhing Kawula Gusti dalam Kebatinan Jawa," (tesis sarjana, Fakultas Pengajian Islam, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2009), 83-84.

<sup>8</sup> William C. Chittick, *Pengetahuan Spiritual*, trans. Achmad Nidjam (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Qalam, 2001), 4.

<sup>9</sup> Syaifulloh Yazid, *Konsep Ketuhanan: Perbandingan Antara Wahdat Wujud Dalam Tasawuf dan Jumbuhing Kawula Gusti Dalam Kebatinan Jawa*, 99-100

Furthermore, human life issues, along with the development of technology and science, are becoming increasingly complex, resulting in greater, more complicated, complex, and extraordinary pressure on the soul, heart, and mind.

Spiritually, many modern human souls are found to be dry, empty, and bored amid the glitz of modern life. As a result, many souls experience alienation or isolation, emotional turmoil, culture shock, and doubts about their beliefs in life. People living in the modern era are required to adapt to every problem that arises in various aspects of life. Individuals are required to always be calm and patient in facing trials and tribulations, as well as being able to find the best solution to the problems they are facing.<sup>10</sup> However, not everyone is able to adjust and handle the various pressures of life, leading to mental disorders and physical conditions.<sup>11</sup>

The dream of a happy life with abundant material possessions that has been dreamed of, pursued and even fought over turns out to be nothing more than an illusion of lust. The success in achieving high positions, titles, material possessions, and social status that they have achieved with great difficulty is only a mirage and cannot satisfy them spiritually. Therefore, many people who have abundant material possessions are poor in spirit and spirituality. Many people have high positions but low morals and ethics.

It is in this state of anxiety that an inner ‘rebellion’ occurs, seeking inner and spiritual wealth. Souls who are greedy for material life begin to realise that, in addition to material needs, there are also very necessary immaterial needs, namely spiritual needs for peace, tranquillity and serenity.

These immaterial or spiritual needs are invisible to the eye, yet their effects are profoundly felt in the quality of human life. Anyone who ignores them will undoubtedly experience a major psychological crisis that will have a very negative effect on their physical and mental health. Individuals who experience spiritual

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<sup>10</sup> Sharifah Basirah Syed Mohsin et al., “Muhasabah al-Nafs (Self-Reflection) dalam Menangani Keresahan Spiritual (Spiritual Distress),” *Jurnal Usuluddin* 50.1 (2022), 45.

<sup>11</sup> Erba Rozalina, Khairunnisa Fitria Permana, and Lalu Agus Satriawan, “Sufi Healing Methods for Preventing Anxiety on Patient with Coronary Heart Disease: A Case Study of Rumah Therapy Haurgeulis, Indramayu, West Java,” *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 30.2, (2022), 216.

unrest will experience excessive pressure, causing them to become depressed. The symptoms they experience are mostly the same as those of depression. In fact, independent studies have found that individuals who experience spiritual pressure will experience physical disorders such as high blood pressure, headaches and intestinal problems.<sup>12</sup> Conversely, abundant spiritual wealth will have a very positive effect on physical and mental health, especially spiritual wealth based on religious spirituality.

Psychology, which was originally expected to be able to participate in solving and resolving various psychological problems, has not been able to show its “powers” and has not played a maximal role as expected. This may be because psychology has neglected its ‘spirit’, that is, psychology has largely disregarded religious values.<sup>13</sup> On this basis, it is understandable that spiritual values and teachings are increasingly sought after and in demand. This includes the teachings of spirituality in Islam, which take the form of Sufi teachings oriented towards *tazkiyah nufus* (purification of the self) and *itmi’nan al-qulub* (tranquillity of the heart) as an effort to fulfil the needs of the soul and spirit and rid oneself of all inner maladies.

The Sufi teachings of Ibn Arabi’s thought, contained in his various books, are highly relevant to be studied and researched to be used as a psychosocial theory and concept and ultimately transformed into human life using therapeutic methods. Especially as psychosocial therapy for souls experiencing crises of faith, alienation, fear and other psychological and mental crises. It is hoped that the results of this study can be put into practice in soul therapy from a Sufi perspective, especially according to Ibn Arabi’s psychosufistic concept. It is hoped that Ibn Arabi’s psychosufistic teachings can provide therapy, calmness, and guidance in terms of spirituality and Sufi spirituality. Theologically, it is also hoped that it can motivate ‘patients’ to become closer, more pious, more faithful, and more trusting in the Almighty. In terms of ethics and morals, it is hoped that it will be able to improve negative human traits and behaviour so that people become noble and beneficial wherever and whenever they are.

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<sup>12</sup> Sharifah Basirah et al., “Muhasabah al-Nafs, 49.

<sup>13</sup> Sentot Haryanto, *Psikologi Shalat: Kajian Aspek-aspek Psikologis Ibadah Shalat* (Yogyakarta: Mitra Keluarga, 2007), 3.

## Methodology

Various efforts will be made in conducting this article to facilitate the process of collecting study data. Therefore, the methodology used by the author in this article is library research. After the relevant data and study materials have been collected, they will be examined historically and analytically. Data collection is the method most widely used by the author to find data or facts related to the title of this article, namely through primary and secondary sources such as manuscripts, books, journals, magazines, seminar papers and other written materials relevant. This method is very important to gain an overall view of matters related to this article. It is through this data collection method that the author will obtain several theoretical foundations.

In order to obtain satisfactory results and achieve the objectives, the article focuses on the writings or primary works of Ibn Arabi, which are the main sources used by the author in this study. In addition, the author will use secondary data sources that examine and discuss the thoughts of Ibn Arabi and various themes related to this study. These secondary sources can be in the form of books, journals, and others. The data and facts will be examined and analysed so that all data can be used and understood critically and logically. Thus, the results of this article can be scientifically and academically accountable. Furthermore, the author will attempt to provide a descriptive analysis of the data and facts obtained through this library study in order to answer and resolve the research questions.

## Definition of Heart

The heart is the translation of the Arabic word 'qalbu'. According to al-Ghazali in his book *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, *al-qalb* has two meanings. First, *al-qalb* means a lump of flesh shaped like a shanaubar located in the chest on the left side. It is a special piece of flesh with a cavity inside which contains black blood where the spirit resides. Second, *al-qalb* is in the form of *lathifah* (something subtle) that is divine (Rabbaniyah) and spiritual. This *lathifah* is the essence of humanity. This heart is connected to the physical *qalb*.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (Kaherah: Dar al-Fajr li al-Turath, 1999), 4.

Robert Frager also shares a similar opinion with al-Ghazali. In Arabic, the heart is referred to as ‘qalb’, meaning heart. There is a physical ‘qalb’ in the form of the heart and there is a spiritual ‘qalb’ (heart). The heart is located at the centre of the torso. Meanwhile, the spiritual qalb or heart is located between the nafs (lower self/soul). The physical qalb (heart) regulates the physical body. The spiritual qalb (heart) regulates the psyche. The heart nourishes the body by sending fresh blood and oxygen to every cell and organ in the body. It also receives dirty blood through the blood vessels. Likewise, the heart nourishes the spirit by radiating wisdom and light. It also purifies the personality from despicable traits. The heart has one face that faces the spiritual world and another face that faces the world of our lower self and bad traits.<sup>15</sup>

In Ibn Athaillah’s perspective, the heart or *qalb* has three different meanings. The heart can mean reason, or it can also mean the muscle or organ located behind the left rib cage of the human body.<sup>16</sup> The heart meaning reason is found in the words of Allah: ‘Indeed, in that is a reminder for those who have reason or who use their hearing, while He witnesses it.’<sup>17</sup> Quranic exegetes argue that the heart referred to in this verse is the mind. The third meaning, the heart or *qalb*, is known as that mentioned in the Quran: “(namely) those who believe and whose hearts find peace in the remembrance of Allah. Remember! Only in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace.”<sup>18</sup>

In al-Tirmidhi’s view, the heart has four stations: the chest, the heart, the deeper heart, and the deepest heart. These four stations are arranged like a set of circles. The chest is the outermost circle. The heart and the deeper heart are located in the two middle circles. Meanwhile, the deepest heart is located at the centre of the circle. The outermost station of the heart is the chest (*sadar*). The chest is the vessel of the light of *amaliyah*, or the practice of every religion. The second station is the heart (*qalb*). The task of this station is to contain the light of faith. The third is the ‘deeper heart (*fu’ad*)’, which contains the light of *ma’rifah*, or knowledge of spiritual truth. The final station is the ‘deepest heart (*lubb*)’. This

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Frager, *Psikologi Sufi untuk Transformasi Hati, Jiwa, dan Ruh*, trans. Hasmiyah Rauf (Jakarta: Penerbit Zaman, 2014), 60.

<sup>16</sup> Ibnu Athaillah, *Mengaji Tajul ‘Arus; Rujukan Utama Mendidik Jiwa*, trans. Fauzi Faisal Bahreisy (Jakarta: Zaman, 2015), 187.

<sup>17</sup> QS Qaf 50:37.

<sup>18</sup> QS al-Ra’d 13:28.

fourth station houses two lights, namely the light of unity and uniqueness, which are the two faces of divine light. Each station is also associated with different spiritual levels and different levels of nafs. However, the core task of the heart is to carry and contain divine light.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, according to philosophers, the heart or *qalb* is actually the centre of anger and courage. The heart is associated with emotions, compassion, affection, love and other things related to instinct. Thus, the meaning of the heart tends to be understood as the same as reason.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, the *qalb* or heart referred to in this study is not a physical organ as known in medical terms. This is because the physical and bodily heart also exists in animals, and even in the bodies of deceased humans. The heart is the core and the inner self. The heart is the opposite of the physical.<sup>21</sup> Here, the heart refers to various emotions such as love, fear and respect. That is, the heart is the feeling to do something and to revere something.<sup>22</sup> According to Robert Frager, the heart is the spiritual essence of the inner self. It is not the heart in the physical sense. That is why it is said that the heart is the source of inner light, inspiration, creativity and compassion.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Nature of the Heart According to Ibn Arabi**

Human beings are likened to a city inhabited by its residents and dignitaries. In the centre of the city stands a palace with a throne occupied by a caliph or king. That throne is the heart. This is the description of human beings and the position of the heart within them as depicted by Ibn Arabi in his book *al-Tadbirat al-Ilahiyah fī Ishlah al-Mamlakah al-Insaniyah*. Ibn Arabi states that the heart is the throne of the king within human beings, even though many people say that the place of the king within human beings is the mind. His opinion is reinforced and based on the words of God, ‘The heavens and the earth which I have created cannot encompass

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<sup>19</sup> Budi Safarianto, *Konsepsi Hati Menurut Imam Ibnu Qayyim al-Jauziyah* (tesis pascasarjana, Program Studi Ilmu Agama Islam Konsentrasi Ilmu Tafsir, Institut PTIQ JAKARTA, 2016), 38.

<sup>20</sup> Muhammad al-Jawady, “al-Qalb,” in *al-Mawsu’ah al-Islamiyyah al-‘Ammah*, ed. Dr. Mahmud Hamdy Zaquzuq, (Kaherah: al-Majlis al-A’la li al-Sy’un al-Islamiyyah, Kementerian Waqaf Pemerintahan Arab Mesir, 2002), 1158.

<sup>21</sup> Muhammad al-Jawady, *al-Qalb*, 1158.

<sup>22</sup> Ibnu Athaillah, *Mengaji Tajul ‘Arus*, 188

<sup>23</sup> Robert Frager, *Psikologi Sufi*, 59.

Me, but the hearts of My faithful servants encompass Me.’ It is also based on the words of the Prophet Muhammad, ‘Allah does not look at your appearance or your deeds, but at your hearts.’<sup>24</sup>

Meanwhile, the king or caliph in the city of the human self is the spirit. So, the heart is the place where the spirit resides within humans. As the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, “There is a piece of flesh in the human body: if it is clean and good (saluhat), the whole body will be good (salaha). If that piece of flesh is corrupted (fasadat), then the whole body will be corrupted (fasada). That piece of flesh is the heart.” The heart is the palace of Allah’s caliph, the place where secrets are kept. It should be worthy and fit. It is an iron chest where the caliph’s secret records, laws and decrees are kept.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Wise Heart or the Heart That Knows al-Haqq**

What is meant by the heart as a resting place or palace for the caliph is the wise heart (which knows) Allah. This heart is a gift of His mercy, and indeed this heart is greater than His mercy because it is capable of encompassing al-Haqq and His mercy.<sup>26</sup> The heart that is wise or knows Allah is the heart that witnesses Allah in all beliefs, and this heart does not deny Him. This returns to the heart’s back and forth with al-Haqq in all forms of belief.<sup>27</sup>

When the heart encompasses al-Haqq, it will not encompass anything other than Him from His creations. It is as if He fills the heart. So, if the heart encompasses Him when He manifests Himself, it is impossible for the heart to see anything other than Him. Furthermore, Ibn Arabi says that if al-Haqq manifests Himself in various forms, then automatically the heart expands and contracts according to the form of His manifestation. This is because the heart that is arif or the heart of the perfect human being is like the setting of a ring that fits it. It is not even more than that; it fits its size and shape. It can be round, square, hexagonal,

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<sup>24</sup> Ibn Arabi, *Al-Tadbirat al-Ilahiyah fi Ishlah al-Mamlakah al-Insaniyah* (Leiden: Penerbit Brill, 1918 M), 132.

<sup>25</sup> Muhyiddin Ibnu Arabi, *Menata Diri dengan Tadbir Ilahi*, trans. Hodri Arieu (Jakarta: PT. Serambi Ilmu Semesta, 2004), 53-54.

<sup>26</sup> Ibn Arabi, “Fusus al-Hikam,” in *Sharah Fusus al-Hikam min Kalami al-Shaykh al-Akbar Muhyi al-Din Ibn Araby*, ed. Mahmud Mahmud al-Ghurab (Damascus: Penerbit Zayd ibn Thabit, 2000), 175.

<sup>27</sup> Mahmud Mahmud al-Ghurab, *Sharah Fusus al-Hikam min Kalami al-Shaykh al-Akbar Muhyi al-Din Ibn Araby* (Damascus: Penerbit Zayd ibn Thabit, 2000), 175.

octagonal, or any other shape according to the shape of the stone. So this analogy is like a servant who appears to al-Haqq according to the form of His manifestation in him.<sup>28</sup>

Ibn 'Arabi offers another powerful image through the metaphor of a mirror. According to him, a purified heart is like a mirror that can perfectly reflect the divine light. This emphasises the importance of tazkiyah al-nafs, or purification of the soul, as a prerequisite for achieving ma'rifah. Without inner clarity, the light of truth will remain obscured, and true realisation will be difficult to achieve.<sup>29</sup>

In order to make the heart a palace or sanctuary, the heart must be wise, that is, it must know Him. This knowledge of Him is an achievement that must be attained by the heart, so that which is wise or knowledgeable is the heart. A wise heart is like a mirror that is shiny and beautifully polished, without any blurring or rust. Therefore, what can make the heart shiny and polished is zikr and reading the Qur'an. As the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, as quoted by Ibn Arabi, 'What can make it shiny is remembering (zikr) Allah and reading the Qur'an.'<sup>30</sup>

The heart shines because of remembering Allah as a result of zikr, contemplation, and sincere worship. Divine truth is reflected from within on the surface of the point (nuqtah) at the centre of man, namely in his heart. Because that point belongs to the kingdom of God. Then a strong beam of light is created from it, a light that reaches the recesses of all beings, and all beings are aware and enchanted. Then no human being moves of their own accord. For no one still has free will. That is why the point at the centre of the heart is called the essence.<sup>31</sup>

In order to make the heart aware of Allah, the arifin strive to sacrifice physical and worldly pleasures, namely the arifin who walk throughout the corners of the mind by walking and riding. The arifin leave their families and countries. They go wandering and devote themselves to the night at all times and seasons. So that

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<sup>28</sup> Mahmud Mahmud al-Ghurab, *Sharah Fusus al-Hikam min Kalami al-Shaykh al-Akbar Muhyi al-Din Ibn Araby*, 176-177.

<sup>29</sup> Nasrul Umam et al., "Hikmah and Ma'rifah, 142-143.

<sup>30</sup> Muhyiddin Ibn al-Arabi, *Risalah tentang Ma'rifah Rahasia-rahasia Sang Raja dan Kerajaan-Nya*, trans. Harun Nur Rasyid (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Darul Futuhat, 2017), 38.

<sup>31</sup> Ibnu Arabi, *Menata Diri dengan Tadbir Ilahi*, 246.

they reach the pinnacle of knowledge and gnosis. They have been opened to the beauty of the secret of true love.<sup>32</sup>

The body is the realm of the animal soul made of coarse matter like the earth. But the light from the heart, which is the realm of the human spirit, reaches the recesses of the body and from there is reflected in the mind, where the inner eye begins to see. Just as daylight enables the physical eyes to see, so too does the light of the heart shining on the inner eye make humans worthy of being addressed by their Lord.<sup>33</sup> ‘Indeed, in that is a reminder for those who have hearts...’<sup>34</sup>

There are two divine lights that come from God. First, illuminating the path of knowledge and wisdom. Second, illuminating the path that leads to Him. He has created two inner eyes in the heart; one is the eye of understanding (*ilm al-yaqin*) and the other is the eye that guides to salvation (*ayn al-yaqin*).<sup>35</sup> As He says: “Allah guides to His light whom He wills.”<sup>36</sup>

The heart is eternally designed to always be sparkling, clean, shiny and clear. Every heart in which the Divine Presence can manifest or reveal Himself as a ‘red ruby’ is a manifestation of the essence, and therefore it is the heart of the owner of *mushahadah*, the perfected human being, the owner of knowledge that no one else can surpass in terms of manifestation.<sup>37</sup>

The knowledge of divinity and gnosis (*al-ulum al-Ilahiyyah al-zawqiyah*) possessed by people (*ahl Allah*) varies according to the diversity of their spiritual capacities, even though they all basically come from one source.<sup>38</sup> It is in these people who are wise to Allah that Allah is willing to manifest Himself. As He says: “I am the ear with which he hears, the eye with which he sees, the hand with which he takes, and the foot with which he walks.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Muh. Panji Maulana, “Filsafat Ketuhanan Ibn Arabi (Telaah Kitab Hill Al-Rumuz Wa Mafatih Al-Kunuz),” *YAQZHAN* 4.2 (2018), 343.

<sup>33</sup> Muh. Panji, “Filsafat Ketuhanan Ibn Arabi,” 256.

<sup>34</sup> Q.S. 50:37.

<sup>35</sup> Ibnu Arabi, *Menata Diri dengan Tadbir Ilahi*, 256.

<sup>36</sup> Q.S. al-Nur 24:35.

<sup>37</sup> Ibn Al-Arabi, *Risalah tentang Ma’rifah*, 39.

<sup>38</sup> Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam: Mutiara Hikmah 27 Nabi*, trans. Nur Sahidah dan Nurjannah Arianti (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Futuh Printika, 2004), 178.

<sup>39</sup> Ibn Arabi, *Mutiara Hikmah*.

### **A Heart that is Not Wise or Does Not Know al-Haqq**

The heart can also rust, as stated by the Prophet Muhammad, quoted by Ibn Arabi, “Verily, hearts can truly rust like iron.”<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, Ibn Arabi explains that a rusty heart means, the rust referred to here is not a fog of ignorance, sadness, or anxiety that arises and covers the surface of the heart. But when the heart becomes attached and preoccupied with knowledge of secondary causes (asbab) instead of knowledge of Allah SWT, then its attachment and love for other than Allah becomes rust that covers the face or surface of the heart, because it becomes a barrier to tajalli al-Haqq to the heart.<sup>41</sup> Automatically, the heart that cannot receive the manifestation of the Divine Presence from the side of the praiseworthy Sharia command is because it accepts something else. Thus, its acceptance of something else is expressed in the Quran and Hadith as rust, a cover,<sup>42</sup> a lock,<sup>43</sup> blindness,<sup>44</sup> dirt that covers,<sup>45</sup> and others.<sup>46</sup>

The unhealthiness of the human heart is influenced by the material world on human desires. In turn, desires cause the heart to become sick. When the heart is sick, the mind emits a ray of light onto it to make the heart immune to the tyranny of desires. However, in addition to burning the tyranny of desires, it also burns the heart, and the burnt heart is covered by the dark smoke it produces. This smoke separates the heart from the mind, severing all connections between the two. Thus, the heart becomes dark. The dark cloud that covers the heart is a veil that blinds it. What removes the light of faith and clouds the vision of the heart is the absence of sincerity, the loss of trust, disbelief, and the failure to distinguish right from wrong.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibn Arabi, *Risalah tentang Ma'rifah*, 38.

<sup>41</sup> Ibn Arabi, *Risalah tentang Ma'rifah*.

<sup>42</sup> Q.S. 41:5. And they say, “Our hearts are within coverings from that to which you invite us, and in our ears is deafness, and between us and you is a partition, so work; indeed, we are working.”

<sup>43</sup> Q.S. 47:24. Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'an, or are there locks upon [their] hearts?

<sup>44</sup> Q.S. 22:46. So have they not traveled through the earth and have hearts by which to reason and ears by which to hear? For indeed, it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts.

<sup>45</sup> Q.S. 83:14. No! Rather, the stain has covered their hearts of that which they were earning.

<sup>46</sup> Ibn Al-Arabi, *Risalah tentang Ma'rifah*, 39.

<sup>47</sup> Ibnu Arabi, *Menata Diri dengan Tadbir Ilahi*, 258-260.

A clear example is the hypocrites who have become entangled in the web of ‘everything other than Allah (al-aghyâr)’. They have been called by Allah to settle in the abodes of the owners of musyahadah. But their taking of the unseen promise in the eternal realm is veiled by the bonds of sensory promises and the call of objects similar to them. All of this deafens their hearing and blinds their sight, and they are immersed in their ignorance. When they have strayed from the path of purification and stood with their desires, Allah SWT says to us, “Remember! Verily, they are ignorant people”<sup>48</sup> and full of delusions because they have been overcome by their desires. They are veiled from the delight of hearing the sound of ‘raindrops falling on the slopes of the hills,’ ‘but they do not know it.’<sup>49</sup>

### **Psychosophysical Heart Therapy from the Perspective of Ibn Arabi’s Sufism**

The *‘arif* heart is a pure heart that can lead a person to *mukashafah*, or spiritual insight, into the knowledge of God. Knowledge of the Creator is closely related to knowledge obtained directly, through direct revelation or *mukasyafah* from Allah to His servants. This *mukashafah* can occur through intuition that originates from the heart.<sup>50</sup> A servant is able to be close to Allah through the medium of his heart. “The earth and the heavens cannot encompass Me, but the heart of My faithful servant can encompass Me.”<sup>51</sup> When the heart encompasses Reality, it encompasses nothing else but Him. This is because Reality seems to fill the heart. Therefore, when the heart contemplates Reality in His manifestation to it, it cannot contemplate anything else.<sup>52</sup>

In the psycho-Sufi approach, analogies are also taken from modern psychology. Carl Jung, for example, introduced the concept of individuation, which is the process of integrating various aspects of personality to achieve a whole self. In this context, the journey towards *ma`rifah* can be seen as a path of

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<sup>48</sup> Q.S. 2:13. And when it is said to them, “Believe as the people have believed,” they say, “Should we believe as the foolish have believed?” Unquestionably, it is they who are the foolish, but they know [it] not.

<sup>49</sup> Ibn Al-Arabi, *Risalah tentang Ma`rifah*, 185.

<sup>50</sup> Muh. Panji, “Filsafat Ketuhanan Ibn Arabi,” 343.

<sup>51</sup> ‘Izz al-Din ibn Ahmad ibn Ghanmi al-Muqaddasi ‘Abd al-Salam, *Hill al-Rumuz wa Mafatih Khunuz* (Lebanon: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, 2011), 58

<sup>52</sup> Ibn Arabi, *Mutiara Hikmah*, 205.

inner integration, where a person recognises and harmonises the deepest layers of themselves to achieve holistic spiritual awareness.<sup>53</sup>

The heart is a polished and shiny mirror. All parts of the mirror are surfaces (*wajh*) and will never rust. But when the heart becomes attached and preoccupied with knowledge of secondary causes (*asbab*) instead of knowledge of Allah, then its attachment and love for other than Allah becomes rust that covers the face or surface of the heart, because it becomes a barrier to *tajalli al-Haqq* on the heart.<sup>54</sup>

In the effort to achieve *mukashafah* or direct revelation from Allah, the heart as a medium of *ma`rifah* must first be tempered and trained through various efforts of *riyadah*, *mujahadah* and ascetic practices in several stages.<sup>55</sup> The first step in this *tazkiyah* of the heart is to follow the path to Allah, which consists of three steps, namely Islam, Iman, and Ihsan. Islam is the general level of religion for all Muslims. The second level, Iman is the starting point for the hearts of believers. The third level is Ihsan, which is the beginning of spiritual elevation, especially for those who want to be closer to Him. To achieve *maqam qurubah* or closeness to Allah, one must go through six steps, namely:

- i. Refrain from violating the sharia.
- ii. Detaching one's desires from bad habits.
- iii. Detaching one's desires from human movements.
- iv. Detaching one's heart from impurity.
- v. Detaching one's spirit from damage caused by the five senses.
- vi. Detaching one's mind from false hopes.<sup>56</sup>

These six steps are some of the steps to purify the heart in order to reach the peak of *ma`rifah*. *Ma`rifah*, as a form of deep spiritual recognition, significantly influences the way a person views reality. *Ma`rifah* is not merely intellectual knowledge about God, but rather a direct inner recognition, obtained through intense spiritual experience. Those who attain *ma`rifah* do not view the

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<sup>53</sup> Nasrul et al., "Hikmah and Ma`rifah," 143.

<sup>54</sup> Ibn Al-Arabi, *Risalah tentang Ma`rifah*, 38.

<sup>55</sup> Muh. Panji, "Filsafat Ketuhanan Ibn Arabi," 340.

<sup>56</sup> Muh. Panji, "Filsafat Ketuhanan Ibn Arabi," 344.

world as a series of random events, but as a manifestation of the Divine Names and Attributes. This perspective fosters patience, gratitude, and surrender to God's decree. In all circumstances, they constantly maintain a sense of closeness to Allah and find spiritual meaning in every experience of life, whether it brings joy or is fraught with sadness.<sup>57</sup>

The soul must always be cleansed of anything other than Him. Because in essence, the heart will become increasingly impure if it draws closer to material things and serves the desires of the flesh. If this is the case, then the heart is like descending to earth. But on the contrary, if the heart is turned away from physical desires or tendencies, it will increasingly cause the heart to fly away to the heavens. Therefore, for Ibn Arabi, the only way to purify it is through spiritual exercises.<sup>58</sup>

In Ghazali's perspective, purification of the soul is a process of spiritual development through the purification of the soul (tathir al-nafs) from *mazmumah* traits through the process of *takhalli* (a process of self-purification through the removal of *mazmumah* traits that can distance individuals from their Creator and lead to spiritual confusion) and the cultivation of the soul (tanmiyah al nafs) with praiseworthy traits through the process of *tahalli* (i.e. cultivation of praiseworthy traits within oneself by performing righteous deeds, either outwardly or inwardly) and *tajalli* (i.e. an emergence in Rabbani consciousness.<sup>59</sup> This process also requires determination within oneself to form a noble personality by carrying out the commands of Allah SWT and His Messenger, such as performing sunnah worship, doing good deeds, reading the Qur'an, offering prayers to Allah SWT, and reciting zikr consistently and sincerely as the most effective method of psychotherapy. Therefore, this method places greater emphasis on the practices that must be undertaken to achieve inner peace.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Nasrul et al., "Hikmah and Ma'rifah," 144.

<sup>58</sup> Ibnu Ali, "Nilai-nilai Dasar Pendidikan Tasawuf dalam Paradigma Mistik Ibnu 'Arabi Tentang Insan Kamil," *El-Furqania* 4.1 (2017), 30.

<sup>59</sup> Farah Mohd Ferdaus et al., "Psychospiritual Reinforcement: A Study of the Importance of Prayer," *Al-'Abqari Journal of Islamic Social Sciences and Humanities* 27 (2022), 108.

<sup>60</sup> Mohd Manawi Mohd Akib et al., "Spiritual Strengthening of Man Through Prayer of Worship," *Afkar* 24.1 (2022), 393.

Meanwhile, in the effort to purify the heart, Ibn Arabi proposed five gradual steps that must be taken, namely: First, purify the heart by distancing oneself from all transgressions and sins. In addition, one must always strive to do good deeds. Second, striving to abandon worldly and physical desires and becoming aware of all aspects of their phenomena. Third, distance oneself from worldly 'attributes' and cultivate the awareness that all of these belong to Allah SWT. Fourth, abandon everything other than Allah SWT and bring forth a new awareness that Allah is both the beholder and the beheld. Fifth, discarding these 'attributes' of God and His 'relationships'. So that God will be seen more as an essence, that is, as God's Substance, and He is believed to be the first cause.<sup>61</sup>

If the heart can be cleansed of the various impurities attached to it, then the heart will not be blind to understanding the divine lights that are revealed in the heart (gnosis). The heart is forever destined to be radiant, clean, shiny and clear. Every heart in which the Divine Presence can manifest or reveal Himself as the 'Red Ruby Stone' and this is the manifestation of the Essence, then that is the heart of the owner of *mushahadah*, the perfected human being, the owner of knowledge that no one else is higher than him in terms of manifestation.<sup>62</sup>

For the wise, within possibility (imkan), Allah will never be hidden from their sight and secret, for they are never present with creatures. For them, there is nothing similar to Him that manifests in possibility. They understand nothing in existing things except His names. Towards everything that manifests and reveals itself to them, they say, 'You are the Most Holy and Most High, and none of that is like You.'<sup>63</sup>

*Ma'rifah* offers a much-needed alternative in an age when excessive intellectualism and analytical thinking often cause humans to lose their meaning and purpose in life. By emphasising direct experience and spiritual depth, *ma'rifah* provides a path for those seeking a more authentic and meaningful understanding of life.<sup>64</sup> In this context, especially from the perspective of Ibn Arabi's Sufism, psychosufism serves as a bridge between the

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<sup>61</sup> Ibnu Ali, "Nilai-nilai Dasar Pendidikan Tasawuf," 30.

<sup>62</sup> Ibn al-Arabi, *Risalah tentang Ma'rifah*, 39.

<sup>63</sup> Ibn al-Arabi, *Risalah tentang Ma'rifah*, 187.

<sup>64</sup> Nasrul et al., "Hikmah and Ma'rifah," 144.

richness of spiritual tradition and the language of modern psychology, which is more accessible to the younger generation. This approach opens up new opportunities for Sufi values to remain alive and relevant, while being able to respond to contemporary challenges in a more contextual and practical manner.<sup>65</sup>

## Conclusion

Psychosufism is a holistic approach capable of bridging the gap between modern psychology and Islamic spirituality, particularly through the Sufi thought of Ibn 'Arabi. This study demonstrates that the heart (*qalb*) serves as the center of human spiritual and psychological consciousness, acting as the locus of Divine manifestation (*tajalli*) and the foundation of psychological well-being.

From Ibn Arabi's perspective, the purification of the heart achieved through *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the self), *riyadah* (spiritual discipline), and *dhikr* (remembrance of God). It is a primary prerequisite for attaining *ma'rifah*. This constitutes a direct, inner realization of God that fosters inner tranquility, personality integrity, and moral transformation. This psychosufistic approach is not merely curative regarding psychological disorders but also transformative, as it guides the individual toward spiritual perfection (*al-insan al-kamil*).

Thus, a psychosufistic approach grounded in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi offers a relevant conceptual and therapeutic framework for addressing the spiritual and mental crises faced by modern humanity, while also holding the potential to be developed into a contextual and applicable model of Islamic psychotherapy.

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<sup>65</sup> Nasrul et al., "Hikmah and Ma'rifah," 145.

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