

Rūḥ between Revelation and Psychology: Integrating Scientific Qur'anic Exegesis and Transpersonal Psychology

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Abstract

The Qur'anic concept of rūḥ remains a central yet epistemologically complex issue in Islamic thought because it concerns life, consciousness, morality, and transcendence while exceeding complete human understanding. This study develops an integrative conceptual model of rūḥ by bringing scientific Qur'anic exegesis into dialogue with Robert Frager's transpersonal psychology. A qualitative library-research design was employed using thematic Qur'anic interpretation, qualitative content analysis, conceptual mapping, and source triangulation. Classical, modern, and scientifically oriented interpretations of Q.S. al-Isrā' [17]:85 were examined alongside literature on Sufi psychology, transpersonal psychology, consciousness, and spiritual development. The findings identify three dimensions of rūḥ: ontological, as an immaterial and transcendent principle of life; epistemological, as a reality whose essence remains beyond complete human knowledge; and functional, as a source of consciousness, moral agency, spiritual orientation, and human transformation. Functional correspondences emerged between these dimensions and transpersonal concepts such as self-transcendence, psycho-spiritual integration, meaning-making, emotional regulation, and moral development. Nevertheless, Qur'anic metaphysics and psychological theory remain epistemologically distinct. Transpersonal psychology may explain spiritual experience and development but cannot determine the revealed ontological status of rūḥ, while preserving the epistemic authority of revelation. The proposed non-reductive framework contributes to Qur'anic studies, Islamic psychology, spiritual education, counselling, and mental-health research.

Keywords: *Qur'anic Concept of Rūḥ, Scientific Qur'anic Exegesis, Transpersonal Psychology, Islamic Psychology, Spiritual Development.*

Abstrak

Konsep *rūḥ* dalam Al-Qur'an tetap menjadi persoalan sentral sekaligus kompleks secara epistemologis dalam pemikiran Islam karena berkaitan dengan kehidupan, kesadaran, moralitas, dan transendensi, tetapi hakikatnya melampaui kemampuan pemahaman manusia secara menyeluruh. Penelitian ini mengembangkan model konseptual integratif

mengenai *rūḥ* dengan mempertemukan tafsir Al-Qur'an bercorak ilmiah dan psikologi transpersonal Robert Frager. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian kepustakaan kualitatif melalui pendekatan tafsir tematik Al-Qur'an, analisis isi kualitatif, pemetaan konseptual, dan triangulasi sumber. Penafsiran klasik, modern, dan bercorak ilmiah terhadap Q.S. al-Isrā' [17]:85 dianalisis bersama literatur mengenai psikologi Sufi, psikologi transpersonal, kesadaran, dan perkembangan spiritual. Hasil penelitian mengidentifikasi tiga dimensi *rūḥ*, yaitu dimensi ontologis sebagai prinsip kehidupan yang immaterial dan transenden; dimensi epistemologis sebagai realitas yang hakikatnya berada di luar jangkauan pengetahuan manusia secara utuh; serta dimensi fungsional sebagai sumber kesadaran, agensi moral, orientasi spiritual, dan transformasi manusia. Korespondensi fungsional ditemukan antara dimensi-dimensi tersebut dan konsep-konsep transpersonal, seperti transendensi diri, integrasi psikospiritual, pembentukan makna, regulasi emosi, dan perkembangan moral. Meskipun demikian, metafisika Al-Qur'an dan teori psikologi tetap memiliki landasan epistemologis yang berbeda. Psikologi transpersonal dapat menjelaskan pengalaman serta perkembangan spiritual, tetapi tidak dapat menentukan status ontologis *rūḥ* yang bersumber dari wahyu. Dengan demikian, otoritas epistemik wahyu tetap dipertahankan. Kerangka nonreduktif yang diusulkan memberikan kontribusi bagi kajian Al-Qur'an, psikologi Islam, pendidikan spiritual, konseling, dan penelitian kesehatan mental.

Kata Kunci: Konsep *rūḥ* dalam Al-Qur'an, Tafsir Al-Qur'an bercorak ilmiah, Psikologi Transpersonal, Psikologi Islam, Perkembangan Spiritual.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of *rūḥ* occupies a foundational yet epistemically difficult position in Islamic intellectual history because it is treated as the principle of life and as a reality whose ultimate nature exceeds human cognition¹. Q.S. al-Isrā' [17]:85 anchors this tension by describing *rūḥ* as belonging to the command of God and emphasizing the limited scope of human knowledge concerning it². Muslim philosophers, including al-Kindī and Ibn Sīnā, approached the soul-body relation through metaphysics and theories of substance, whereas Qur'anic exegetes generally retained revelation as the primary epistemic horizon for discussing the unseen³. Modern scholarship examines *rūḥ* in relation to consciousness, moral agency, human development, and contemporary scriptural interpretation⁴.

¹ Ali A M Alhaj, "Lexical-Semantic Problems and Constrains Met in Translating Qur'anic Arabic-Specific Words "Nafs" نفس Into English: A Cross-Lingual Perspective," *Technium Social Sciences Journal* 44 (2023): 1025–40, <https://doi.org/10.47577/tssj.v44i1.9073>.

² Fridayanti Fridayanti and Dzatul Lu'lu, "Translating the Term Nafs in the Qur'an Into Indonesian: A Case Study on Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahnya, 1990, 2002, and 2019 Editions, Published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs," *Subuf* 15, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v15i2.746>.

³ Ismail Pane, "Dilalah Makna Rūḥ Dalam Penafsiran Quraish Shihab," *Tazkirah* 6, no. 2 (2021): 1083–1104, <https://doi.org/10.53888/tazkirah.v1i2.463>.

⁴ Vijay A B Seer, Muhammad A Fuadi, and Sukron Azhari, "Fitrah: Becoming a Proportional Human (Comparative Study: Indonesian Tafsir Perspectives)," *Ijir* 2, no. 2 (2024): 454–66, <https://doi.org/10.70687/ijir.v2i2.48>.

This renewed interest reflects concern with the limitations of exclusively materialist accounts of the human person. Contemporary research increasingly recognizes spirituality, transcendent consciousness, mystical experience, meaning, and religious practice as significant dimensions of personality and psychological well-being⁵. Within Islamic studies, *rūḥ*, *nafs*, *qalb*, and *'aql* have consequently been revisited as interrelated but non-identical elements of a theological anthropology that cannot be reduced to neurobiological processes⁶. Studies also indicate that Qur'anic spirituality may support resilience, spiritual care, moral formation, and therapeutic communication, although its application requires culturally and theologically appropriate frameworks⁷. *Rūḥ* is therefore relevant to theology, exegesis, psychology, spiritual education, and mental-health discourse⁸.

The principal problem is the fragmentation of existing explanations. Classical theology protects the transcendence and divine origin of *rūḥ*, but may leave its psychological functions insufficiently articulated for interdisciplinary inquiry. Conversely, scientific and psychological approaches can clarify observable dimensions of consciousness, behavior, and well-being, yet risk reducing *rūḥ* to biological energy, cognition, or neurochemical activity. The semantic plurality of *rūḥ* further complicates the issue because Qur'anic usage may refer, depending on context, to the life principle, revelation, divine assistance, or the angel Gabriel⁹. An interdisciplinary account must explain correspondences without treating theological and psychological categories as interchangeable¹⁰.

A general solution has emerged through *tafsir 'ilmi*, which promotes structured dialogue between Qur'anic revelation and scientific knowledge¹¹. This approach uses contemporary resources to interpret cosmological and anthropological verses while maintaining that empirical

⁵ Susanti Vera, Eni Zulaiha, and Badruzzaman M Yunus, "Potensi Dasar Individu Muslim Sebagai Penunjang Kehadiran Diri Dalam Peran Khalifatullah Dan 'Abdullah," *Jaqfi: Jurnal Aqidah Dan Filsafat Islam* 7, no. 2 (December 13, 2022): 217–30, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jaqfi.v7i2.18392>.

⁶ Moh. M R Rohman and Imron R Rosadi, "Konsep Tazkiyah Al-Nafz Fakhruddin Al-Razi Dalam Kitab Mafatih Al-Ghaib," *Bidayah Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman*, 2022, 192–218, <https://doi.org/10.47498/bidayah.v13i2.1326>.

⁷ Muslim Djuned, Khalis Akbar, and Furqan Furqan, "Exploring Negative Human Traits: A Thematic Tafsir of the Qur'an," *Sinthop Media Kajian Pendidikan Agama Sosial Dan Budaya* 3, no. 1 (2024): 49–58, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sinthop.v3i1.5516>.

⁸ Mohamad Z Arifin et al., "The Qur'anic Therapeutic Spiritual Communication on the Patient's Spiritual Problems in Nursing Care," *Jurnal At-Tibyan Jurnal Ilmu Alqur'an Dan Tafsir* 7, no. 1 (2022): 77–100, <https://doi.org/10.32505/at-tibyan.v7i1.3902>.

⁹ Fridayanti and Lu'lu, "Translating the Term Nafs in the Qur'an Into Indonesian: A Case Study on Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahnya, 1990, 2002, and 2019 Editions, Published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs."

¹⁰ Sarwadi and Abdullah Miqdam, "Kecerdasan Entrepreneurship Dalam Alqur'an," *At Tuross Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 2, no. 1 (2020): 60–75, <https://doi.org/10.51468/jpi.v2i1.28>.

¹¹ Aqdi R Asnawi, Syukron Affani, and Zaenatul Hakamah, "Scientific Qur'anic Exegesis in Indonesia," *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 6, no. 4 (2021): 25–46, <https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v6i4.401>.

inquiry cannot exhaust metaphysical reality¹². Its value lies in resisting both epistemic isolation and uncritical concordism: revelation provides normative and ontological orientation, while science contributes analytical concepts and models. Habibullah et al argue that knowledge integration can improve interpretations of difficult verses when disciplinary boundaries remain explicit¹³. Applied to Q.S. al-Isrā' [17]:85, this position treats epistemic limitation not as a prohibition but as a requirement for humility, restraint, and differentiation between knowable functions and unknowable essence¹⁴.

A more specific solution is offered by transpersonal psychology, which regards spiritual experience, self-transcendence, and expanded states of consciousness as legitimate components of human development. Transpersonal approaches may contribute to emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being by moving beyond models restricted to behavior, cognition, or pathology¹⁵. In an Islamic context, this orientation intersects with Sufi psychology, which interprets human transformation through relations among body, ego, intellect, heart, and spirit. Such scholarship explains how religious anthropology may inform personality development without relinquishing theological foundations. It also offers a route for relating exegetical claims about *ruh* to meaning, ethical conduct, emotional regulation, spiritual practice, and psychological integration.

Robert Frager's Sufi-oriented transpersonal framework is particularly relevant because it portrays the human being as a multidimensional psycho-spiritual unity. Frager associates spiritual development with the balanced functioning of bodily, psychological, intellectual, affective, and spiritual dimensions and with the transformation of the heart and self. Comparative scholarship employs his concepts to examine *qalb*, personality, and relations between Islamic spirituality and modern psychology. Studies integrating Islamic and transpersonal psychology likewise suggest that such models can clarify self-transcendence, faith, character formation, and spiritual well-being. However, these applications generally address Islamic psychology broadly rather than systematically interpreting the Qur'anic concept of *ruh*.

¹² Fathul M Al-Anshary, Muhsin Mahfudz, and Achmad Abubakar, "Sains Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an (Studi Metodologis Dalam Buku 'The Quranic: Scientific Exegesis,' Karya Pallacken Abdul Wahid," *Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 11, no. 2 (2023): 173–94, <https://doi.org/10.15408/quhas.v11i2.25032>.

¹³ Ilham Habibullah et al., "The Integration of Knowledge in Al-Tafsir Al-'Ilmi in Improving Interpretations of Verses," *QiST: Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies* 4, no. 1 (2025): 199–220, <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v4i1.8732>.

¹⁴ Faizin Faizin, "Kisah Al-Qur'an Dalam Tinjauan Sains (Studi Atas Serial Tafsir Ilmi Kementerian Agama RI)," *Al Quds Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Hadis* 4, no. 1 (2020): 77, <https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v4i1.1106>.

¹⁵ Sri Haryanto, "Relevansi Dimensi Spiritual Terhadap Pendidikan Karakter," *Jurnal Keislaman* 7, no. 1 (February 23, 2024): 57–65, <https://doi.org/10.54298/jk.v7i1.4005>.

The literature reveals three trajectories: theological studies emphasizing the unknowability of *rūḥ*; critiques of biological or neuroscientific reductionism; and integrative studies connecting Qur’anic or Sufi anthropology with contemporary psychology¹⁶. Although *tafsīr ‘ilmī* has been presented as a bridge between revelation and science, and transpersonal psychology has been used to explain spiritual development, the approaches have rarely been synthesized through a clearly delimited procedure¹⁷. The literature does not provide a sustained mapping of interpretations of Q.S. al-Isrā’ [17]:85 onto Frager’s psycho-spiritual framework. Empirical validation remains limited, and conceptual equivalence is often assumed rather than demonstrated. The resulting gap concerns how interdisciplinary dialogue can proceed without collapsing *rūḥ* into a secular psychological construct or presenting transpersonal categories as direct explanations of revelation¹⁸.

Accordingly, this study develops an integrative conceptual model of *rūḥ* by bringing *tafsīr ‘ilmī* into dialogue with Robert Frager’s transpersonal psychology¹⁹. It identifies the ontological, epistemological, and functional constructions of *rūḥ* in selected classical and modern interpretations of Q.S. al-Isrā’ [17]:85, analyzes relevant dimensions of Frager’s framework, and synthesizes the two bodies of knowledge through thematic and conceptual comparison. Its novelty lies not in claiming empirical access to the essence of *rūḥ*, but in distinguishing the concept’s irreducible theological status from its interpretable psycho-spiritual functions. The guiding proposition is that a disciplined synthesis can preserve the epistemic authority of revelation while using psychological theory to clarify the roles of *rūḥ* in consciousness, moral development, spiritual growth, and mental well-being. The conceptual and interdisciplinary scope provides a basis for research in *tafsīr*, Islamic psychology, spiritual education, and culturally grounded mental-health practice.

METHOD

Research Design and Epistemological Position

This study adopted a qualitative library-research design to develop an interdisciplinary interpretation of *rūḥ* through dialogue between *tafsīr ‘ilmī* and Robert Frager’s transpersonal

¹⁶ Anisatul Khoiriyah, “Penggunaan Siyāq Dalam Kitab Al-Tafsīr Al-Hadīs Karya Muhammad Izzat Darwazah,” *Al-Itqan Jurnal Studi Al-Qur’an* 5, no. 1 (2019): 19–40, <https://doi.org/10.47454/itqan.v5i1.706>.

¹⁷ Asnawi, Affani, and Hakamah, “Scientific Qur’anic Exegesis in Indonesia.”

¹⁸ Djuned, Akbar, and Furqan, “Exploring Negative Human Traits: A Thematic Tafsir of the Qur’an.”

¹⁹ Kholid Albar, Hamzah Harun, and Muhaemin Latif, “Menyinerikan Kecerdasan Spiritual, Emosional, Dan Intelektual Melalui Perspektif Al-Qur’an,” *Jurnal Keislaman* 7, no. 2 (2024): 335–48.

psychology. A textual-conceptual approach was selected because the study did not seek to measure *ruh* empirically, but to examine how it is defined, interpreted, and functionally situated within Qur'anic exegesis and psycho-spiritual theory²⁰. The research maintained a distinction between revelation as a normative source and psychology as an analytical framework. This position is consistent with integrative approaches that permit dialogue among *tafsir*, philosophy, hermeneutics, and psychology without reducing one epistemic domain to another²¹.

Data Sources and Selection

The primary sources consisted of classical, modern, and scientifically oriented exegetical works discussing Q.S. al-Isrā' [17]:85 and the concept of *ruh*. The corpus included interpretations associated with al-Ghazālī, al-Ālūsī, Ṭanṭāwī Jawharī, al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, Sayyid Quṭb, al-Sha'rāwī, and Quraish Shihab²². These works were selected because they represent diverse theological, philosophical, and exegetical perspectives. Secondary sources included Robert Frager's writings on Sufi and transpersonal psychology and contemporary studies concerning Islamic psychology, spirituality, consciousness, personality development, and mental well-being²³. Sources were purposively selected according to their relevance to the ontology, epistemology, functions, embodiment, and spiritual implications of *ruh*.

Thematic and Content Analysis

The first analytical stage applied thematic interpretation, or *tafsir mawdu'ī*, to organize exegetical discussions around *ruh*. Q.S. al-Isrā' [17]:85 functioned as the principal textual foundation, while related interpretations were examined to clarify its semantic and theological implications. The analysis identified three principal dimensions: the ontological dimension, concerning *ruh* as an immaterial and transcendent reality; the epistemological dimension, concerning the limitations of human knowledge; and the functional dimension, concerning vitality, consciousness, morality, and spirituality. Thematic interpretation was used because it allows Qur'anic materials to be examined systematically around a coherent conceptual problem²⁴.

²⁰ Albar, Harun, and Latif.

²¹ Joseph E B Lombard, "Decolonizing Qur'anic Studies," *Religions* 13, no. 2 (2022): 176, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13020176>.

²² Ilyas Supena, "Epistemology of Tafsir, Ta'wīl, and Hermeneutics: Towards an Integrative Approach," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 14, no. 1 (2024): 121–36, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.141.08>.

²³ Kholid Albar, Rahman Ambo Masse, and Muslimin H Kara, "Nilai-Nilai Etika Jual Beli Dalam Al-Qur'an Dan Kontribusinya Bagi Pembangunan Ekonomi Berkelanjutan," *Al-Mada: Jurnal Agama, Sosial, Dan Budaya* 8, no. 1 (2025): 130–41.

²⁴ Ade Jamaruddin, "Social Approach in Tafsir Al-Qur'an Perspective of Hasan Hanafi," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 23, no. 1 (2017): 1, <https://doi.org/10.24014/jush.v23i1.1074>; Ulfatun Hasanah, Moh A Fuadi, and Fitrotul Muzayanah,

Qualitative content analysis was then employed to identify recurring themes and conceptual relationships across the selected texts. Deductive codes included transcendence, life, embodiment, consciousness, epistemic limitation, moral development, and spiritual transformation. Additional categories were generated inductively when recurring meanings emerged from the corpus. Content analysis supported transparent and systematic interpretation of complex textual materials.

Conceptual Mapping and Synthesis

The exegetical findings were subsequently mapped onto Frager's psycho-spiritual framework. This procedure examined functional correspondences involving bodily vitality, ego, intellect, emotion, heart, and spiritual consciousness. The mapping did not assume that Qur'anic and psychological categories were identical. Instead, conceptual analysis was used to clarify distinctions among *rūḥ*, *nafs*, *qalb*, consciousness, soul, and self. The final synthesis integrated the theological foundation of *tafsīr 'ilmī* with the explanatory resources of transpersonal psychology while preserving their respective epistemological boundaries.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was strengthened through source triangulation, interpretive transparency, reflexivity, and conceptual validation. Classical and modern exegetical sources were compared with philosophical and psychological literature to identify convergences and disagreements. Interpretive claims were distinguished from empirical conclusions, and conceptual correspondences were described as analogies rather than identities when full equivalence could not be established. Because the study involved published texts and no human participants, formal participant consent was not required.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ontological, Epistemological, and Functional Characteristics of *Rūḥ*

The analysis identified three recurrent dimensions in classical and modern Qur'anic exegesis: ontological status, epistemological function, and practical-spiritual function²⁵. Ontologically, *rūḥ* was consistently represented as a non-material life principle associated with

"Methodological Study of Tafsir Yasin by K.H. Abd. Basith Ulama From Madura," *Studi Multidisipliner Jurnal Kajian Keislaman* 10, no. 1 (2023): 87–106, <https://doi.org/10.24952/multidisipliner.v10i1.7635>.

²⁵ Grant Kynaston, "Jesus as God's Word," *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2018): 68–85, <https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v3i2.117>.

divine agency and the animation of human existence²⁶. Exegetical discussions of Adam's creation and the divine "breathing" of spirit position *ruh* as more than a biological mechanism; it is a foundational dimension of life whose origin is related to God's command²⁷. Sufi and *ishari* traditions further locate *ruh* within a wider metaphysical structure involving *nafs*, *qalb*, *sirr*, and the realm of *malakūt*, thereby presenting human existence as simultaneously corporeal, psychological, and spiritual²⁸.

Epistemologically, the corpus showed that *ruh* is associated with forms of knowledge that cannot be confined to sensory observation or discursive reasoning²⁹. In Sufi-oriented exegesis, *ruh* is linked to inner perception, *kashf*, *irfān*, and the disclosure of meanings beyond the literal surface of the text³⁰. *Ruh al-Ma'āni* exemplifies an interpretive tradition that combines linguistic analysis, transmitted reports, and spiritual reflection, demonstrating that the epistemology of *ruh* is plural rather than methodologically uniform³¹. The findings also revealed a tension between text-centered approaches, which prioritize philology and transmitted interpretation, and esoteric approaches, which recognize spiritually disciplined experience as a legitimate source of interpretive insight³².

Functionally, *ruh* was repeatedly connected to consciousness, moral discernment, contemplation, and spiritual transformation³³. The relationship among *ruh*, *nafs*, and *qalb* was especially important³⁴. Sufi interpretations describe the unrefined *nafs* as an obstruction that prevents *ruh* from fully illuminating the *qalb*, whereas purification enables greater moral clarity and spiritual awareness. Modern exegetical studies similarly connect *ruh* with the capacities to live, feel, act, and develop ethically, although the precise terminology differs across interpretive

²⁶ Seer, Fuadi, and Azhari, "Fitrah: Becoming a Proportional Human (Comparative Study: Indonesian Tafsir Perspectives)."

²⁷ Andi Rosa and Muhamad Shoheh, "Literacy Culture About Sociology of Contemporary Religious Texts: A Study of Interpretation of the Quran in Indonesia," *Kne Social Sciences*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v9i12.15870>.

²⁸ Stephen Cúrto, "Sufi Qur'ānic Exegesis and Theomorphic Anthropology," *Teosofi Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam* 10, no. 1 (2020): 134–54, <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2020.10.1.134-154>.

²⁹ Yuyun Yuhanda et al., "Epistemology of Sufism in Sufi Interpretation (Analysis of the Patterns of Theoretical (Nazhari) and Practical ('Amali) Sufi Exegesis)," *Qist Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies* 3, no. 2 (2024): 216–33, <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v3i2.4199>.

³⁰ Sansan Z Haq, "Eksoterisme Tafsir Ishari: Telaah Epistemologi Tafsir Al-Jilani," *Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 5, no. 1 (2019): 1–28, <https://doi.org/10.15408/quhas.v5i1.13415>.

³¹ Saheed B Suraju, "Discourse on the Characteristic of Tafsir Ruhul-Ma'ani," *Addin* 12, no. 2 (2018): 521, <https://doi.org/10.21043/addin.v12i2.3425>.

³² Halim Calis, "'Ayn Al-A'Yān," *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 1 (2022): 29–53, <https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v7i1.405>.

³³ Habib Habib and Moh Habib, "Semiotic-Sufistic Interpretation of Imam Al-Ghazali: Case Study of 'Verses of Light' in the Holy Qur'an," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Literature and Muslim Society* 7, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.22515/islimus.v7i2.7529>.

³⁴ Haq, "Eksoterisme Tafsir Ishari: Telaah Epistemologi Tafsir Al-Jilani."

traditions³⁵. These findings indicate that *rūḥ* functions not only as an ontological principle of life but also as a central element in accounts of human moral and spiritual development³⁶.

Mapping *Rūḥ* onto Frager's Psycho-Spiritual Framework

The conceptual mapping produced several functional correspondences while preserving the distinction between theological and psychological categories. *Rūḥ* as the principle of life and conscious sentience was aligned with the psycho-spiritual idea of an experiential center that supports awareness, intentionality, and meaning-making. This correspondence was based on exegetical descriptions of *rūḥ* as the divine life-breath that enables human beings to live, feel, and act³⁷. However, the mapping remained analogical because a psychological account of conscious experience does not establish the metaphysical claim that *rūḥ* originates in divine command.

A second correspondence concerned moral and spiritual regulation. Exegetical accounts present *rūḥ* as oriented toward virtue, divine remembrance, and the refinement of the self, while the Frager-inspired psycho-spiritual framework emphasizes value formation, self-transcendence, and the integration of personal development with spiritual meaning. The *nafs-rūḥ-qalb* dynamic therefore corresponds to a developmental model in which lower impulses are disciplined and higher moral-spiritual capacities become more stable³⁸. A third correspondence involved transformative inner experience. *Ishāri* discussions of *kashf* and *irfān* were mapped onto transpersonal constructs such as expanded consciousness and transformative spiritual experience, while remaining grounded in a specifically Islamic epistemology of revelation and spiritual discipline. The result was a heuristic model rather than a claim of conceptual identity.

Convergence and Divergence with Transpersonal Psychology

The analysis identified convergence in three areas: multidimensional consciousness, moral meaning, and transformative development. Qur'anic exegesis and transpersonal psychology both reject a narrowly material account of the person and recognize forms of inner experience that exceed ordinary cognition. Both also connect human flourishing with meaning, virtue, and the transformation of self-centered patterns³⁹. The esoteric concept of spiritual

³⁵ Rosa and Shoheh, "Literacy Culture About Sociology of Contemporary Religious Texts: A Study of Interpretation of the Quran in Indonesia."

³⁶ Seer, Fuadi, and Azhari, "Fitrah: Becoming a Proportional Human (Comparative Study: Indonesian Tafsir Perspectives)."

³⁷ Kynaston, "Jesus as God's Word."

³⁸ Suraju, "Discourse on the Characteristic of Tafsir Ruhu'l-Ma'ani."

³⁹ Yuhanida et al., "Epistemology of Sufism in Sufi Interpretation (Analysis of the Patterns of Theoretical (Nazhari) and Practical ('Amali) Sufi Exegesis)."

unveiling further parallels transpersonal interest in non-ordinary and transformative states of consciousness⁴⁰.

The principal divergence concerned ontology and epistemology. Qur'anic exegesis situates *ruh* within *tamhīd*, divine command, revelation, and Islamic metaphysics, whereas transpersonal psychology generally studies spiritual experience through phenomenological, theoretical, or empirical categories. Consequently, psychological constructs can describe experiential functions associated with *ruh* but cannot determine its revealed ontological status⁴¹. The findings therefore support interdisciplinary comparison only when revelation and psychology retain their distinct explanatory limits⁴².

DISCUSSION

Transformation of the Concept of the Soul in Classical and Hellenistic Thought

The findings indicate that the Qur'anic conception of *ruh* cannot be understood adequately through a purely materialist account of human life. Although the available literature does not provide a complete historical reconstruction of the movement from Pre-Socratic materialism to the metaphysical systems of Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus, it nevertheless clarifies an important epistemological distinction between Greek philosophical speculation and Qur'anic anthropologymeh⁴³. The Islamic sources examined in this study consistently locate *ruh* within a revelatory and theological framework in which it originates from the divine command and functions as the basis of life, consciousness, and spiritual experience⁴⁴. By contrast, philosophical accounts of the soul generally begin with rational reflection on the relation between matter, life, intellect, and transcendence⁴⁵.

This distinction does not imply that philosophical reasoning is irrelevant to Qur'anic interpretation. Rather, philosophy provides analytical categories for discussing embodiment, consciousness, and immateriality, whereas revelation establishes the theological boundaries within which *ruh* is understood. Such a relationship is consistent with integrative epistemologies

⁴⁰ Haq, "Eksoterisme Tafsir Ishari: Telaah Epistemologi Tafsir Al-Jilani."

⁴¹ Cúrto, "Sufi Qur'ānic Exegesis and Theomorphic Anthropology."

⁴² Habib and Habib, "Semiotic-Sufistic Interpretation of Imam Al-Ghazali: Case Study of 'Verses of Light' in the Holy Qur'An."

⁴³ Arzoo Ahmed and Mehrunisha Suleman, "Islamic Perspectives on the Genome and the Human Person: Why the Soul Matters," 2019, 139–68, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004392137_007.

⁴⁴ Ghena Ismail, C N Shealy, and Ziad Nahas, "Psychotherapy Through a Sufi Islamic Lens: A Dialectic of Transcendence and Acceptance,," *Spirituality in Clinical Practice* 10, no. 3 (2023): 200–218, <https://doi.org/10.1037/scp0000274>.

⁴⁵ Seer, Fuadi, and Azhari, "Fitrah: Becoming a Proportional Human (Comparative Study: Indonesian Tafsir Perspectives)."

that allow philosophy and contemporary knowledge to illuminate scriptural concepts without replacing the normative authority of revelation⁴⁶. The findings therefore support a complementary rather than competitive relation between philosophical anthropology and Qur'anic exegesis. Nevertheless, more specialized historical sources are required before firm claims can be made regarding the direct influence of Greek theories on al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, or Ibn Sīnā. The current corpus primarily supports a conceptual comparison, not a comprehensive history of intellectual transmission.

The Construction of *Rūḥ* in *Tafsīr 'Ilmī*

The results demonstrate that *rūḥ* possesses interrelated ontological, epistemological, and functional dimensions. Ontologically, it is represented as a reality connected to divine origin and as the principle through which living beings possess life and consciousness. Modern studies further describe *rūḥ* as the capacity that enables human beings to perceive, feel, and act, while also acknowledging that the Qur'anic term may refer to revelation, the Qur'an, or angelic agency depending on its textual context⁴⁷. This semantic multiplicity challenges any attempt to impose a single psychological or biological definition upon all Qur'anic occurrences of the term⁴⁸.

Epistemologically, Q.S. al-Isrā' [17]:85 establishes an explicit boundary around human knowledge of the essence of *rūḥ*. This boundary should not be interpreted as a rejection of inquiry, but as a warning against claims of complete explanatory mastery. *Tafsīr 'ilmī* can therefore investigate observable manifestations associated with life, consciousness, and spiritual experience while refraining from claiming empirical access to the metaphysical essence of *rūḥ*⁴⁹. This distinction is crucial because scientific exegesis has frequently been criticized when it converts provisional scientific theories into definitive explanations of scripture or presents Qur'anic statements as direct predictions of modern scientific discoveries⁵⁰.

The results consequently support a restrained version of *tafsīr 'ilmī*. In this approach, scientific knowledge serves as an interpretive resource rather than an arbiter of revealed truth. Natural laws and cosmological analogies may increase the intelligibility of Qur'anic discourse,

⁴⁶ Supena, "Epistemology of Tafsīr, Ta'wīl, and Hermeneutics: Towards an Integrative Approach."

⁴⁷ Alhaj, "Lexical-Semantic Problems and Constrains Met in Translating Qur'anic Arabic-Specific Words "Nafs" into English: A Cross-Lingual Perspective."

⁴⁸ Asnawi, Affani, and Hakamah, "Scientific Qur'anic Exegesis in Indonesia."

⁴⁹ Stefano Bigliardi, "The 'Scientific Miracle of the Qur'an,' Pseudoscience, and Conspiracism," *Zygon*® 52, no. 1 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1111/zygo.12321>.

⁵⁰ Rainer Brunner, "Angels in the Sky, Microbes on Earth: Some Remarks on the Natural Sciences in Al-Manār," 2024, 719–47, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004682504_036.

but they cannot demonstrate the metaphysical existence or precise structure of *ruh*⁵¹. Such methodological restraint protects the study from pseudoscientific interpretation while retaining the productive potential of dialogue between scripture and contemporary knowledge. It also preserves the distinction between *tafsīr ‘ilmī*, as an interpretive engagement with scientific discourse, and *i’jāz ‘ilmī*, which may make stronger claims regarding scientific miracles in the Qur’an.

The Dimensions of *Rūḥ* in Transpersonal and Sufi Psychology

The mapping of exegetical findings onto a psycho-spiritual framework revealed meaningful functional correspondences but did not establish conceptual identity. Transpersonal and Sufi-oriented psychology treat the human person as more than a collection of biological mechanisms or cognitive processes. They emphasize the integration of body, emotion, intellect, ego, heart, moral orientation, and spiritual awareness in human development⁵². This multidimensional anthropology resonates with exegetical accounts in which *ruh* supports life, consciousness, moral discernment, and orientation toward God⁵³.

The strongest correspondence concerns the role of *ruh* in spiritual transformation. Islamic psychological models frequently describe development as a process in which the *nafs* is disciplined, the *qalb* is purified, and the person becomes more receptive to spiritual awareness. Such a process can be interpreted in transpersonal terms as self-transcendence, integration, and movement beyond ego-dominated functioning. However, the theological status of *ruh* remains different from psychological concepts such as consciousness, self, or spiritual experience. Psychological models describe patterns of experience and development, whereas Qur’anic exegesis makes ontological and theological claims regarding divine command and human existence.

The available literature does not provide sufficient evidence for reconstructing Robert Frager’s original classification of seven psycho-spiritual dimensions in detail. Consequently, the mapping developed in this study must remain explicitly heuristic. It provides a framework for comparing functions associated with bodily vitality, ego regulation, emotional balance,

⁵¹ Melanie Guénon, “1. Einleitender Teil: Das Wundern Über Die Wunder,” 2024, 13–60, <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783987401039-13>.

⁵² Abdallah Rothman and Adrian Coyle, “Toward a Framework for Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy: An Islamic Model of the Soul,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 57, no. 5 (2018): 1731–44, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-018-0651-x>.

⁵³ Samuel B Sotillos, “Towards an Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy,” *Spiritual Psychology and Counseling* 7, no. 3 (2022): 408–16, <https://doi.org/10.37898/spc.2022.7.3.182>.

intellectual reflection, the heart, and deeper spirituality, but it does not demonstrate that Frager's categories correspond directly to Qur'anic categories. This limitation strengthens rather than weakens the conceptual model because it prevents the uncritical projection of modern psychological terminology onto Islamic revelation.

Integrating *Tafsīr 'Ilmī* and Transpersonal Psychology

The integration developed in this study depends upon epistemological differentiation. *Tafsīr 'ilmī* contributes the theological and textual foundation, while transpersonal psychology offers a language for discussing spiritual experience, transformation, and well-being. An effective synthesis must maintain that *ruh* is not reducible to neurological activity, emotional states, or subjective experiences. At the same time, experiences associated with spiritual practice may be examined psychologically without being treated as revelation itself. Supena's integration of *tafsīr*, *ta'wīl*, and hermeneutics is particularly relevant because it balances textual meaning, inner interpretation, and the historical situation of readers⁵⁴.

This differentiation also has practical implications. Islamic counselling may use concepts such as *nafs*, *qalb*, spiritual discipline, and divine orientation to interpret psychological distress within the client's religious worldview. Sufi and Islamic psychotherapy literature suggests that remembrance, contemplation, meditation, and spiritually oriented reflection may contribute to meaning, emotional regulation, and psychological well-being⁵⁵. However, these practices should not be assumed to produce uniform clinical outcomes, nor should theological concepts be converted automatically into diagnostic variables. Their use requires contextual sensitivity, professional competence, and empirical evaluation.

In spiritual education, the integrated model may support character formation by presenting human development as the cultivation of intellectual, emotional, ethical, and spiritual capacities. The model also provides an alternative to fragmented conceptions of education that separate moral development from cognition and psychological well-being. In clinical contexts, it may help practitioners recognize spirituality as a potential source of resilience while maintaining a distinction between religious guidance and evidence-based psychological treatment⁵⁶.

⁵⁴ Supena, "Epistemology of *Tafsīr*, *Ta'wīl*, and Hermeneutics: Towards an Integrative Approach."

⁵⁵ Sotillos, "Towards an Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy."

⁵⁶ Rothman and Coyle, "Toward a Framework for Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy: An Islamic Model of the Soul."

Epistemological Limitations and Future Research Requirements

The principal limitation of the proposed synthesis is the asymmetry between its knowledge domains. Qur'anic exegesis concerns revealed meaning, theological ontology, and normative guidance, whereas psychology generally studies observable behavior, reported experience, and theoretically constructed variables. The transformation of *ruh* into a measurable psychological construct would therefore risk category error. Similar risks arise when transpersonal experiences are interpreted as direct confirmation of theological claims. The current model avoids this problem by treating psychological constructs as possible descriptions of functions or experiences associated with spiritual life rather than definitions of *ruh* itself⁵⁷.

Further research should operationalize only those aspects that can legitimately be investigated, including spiritual well-being, self-transcendence, meaning, emotional regulation, moral development, and the perceived influence of contemplative practice. Cross-cultural studies are necessary because Muslim communities differ in theological orientation, cultural expression, and attitudes toward psychology. Clinical research could examine whether spiritually integrated interventions improve well-being or therapeutic engagement compared with standard approaches, while qualitative studies could explore how Muslim participants understand the relationships among *ruh*, *nafs*, *qalb*, distress, and recovery. Such research would need to preserve a clear boundary between empirical findings concerning human experience and theological claims that remain outside the scope of psychological verification.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that *ruh* is best understood as a multidimensional concept whose theological, epistemological, and functional meanings cannot be reduced to a single biological, philosophical, or psychological category. The exegetical analysis identified *ruh* as an immaterial and transcendent principle associated with life, consciousness, moral agency, and spiritual orientation, while Q.S. al-Isrā' [17]:85 establishes a clear limit on human access to its ultimate essence. The comparison with transpersonal and Sufi psychology further showed that psychological concepts may clarify the experiential and developmental functions associated with *ruh*, particularly self-transcendence, moral formation, emotional integration, and spiritual awareness. The principal implication is that *tafsir 'ilmi* and transpersonal psychology can engage productively only when their epistemological boundaries are preserved. Revelation provides the

⁵⁷ Ahmed and Suleman, "Islamic Perspectives on the Genome and the Human Person: Why the Soul Matters."

normative and ontological foundation, whereas psychology offers descriptive and analytical tools for examining human experience. Accordingly, the proposed synthesis should be treated as a heuristic framework rather than as proof that Qur'anic and psychological concepts are identical. This study contributes to contemporary Qur'anic studies and Islamic psychology by providing a structured model for integrating scriptural interpretation with psycho-spiritual theory without reducing *rūḥ* to neurological processes or equating subjective spiritual experience with revelation. The model also offers a conceptual basis for spiritually informed counselling, character education, and mental-health research. Further studies should evaluate its relevance through cross-cultural, qualitative, and clinical research focusing on spiritual well-being, self-transcendence, moral development, contemplative practice, and the relationships among *rūḥ*, *nafs*, and *qalb* in Muslim communities.

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