BEYOND FREUD AND BEHAVIORISM: SUFISM AS THE ROOT OF TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY IN UNDERSTANDING HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

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Abstract :

This article aims to analyze the position of Sufism as an often overlooked intellectual and practical foundation in the birth of Transpersonal Psychology. Through a literature study and comparative analysis approach, this research criticizes the limitations of mainstream psychological paradigms particularly Freudian Psychoanalysis and Behaviorism which fail to explain the spiritual dimension and peak experiences of humans. The research findings show that key concepts of Sufism such as fana' (destruction of the ego), ma'rifat (divine knowledge), and Zikr as a method of developing consciousness, has been discussing the "transpersonal" area centuries before modern psychology formulated it. Sufism is not just a parallel, but functions as a root that provides a comprehensive spiritual journey map. This article concludes that the integration of the Sufi heritage with Transpersonal Psychology can lead to a more holistic understanding of human consciousness, moving beyond pathological models to a model of actualizing the highest human potential. This study recommends further exploration of Sufism practices as a therapeutic modality in the context of contemporary psychology.

Keywords: *Sufism, Transpersonal Psychology, Consciousness, Ego, Fana', Ma'rifat, Spiritual Roots.*

INTRODUCTION

The landscape of 20th-century psychology was dominated by two major paradigms: Freudian psychoanalysis, which delved into the unconscious mind filled with primitive conflicts and drives, and behaviorism, which focused strictly on observable and conditioned behavior. Despite their significant contributions, both schools were criticized for reducing humans the former to neurotic beings driven by their pasts, and the latter to stimulus-response machines. Both failed to address existential questions about meaning, purpose, spirituality, and humankind's highest potential. In response, transpersonal psychology emerged as a "fourth force" in psychology, pioneered by figures such as Abraham Maslow, Stanislav Grof, and Ken Wilber. This force focuses on experiences that transcend (*trans*) the boundaries of the individual's personal, such as mystical experiences, expanded states of consciousness, and ultimate self-actualization. However, this framework is often presented as a 20th-century discovery. (Indonesia et al., 2025)

Maslow (1968), for example, through the concept of self-actualization and peak experiences, opened up space for understanding spiritual experiences as part of human psychological potential. However, Maslow did not specifically link his findings to any particular spiritual tradition, including Islam. His study

focused on Western humanistic and phenomenological frameworks without exploring the concept of consciousness in Sufism. (Ziyadul et al., 2023)

A more explicit approach to non-ordinary experiences of consciousness can be found in the work of Grof (1988), particularly through the development of *holotropic breathwork* as a method of psychic exploration. Although Grof draws heavily on world mystical traditions, his exposition is general and does not link his therapeutic methodology to the psychological system of Sufism, which has a detailed structure of spiritual stages. (Journal et al., 2024)

Meanwhile, Wilber (2000) through *Integral Theory* offers a grand synthesis regarding the development of human consciousness. Within this framework, the world's mystical traditions including Sufism are referred to as part of the "perennial philosophy." However, this reference is more illustrative and does not provide an in-depth analysis of the structure of concepts such as *maqāmāt* , *aḥwāl* , or *nafs* from a modern transpersonal perspective. (Khadijah, 2014)

On the other hand, a number of Muslim intellectuals such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1987) and William Chittick (1989) have presented in-depth studies on Islamic metaphysics and Sufi psychology. Their works reveal the depth of cosmological and anthropological views in Sufism. However, this literature still focuses on theological and spiritual aspects, without explicitly connecting it to contemporary Transpersonal Psychology or to the empirical-phenomenological model of Western psychology. (Ali, 2024)

Several comparative studies, such as Kazemi (2012) and Rothberg (2005), have attempted to compare certain concepts between Sufism and Transpersonal Psychology. Despite making important initial contributions, these studies are still limited to shared themes or phenomena, and have not explored the epistemological equivalence, methodological approaches, or correlations between the Sufi model of spiritual development and the framework of consciousness development in modern transpersonal psychology. (North, n.d.)

From all previous research, it appears that there has not been a study that comprehensively maps the structural relationship between Sufism and Transpersonal Psychology. The literature is still dominated by superficial discussions, without examining the possibility that Sufism is not only parallel, but has the potential to become a conceptual foundation for transpersonal understanding itself. (n cholid, nd)

This article argues that the roots of this transpersonal understanding have been embedded much earlier in spiritual traditions, particularly Sufism (Islamic mysticism). This research aims to demonstrate that Sufism not only shares similarities with Transpersonal Psychology but also constitutes a rich and systematic foundation for it. By exploring the conceptual and methodological intersections between the two, this article seeks to offer a more holistic and culturally inclusive perspective on understanding human consciousness. (Imron, 2018)

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method with a library research approach and comparative analysis. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on exploring and comparing the main concepts in Sufism and Transpersonal Psychology through the analysis of authoritative texts and academic literature. The primary data sources of this research consist of classic works of Sufism such as *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* by Al-Ghazali, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* by Ibn 'Arabī, and the poems of Jalaluddin Rumi, which contain the structures of spiritual psychology such as *nafs* , *maqāmāt* , *aḥwāl* , and the experience *of fana'–baqa'* . On the other hand, the primary sources of Transpersonal Psychology include the works of the founders of the discipline, namely *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* by Abraham Maslow, *Beyond the Brain* by Stanislav Grof, and *The Spectrum of Consciousness* by Ken Wilber, which form the basis of thinking about peak experiences, non-ordinary consciousness, and the spectrum of human consciousness development. (Saefulloh, 2023)

Secondary sources include academic books related to Sufism and Transpersonal Psychology, as well as scholarly journal articles discussing the relationship between mysticism and psychology, including contemporary writings by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, William Chittick, Annemarie Schimmel, David Rothberg, and Kazemi. Data collection was conducted through documentation techniques, namely identification, selection, in-depth reading, recording, and organization of relevant literature. This process included noting key concepts such as epistemology, the structure of consciousness, stages of spiritual development, and methods of self-transformation in both disciplines. The data were then analyzed using qualitative comparative analysis techniques that go through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and analysis of relationships between concepts. (Saefulloh, 2023)

In the reduction stage, the researcher filters the data to retain only concepts relevant to the research focus. The data is then presented in the form of thematic descriptions and analytical categories to facilitate comparison. Through comparative analysis, the researcher examines the similarities, differences, and potential integration between Sufism and Transpersonal Psychology, particularly in terms of the structure of spiritual development, epistemology, and the goals of consciousness transformation. The results of the analysis are then interpreted to draw conclusions regarding the conceptual relationship between the two traditions. To maintain data validity, this study uses source triangulation by comparing data from classical texts, modern literature, and scientific articles, and conducts contextual analysis to ensure that the concepts found remain within their historical and theological context. With this approach, the research is expected to produce a comprehensive understanding of the transpersonal foundations of the Sufism tradition. (Arni, 2016)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Freudian psychoanalysis viewed religion and spiritual experiences as illusions and sublimations of repressed sexual urges (*Future of an Illusion*).

Skinnerian behaviorism, on the other hand , considered consciousness and subjective experience as a "black box" irrelevant to study. This limitation sparked the Humanistic Psychology movement (Maslow, Rogers), which emphasized positive mental health, which later gave rise to Transpersonal Psychology. Maslow himself recognized that peak self-actualization often involves transcendental and mystical experiences, which cannot be explained by existing psychological frameworks. (Ahmad, n.d.)

The development of digital technology in recent decades has brought profound changes to our lives. From easy access to information to global connectivity, technology has transformed the way we work, communicate, and live our daily lives. However, despite the benefits offered by this digital era, there are also complex challenges, including maintaining our spiritual awareness. In this context, Sufism, as an important branch of Islamic tradition, offers insights and practices that can help individuals maintain their spiritual awareness amidst the ever-evolving technological landscape. Sufism teaches the values of introspection, meditation, and self-control, which are fundamental to one's spiritual development (Wahid, 2023).

In Sufism, spiritual awareness is seen as the primary goal of human life, involving the pursuit of deeper knowledge and experience of a relationship with God, and the attainment of a meaningful and harmonious life. Sufism, long before its inception, had a very detailed map of human consciousness. The spiritual journey of a salik (spiritual journeyer) is a deep psychological journey. Sufism charts the development of the nafs from *ammarah* (which commands evil), *lawwamah* (which regrets), to *muthma'innah* (which is calm). The concept of tazkiyah al-nafs (purification of the soul) refers to efforts to cleanse oneself of negative traits and develop better traits. The concept of ma'rifah (intimate knowledge) describes a deep understanding of the existence of God and the close relationship between humans and God (Idrisiyyah, nd) . Other concepts such as dhikr (dhikr), muhasabah (self-introspection), and muraqabah (self-monitoring) are also an important part of Sufism. Sufism involves various spiritual practices aimed at drawing closer to God. These practices include meditation, dhikr, fasting, and contemplation. Through this practice, individuals are expected to achieve greater depths of spiritual experience and higher levels of consciousness. Apart from practices, ethical and moral values are also very important in Sufism. Values such as love, compassion, honesty, simplicity, and humility are fundamental to the practice and understanding of Sufism. By internalizing these values, individuals can strengthen their spiritual awareness and live a more meaningful and harmonious life. (Daniyart et al., 2023)

In addition to various advances and conveniences, modernity has also given rise to various social and individual crises, including crises of identity, legality, penetration, participation, distribution, and moral crises that seem insoluble through the lens of Western knowledge. These crises are rooted in the psychological problems of modern humans, which at some point develop into a widespread collective crisis. If so, the endless problems of modern psychology

will have a very high potential to have a negative impact on social life. Here , Sufism, as one of the disciplines within the Islamic treasury of knowledge that focuses on the spiritual dimension to balance the physical and spiritual aspects of humans, is used to overcome these various problems. Ultimately, this effort also enriches the treasury of knowledge, which is one of the integrations between psychology and Sufism, namely transpersonal psychology. Through the help of Sufism, modern humans are reminded that the essence of humans is not only as physical beings, but also as spiritual beings. This spiritual aspect is often ignored by modern humans, resulting in a feeling of meaninglessness and emptiness in life (Imron, 2018) .

Fana' in Islamic Sufism refers to the process of "losing" or "disappearing" the ego or individual self in union with God, meaning the ego is completely destroyed or eliminated so that union with the Divine occurs. This is a mystical way in which the individual releases a separate self-identity and merges with the Divine essence, releasing all egoistic attachments. Meanwhile, Ego Transcendence in philosophy and psychology emphasizes more on transcending the ego not by destroying it, but by integrating the ego with the higher True Self. Jean-Paul Sartre, for example, explains that the ego is not a fixed entity in consciousness, but something that is constructed by self-reflection and can 'transcend' the boundaries of ordinary ego identity. In a modern spiritual context, ego transcendence means that the ego is not lost, but the ego is brought to a higher level of consciousness and aligned with the true self or transpersonal consciousness. (Sinaga & Minarti, 2025)

In the spiritual journey of Muslims, Sufism plays an important role as a path to the closeness and presence of Allah SWT. Sufism is not just a practice of external worship, but also demands depth of heart and sincerity in worship. One of the central concepts of Sufism is fana, which literally means 'loss' or 'erasure'. This word signifies a state in which a Sufi experiences the destruction of his ego and negative traits, leaving only the presence of God united in his heart and soul. This concept of fana has a very deep and complex meaning. Fana is not just a momentary emotional experience, but rather a long process that every individual must go through on their spiritual journey. In this context, fana is often understood as the highest stage in the Sufi maqam maqamat , which marks the success in eliminating the ego and worldly desires in order to become fully united with God. Thus, fana becomes a symbol of the union of the human heart with the Creator, achieved through sincere effort and sacrifice. Etymologically, the word fana comes from Arabic meaning 'vanish', 'annihilation', or 'end'. In this sense, fana indicates a condition in which the ego and negative traits in humans disappear, leaving only the presence of God (III, nd)

The term ma' rifat is a Sufism term which indicates the highest position of these four levels. This position is the goal of Sufis and it is at this stage that they believe in miraculous beliefs, which occur in a Sufi who reaches it. According to Haderanie, ma'rifat is, "it comes from the word 'arafa which means to know. It means: "Whoever knows himself, he can truly know his God." This self is full of dependencies, shortcomings, weaknesses, mortals, compared to Allah

subhanahu wa ta'ala who has greatness, power, might and eternity and has all the characteristics of perfection. No human being is able and able to know Him in the true sense except Him. In his statement, Haderanie admits that the above information is the source of the hadith that takes the name 'marifat', but it is not recognized by the scholars, both from the history and Islamic tradition but acknowledged in cassafide (Mu, 2023)

Maslow introduced the peak experience , a brief, intense moment of ecstasy. Assagioli and Wilber later discussed the plateau experience , a stable, sustained state of transpersonal consciousness. It is not simply a brief peak experience, but a stable, profound state of enlightenment an attainment of direct knowledge and union similar to the plateau experience. The mystical experiences (*hal*) of the Sufis are empirical accounts of this transpersonal state of consciousness.

Mindfulness emphasizes awareness, becoming fully aware of what is happening in the present moment by shifting to other experiences, fully accepted without judgment . The concept of mindfulness itself is actually nothing new. It is present in the religious practices of most major religions, but is now popularized by secular circles in the Western world due to its numerous benefits for mental and physical health. In psychology, for example, mindfulness is said to have various benefits, such as reducing stress, improving memory, sharpening focus, strengthening social relationships, and boosting immunity. Mindfulness meditation is often promoted as a method for becoming fully aware of one's feelings and thoughts so that one can ultimately take full control of one's actions, becoming calmer, more peaceful and less reactive. As with dhikr in general, quality prayer requires a high state of awareness called khusyuk. A state of solemnity is a state of mindfulness. Therefore, someone who practices prayer devoutly is simultaneously practicing mindfulness with God as their focus. Various studies have shown that prayer can also cure ADD or ADHD. ADD is a description of a person's mindlessness. Gradually, the condition of ADD sufferers improves, or becomes more mindful. Djamaluddin Ancok explained that there are four major aspects included in the therapeutic effects of prayer practice, including the following: First, the exercise aspect, where prayer movements demonstrate physical activity. Muscle movements during prayer movements lead to relaxation, meditation, autosuggestion, and community gathering. The statement that exercise can reduce mental anxiety is reinforced by Eugene Walker. Second, mediation can be achieved through prayer movements that are devout and calm. Devout prayer can move the heart through readings and verses to be able to pray to God, so it requires focus on the prayer readings. Otherwise, it cannot be called a dialogue with God. Efforts to eliminate mental noise through devotion have a meditation-like effect, overcome anxiety, and stimulate the nervous system to block out feelings of discomfort in the brain (Jurnal & Islam, n.d.)

In Islam, the concept of worship has a broad meaning, all actions aimed at gaining Allah's pleasure are worship, not just prayer. Worship generally includes vertical spiritual aspects, such as the Hajj fasting prayer. Also covers

the social horizontal area and the professional area. However, of all these acts of worship, there is one main act of worship which is also an indicator of the overall value of a person's entire act of worship, this act of worship is prayer. This is stated in various hadiths of the Prophet. The first hadith, from Abu Hurairah Radhiyallahuanhu, is that the Prophet sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam said. "Indeed, the first deed of a servant that will be accounted for is his prayer. If his prayer is good, he is successful and successful, and if his prayer is defective, he is at a great loss." (Narrated by Nasai and Turmudzi) (Jurnal & Islam, nd)

Cleansing liver disease can be done in various ways, one of which is reciting dhikr. Dhikr for Muslims is nothing new, dhikr is a teaching in the Islamic religion that is practiced at all times and in all conditions. Zikr is a basic need or primary need for every human being. Since the soul was first breathed into the human body, there has been an agreement between humans and Allah SWT. where humans themselves believe in the existence of Allah and always remember Him. The word dhikr in the Qur'an is repeated 292 times contained in 264 verses, with various themes addressed by the Qur'an, dhikr aims to strengthen the heart, strengthen faith, and increase piety to Allah. By doing dhikr, people will gain inner and soul peace, because they will remember themselves and feel remembered by Allah. By doing dhikr, they will feel that Allah knows, pays attention to and hears their prayers. People who do dhikr in any situation will certainly avoid all negative behavior and their hearts will be more comfortable, calm, and peaceful. All influences that come into the heart are inseparable from feelings of anxiety, anxiety is the entrance of Satan, and Satan will always breathe anxiety into the human heart. therefore only dhikr is able to close the entrance of Satan, because dhikr is the opposite of all temptations of Satan. Furthermore, dhikr has significant benefits, such as calming the heart, cleansing impurities adhering to it, and healing all heart ailments such as polytheism, envy, jealousy, showing off, self-centeredness, arrogance, and so on. As with the benefits of dhikr mentioned above, dhikr can be used as therapy to cure liver diseases. Therapy here means treatment, and dhikr therapy can be defined as treatment using dhikr as its method. (Dan & Islam, 2020)

CONCLUSION
This article has shown that the claims of "novelty" of Transpersonal Psychology need to be reexamined. Sufism, with its comprehensive map of consciousness, concepts of *fana'* and *ma'rifat* , and methodology *of dhikr* and *muraqabah* , had functioned as a living transpersonal psychology centuries before it was named that way. The limitations of the Freudian and Behaviorist paradigms in reaching the spiritual dimension of humans have been elegantly answered by this Islamic mystical tradition. By looking at Sufism as its roots, we not only enrich Transpersonal Psychology, but also restore a very valuable spiritual intellectual treasure to the global conversation about the highest potential and nature of human consciousness.

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