Soul Restoration in Islamic Tradition
(Ibn Tufail’s Perspective of Tazkiyya an-Nafs Model)

Jarman Arroisi, Erva Dewi Arqomi Puspita
University of Darussalam Gontor Ponorogo, Indonesia
ervadewiap@unida.gontor.ac.id

Abstract

The modern era has had both positive and negative impacts on the progress of human civilization. The positive impact can be seen from the increasing advances in technology and science that help human life. Meanwhile, one of the negative impacts that emerged from the modern era is the spread of mental health problems in society. Not a few in modern society there are several symptoms and mental health problems that make it difficult for someone to find happiness. This article aims to explain efforts to cleanse the soul in Islamic tradition such as the pattern of cleansing the soul by Ibn Tufail. By using a descriptive critical analysis method with this type of literature research, this research found several important points. First, tazkiyya al-nafs is an important effort that must be made by someone to get a sense of happiness. Second, one of the important strategies and ways to get happiness according to Ibn Tufail is to attain knowledge of God. Third, if someone has come to the knowledge of God, then he will come to Ma’rifatullah. The attainment of this ma’rifatullah stage can only be achieved by someone if that person has cleansed his soul. With tazkiyya al-nafs that is done consistently one will come to what is called musyahadatullah or ma’rifah billah.

Keywords
Soul Restoration, Islamic Tradition, Tazkiyya al-Nafs


Introduction

In this modern era, humans have undergone many changes and achieved extraordinary levels of progress in the fields of science and technology\(^1\), the field of life, and people’s behaviour.\(^2\) Modern society will indirectly adhere to and follow the capitalist lifestyle,\(^3\) materialist, individualist, hedonist, and abandon existing religious and spiritual values.\(^4\) This is what has resulted in social changes.

Development progress and the social changes that result have caused socio-psychological symptoms; dislocation, disorientation and relative deprivation of certain social groups.\(^5\) Life is increasingly competitive and competitiveness is getting tougher as a result of many people who experience stress and frustration.\(^6\) Furthermore, the impact also resulted in moral deviation in modern human life.\(^7\) It is clear that the profound influence of this spiritual vacuum has created mental health problems in modern society.

The mental health problems are caused by changes in social life, which modern society has begun to yearn for spiritual elements that were previously negated. This is because, in human life, two needs must be fulfilled, namely, an essential soul, and an external body.\(^8\) These external aims and favours are false because they come from outside; so that the person who has this external favour feels deprived of his future, feels solitude, restlessness, worry and emptiness of the soul amid the rushing pace of life.\(^9\) This condition raises various criticisms and attempts to find a new paradigm which is expected to bring awareness to live meaningfully.\(^10\) Then various attempts emerged to bring back the spiritual elements in modern society.

\(^1\) Syamsun Ni’am, *Tasawuf Studies* (Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media, 2014), 204.
\(^7\) The moral impact caused by the modern lifestyle above has an impact on many aspects of life, be it education, economy and social media, see the negative impact of moral education in Bahru Rozi, “Akhlak Tasawuf Sebagai Alternatif dalam Memecahkan Problemakta Masyarakat Modern,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 27, no. 2 (2017); Alfaiz Faiz et al., “Pendekatan Tazkiyatun an-Nafs Untuk Membantu Mengurangi Emosi Negatif Klien,” *Counsellia: Jurnal Bimbingan dan Konseling* 9, no. 1 (2019): 65.
The modern psychology developed by the West has not been able to answer the problem of spiritual emptiness as mentioned above. History tells us that a large part of modern psychology, indeed, separates God from the subjective experience of humans. Western psychology views the subjective-religious experience as unscientific.¹³ Spirituality as the basic experience of humanity concerning things such as God, the height of nature, purpose, love and ideals, obviously failed to be broken down by enlightened rationalism which has been echoed successfully playing a role in the development of science and technology (physical science), but failed to solve psychological problems.¹² This failure prompted several parties to discuss spiritual issues and find solutions.

Psychologists, scientists and scholars have carried out a lot of research and discussion related to the soul. Tazkiyya al-Nafs is one of the methods used to purify the soul.¹³ The study of Tazkiyya al-Nafs is very important to discuss, as an answer to the spiritual decline in this modern world. It is proven by the number of articles or research on this theme. Such as the research conducted by Belinda Dwijayanti with the title “Tazkiyatun Nafs in Classical and Modern Islamic Tradition”.¹⁴ Other study had been conducted by Nik Siti Khadijah with the title “Penyucian Jiwa melalui Pendekatan Muhasabah Dalam Penghayatan Shalat” in journal Fikiran Masyarakat.¹⁵ In this study, it is known that the muhasabah approach has three focused matters, namely, form, method and field in purifying the soul. Another research was conducted by Masyhuri under the title “Prinsip-Prinsip Tazkiyah an-Nafs Dalam Islam dan Hubungannya dengan Kesehatan mental”.¹⁶ Next is the research conducted by Alfaiz, et al. With the title “Pendekatan Tazkiyatun an-Nafs Untuk Membantu Mengurangi Emosi Negatif Klien”.¹⁷ However, these studies have not specifically discussed the concept of tazkiyya al-nafs, nor from several related figures in that field.

Soul restoration is an effort of tazkiyatun an-nafs that has been carried out by previous Islamic scholars. Like the restoration of the soul carried out by al-Ghazali, namely calling on humans to return to their nature, namely tauhid. Because knowing God is the essence of true happiness.¹⁸ The cleansing of the soul must be done as an effort to control oneself to avoid the wrath of Allah who is nothing but a barrier to happiness.¹⁹ Purification of the soul is one of the ways to achieve happiness.

The essence of happiness is happiness which refers back to the value of spirituality and not only in the material aspect.²⁰ The highest happiness in Islam is knowing the source of all truth itself or what is called ma’rifatullah. Knowledge of God was made by al-Ghazali as the peak of the highest happiness.²¹ This opinion is similar to that expressed by Ibn Tufail that there is only one way

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¹³This is related to their epistemological perspective which considers that science is only logical, rational, empirical. See Septi Gumiandari, “Dimensi Spiritual Dalam Psikologi Modern (Psikologi Transpersonal Sebagai Pola Baru Psikologi Spiritual), Conference Proceedings Annual International Conference on Islamic Studies (Surabaya: AICIS XII, 2013), 1033–1052, http://eprints.uinsby.ac.id/id/eprint/269.

¹²Although the discussion of aspects of spirituality has appeared in previous Western psychology schools, such as the discussion presented by William James, Carl Jung and Otto Rank, according to Miller, past psychologists tend to forget the spiritual dimension reached by humans. See Abdul Muhaya, “Konsep Psikologi Transpersonal Menurut Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali,” Jurnal At-Taqaddum 9, no. 2 (2017); Khadijah K, “Titik Temu Transpersonal Psychology dan Tasawuf,” Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam 4, no. 2 (2015): 383.


¹⁷Alfaiz Faiz et al., “Pendekatan Tazkiyatunan-Nafs Untuk Membantu Mengurangi Emosi Negatif Klien.”


²¹HAMKA, Perkembangan dan Pemurnian Tasawuf (Jakarta: Republika, 2016), 177–178.
to achieve happiness in life and beyond, namely the presence of an energy that always leads him to God. According to Ibn Tufail, essential happiness is when a person lies in his ability to witness God continuously. Thus, this study tries to examine a model of tazkiyya al-nafs in the view of Ibn Tufail in his Hayy bin Yaqdzan. Ibn Tufail is well known as a Muslim figure who discusses the soul. In his book, there is a description of achieving happiness through the tazkiyya al-nafs. So that the book of Hayy bin Yaqdzan becomes the main reference in this research.

**Biography of Ibn Thufail**

Ibn Tufail’s full name is Abu Bakar Muhammad Ibn Abdul Malik Ibn Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Tufail al-Qaysi al-Andalusi. He has the titles al-Andalusi and al-Qurthubi. In the West, Ibn Tufail was known as Abubacer. Ibn Tufail was born in the city of Wadi Ash (Guadix) in 508 H / 1110 AD, a fertile city near Granada. Ibn Tufail served as a minister. And it was at this time that he introduced Ibn Rushd. At that time Ibn Tufail asked Ibn Rushd to explain Aristotle’s books. Many have translated their works into various languages. Apart from exact knowledge, Ibn Tufail also wrote about the science of Sufism, entitled Qashaid Sufiah.

Should to note, he also provided scientific contributions in the field of psychology in which in the development of modern scientific disciplines could be included in psychology. However, of his many works, only one has reached us at this time, namely Hayy bin Yaqdzan, who is the main reference in this research. Ibn Thufail became one of the important figures who played a role in the advancement of European civilization. His greatest contribution in the world of psychology is his story about Hayy bin Yaqdzan which serves as one of the foundations for developmental psychology.

**Understanding of the Soul and Tazkiyatun al-Nafs**

Many terms related to mental issues, namely spirit, soul, nafs, reason and so on. The word soul comes from the Arabic language nafs which can be literally translated as self. There are also those who define the nafs as life, spirit, a lust and ghadhab, personality, and human psychophysical substance. From Greek psyche or pneuma, Latin as anima, Sanskrit as jiva, and English as soul, this term refers to the controlling agent, regulatory centre, or vital principle of man. Soul is the rational, emotional, and the volitional faculties in man, conceived of as forming an entity distinct from, and often existing independently of, his body. It is clear here that the role of the soul as the formation of different entities and often exists independently of the body.

In terms of the word soul, it can refer to several views of Muslim scholars and philosophers. Muslim philosophers generally agree in defining that the soul is the initial perfection for the physical which is natural, mechanistic and has an energetic life. The soul in man refers to the immaterial substance which always remains amid...
the transformations of life, which produces and
supports psychic activities, and which animates
the organism. As what William C. Chittik said
in his book: “Soul” is the generic name for what
shows itself when we recognize life and awareness.
When we recognize these qualities in things, we
simultaneously recognize them in ourselves. So
it is known that the term of soul is a common name
as a tool for recognizing consciousness and life
in humans. Soul consciousness is a higher level
of consciousness than physical consciousness.
This is because mental consciousness can receive more information at once than physical
consciousness, which has limited capabilities.
However, this mental consciousness is also only
an intermediate awareness between physical
consciousness and true consciousness, namely
spiritual consciousness.

Purification of the soul in Arabic tazkiyya
al-nafs, consists of two different words, namely
tazkiyya and al-nafs. Etymologically, tazkiyya
means purification and growth. Whereas in term
it is Zakatu al-nafs which means purification of
the soul from all diseases and defects, realizing
various states in it, and making asma’ and sihat as
moral. Ultimately tazkiyya is tatlahuru, tahaqquq
and takhalluq. So that it affects behaviour in
interacting with Allah and creatures, and in
controlling the limbs according to Allah’s orders.
The purpose of tazkiyya al nafs is to cleanse the
soul and heart of all acts of shirk, and associate
things with Allah SWT. Improve the form of moral
behaviour and perfect ‘ubudiyyah and rububiyyah to
Allah SWT. More specifically discussed in the
problem of psychology in terms of religion.

34The New International Webster’s Comprehensive Dictionary
(India: Oneeworld Publications, 2007), 121.
36Raja Oloan Tumanggor and Carolus Suharyanto, Pengantar
Filsafat Untuk Psikologi (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2018), 214.
37Ibn Sab’in discusses the soul in the way of
the philosophers. He divides the soul into five
categories. Namely nafs nabati, nafs hayawani,
nafs nathiqoh, nafs hukmiah, nafs nabawiyyah.
With this division, the condition of the human
soul is very dependent on the quality of knowledge
obtained through the instrument of reason (al-nafs
alnatiqah), and assisted by Allah’s help. In
the chemistry of the prayer mat al-Ghazali shows

38Jiwa Rasional dan Praktis Sebagai Sarana
amaliyah
39Fourth, spiritual/spiritual experiences, namely experiences
that cover themes; the emergence of automatic
movement, self-purification and experience
healing experiences. Second, socio-psychological
experiences, which cover the theme; transitions,
loss of self-reliance, experiences that are difficult
to express, experiences related to daily life
problems and experiences related to emotional
situations. Third, the psychological experience,
which includes the theme of future-reaching
experiences, a distraction from spirits and
experiences related to altered consciousness states
of (ASC). Fourth, spiritual/spiritual experiences,
which include the theme of self-purification,
the discovery of truth, a new understanding of
religious teachings, intimacy and closeness to
Allah.

The science of religious psychology as a
branch of psychology which focuses on its
investigation of religious awareness (religious
consciousness) which is more concerned with
the issue of amaliyah which is born and religious
experiences which focus on religious feelings that
arise from amaliyah. This religious experience
is felt more by the Sufis who always prescribe
all religious practices into their sacred inner
feelings. Furthermore, Prof. Subandi classified
religious experiences into four groups: First,
physiological experiences, namely experiences
that cover themes; the emergence of automatic
movement, self-purification and experience
healing experiences. Second, socio-psychological
experiences, which cover the theme; transitions,
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38Syamsun Ni’am, Tasawuf Studies, 99.
39M.A. Subandi, Psikologi Agama dan Kesehatan Mental
40Ali Ahmad Yenuri, “Jiwa Rasional dan Praktis Sebagai Sarana
Mencapai Kebahagiaan,” Miyah: Jurnal Studi Islam 12, no. 1
(2017): 112.
4 kinds of knowledge that must be known to purify the heart. Knowledge of Self, Knowledge of God, Knowledge of the Reality of Nature, Knowledge of the reality of the Day of Judgment. Allâh’s help is very important because in reality many people are smart and able to understand everything taught by Allâh and His Messenger but do not get help (taufiq) from Allâh, so their souls are still not good and their knowledge does not contribute positively in the form of control power. Against his soul so that he tends to be unkind and immoral.

As long as the soul remains indifferent and forgets Allâh, it cannot know its nature and cannot properly be called an intellect. All human souls are centres of knowledge but acquire knowledge at different levels. This is due to the weakening effect of manifestation, for the beginning, all human souls were capable of receiving all kinds of knowledge. But sometimes, because the soul has been afflicted with the diseases of this world, it is prevented from understanding the true meaning of things.

It must be admitted, the human soul is often sick, it will not be perfectly healthy without travelling to Allâh. For people who are close to their God, their personality seems calm and their behaviour is praiseworthy. According to al-Ghazali, the soul has a practical power which functions to move and control humans in their actions. Besides, the nafs also has a theoretical power which functions to capture immaterial knowledge. The practical and theoretical power are interrelated. If practical power succeeds in carrying out its duties properly, then practical power can focus attention on immaterial things and get closer to God and the level of man is also getting closer to perfection by carrying out worship under God’s commands.

Tazkiyya al-Nafs in the Book of Hayy Bin Yaqdzan

One thing that Ibn Tufail wants to convey through his book, is that in addition to the diversity of objects, there is a unity and there is always something, namely a transcendent soul. He tries to show that religion and philosophy are derived from the same truth. Ibn Tufail’s emphasis on inner radiance in sharing these elements is akin to narrative Avicennan’s, which shows the ultimate goal of true philosophy to become illuminating knowledge. Ibn Thufail’s conception of the soul is in line with that stated by Al-Farabi, namely that there are three categories of souls. First, the soul of fadhilah, which is eternal in happiness because of knowing God and continues to direct attention and reflection to Him. Second, the soul of Fasiqah, which is a soul that is eternal in adversity and its place in hell. Third, the soul of Jahiliyyah, namely the who perished because they never knew Allâh at all. With this conception of the soul the meaning of life for Ibn Tufail is to have a purpose in life. Where the purpose of his life is to know the creator.

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4Noor Shakirah Mat Akhir, Al-Ghazali and His Theory of the Soul (Malaysia: Universiti Sains Malaysia Press, 2008), 199.
4Noor Shakirah Mat Akhir, Al-Ghazali and His Theory of the Soul, 197.
4Afrizal M, “Pemikiran Para Filosofo Muslim Tentang Jiwa,” 16.
4Wahyu Murtiningsih, Para Filsuf dari Plato Sampai Ibnu Bajjah, 255.
Intuition is used by Hayy as a means of gaining knowledge. Performed through deep reflection and high spiritual cultivation. So Hayy believes in the existence of a soul, which in Ibn Thufail’s thought is seen by the soul as one of the central points because through his soul man can know what is obligatory to exist God. Ibn Tufail has three methods based on intuition: the method of discovery (al-ikhtiyasiyaf), which is when Hayy knows the secrets behind the universe. Second, the method of reflection, which is the natural likeness of the immaterial which is based on the power of the human soul to be able to use the essence of all the wisdom contained therein, namely the highest morals in order to achieve happiness. Third, the likeness method which is the highest achievement, namely seeing God’s essence to do total ecstasy. To hone his intuitive abilities he did a spiritual exercise called tazkiyya al-nafs.

The highest peak to be achieved in Ibn Thufail’s tazkiyya al-nafs is the process of musyahadah. In the past, he thought that his happiness and fortune from all suffering was through the existing Musyahadah (Witnessing) al-Wajib. Musyahadah which is carried out continuously. Continuous and uninterrupted. Without turning away for a moment. Musyahadah is defined by at-Thusi as the presence of the heart, that is, when the heart is present in God’s knowledge, then that knowledge is categorized as intuition. Thus a person meets his Lord which is the highest happiness according to Ibn Thufail.

In his book Ibn Thufail, Hayy ibn Yaqdzan performs the stages of spiritual cultivation known as the three stages of soul purification (tazkiyya al-nafs) through the likeness of the cycle of natural movements. First, likeness to animal behaviour. Second, the likeness to the behaviour of celestial bodies which symbolizes high and praiseworthy characteristics and has a regular cycle. Third, the likeness to the attributes of God. The researcher will describe these steps further.

The first likeness must be carried out carefully. Because according to him, this likeness would turn itself away from Him. Even this likeness would prevent him from carrying out musyahadah with Him. In carrying out this first likeness Hayy adjusts his diet in such a way that it does not exceed the limit of his needs. It regulates the amount of food you can eat just to get rid of hunger. No more than that. This is similar to the tazkiyya al-nafs process according to Sa’id Hawwa and al-Ghazali, which includes fasting in the third part of the tazkiyya al-nafs. Al-Ghazali added the importance of selecting foods that enter the body. It should be noted that the food which comes in should be halal and good. Fasting is necessary to rid the body of the bad effects of excess food consumption.

Hayy did not fast as most Sufis do. However, he adjusted his diet so that his eating activities did not interfere with his prayer process. Some of these foods are a source of happiness because as a result of the obligatory actualization of al-Maujud. The process carried out by way of killing animals away from the animal, then he was satisfied with eating the fruits that ripen and plants and only in urgent situations he eating animal

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This step is similar to the method used by Suhrawardi in attaining knowledge, namely by stopping eating meat in preparation receiving the light of God. He carefully arranges his food so as not to be deceived by his passions.

The description of Hayy’s story in Ibn Thufail’s work indicates a picture of the life of the human soul which is still clean and empty. This is similar to Jacques Lacan who identified the initial phase of the growth of human desire. According to him, every human being is born empty. They have no awareness of their identity and differences with others. Besides, Hayy bin Yaqdzan experienced almost the same isolation as 'uzlah. Nicolay Berdiat of argues that self-isolation is a means of seeking knowledge. Knowledge will encourage us to rise from the isolation we rely on ourselves, and move us to another place and another age that is the divine realm. We need isolation when we want to know something true. Because sometimes we have to get out of the crowd and think clearly.

For the second group of traits, Hayy cleaned himself from unclean and dirt. He washed his body using water. He cleaned his nails and teeth. He rubbed his body. His body was scented with fragrant herbs, as well as several clumps of plants containing perfumed oils. He washes his clothes and wears clean and nice clothes. This is similar prioritizes the cleanliness of the body from dirt and uncleanness. They claim that the perfection of prayer should start from being purified again, such as cleaning the limbs and place of prayer.

Even though in the story Hayy has not prayed yet, he has started and realized the importance of body hygiene.

Finally, a higher likeness by imitating the characteristics of al-wajib al-wujud. This third type of practice will be able to lead to eternal happiness as the ultimate goal of moral principles. Furthermore, Ibn Tufail taught that the soul should be connected (ittiṣal) or musyahadah continuously from life in the world to eternal life. Efforts in this direction can be contemplative and mortal-mysticism. Humans can relate and witness God not only with their intellect but also through their spirituality.

Conclusion

The concept of tazkiyatun nafs according to Ibn Tufail refers back to the definition of happiness. The highest level of happiness for him is when a person can see his Lord. There is a clear difference in definition between that put forward by Ibn Tufail and the West. This difference in definition also has a big share in one’s spiritual management. The definition of happiness proclaimed by the West is very materialistic and hedonistic, in contrast to Ibn Thufail’s very holistic and spiritual definition.

In improving spiritual health, it could take from the concept of tazkiyya al-nafs in the story of Hayy bin Yaqdzan. In this story, there are three stages of the likeness process. First, animal likeness in general. In this process, humans must fulfill their physical needs but do not exceed the limits of reasonableness. Because if it is too much, it will thwart the musyahadah process that you want to do. This step is done by adjusting a diet such as fasting and avoiding eating the meat.

Second, the process of likening celestial bodies. At this stage, humans required to clean the body and the equipment that accompanies it so that humans are in a pure state. This step is done by bathing or take ablution by holy water.

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65 Ulpiyana, Ris’an Rusli and Murtiningsih, “Pemikiran Ibn Tufail Tentang Pengetahuan Metafisika dalam Kisah Hayy Ibn Yaqdzan,” 125.
66 Thufail, Haway Bin Yaqdzan, 235.
67 Nik Siti Khadijah Nik Salleh and Hasanah Abd Kafidz, “Penyucian Jiwa Melalui Pendekatan Muhasabah Dalam Penghayatan Shalat,” 130.
68 Hasyimsyah Nasution, Filsafat Islam (Jakarta: Gaya Media Pratama, 1998), 112.
It is done for preparation of meeting with the Most Holy.

Third, the final stage is carried out with the likeness of Wajib al-Wujud. In this likeness, he will perform musyahadah in full. He will not turn to anything other than the Wajib al-Wujud. This stage is what happiness for Ibn Tufail and in accordance by the Islamic tradition brought by the previous scholars.

With these three processes, after fulfilling several practices in prayer. A person will arrive at the highest degree of happiness by seeing his Lord. So that he doesn’t need anything more than Him.

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