

A Comparative Analysis of Selected Western Personality Theories and Ali Ahmad Madkur's Islamic Perspective on Human Nature

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the concept of human nature from the perspectives of Western and Islamic psychology and to explore its relevance to contemporary personality theory. The research employs a descriptive qualitative method with a library research approach, using *Manahij At-Tarbiyah Fii At-Tashawwur Al-Islamiy* by Ali Ahmad Madkur as the primary source, along with supporting literature from Western and Islamic psychology. The findings reveal that Western psychology, through psychoanalytic, humanistic, and behavioristic approaches, views humans as rational and biological beings whose behavior is shaped by drives, experiences, and environmental factors. In contrast, Islamic psychology perceives humans as spiritual beings composed of the soul (*an-nafs*), intellect (*al-'aql*), and heart (*al-qalb*), which interact under divine guidance. The discussion indicates that Western psychology emphasizes rational, biological, and social aspects, while Islamic psychology integrates spiritual, moral, and rational dimensions. Although both aim to understand human wholeness, they differ in epistemological foundations and moral orientations. Ali Ahmad Madkur's thought offers an integrative paradigm that unites spirituality, intellect, and morality as the foundation for understanding human personality comprehensively. Thus, his perspective makes a significant contribution to modern psychology by integrating Islamic values with psychological science, providing a holistic understanding of the human being as a spiritual, rational, and moral entity.

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Introduction

Understanding the nature of human beings is a fundamental issue in philosophy, psychology, and Islamic education (Muslim, 2023; Nurachadijat et al., 2023; Pasinringi et al., 2023). Various approaches attempt to explain how humans are perceived in terms of their physical,

spiritual, and personal dimensions. In the context of modern science, Western psychology emphasizes the empirical and rational aspects of humans as psychological beings who develop through experience, environment, and biological factors. In contrast, Islam views humans not merely as psycho-physical entities but also as spiritual beings endowed with a pure soul (*rūḥ*) and an innate disposition (*fiṭrah*) to recognize their Creator (Haryanto, 2022). The problem arises when the secular Western paradigm dominates psychological studies in academic discourse, while the Islamic paradigm is often considered less scientific because it is grounded in divine revelation. This leads to a fundamental question: how do Islamic and Western psychological approaches understand the nature of human beings particularly in relation to the soul and personality and what is the relevance of the concepts found in *Manāḥij At-Tarbiyah fī At-Taṣawwur Al-Islāmī* by Ali Ahmad Madkur to contemporary psychological discourse?

A number of previous studies have examined the relationship between Islamic and Western psychology, although with varying focuses. First, Al-Attas (2015) emphasized that Western science tends to separate the spiritual and material dimensions of human existence, whereas Islam integrates both through the concept of *insān kāmil* a complete and balanced human being. Second, Al-Qaradawi (2017) highlighted that Islamic education must cultivate personality through *tazkiyatun nafs*, the purification of the soul, which serves as the core of spiritual character formation (Abdillah et al., 2017; Al-Qaradawi, 2017). Third, Badri (2018) demonstrated that Islamic psychology is rooted in *tawḥīd* as its epistemological foundation, in contrast to Western psychology, which is based on empiricism and humanism (Badri, 2018). Fourth, Nafi et al. comparative study of the personality theories of Freud, Jung, and the Islamic concept of *nafs* revealed that the human psychic structure in Islam is transcendental, while Western perspectives tend to be reductionist (Hanna-e-Kalbi & Basharat, 2020; Nafi et al., 2022). Fifth, Nasr (1933) found that Islamic spirituality offers a balance to the existential crisis experienced by modern humans as a result of a mechanistic scientific worldview (Nasr, 1933).

From these studies, it is evident that previous research has explored the paradigmatic and epistemological differences between Islamic and Western psychology (Al Farabi et al., 2023). However, most of these studies remain conceptual and have not deeply examined how classical Islamic texts particularly *Manāḥij At-Tarbiyah fī At-Taṣawwur Al-Islāmī* formulate the concepts of the soul (*an-nafs*), intellect (*al-'aql*), and heart (*al-qalb*) in shaping human personality. Few studies have systematically analyzed Ali Ahmad Madkur's work as a conceptual source for bridging the Islamic and Western paradigms in understanding human nature. In fact, this text not only discusses educational and moral dimensions but also presents a philosophical framework for the soul and its development within the paradigm of *tawḥīd*. Therefore, there remains a research gap in linking classical spiritual concepts with modern personality theories oriented toward holistic human development.

The novelty of this study lies in its qualitative analytical approach to *Manāḥij At-Tarbiyah fī At-Taṣawwur Al-Islāmī*, positioning the work as an epistemological source in the dialogue between Islamic and Western psychology. This research does not merely compare the two paradigms dichotomously but seeks to identify conceptual points of convergence regarding the nature of humanity that can bridge the spiritual and empirical dimensions. Through an analysis of classical Islamic literature and Western personality theories, the study aims to construct an integrative model of understanding the human soul and personality one that is rooted in divine revelation yet open to modern scientific inquiry.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of Islamic psychology by enriching the integrative concept of the human being, transcending the dichotomy between science and religion. Practically, the findings provide a foundation for developing a more comprehensive curriculum in Islamic character education and counseling, where the cultivation of the soul and personality is oriented not only toward cognitive development but also spiritual and moral formation (Hermawan et al., 2025; Robaeah et al., 2023, 2024). Moreover, this study has the potential to inspire the emergence of a new scientific paradigm that views humans as multidimensional beings embodying physical, intellectual, and spiritual unity thus offering

relevance in addressing the challenges of modernity that often neglect the spiritual dimension of human existence.

The research gap in this study lies not only in the limited textual exploration of Ali Ahmad Madkur's work, but also in the insufficient critical engagement with international debates in the psychology of religion and contemporary personality theory. In global discourse, modern psychology of religion often oscillates between two dominant poles: an empirical-positivist approach that examines religiosity as a psychological variable, and a phenomenological-existential approach that emphasizes meaning and individual spiritual experience. However, both trends generally operate within a secular epistemological framework that separates revelation from the construction of personality theory.

At the same time, contemporary personality theories whether in positive psychology, neuropsychology, or integrative personality models acknowledge the importance of meaning, values, and spirituality, yet they have not provided a coherent theological foundation concerning the structure of the soul. Therefore, a comparative examination of Islamic and Western psychological paradigms becomes particularly urgent today, especially amid a global crisis of meaning, the rising prevalence of mental health disorders, and the growing need for a more holistic and morally oriented model of personality. This study seeks to address this gap by offering a critical and dialogical analysis that positions the concepts of *an-nafs*, *al-'aql*, and *al-qalb* as relevant conceptual contributions to the global scientific discourse on human nature and personality formation.

Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, which seeks to understand phenomena in depth through detailed description and interpretation of the meanings embedded in the data. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on conceptual and philosophical analyses of human nature, the soul, and personality as presented in both Islamic and Western sources. The descriptive qualitative method allows the researcher to interpret texts contextually and thematically, thereby revealing the conceptual values contained within them (Moleong, 2019).

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary materials. The primary data were derived from the main work under examination, *Manāhij At-Tarbiyah fī At-Taṣawwur Al-Islāmī* by Ali Ahmad Madkur, which explicitly discusses the concepts of the soul (*an-nafs*), intellect (*al-'aql*), and heart (*al-qalb*) as the foundation for human personality formation from an Islamic perspective. Meanwhile, the secondary data were obtained from supporting literature such as books, journal articles, and previous studies relevant to Islamic and Western psychology. These include the works of key figures such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Abraham Maslow from the Western perspective, as well as Malik Badri, Al-Attas, and Al-Ghazali from the Islamic perspective (Al-Attas, 2015; Ansor & Zaitun, 2021; Badri, 2018; Hamdiah, 2015).

The data collection technique used is library research, which involves tracing, reading, and examining various relevant sources related to the research focus. Data collection was carried out systematically through the following steps: (1) identifying and selecting primary and supporting literature, (2) recording relevant quotations, ideas, and theories related to the concepts of the soul and personality, and (3) organizing the data according to specific themes such as human nature, the structure of the soul, and personality formation (Sugiyono, 2020). This approach allows the researcher to explore the philosophical and psychological meanings embedded in the texts and to compare them with modern psychological theories.

The data analysis technique applied is content analysis using a thematic model, which involves examining and interpreting the meanings contained in both primary and secondary texts. The analysis was conducted through three stages: (1) data reduction, by selecting information that is significant and relevant to the focus of the study; (2) data presentation, by grouping concepts into thematic categories such as soul, personality, and human nature; and (3) conclusion drawing,

by identifying conceptual relationships between Islamic and Western psychology in understanding human beings holistically (Miles et al., 2014). Through this process, the study aims to provide a deep and comprehensive understanding of Ali Ahmad Madkur's contribution to the development of personality theory from an Islamic perspective.

Result and Discussion

Before examining the respective concepts of human nature in Western and Islamic psychology, it is essential to frame this discussion within a deeper critical comparison that highlights their underlying philosophical tensions. One of the most significant conceptual contrasts concerns the issue of determinism versus moral agency. Many Western psychological theories particularly psychoanalysis and behaviorism tend to interpret human behavior as determined by unconscious drives, biological impulses, or environmental conditioning. In such frameworks, human freedom is often constrained by causal mechanisms beyond conscious control. In contrast, Islamic psychology affirms that although humans are influenced by instincts and external factors, they ultimately possess moral agency grounded in accountability before God. This fundamental difference shapes not only how personality is defined but also how responsibility, ethics, and transformation are understood within each paradigm.

The Concept of Human Nature in Western Psychology Based on Its Major Theories

Western psychology emerged as a scientific effort to understand human beings through empirical, rational, and experimental methods. This approach developed from an anthropocentric and secular worldview that places humans at the center of reality, yet detached from spiritual dimensions. In this perspective, the essence of humanity is understood as biological, psychological, and social beings whose behaviors can be observed, predicted, and controlled according to scientific laws. Western psychology tends to emphasize causal explanations rather than metaphysical or transcendental interpretations. Consequently, the human psyche is reduced to measurable mental functions and behaviors that can be examined through observation and experimentation.

One of the foundational theories shaping Western conceptions of human nature is psychoanalysis, introduced by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). Freud viewed humans as driven by instinctual forces, primarily biological and sexual instincts (*libido*). In Freud's model of personality, the psyche is structured into three main components: the *id*, the *ego*, and the *superego*. The *id* represents primitive and instinctive drives; the *ego* acts as the rational mediator; while the *superego* functions as the moral regulator formed through the internalization of social norms. According to Freud, human nature is characterized by internal conflict between unconscious drives and the demands of reality. The psyche is governed by the tension between biological needs and social values. Within this framework, humans are not spiritual beings but rather psychological systems bound by biological determinism and past experiences.

In contrast, Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) expanded the understanding of human nature through analytical psychology, particularly his concepts of the *collective unconscious* and *archetypes*. Jung argued that beyond the personal unconscious, humans possess a collective unconscious containing universal symbols and archetypes inherited across generations. For Jung, human beings are symbolic creatures who seek meaning and balance between the conscious and unconscious realms. The process of *individuation*, or self-realization, represents the path toward wholeness and the true essence of humanity. Thus, Jung shifted Freud's reductionist view toward a more spiritual and philosophical understanding, though he remained within the bounds of scientific psychology.

Another major perspective comes from behaviorism, developed by John B. Watson and B. F. Skinner. They rejected the notion of the "soul" as a metaphysical entity, asserting that only observable behavior should be the subject of psychology. For Skinner, human nature can be explained through the principles of *stimulus-response* and *reinforcement*. Personality is formed through conditioning and environmental reinforcement. Within this view, humans are not seen as

free agents but as products of environmental influences and learning experiences. Behaviorism asserts that human behavior can be modified and controlled through environmental manipulation without involving consciousness or spirituality.

As a reaction to the deterministic nature of psychoanalysis and behaviorism, humanistic psychology emerged, pioneered by Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) and Carl Rogers (1902-1987). Humanism asserts that human beings possess an innate potential for growth and self-actualization. Maslow developed a hierarchy of needs from physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, to self-actualization as the pinnacle of human development. He believed that human beings are inherently good, free, and motivated to become the best version of themselves. Rogers emphasized the concept of *self* and the importance of subjective experience in personality formation. According to him, humans have a natural tendency toward self-actualization, which develops optimally in an environment of *unconditional positive regard*. Humanistic psychology thus introduced optimism and existential dimensions into understanding human beings, while still remaining within psychological not spiritual boundaries.

Later, Western psychology evolved toward cognitive and existential approaches, emphasizing humans as thinking and meaning-seeking beings. Viktor Frankl, the founder of existential psychology, asserted that the essence of humanity lies in the capacity to find meaning in life, even amid suffering. His theory of *Logotherapy* rejects the idea that humans are merely driven by biological instincts, arguing instead that the *will to meaning* is the primary motivational force. Meanwhile, cognitive psychology, developed by Jean Piaget and Aaron Beck, highlights that human behavior results from thought processes and perceptions of reality. In this context, humans are rational beings capable of interpreting, processing, and transforming information.

From these major theories, it can be concluded that Western psychology understands human nature through layered perspectives: biological (Freud), social-environmental (Skinner), rational-cognitive (Piaget), and existential (Frankl). However, most of these views are anthropocentric and secular, explaining humans without incorporating the spiritual or divine dimension. Even theories that touch upon spirituality, such as those of Jung and Frankl, remain grounded in humanistic philosophy rather than theology. Therefore, Western psychology provides a comprehensive understanding of human personality dynamics from empirical and philosophical standpoints but does not reach the transcendental dimension emphasized in Islamic psychology.

Nevertheless, Western psychology has significantly contributed to the scientific understanding of human structure and dynamics. Freud revealed the importance of the unconscious; Jung introduced symbolic spirituality; Skinner emphasized environmental influence; Maslow and Rogers explored human potential for self-actualization; and Frankl highlighted the search for meaning. Collectively, these perspectives portray humans as multidimensional beings biological, psychological, social, and existential who continually evolve within life's contexts. Yet, the fundamental difference from Islamic psychology lies in their value orientation: while Western psychology is grounded in rationalism and empiricism, Islamic psychology is rooted in divine revelation and the concept of *fitrah* human beings as spiritual creatures who submit to their Creator.

In conclusion, Western psychology views human nature through diverse theoretical lenses emphasizing empirical and humanistic aspects. However, it has yet to fully address the deepest essence of humanity encompassing the spirit and *fitrah*. This gap provides a critical point and an opportunity for dialogue between Western and Islamic psychology to construct an integrative understanding of the complete human being.

The Concept of Human Nature in Islamic Psychology Based on the Book *Manāhij al-Tarbiyah fī al-Taṣawwur al-Islāmī*

In the perspective of Islamic psychology, the nature of human beings is comprehensively understood as a creation of Allah composed of interrelated physical and spiritual dimensions. This understanding is rooted in the principle of *tawḥīd*, which emphasizes that humans have both a vertical relationship with God and a horizontal relationship with fellow human beings. In *Manāhij*

al-Tarbiyah fī al-Taṣawwur al-Islāmī, Ali Ahmad Madkur explains that the concept of humanity cannot be separated from the purpose of creation: to serve as *‘abd Allāh* (servant of Allah) and *khalīfah fī al-arḍ* (vicegerent on earth). Therefore, humans are viewed as beings with the potential for spiritual, moral, and intellectual development, as long as they are guided by the values of divine revelation.

Madkur emphasizes that, in Islamic thought, the human being is not merely a biological or psychological entity but a creature endowed with *fiṭrah* (innate disposition), *rūh* (spirit), *‘aql* (intellect), and *qalb* (heart). These four elements form an integral structure of human personality. *Fiṭrah* represents the inherent tendency to recognize and worship Allah, as stated in the Qur’an (Ar-Rūm [30]: 30): “The fitrah of Allah upon which He has created all people.” It forms the foundation of the human inclination toward truth and goodness. The *rūh* is viewed as the divine essence that grants life and spiritual consciousness; it originates from Allah’s command and connects the human being to the divine dimension.

Furthermore, the intellect (*‘aql*) plays a crucial role in comprehending reality, discerning right from wrong, and directing behavior in accordance with the Sharī‘ah. According to Madkur, *‘aql* is an epistemological instrument granted by Allah to help humans recognize His signs throughout the universe. Through intellect, humans develop knowledge and civilization, yet their reasoning must remain guided by revelation. Meanwhile, the *qalb* (heart) occupies a central position in the human soul as the seat of moral and spiritual awareness. The Qur’an states, “For indeed, it is not the eyes that are blind, but the hearts within the breasts” (Al-Ḥajj [22]: 46). The *qalb* thus functions as the inner compass leading humans toward *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul) and *ma’rifat Allāh* (knowledge of God).

Madkur views human personality in Islam as being formed through the process of *tarbiyah* (education), aimed at nurturing balance among physical, intellectual, and spiritual potentials. Within this framework, *Manāhij al-Tarbiyah* asserts that education should promote harmony between spiritual and intellectual dimensions. The human soul, as described in the Qur’an, comprises three levels: *nafs al-ammārah* (the commanding self inclined toward evil), *nafs al-lawwāmah* (the self-reproaching soul), and *nafs al-muṭma’innah* (the tranquil soul). These stages reflect the moral and spiritual development of a person, progressing from the domination of desires toward the perfection of the soul.

This concept bears structural similarity to Freud’s tripartite model of personality—id, ego, and superego. However, within Islamic psychology, such dynamics are not mechanistic or secular but deeply theological and moral. The *nafs al-ammārah* can be controlled through *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah), worship, and self-reflection (*muhāsabah*), while the tranquil soul represents the peak of spirituality achieved through awareness of *tawhīd*. Madkur asserts that true psychological balance cannot be attained solely through therapy, but through spiritual purification and closeness to Allah.

Moreover, Madkur rejects reductionist views that see humans merely as biological organisms or social products. He argues that humans are multidimensional beings with moral and spiritual responsibilities. Citing al-Ghazālī, he notes that “the human soul is a mirror of divine light that must be cleansed from the rust of sin and heedlessness.” Thus, soul education should aim to cultivate spiritual awareness and righteous behavior, leading the individual toward *insān kāmil* (the perfect human). This concept portrays the ideal human as one who harmonizes faith, knowledge, and righteous action.

Within the framework of Islamic psychology, Madkur also highlights the essential relationship between *‘aql* (intellect) and *qalb* (heart) in personality formation. The intellect functions to understand, while the heart functions to feel and evaluate. A sound personality, according to Madkur, emerges when intellect and heart work harmoniously under the guidance of revelation. This contrasts with Western psychology, which often places rationality at the center of personality. In Islam, reason is a means to know God, not an end in itself.

Madkur further emphasizes that human personality cannot be separated from the ultimate purpose of life (*ghāyah al-insān*), which is to worship Allah, as stated in the Qur’an (Adz-Dzāriyāt

[51]: 56). Therefore, every human potential—intellectual, emotional, and physical—must be directed toward servitude to Him. A person who loses this orientation will experience existential emptiness and a crisis of meaning, as seen in modern civilization. In this regard, Madkur critiques Western psychology for failing to grasp the deepest essence of humanity due to its neglect of the vertical relationship with the Creator.

Hence, *Manāhij al-Tarbiyah fī al-Taṣawwur al-Islāmī* offers an epistemological framework centered on *tawhīd* as the foundation of personality. *Tawhīd* is not merely a theological belief but also a psychological principle that organizes all aspects of human personality. A monotheistic person possesses inner balance, self-control, and a clear sense of purpose. Madkur describes the Islamic personality as one grounded in faith, oriented toward morality, and aimed at achieving happiness in both worlds (*sa'ādah al-dārayn*).

In the context of modern psychology, Madkur's perspective is highly relevant as a critique of the spiritual crisis afflicting contemporary humanity. He demonstrates that the Western emphasis on unlimited autonomy and freedom has led to alienation and loss of meaning. Conversely, Islamic psychology situates human freedom within the framework of moral responsibility under divine guidance. Therefore, the essence of humanity in Islam is that of a rational, responsible, and spiritual being, capable of attaining moral perfection through a conscious relationship with Allah.

From the analysis of Ali Ahmad Madkur's thought, it can be concluded that human nature in Islamic psychology is understood integratively across biological, psychological, and spiritual dimensions. Humans are not merely beings who think or behave but possess divine consciousness. The soul, intellect, and heart complement one another in forming a balanced personality. Thus, Madkur's conception of human nature significantly contributes to the development of an Islamic psychological paradigm centered on soul purification and character formation.

The Concept of the Soul (An-Nafs), Intellect (Al-'Aql), and Heart (Al-Qalb) in the Work of Ali Ahmad Madkur: The Structure and Dynamics of Human Personality from the Islamic Perspective

The concept of human nature in Islamic thought receives a comprehensive explanation from various scholars, one of the most prominent being Ali Ahmad Madkur through his work *Manāhij al-Tarbiyah fī al-Taṣawwur al-Islāmī*. In this work, Madkur presents the structure of human personality based on three principal components: the soul (*an-nafs*), the intellect (*al-'aql*), and the heart (*al-qalb*). These three are not separate entities but an integrated system that shapes the dynamics of human personality in relation to God, the self, and the social environment. Madkur seeks to present a framework of Islamic psychology rooted in revelation, wherein human beings are viewed not merely as biological or psychological entities, but also as spiritual and moral beings.

1. The Concept of the Soul (An-Nafs)

Ali Ahmad Madkur explains that *an-nafs* represents the core of human personality, containing dual potentials: the inclination toward goodness (*nafs muṭma'innah*) and the inclination toward evil (*nafs ammārah bi al-sū'*). The human soul is depicted as a battlefield between divine impulses and worldly desires. Madkur's understanding aligns with the Qur'anic view that the soul was created with the innate capacity to discern good and evil (Qur'an, *Ash-Shams* [91]: 7-8). Therefore, the education and purification of the soul become essential in forming a balanced personality that harmonizes physical and spiritual needs.

Madkur outlines that *an-nafs* possesses several levels reflecting a person's moral and spiritual development: (1) *an-nafs al-ammārah* the soul dominated by base desires; (2) *an-nafs al-lawwamah* the self-reproaching soul aware of its moral shortcomings; and (3) *an-nafs al-muṭma'innah* the soul that attains spiritual tranquility. The transformation from one level to another illustrates the dynamic process of self-purification and the pursuit of moral perfection and closeness to Allah. This concept contrasts sharply with Western psychological theories, such as Freud's biological determinism and instinctual drives, as Madkur emphasizes transcendence and moral responsibility as defining aspects of human existence.

2. The Concept of the Intellect (Al-'Aql)

In Madkur's framework of Islamic personality, *al-'aql* serves as the central faculty that governs and directs human behavior. The intellect functions to comprehend the divine signs in the universe, distinguish between good and evil, and serve as the foundation of moral decision-making. Madkur stresses that in Islam, reason is not merely a cognitive function but also ethical and spiritual. It is not limited to rational thinking as defined in Western psychology but is also a means to recognize truths revealed through divine revelation.

Madkur asserts that human reason has inherent limitations, unable to grasp metaphysical realities in their entirety. Thus, reason must work in harmony with revelation (*wahy*) and the heart (*qalb*) to avoid intellectual deviation. This synergy embodies the epistemological balance in Islam between rationality and spirituality. Madkur's view echoes that of Al-Ghazali, who described reason as a "lamp" guiding humans toward truth yet a lamp that requires the "oil" of revelation to keep its light from fading. Hence, in Islamic psychology, the intellect cannot be separated from faith and ethics, for sound reasoning must be accompanied by a pure heart and a soul that submits to God.

3. The Concept of the Heart (Al-Qalb)

The heart (*al-qalb*), according to Madkur, is the spiritual center of human existence the seat of faith, moral awareness, and divine consciousness. Etymologically, the Arabic word *qalb* denotes something that "turns over" or "changes," symbolizing the heart's susceptibility to fluctuation depending on one's spiritual state. Madkur emphasizes that the purity of the heart determines the overall quality of a person's character. A sound heart (*qalbun salīm*) produces inner peace and virtuous behavior, while a diseased heart (*qalbun marīḍ*) leads to anxiety, moral corruption, and spiritual alienation.

Madkur underscores the importance of spiritual education of the heart in the formation of human personality. He references Qur'anic verses such as *Ash-Shu'arā* [26]: 88–89, which affirm that salvation in the Hereafter belongs only to those who come before Allah with a pure heart. For Madkur, the heart acts as the bridge between the spiritual and psychological dimensions of human life; it influences the way one thinks (*'aql*) and the direction of the soul's impulses (*nafs*). Therefore, the heart must continually be purified through worship, remembrance (*dhikr*), and self-reflection (*muhāsabah*), which serve as forms of Islamic psychotherapy.

4. The Structure and Dynamics of Human Personality in Madkur's View

From these three components the soul, intellect, and heart Madkur constructs an integrative and dynamic model of personality. Human personality is shaped not only by biological or social factors, as assumed in Western psychology, but also by the vertical relationship between humans and Allah. The soul provides motivation and drives action, the intellect evaluates and directs those actions, while the heart determines their moral and spiritual quality.

In the dynamics of personality, these elements interact harmoniously. When the intellect is guided by revelation and the heart remains pure, the soul achieves serenity (*iṭmi'nān*). Conversely, when reason is enslaved by desire and the heart hardens, the human personality deviates from its divine path. Thus, balance among these three elements is essential for the formation of a complete Islamic personality.

Madkur further emphasizes that this system is not merely theoretical but applicable in education and moral development. For him, ideal Islamic education should nurture balance among intellectual development, soul purification, and heart refinement. This marks a key distinction from Western psychological approaches, which are often secular and neglect the spiritual dimension.

In conclusion, the concepts of *an-nafs*, *al-'aql*, and *al-qalb* in Ali Ahmad Madkur's work not only explain the structure of human personality within a spiritual framework but also propose an integrative model harmonizing moral, rational, and emotional dimensions. This approach makes a significant contribution to the development of Islamic psychology as a scientific discipline rooted in divine revelation and oriented toward the comprehensive perfection of the human being.

Fundamental Differences and Similarities between the Islamic and Western Psychological Approaches in Understanding Human Nature and Personality Formation

The study of human nature and personality formation reveals that Islamic Psychology and Western Psychology possess fundamentally different epistemological, ontological, and axiological foundations, although they share certain points of convergence. Both seek to explain the structure and dynamics of the human being as a personality-bearing creature, yet they originate from distinct philosophical assumptions. Western psychology generally views humans as biological and psychic entities governed by natural laws, whereas Islamic psychology perceives humans as spiritual beings possessing a vertical relationship with God. Ali Ahmad Madkur emphasizes that understanding the human being without acknowledging the spiritual dimension leads to a partial and reductionist theory of personality.

1. Epistemological and Ontological Foundations

From an epistemological standpoint, Western psychology is founded upon rationalism and empiricism. Knowledge about humans is developed through observation, experimentation, and the measurement of observable behavior. Figures such as Wilhelm Wundt, John B. Watson, and B.F. Skinner considered observable behavior as the primary source of psychological knowledge. Psychology then evolved through psychoanalysis (Freud), humanism (Rogers, Maslow), and cognitive theory (Piaget, Bandura) all of which aim to explain human functioning and adaptation to the environment.

In contrast, Islamic psychology is built upon the harmony between revelation (*wahy*) and reason (*'aql*) as sources of knowledge. According to Madkur, revelation represents the ultimate source of truth about human beings because it originates from their Creator, while reason functions as an instrument to understand and interpret divine meaning. Ontologically, the human being consists of bodily, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional (*heart*) components that interact integratively. The *nafs* (soul) is regarded as the living substance the center of consciousness, moral responsibility, and spiritual connection with Allah. This perspective differs from Western paradigms that often deny transcendence and reduce human behavior to biological or psychological mechanisms.

2. Purpose and Orientation in Understanding Humanity

The main objective of Western psychology is to understand, predict, and control human behavior in order to improve adjustment and psychological well-being. Humanity is understood within a worldly context, where personality is seen as a product of the interaction between biological factors, social experience, and environmental influence. For example, Freud viewed humans as driven by libido impulses seeking instinctual satisfaction, while behaviorism focused solely on stimulus-response mechanisms, disregarding consciousness and moral dimensions. Even the humanistic theories of Maslow and Rogers though emphasizing self-actualization remain anthropocentric, oriented toward the fulfillment of worldly potential without a divine dimension.

In contrast, Islamic psychology seeks to understand humans as servants of God (*'abdullāh*) and vicegerents on earth (*khalīfatullāh fī al-ard*). A healthy personality is not merely one that adapts to its environment, but one that aligns itself with divine will. Madkur asserts that education and personality development in Islam aim to cultivate balance among physical, intellectual, and spiritual potentials so that a person attains the level of *nafs al-muṭma'innah* the tranquil soul that submits wholly to Allah. The orientation of Islamic psychology is theocentric, whereas Western psychology is anthropocentric, making the human being the center of values and truth.

3. Structure and Dynamics of Personality

In Western psychology, various theories of personality present differing perspectives. Freud described the personality structure as consisting of the id, ego, and superego, functioning within the tension between instinctual drives and social norms. Jung added the collective unconscious, containing universal symbols and archetypes. Meanwhile, Maslow and Rogers developed the concept of self-actualization as the pinnacle of human growth. Despite their diversity, these theories largely interpret personality within intra-psychic or psychosocial frameworks, not within a spiritual one.

In contrast, Madkur's Islamic personality structure comprises three central elements: the soul (*an-nafs*), the intellect (*al-'aql*), and the heart (*al-qalb*). The soul represents moral and

emotional drives; the intellect serves as a regulator and evaluator of behavior; and the heart functions as the spiritual center that determines moral direction. The dynamics of personality emerge through the harmonious interaction among these three elements under the guidance of revelation. When the soul is dominated by base desires, reason loses divine guidance, and the heart hardens, the human personality deviates. Conversely, when reason submits to divine truth and the heart remains pure, a stable and virtuous personality emerges.

Thus, Islamic psychology not only explains mental and behavioral functions but also emphasizes moral and spiritual dimensions as the essence of personality. This makes it more comprehensive, as it encompasses all existential aspects of human nature physical, psychological, and spiritual rather than merely the empirical.

4. Points of Convergence and Shared Views

Despite their fundamental differences, Islamic and Western psychology share several points of convergence. Both acknowledge that human beings possess the potential for psychological and moral development. Maslow's concept of self-actualization, for instance, parallels the Islamic concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs* the purification of the soul toward existential perfection. Similarly, Carl Rogers' idea of self-congruence aligns with the Islamic concept of *ikhlaṣ* (sincerity), though grounded in different philosophical premises.

Moreover, Islamic psychology can benefit from empirical findings in Western psychology such as psychotherapy, personality assessment, and behavioral intervention as long as they do not contradict the principles of *tawḥīd* (monotheism) and Islamic ethics. Malik Badri emphasizes that integrating modern psychological science with Islamic values is not a rejection of the scientific method but rather a reaffirmation of the correct paradigm of humanity. In this sense, Islamic psychology serves as a "meta-paradigm" that provides moral and spiritual direction for psychological practice.

5. Synthesis and Implications

The principal difference between the two approaches lies in their center of orientation. Western psychology is oriented toward self-satisfaction and worldly well-being, whereas Islamic psychology places nearness to Allah as the ultimate goal of personality development. Nonetheless, both approaches can be synthesized through an integrative model that combines Western empirical knowledge with Islamic spirituality. Madkur proposes that contemporary Islamic psychology should aim to restore the balance among reason, soul, and heart, which has been disrupted by the secularization of science.

In educational and character-building contexts, this synthesis underscores that ideal personality formation requires not only cognitive mastery and social competence but also a firm spiritual foundation. Therefore, Islamic psychology does not reject Western psychology outright but seeks to correct its limitations and reorient the understanding of human beings within their original *fiṭrah* their divinely created nature with a clear ultimate purpose (*al-ghāyah al-insāniyyah*).

The Relevance of the Concept of the Soul and Personality in *Manahij At-Tarbiyah Fii At-Tashawwur Al-Islamiy* to the Development of Personality Theory in Contemporary Psychology

Ali Ahmad Madkur's ideas in *Manahij At-Tarbiyah Fii At-Tashawwur Al-Islamiy* occupy an essential position in the discourse of modern Islamic psychology, as they offer a philosophical and theological foundation that enriches contemporary personality theories (Maman et al., 2022). In this work, Madkur asserts that the human being is a multidimensional entity composed of the elements of the soul (*an-nafs*), intellect (*al-'aql*), and heart (*al-qalb*), which function harmoniously under the guidance of divine revelation. This understanding is highly relevant to the current trends in psychology that seek integrative approaches encompassing the biological, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions of human existence.

Contemporary psychology, particularly since the emergence of the humanistic and transpersonal movements, has undergone a paradigm shift from a materialistic to a more holistic framework. Thinkers such as Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Viktor Frankl have recognized that spirituality and the search for meaning are essential components of human personality. However,

their approaches remain grounded in empirical and humanistic reflections without a theological foundation. In this regard, Madkur's concept of personality becomes relevant because it integrates the spiritual dimension into a scientific framework rooted in revelation. He not only explains the psychological functions of the soul but also reveals its moral and transcendental orientation.

1. Ontological Relevance: The Human as a Spiritual-Rational Being

Ontologically, Madkur views human nature as inseparable from both physical and psychic dimensions. The *nafs*, in his view, is a living and conscious substance responsible for moral actions. This perspective has great relevance for contemporary personality theory, especially in efforts to understand human consciousness and volition, which cannot be fully explained by biological mechanisms alone. In the era of neurocognitive psychology, many scholars acknowledge the limitations of reductionist approaches in explaining consciousness and motivation.

Madkur's concept of *an-nafs* broadens the understanding of humanity by emphasizing the involvement of the spiritual dimension in personality formation. A mature personality, therefore, is not merely a result of social interaction or traumatic experiences but the fruit of *tazkiyah* (self-purification). This aligns with *psychospiritual development* approaches in contemporary psychology, which assert that balance between rational and spiritual aspects is the key to psychological well-being.

2. Epistemological Relevance: Integration of Reason and Revelation in Personality Science

Epistemologically, Madkur emphasizes that the intellect (*al-'aql*) plays an important role in understanding reality but must be harmonized with revelation to avoid intellectual arrogance or the secularization of knowledge. In modern psychology, this approach parallels the spirit of *integrative psychology*, which seeks to unify various sources of knowledge including spirituality in explaining human personality. Western psychology often falls into a dichotomy between rationality and spirituality, whereas both can coexist in a complementary manner.

Madkur proposes an epistemological model that places revelation as the normative source of knowledge about humanity, while reason functions to interpret and apply these principles empirically. For instance, in understanding motivation, Western psychology emphasizes biological and social needs as proposed by Maslow, whereas Madkur views the highest human need as *ma'rifah Allah* (knowing and serving God). Thus, the hierarchy of needs can be refined by including the spiritual dimension as the peak of self-actualization.

3. Psychological Relevance: The Structure of the Soul and Personality Dynamics

Madkur's structure of personality namely, the interaction between *an-nafs*, *al-'aql*, and *al-qalb* has direct relevance to modern theories emphasizing the balance of mental and emotional functions. Freud's model of *id*, *ego*, and *superego*, for example, describes internal psychological conflicts that often result in anxiety or neurosis. Madkur, however, offers a more positive and spiritual approach: inner conflicts can be resolved through purification of the heart and divine guidance, rather than merely through ego-defense mechanisms.

Furthermore, Madkur regards the heart (*al-qalb*) as the spiritual and moral center of human nature. This concept parallels *positive psychology* developed by Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, which emphasizes virtue, meaning, and character strength in building a healthy personality. Yet, Madkur adds the dimension of *tawhid* (divine unity), asserting that true virtue gains meaning only when directed toward seeking God's pleasure. Therefore, positive psychology, which often focuses on personal happiness, can be enriched with a deeper spiritual orientation.

4. Moral and Educational Relevance: The Formation of the Islamic Personality

Madkur asserts that human personality is shaped not only by biological and environmental factors but also through *tarbiyah* (education) aimed at moral and spiritual cultivation. This is highly relevant amid today's moral crisis and character degradation. In contemporary education systems, spiritual values are often marginalized by cognitive and competitive orientations (Gross & Medina-DeVilliers, 2020). The concept of *tarbiyah an-nafs* developed by Madkur can serve as a foundation for a more holistic approach to personality education.

This view aligns with the integration of *moral education* and *character building* in modern educational psychology (Jaenudin et al., 2023; Sugiana et al., 2025; Syaeful Millah et al., 2024).

Personality theories such as Bandura's *Social Learning Theory* and Kohlberg's *Moral Development Theory* highlight social learning and moral reasoning processes but neglect spirituality as the primary driver of morality (Manik et al., 2022). In contrast, Madkur emphasizes that genuine morality arises from a heart illuminated by faith, not merely from rational reasoning.

5. Transdisciplinary Relevance: The Direction of Contemporary Islamic Psychology Development

Madkur's thought opens avenues for the development of contemporary Islamic psychology as an integrative and transdisciplinary science. He demonstrates that revelation and empirical science can interact harmoniously without negating one another. This approach aligns with the *integrative paradigm* trend in modern science, which seeks to bridge the gap between science, philosophy, and spirituality (Sardar, 2011).

In this context, Madkur's theory of personality can serve as a conceptual foundation for modern Islamic psychology, where personality is viewed as the result of synergy among cognitive, affective, moral, and spiritual dimensions. Such an approach can enrich contemporary psychological therapies, including *Islamic psychotherapy*, *spiritual counseling*, and *dhikr-based mindfulness*, which are increasingly being developed today.

Thus, the concept of personality in *Manahij At-Tarbiyah* is not only relevant to Islamic psychology but also contributes philosophically to the global psychological paradigm. Madkur's work reaffirms that humans cannot be fully understood without acknowledging their spiritual existence and relationship with God. The relevance of his thought lies in its ability to restore the *spiritual soul* to psychology a discipline that has often lost its moral direction.

In light of this analysis, the dialogue between Islamic and Western psychology reveals not merely complementary insights but also enduring philosophical tensions. Western determinist tendencies, even in their more refined cognitive or humanistic forms, often struggle to reconcile causal explanation with genuine moral responsibility. Islamic psychology, on the other hand, integrates human limitation with ethical accountability by situating freedom within the framework of divine guidance. The tension between autonomy and submission, instinct and conscience, empirical observation and revealed truth, represents a productive space for theoretical development. Rather than reducing one paradigm to the other, a critical synthesis requires acknowledging these differences while exploring how empirical findings and spiritual anthropology can inform one another. Such engagement allows personality theory to move beyond reductionism toward a more comprehensive understanding of the human being as simultaneously conditioned and morally responsible, finite yet spiritually transcendent.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Western psychology predominantly emphasizes rational, biological, and social dimensions of human nature, as reflected in major theories of personality development. In contrast, Islamic psychology, particularly through the thought of Ali Ahmad Madkur in *Manāhij At-Tarbiyah Fī At-Taṣawwur Al-Islāmī*, conceptualizes the human being as an integrative entity composed of the soul (*an-nafs*), intellect (*al-'aql*), and heart (*al-qalb*), functioning harmoniously under the guidance of divine revelation. While both perspectives aim to explain human personality in a comprehensive manner, they differ significantly in their epistemological foundations and moral orientations.

However, the contribution of this research is primarily conceptual rather than empirical. The analysis enriches theoretical discourse by offering a critical and dialogical comparison between Islamic and Western paradigms and by articulating Madkur's framework as a potential integrative model of personality. At the same time, this study does not provide empirical testing or quantitative validation of the proposed conceptual synthesis. Therefore, further research is needed to operationalize these concepts and examine their applicability within contemporary psychological assessment, counseling practices, and educational contexts. By acknowledging this limitation, the present study positions itself as a theoretical foundation that invites subsequent empirical exploration rather than as a definitive or experimentally verified model of personality.

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