



## **The Depths of the Human Soul: Freud's Deconstruction and the Reconstruction of the Spirit in the Book of Sirr al-Asrar**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study explores the complexity of the human psyche through hermeneutical methods, while reexamining Freud's psychological map with a deconstructive approach. The structure of the id, ego, and superego is reexamined, and the concept of the soul is reformulated based on Abdul Qadir al-Jilani's *Sirr al-Asrar*. This literature research relies on primary sources, particularly Freud's works and texts from *Sirr al-Asrar*. The findings indicate that Freud's structure of the soul is limited to a psychodynamic understanding, while *Sirr al-Asrar* offers a spiritual dimension as a center of consciousness capable of addressing the existential challenges of today. The hermeneutic approach opens up a richer perspective on the psychological dynamics of modern humans. This research report makes an important contribution to the field of psychospirituality and contemporary psychotherapy practices.

**Keywords:** Human soul, Freud, id, ego, superego, *Sirr al-Asrar*, spirit, hermeneutics, deconstruction.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Over the past decade, mental health issues have become a major burden on global health. In 2019, more than 970 million people were recorded as struggling with depression or anxiety. In Indonesia and elsewhere, nearly one-fifth of the population showed signs of serious mental health problems in the past year. This situation was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. An in-depth study showed that depression rates jumped by 28%, anxiety reached 26.9%, and stress levels reached 50% at the start of the pandemic. Insomnia, particularly among healthcare workers, reached 37.9% (Hossain et al., 2020). This situation highlights the importance of mental health care, especially during a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, which has worsened the global mental health situation (Oktavia et al., 2021). This increase in mental health issues demands more proactive and integrative interventions to support individuals in coping with the psychosocial challenges caused by the pandemic (Nurhaeni et al., 2021) and its long-term impacts. Therefore, it is important to develop comprehensive mental health support programs, especially for vulnerable groups such as health workers and adolescents (Oktavia et al., 2021).

The WHO and ILO report that depression and anxiety cause 12 billion lost working days each year, resulting in a global economic loss of approximately US\$1 trillion. In the UK, the burnout rate in the financial sector is 17%, higher than the average for other sectors of 12%. Generation Z and millennials are feeling the impact of this issue particularly keenly. One report states that 60% of young people experience ecoanxiety due to concerns about climate change. In Australia, mental health disorders among adolescents have increased sharply by 50% in the past 15 years. Unfortunately, approximately 76–85% of people in low- to middle-income countries do not receive adequate mental health care. In the US, 33.5% of adults with severe mental health disorders do not receive the treatment they need. Lack of trust in healthcare professionals is also a major barrier (Lalloo et al., 2022).

Sigmund Freud, a central figure in psychoanalysis, is known for his theory of the structure of the mind, consisting of the Id, Ego, and Superego. However, this concept seems to ignore the spiritual side or personification of the soul, which is often a central focus in classical Islamic works, such as *Sirr al-Asrar*. Therefore, it is important to revisit Freud's thought and incorporate the spiritual dimension into it (Smythe, 2011). By integrating this spiritual aspect, we can create a more holistic approach to understanding human personality, one that aligns with the values of character education in Islam (Wijaya & Darmawan, 2019).

The book *Sirr al-Asrar* (The Secret of All Secrets) highlights the concept of the soul as a spiritual entity undergoing spiritual evolution or divine transformation (al-Jīlānī & Bayrak, 1992). By revisiting this book, we can gain a richer understanding of the soul, transcending the limitations of Freud's view, which tended to be solely

oriented towards biological and psychological aspects. Studies by Coyle and colleagues, as well as Rosenfeld and his team, demonstrate that integrating technology with psychological insights is invaluable in understanding mental health, although it has not yet addressed the spiritual aspect (Racey et al., 2023). This opens up a wide opportunity to bridge Freud's ideas with the teachings of Sirr al-Asrar.

According to Freud, neurosis arises from internal conflicts rooted in the subconscious. However, problems such as social anxiety, social media fatigue, and the loss of spiritual meaning are difficult to fully explain with his theory. Therefore, a reconstruction of Freud's thinking is necessary to maintain its relevance to the realities of the human psyche today (Sletvold, 2016). By interpreting Sirr al-Asrār, this study will formulate a model of soul reconstruction that integrates psychoanalytic analysis with elements of spirituality, making it more holistic and relevant to the needs of the modern human psyche. It is hoped that this step can provide alternative solutions to the ever-growing mental health challenges of the modern era. This study aims to examine the dynamics of the psyche based on Freud's psychoanalysis, evaluate its limitations in explaining spiritual aspects, and examine the concept of the soul in Sirr al-Asrār as an alternative to Sufism. Furthermore, this study compares Freud's and Islamic views on the soul and proposes an Islamic spirituality-based therapeutic approach for more comprehensive mental recovery.

**A Comparison of Theories of the Soul: Analyzing Freud's Thought and Reimagining the Spirit in Sirr al-Asrar.** Freud Explores the Depths of the Soul: Sigmund Freud described the psyche as a complex system. Within it are consciousness, preconsciousness, and the subconscious, where inner struggles occur. We have a way of resisting anxious urges by repressing them in the subconscious (Taheri & Biriya, 2013). According to Freud, this is the "foundation" of psychoanalysis. He then created a structural model that describes the workings and conflicts within the psyche: the Id (basic instincts), the Ego (reason), and the Superego (internalized moral codes) (Dumitrescu, 2013).

In his book, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud, 2003), Freud introduced the idea of the death drive (Thanatos) as a complement to the life instinct (Eros). Decathexis is the process of drawing psychic energy from an external object, and it is closely related to the death drive. Through techniques such as free association, dream analysis, and transference, Freud unraveled the structure of the psyche and explored hidden conflicts (Kernberg, 2009). Freud distinguished between 'die Seele' (the soul) and mere thought, emphasizing the importance of the emotional and spiritual aspects. For him, the soul is a psychological depth, which he called depth psychology (Virsidea, 2001). While acknowledging the existence of the spirit, Freud rejected spirituality as a separate entity—he considered religion a common illusion (Tran The et al., 2020). Thus, Freud deciphered the human psyche as a battleground of basic instincts hidden by defense mechanisms, accessible through psychoanalysis.

**Restoring the Soul According to the Book of Sirr al-Asrar** Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani's book, *Sirr al-Asrar*, is a spiritual guide on the soul's journey back to the Creator (Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, 1992). In this book, reality is seen as consisting of two elements: the body and the spirit, originating from a higher realm and moving toward the real world. There are four main stages in the spiritual journey: Sharia, Tariqah, Hakikat, and Ma'rifat (Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, 1992). The soul goes through various stages as it descends from the realm of Lahut to the body, reflecting its level of spirituality. The language used in this book is rich in symbols and metaphors typical of Sufism (Hidayat, 2016). Purification of the soul is carried out through both physical and spiritual practices, such as dhikr (remembrance of God) and various other acts of worship (Shofwan, 2022). The book also explains that spiritual experiences can occur in dreams, which are considered revelations (Zuherni, 2024). The highest level, called *syâb amrad*, is the condition when the soul emits pure light (Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, 1992).

The ultimate goal of this spiritual journey is to attain union with God through knowledge (Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, 1992). Therefore, this work aims to transform and restore the soul from the Shari'a to divine consciousness. Let us examine the similarities and differences between these two concepts. Both recognize the layers of the soul: Freud's concept of the conscious and subconscious, while Al-Jailani's is based on the Shari'a to knowledge. Freud emphasized the balance of the mind, while Al-Jailani emphasized the importance of the soul's union with God. The methods of transformation also differ: Freud employed verbal analysis, while Al-Jailani employed asceticism and dhikr. According to Freud, mental conflict is caused by basic instincts, while Al-Jailani views it as worldly influences corrupting the pure soul. Freud tended to be skeptical of spiritual aspects, while Al-Jailani viewed the soul as the core of human spirituality.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

In this research, we chose a qualitative approach combining hermeneutics and deconstruction. The purpose of this method is to explore and understand the deeper meaning of Freud's concept of the soul, as well as the idea of the spirit in classical Sufi texts, particularly the *Sirr al-Asrar* (Rahmatiah, 2017). This research falls

into the category of library research with a descriptive-analytical nature. We conducted an in-depth analysis of various relevant primary and secondary sources, including Freud's works, the *Sirr al-Asrar*, and scientific journals indexed by Sinta (Affiah et al., 2024). **Data Collection Sources and Techniques:** The primary data sources used were Sigmund Freud's original texts dealing with the psychological structure (id, ego, superego) and the *Sirr al-Asrar*. We obtained secondary data from relevant Sinta-indexed journals. The data collection process was carried out by reviewing documents and conducting in-depth literature studies (Sakdiah et al., 2023).

**Data Analysis Techniques:** Data were analyzed using several methods, such as data reduction, theme grouping, and content analysis. This analysis process employed a hermeneutic approach to Sufism texts and a deconstructive approach to Freud's psychological structure. To ensure accuracy, triangulation was applied by comparing various literature sources, both primary and secondary (Wahyudi & Bakri, 2021). **Data Validation:** Data validity was ensured through strategies encompassing credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. These steps included triangulation of sources and theories, an audit trail of the analysis flow, and discussions with experts in Sufism and psychology.

## RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research seeks to explore the deepest dimensions of human nature by integrating two seemingly distinct yet complementary approaches: first, the psychological perspective offered by Sigmund Freud through the concepts of the id, ego, and superego; and second, the spiritual perspective found in Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani's *Sirr al-Asrār*, which elaborates on the concept of the spirit within the Sufi tradition. The methodological approach used is hermeneutics, an interpretive method that goes beyond literal interpretation of the text but seeks to uncover the hidden structures of meaning behind the text, thus enabling the discovery of new, contextual interpretations relevant to contemporary challenges. In his famous work, *"The Ego and the Id"*, Freud proposed a theory of the structure of the psyche divided into three main components: the id as the center of instinctive drives, the ego as the mediator of consciousness, and the superego as the representation of moral values and social norms. These three elements, although formulated within a psychodynamic framework, represent the internal complexity of human beings that cannot be separated from the influences of culture, environment, and spirituality. Using a hermeneutic approach, these structures are understood dynamically, not as fixed categories, but as conceptual tools for interpreting human psychological reality in various contexts.

The id, as defined by Freud, is the source of all instinctive desires and impulses. However, in hermeneutic interpretation, the id is not necessarily considered a negative aspect of personality, but rather an existential part that demonstrates human vitality and, if managed wisely, can be a source of creativity and inner strength. In today's digital age, manifestations of the id can be recognized in consumerist behavior, hedonistic tendencies, and identity crises exacerbated by intense social media exposure.

Meanwhile, the ego functions as a link between the id and the superego, that is, between internal drives and external reality. Within Jacques Derrida's deconstructive framework, the ego can be read as a symbolic conflict space where tensions between individual will and cultural structures occur. In modern, fast-paced and existentially stressful societies, the ego often loses its stability, becoming fragile, stripped of transcendental values that could provide deeper meaning to human existence. The superego, which in Freud's theory is positioned as the internalization of social norms and moral values, also receives a critical reading within the deconstructive approach. The superego does not merely act as a guardian of moral order, but has the potential to become an instrument of repression if the internalized morality turns out to be a product of dominant ideological constructions that restrict spiritual freedom and individual autonomy. Thus, this structure can become a barrier to the search for more authentic meaning.

Criticism of Freud's reductionism has come from transpersonal thinkers such as Ken Wilber, who argue that Freud tended to ignore the spiritual aspects of the human soul. Freud focused his theory on biological and psychodynamic aspects, leaving no room for religious experience and the transcendental dimension. This provides a strong rationale for this study to reexamine the concept of the soul through the spiritual lens offered by the *Sirr al-Asrār* text, which is not only rich in theological value but also presents a more holistic mapping of the human soul. In the *Sirr al-Asrār*, the structure of the soul is classified into four main layers: *nafs*, *qalb*, *ruh*, and *sirr*. A hermeneutic approach to this text emphasizes that the soul's journey is not merely a process of psychological healing, but rather a spiritual path toward reunification with God. The soul, in this understanding, is not seen as a mere field of conflict, but as a spiritual field that must be nurtured with divine light. The *nafs*, which in some ways corresponds to Freud's concept of the id, is not only considered an instinctive drive, but as an entity that must be transformed to a higher level of consciousness, namely into *nafs al-muthmainnah*, namely a soul that is calm and serene in its devotion to Allah.

The heart, in Islamic tradition, is understood as the center of spiritual awareness, not simply the seat of emotions. Unlike Freud's ego, which disregards this dimension, the hermeneutic approach allows for a reinterpretation that the existential emptiness of modern humans arises from the ego's disconnection from the heart. Within this framework, the heart functions as a mirror of consciousness capable of capturing divine light through the processes of meditation and dhikr, becoming a bridge between the physical world and the spiritual dimension. The superego, which Freud defined as an internal moral control, is paralleled in Sufism with the concept of *sirr*, the divine secret hidden within humans. *Sirr* symbolizes humanity's deepest connection with God, an existential depth beyond mere rationality. At this point, Freud's approach is seen as mapping the surface layers of psychology, while *Sirr al-Asrār* brings a deeper understanding of the reality of the soul as a divine creation constantly moving toward spiritual perfection.

The phenomenon of spiritual emptiness experienced by many people in the modern era is a sign that contemporary psychological approaches, which tend toward behaviorism and neurobiology, have not fully addressed human existential anxiety. Many psychological approaches remain reluctant to acknowledge the existence of the soul as a spiritual entity, thus opening up space for a new, more integrative paradigm. In this regard, the ideas of *Sirr al-Asrār* can make an important contribution to filling this void by offering an approach that harmoniously unites psychology and spirituality. Sigmund Freud was a product of a secular European era and culture, and his personal experiences with religious institutions contributed to shaping his materialistic and rationalistic mindset. However, the hermeneutical approach does not aim to completely reject Freud's ideas but rather to place them within a broader context. Thus, the id, ego, and superego can be seen as symbols of modern humans experiencing spiritual alienation and in need of reconnection with transcendental values.

The *Sirr al-Asrār* serves not merely as a Sufi text but as an inner map full of symbols and meanings, guiding humans through the dark tunnels of their souls. Healing, from this perspective, is not solely through cognitive therapy or psychopharmacological interventions, but through spiritual practices such as dhikr, *muraqabah*, and self-knowledge or *ma'rifat al-nafs*. This study does not aim to discredit Freud, but rather to broaden the understanding of the soul by emphasizing the spiritual aspect as a crucial element in mapping human existence. While Freud formulated the tripartite soul through the id, ego, and superego, *Sirr al-Asrār* responds with a spiritual structure consisting of the heart, spirit, and *sirr*—a dialogue between the two approaches, not a conflict. Hermeneutics allows us to see that the solution to the modern spiritual crisis is not solely through psychic intervention, but through the integration of simple yet transformative spiritual practices. Consistent dhikr and the silence of meditation have proven capable of bridging the psychological and spiritual needs of today's humans.

Finally, the symbolism in *Sirr al-Asrār* presents vivid spiritual images: the light emanating from the heart, the mirror of consciousness reflecting the essence of the self, and the ineffable mystery of *Sirr*. All of this seems to complement Freud's view, which often feels devoid of spiritual nuance. For many Western thinkers, the soul remains a metaphysical concept without a scientific foundation, while *Sirr al-Asrār* opens the narrative with the creation of the soul and concludes with its return to God. Therefore, the soul, in this framework, is not merely a psychological entity but a theological project that is continually renewed in the human spiritual process. It can be concluded that the spiritual richness in *Sirr al-Asrār* complements and even transcends the limitations of Freud's theory. This study invites us not to choose one approach and reject the other, but rather to build a dialogical bridge between the two. In this way, we can explore new harmonies in understanding the human soul as a whole, both in its psychological and spiritual depths.

## CONCLUSIONS

Sigmund Freud is one of the most influential figures in the history of modern psychology, who never hesitated to systematically and radically describe the structure of the human psyche. Using a psychoanalytic approach, he formulated a tripartite model of the structure of the psyche—the id, ego, and superego—as a theoretical tool for understanding the dynamics of the human mind. Within this framework, the id is depicted as a source of primitive, impulsive, and irrational instinctive drives, constantly demanding instant gratification of all desires. Meanwhile, the ego acts as a rational mediator, attempting to manage the demands of the id with external reality and the moral demands embodied by the superego. The superego, meanwhile, is positioned as a representation of the conscience or internal moral compass, constantly reminding individuals of the norms, ethics, and social values internalized since childhood. Freud himself recognized that human life is a psychic battlefield, where the ego must constantly struggle to ensure the individual's ability to function in a social life full of pressure and contradictions.

Although Freud's model is considered revolutionary and widely influential in psychotherapy and personality theory, many have criticized this approach for being reductive and oversimplifying human complexity. Freud, skeptical of religion and viewing it as a form of collective illusion, emphasized that all forms of mental illness can be explored and resolved through the analysis of internal conflicts between psychic structures. However, this approach is considered to ignore the deeper existential dimensions of human experience. Some contemporary thinkers argue that humans need not only psychoanalytic explanations to understand themselves but also experiences of meaning, a sense of connection to something larger than themselves, and a spiritual relationship that taps into the transcendental dimension.

In this context, Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani's *Sirr al-Asrār* offers an alternative perspective rich in spiritual meaning. Unlike Freud's framework, which focuses on subconscious conflict and the dynamics of instinctive drives, this book places the spirit at the center of human consciousness. The spirit is understood as a divine element entrusted by God, by the Qur'anic instructions, particularly in Surah Al-Isra, verse 85, which states that the spirit originates from God's affairs and that human knowledge of it is very limited. In this understanding, the spirit is not merely a metaphysical component, but a bridge between the ephemeral worldly reality and the eternal divine realm. The spirit also functions as a guide that maintains the purity of nature and directs humans to return to their source, namely God Almighty.

When Freud's psychoanalytic model is directly compared with the psychological structure in *Sirr al-Asrār*, fundamental differences in their ontological and epistemological assumptions emerge. Freud approached the human soul with a materialistic approach rooted in the logic of physical objects and mechanisms, thus understanding the soul as a result of purely biological and psychodynamic dynamics. In contrast, Sufism, as reflected in *Sirr al-Asrār*, understands the soul within a broader horizon, namely as a spiritual entity possessing a divine purpose and the potential for union with the Creator. Thus, this difference lies not only in terminology or symbols, but in a more comprehensive perspective on what humans are, where they come from, and where they will return.

Rather than simply dogmatically accepting and worshiping Freud's ideas, this research seeks to transcend the boundaries of classical psychoanalytic thought by critically and deeply exploring the spiritual teachings contained in the *Sirr al-Asrār*. This Sufi text is not merely studied as a historical text, but is also hermeneutically analyzed, re-examined through a contemporary philosophical perspective, and systematically compared with modern psychological paradigms. From this dialogical process, concrete and applicable ideas emerge, particularly in the realms of education, psychotherapy, and counseling. All three are deemed to require a more inclusive space for the spiritual dimension of humankind, as meaning and healing are often not found solely through rational approaches, but through transcendental experiences that touch the deepest core of consciousness. Jacques Derrida's deconstructive approach paves the way for critiquing the rigidity of Freud's model, which is often deterministic and closed to the transcendent. Through deconstruction, Freud's narrative structure can be challenged, unraveled, and then restructured into a paradigm more open to the plurality of human experience. This allows for the emergence of a new psychological framework that not only emphasizes unconscious conflicts and drives but also accommodates spiritual potential and the spiritual journey as a legitimate part of the dynamics of the psyche.

The existential condition of today's humanity, often mired in nihilism, alienation, and a void of meaning, presents a spiritual crisis that conventional psychology cannot fully address. Many individuals feel disconnected from their existential roots, and in such situations, a spiritual approach becomes essential. Reconstructing the understanding of the soul as the foundation of a living and evolving consciousness offers a new entry point for psychotherapy to re-humanize humans. This is where the importance of integrating psychospiritual elements into modern therapeutic practice lies, oriented not only toward symptom relief but also toward restoring meaning, life orientation, and the individual's relationship with the divine dimension.

Thus, healing of the soul occurs not only in the clinical setting or through an entirely empirical, behaviorist approach, but also through openness to a higher dimension: a dimension that involves inner reflection, awareness of God's presence, and recognition that humans are spiritual beings who yearn for connection with something greater than themselves. This integrative proposal does not aim to eliminate Freud's theory, but rather to expand it to be more responsive to the complexities of modern human existence.

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