

THE MEANING OF DEATH IN A PSYCHOSOPHYSTIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: *The study employs a dual approach, combining psychological analysis with Sufi teachings to comprehend the multifaceted nature of death. Methodologically, it synthesizes insights from psychological theories on emotional detachment and the human perception of mortality. This is juxtaposed with the Sufi perspective, derived from extensive literature, teachings, and interpretations of Sufi scholars and texts. The psychological aspect delves into the notion of psychological death, exploring how individuals, while physically alive, can experience emotional numbness, disconnect, and insensitivity to their surroundings. This exploration incorporates established psychological frameworks and case studies that illustrate these states. Simultaneously, the Sufistic approach interprets death as an inevitable certainty, emphasizing the spiritual separation between the body and the eternal soul. This perspective draws upon Sufi texts, traditions, and philosophies that emphasize the eternal nature of the soul and the transformative aspect of death. The study synthesizes these perspectives, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of death. It examines how the psychological and Sufi viewpoints converge and diverge, shedding light on the multifaceted meanings and implications of death within the human experience. Through this methodological fusion, the study endeavors to offer a nuanced perspective on death that encompasses both psychological and spiritual dimensions.*

Keywords: *Death; Sufistic; Psychosophystic.*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan ganda, menggabungkan analisis psikologis dengan ajaran sufi untuk memahami sifat kematian yang beraneka segi. Secara metodologis, ini mensintesis wawasan dari teori-teori psikologis tentang pelepasan emosi dan persepsi manusia tentang kematian. Hal ini disandingkan dengan perspektif sufi, yang berasal dari literatur, ajaran, dan interpretasi ulama dan teks sufi yang luas. Aspek psikologis menyelidiki gagasan kematian psikologis, mengeksplorasi bagaimana individu, ketika masih hidup secara fisik, dapat mengalami mati rasa emosional, keterputusan, dan ketidakpekaan terhadap lingkungannya. Eksplorasi ini menggabungkan kerangka psikologis dan studi kasus yang menggambarkan keadaan-keadaan ini. Pada saat yang sama, pendekatan sufistik menafsirkan kematian sebagai kepastian yang tak terelakkan, menekankan pemisahan spiritual antara tubuh dan jiwa yang abadi. Perspektif ini mengacu pada teks, tradisi, dan filosofi sufi yang menekankan sifat abadi jiwa dan aspek transformatif dari kematian. Studi ini mensintesis perspektif-perspektif ini, yang bertujuan untuk memberikan pemahaman komprehensif tentang kematian. Artikel ini mengkaji bagaimana sudut pandang psikologis dan sufi bertemu dan menyimpang, menyoroti beragam makna dan implikasi kematian dalam pengalaman manusia. Melalui perpaduan metodologis ini, penelitian ini berupaya menawarkan perspektif berbeda tentang kematian yang mencakup dimensi psikologis dan spiritual.

Kata Kunci: Kematian; Sufistik; Psikosofistik.

Introduction

Death is a universal event that all humans will face, but the human conceptualization of this event can vary culturally and contextually. In addition to cultural relativity to the concept of death, this conceptualization of death also varies contextually, such as in the realm of religion, psychology and among the Sufis. The conceptualization of death as a mediator between life and the hereafter makes death a vital position in Islam when the afterlife is conceptualized as a place of human judgment for deeds while alive.¹

Death is something that every living thing will experience without exception. Humans, animals and plants will feel death when the age limit given by Allah, has ended. This indicates that no creature can resist the coming of death outlined by Allah. Death is a mystery to humans. No one knows when death will come. However, one certainty is that a person's death (time of death) was recorded long ago in *lawh al-mahfud* before humans were created.

Discussing death based on psychology perspective can cause a 'rebellion' that saves pain in the human soul, namely the awareness and belief that death will surely come and destroy everything he loves and enjoys. That awareness raises the denial that we don't want to (quickly) die. Death is a condition in which the human body can no longer move. But it's not just a body that doesn't move, it is the mind that is unconscious.

Generally, the definition of death is the absence of life anymore in humans. If the definition is agreed upon, then the Quran also explains the types of death in humans. As in QS. al-Zumar 42, Allah describes the condition of the human soul when it dies. This verse also explains the two types of death that occur in humans.

The Definition and Category of Death in Sufism

In Sufism, understanding death encompasses the physical departure from life and a deeper spiritual dimension. The term *al-mawt* (dead) in Arabic correlates with the loss of senses and reasoning, signifying the inability to perceive and function akin to failing bodily organs. Etymologically, *māta-yamūtu-mawtan* holds diverse meanings, including “to die”, “to become calm”, or “to subside”. Arabic dictionaries define *al-mawt* as the opposite of *al-ḥayāh* (life) and *al-mayyit* (the dead) as the opposite of *al-ḥayy* (the living).²

Initially, *al-mawt* signified ‘silence’ or stillness, used metaphorically for various phenomena like the end of fire or the cessation of wind. The Quranic references to death, such as in QS. al-Baqarah 28, QS. al-Zumar 42, QS. Ghāfir 11, and QS. al-Mulk 1-2, portray death as the severance of the soul-body relationship or the cessation of human cultivation. It’s depicted as the departure of the soul from the body, to be revived as per Allah’s will after burial. Sufism extends the concept of death beyond physical demise, encompassing the ‘death of the heart’ where one loses their humane qualities.

This idea is illustrated in a Hadith narrated by Abū Hurayrah, where the accumulation of sins darkens the heart, blurring moral discernment. A person, according to Sufism, can be ‘alive but dead,’ devoid of sensitivity or perception, as elucidated in QS. al-Naml 80. This state signifies a lack of spiritual awareness despite physical existence. Regarding the process after physical death, the soul’s departure from the body and subsequent burial precedes the return of the spirit into the body, as mentioned in QS. al-Baqarah 28 and 56, and QS. al-Ḥajj 7. Sufistic interpretations emphasize the soul’s separation from the body during death and its subsequent return, awaiting revival. Sufism’s perspective on death underscores the dual experiences of two deaths and two lives: the first death being the body’s demise while the soul persists, and the second death culminating in the body-soul separation, followed by an eternal life after resurrection. In conclusion, death, according to Sufism, is the separation of the soul from the body, encompassing physical demise and a deeper spiritual transition, with implications extending into the afterlife. This revised segment aims

to delve into the Sufistic interpretation of death, focusing on the Quranic references and Sufi philosophical concepts, maintaining a more scholarly tone and highlighting the Sufi perspective on death as per the provided instructions.

Sufi scholars like al-Ghazālī attribute people's unawareness of death to a couple of factors. First, an attachment to worldly pleasures blinds individuals from contemplating the separation caused by death. Second, youthful arrogance leads some to believe death is impossible when they are young. Komaruddin Hidayat further explains that people's reluctance to acknowledge death stems from their deep attachment to worldly pleasures and the mystery surrounding death's aftermath. Contrary to misconceptions, death doesn't signify the end but rather a transition. The Quran and Hadiths illustrate death as a transformative process. It involves the separation of the spirit from the body, leading to an afterlife where the spirit undergoes its journey. According to Sufi thought, the soul is eternal, originating from God and destined to return to its source. Ibn 'Arabī and Ibn Sinā propose that the soul doesn't perish with the body but continues its journey through different realms until eternity.³

According to Komaruddin Hidayat, people's reluctance to meet their death is caused by two things: *First*, humans have already been spoiled by various worldly pleasures that they have embraced tightly, thus entering old age means entering a phase of regret, while death is the pinnacle of defeat and suffering. *Second*, the mysterious nature of death. Death is feared because humans do not know what will happen after that death.⁴

The individuals who lack understanding about the nature of death and become very long-sighted think that they will live forever. Therefore, they will spend their life satisfying lust, regardless of the method or means used. Satan has closed the eyes of his heart and mind until the days are spent in vain deeds. Finally, he was struck by a deadly shot that never missed its target.

The debate about death continues. Two groups that believe in the death and its rewards are: First, the group that believes that a human who dies will vanish so that while living in the grave he does not suffer torture or enjoy the rewards of a good deed until he is resurrected on Judgement Day. Second, the group believes that the human spirit is eternal and does not perish with death. In fact, the soul is the object of reward or punishment without a body, and the spirit is not resurrected at all.⁵

All of these assumptions are wrong and deviate from the truth. The verses of the Quran and Hadith testify that death means a change in circumstances. After the body's death, the human spirit continues to live

and experience torment or happiness. The spirit is no longer adequate for the body at all. Therefore, the body was no longer subject to his orders.

Death's meaning is not limited to the separation of the spirit from the body. In essence, death has two definitions: first, death is a cleansing process, and second, death is an intermediate life.⁶ Death is also a purification process, as the Hadith of the Prophet explained in the book *Madārij al-Sālikīn* by Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyah, which tells about *al-tamhīsh* as a process of cleaning or bleaching. In the past, humans came from God and were born in a holy condition; when they return, they should be in a sacred condition too. The second meaning is that death is an intermediate life; that is, the *barzakh* realm is the second journey of life after the journey of life in this world. Therefore, death is not the end of life but the beginning of the second episode of life.⁷

Islam does not recognize the concept of reincarnation. Death is not understood as a cycle. In addition to seeing death as part of the cycle, the Islamic view of the concept of death is not limited to the malfunction of vital organs (for example, the heart and brain) that support the course of complex biological and neurological activities in the human body as in medicine, but death in general it is also interpreted as transcendence from life to the afterlife which is the ultimate goal of humans.⁸

The reality of death is an undeniable certainty. Every human being will surely experience death, and whether we like it or not, death will come; no power on this earth can resist death.⁹ Death is the separation of the mind from the body, and at that moment, the mind moves into another world of life, often called the grave.

Death is the end of the life of this world and at the same time the beginning of an afterlife. So the annihilation is relative.¹⁰ And actually, the human fear of death, said Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī, is proof that it is the fruit of the human desire for immortality. And remembering that nothing is useless in nature, desire can be the argument for the eternity of human life after death.¹¹

In the view of the Sufis, death is the beginning of life. Death in this world becomes the beginning of the afterlife. Death brings people to understand their life and, simultaneously, invites them to believe that there is a power outside of themselves that causes humans to exist and return to non-existence. But in the realm of tasawuf, most Sufis believe that the soul is eternal because it comes from God; of course, it will return to its God. The immortal soul will not perish and will not die even though the body experiences the *mithāl* realm, the realm between the world realm and the realm of meaning or the realm of the grave.¹²

Ibn Arabī argues that the degree of the soul is higher than the body and lower than the intellect, and it is a place for the development of the spirit. The soul is empowered, and it will remain eternal. The soul goes on without stopping. It keeps on moving, starting when the soul humans make a pact with God, beginning from the realm of the womb, the realm of *barzakh*, the realm of resurrection, the realm of heaven and hell, and lastly, the realm of eternity.¹³

Ibn Sina said that actually, the soul does not experience death with the death of the body. Even the soul will not experience destruction at all. When it dies, and the soul is separated from the body, it lives on and does not die because the soul is immortal and eternal. The process of death is only a process to perfect the soul.¹⁴

Death is a process of perfecting human potential because human life is like living in the womb with bondage. As it is known that when a baby is still in the womb, all of its typical human accessories are not functioning, and all of them function only when the baby is born into the world.¹⁵ Death is the preparation for another life. Dead bodies do not lie without benefit, and they will give rise to new plants or living things. There will be an endless repetition of life because when humans die, it will still give rise to new life.

Death According to The School of Psychology

Psychology views death as a profound event influencing human life. Some perceive it as a catastrophe, while others see it as a temporary phase leading to a nobler existence in the hereafter. Psychological death involves living as if already dead, characterized by emotional numbness and a lack of arousal. It can manifest as depression, marked by feelings of hopelessness, lack of interest, and numbness. The psychology of death categorizes death into natural, anticipated deaths, unanticipated natural deaths, and non-natural deaths (like suicide or homicide). Depression is often associated with psychological death due to its symptoms mirroring emotional detachment and withdrawal. While psychological death seems irreversible, therapies and treatments suggest a possibility of reversal, particularly when addressing symptoms akin to depression. This simplified version outlines the Sufistic perspective on death and touches on the psychological dimension, summarizing key ideas and interpretations.

The theory used in this study is the psychology of death. Death, dying, and the emotions of death (anxiety, fear, joy) are areas that can be understood through the study of psychology as a scientific discipline that examines the “inside” world. Therefore, the psychology of death in

psychology that talks about death, dying and reactions to death.¹⁶

Categorical death, according to Range et al¹⁷ divided into three, namely (1) natural death that can be anticipated, (2) natural death that cannot be anticipated, and (3) non-natural death. Non-natural deaths, such as suicide or homicide. For suicides, Silverman et al. explained that suicides are a category of death that is difficult to overcome because it is related to the problems experienced by individuals, factors of stress, sadness, violence, or a breakup.¹⁸

We think of depression as a form of psychological death. Narratives regarding depression and mental health often share stories of numbness, apathy, lack of will, loss of interest and pleasure in activities, hopelessness, and more. The symptoms and experience of this disease match the characteristics of psychological death described by Kramer. Suicidal ideation can be seen as a desire to experience physical death if one already feels psychologically dead.

The idea that psychological death is reversible¹⁹ may also discuss the aspects of depression that can be treated through medication, counselling, psychoanalysis, meditation and other forms of therapy. Psychological death occurs when the individual begins to face impending death and consequently retreats inward.

Discussing death creates a psychological influence between accepting and being forced to face death. It will be sad when his death picks up a human being while the world's life lulls him. In contrast, death becomes a barrier for him to love and enjoy all the lucrative and enjoyable facilities in the form of possessions, degrees, positions and so on.

As a science that examines one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviour, psychology sees death as a powerful event that is actually very influential in one's life. There is a class of people who view death as a catastrophe. However, there is an opposite view that life in this world is only temporary, and there is another, more dignified life later, namely life in the hereafter.²⁰ Therefore, this awareness often creates a psychological protest in the form of rejection of death, that each person does not want to experience death. Everyone tries to avoid all the ways that draw closer to death's door, yearning for and imagining immortality. This rebellion and rejection of death gave birth to two schools of the psychology of death.

1. Religious Schools, namely those who use religion as a reference that immortality after death exists, and to obtain eternal happiness, a religious person makes the afterlife the main object and target. World life deserves to be enjoyed, but that is not the end goal of a life process. So whatever is done when living in the world is a person's inventory to be enjoyed

later in the afterlife.

2. Secular Schools, namely those who do not care and do not believe in the existence of life after death. But psychologically, both of them have in common the spirit of heroism that yearns for immortality so that they can be remembered for all time. To fulfil that desire, a person wants to contribute something big in his life for his family, society, nation and the world. So everyone tries to leave a legacy for others.

The opinions above illustrate that a belief in death is not enough without being followed by a view of life after death.²¹ The psychological perspective focuses on the discussion about the meaning of death; individual and social responses to death; different responses to death; contextual influences on grief and loss; developmental aspects of death at various stages of the life journey (children, adolescents, adults, and later life). Because death is a certainty, psychologically, it has a considerable influence on the subconscious of one's life and human life behaviour.²²

According to Martin Haidegger, death is a presence directed towards death. There are several views on this course of life. Some believe this life path runs forward in a spiral, and some understand it is like a cycle. However, what is certain is that the agenda of this life is believed to be moving forward, while the time and events that have passed cannot be played back. Each moment is a different moment and occasion of life than before.²³

The problem of death is alarming to humans. Myth, philosophy, and science cannot provide a satisfactory answer. The inner emptiness will be increasingly felt when the individual is faced with events of death. Especially when faced with the death of the closest and most loved ones. The feeling of loss is individual because each individual will not feel the same way about loss. There are various processes to return from adversity because everyone will experience unique and special things, depending on how they were left behind. Some individuals prefer to be strong because of the awareness to continue life. Humans also address death about themselves. They realized that one day that they, too, would experience death. Each of them began to assess themselves.

Synthesis of the Integration of Death in a Psycho-Sufistic Perspective

Death is a psychosomatic process²⁴ that involves the entire human body and soul. Because of that, psychological and somatic signs indicate that the moment of death is getting closer. Among these signs are mental disorientation, confusion, and confusion in thinking power, feelings and observations.²⁵ He can also experience the following three symptoms,

namely:

- a. Illusion is the wrong perception of something real in the environment or observations that are not following reality (misinterpretation).²⁶
- b. Hallucinations are the loss of the human ability to distinguish internal stimuli (thoughts) and external stimuli (external world) or imaginary pictures.²⁷ Hallucinations are divided into several types, namely auditory hallucinations (hearing), visual hallucinations (sight), olfactory hallucinations (smell), tactile hallucinations (touch), gustatory hallucinations (taste), and kinaesthetic hallucinations.²⁸ There are two causes of hallucinations, namely predisposing factors and precipitation. Predisposing factors consist of (1) biological factors related to abnormal development of the nervous system, (2) psychological factors such as parenting patterns, family and environmental conditions, (3) sociocultural factors such as economic conditions, social conflicts, and living isolated with stress. While the other factors are precipitation, namely (1) biological factors related to communication disorders and brain turning that regulate information processing, (2) environmental factors where environmental stressors occur outside the limits of individual tolerance, (3) coping that can determine a person in tolerating the stressor.²⁹
- c. Delusions have unreal beliefs or suspicions that are not shared by others in that person's culture.³⁰ Delusion is a feeling of false belief, which cannot be changed by reasoning and presenting facts. Delusions are characterized by persistent and often paranoid delusions with well-defined qualities.³¹ A delusional disorder does not occur suddenly. There is a series of processes that a person goes through so that he experiences this disorder. Yosep suggests that delusional disorder occurs through 6 phases, namely: *First*, the Lack of Human Need Phase, namely the delusion, begins with the client's physical and psychological limitations in fulfilling his needs. *Second*, in the Lack of Self Esteem Phase, a person does not get recognition from his environment, experiences a high gap between the ideal self and the authentic self (expectations and reality), and has unmet needs. At the same time, the standard in the atmosphere has exceeded his ability. *Third*, the Internal External Control Phase is when a person tries to reason that what he believes or says is a lie solely to cover up deficiencies and is not under the facts. But for clients, facing reality is very hard because the need to be recognized, considered essential and accepted by the environment is a priority in their lives. These needs may not be optimally fulfilled in childhood. Being a passive listener but do not want to be prolonged confrontation because the client's confession does not harm others. *Fourth*, the Environment Support Phase. The existence of several people who trust

someone in their environment causes a person to feel supported. Over time the client considers something that is said as the truth because it is often repeated. This damages self-control and causes dysfunction of the norm (superego), characterized by no longer feeling guilty when lying. *Fifth* the Comforting Phase. A person feels comfortable with his beliefs and lies and assumes that everyone is the same; that is, they will believe and support him. *Sixth*, the Improving Phase. If there is no confrontation and attempts at correction from the environment, the wrong belief in the client will increase every time. The delusional themes often relate to past traumas or unfulfilled needs (missing chains).³²

In addition to the psychic signs above, somatic symptoms³³ indicate that the time of death is getting closer. Some of the somatic signs include:

- a. Bluish and pale skin, starting from the fingertips, feet and lips and then spreading to other body parts
- b. Irregular and weak pulse
- c. Breath sounds loud and often snoring
- d. Vision and hearing began to blur.
- e. Loss of self-awareness

In medical terms, it is also known as somatic death, namely the cessation of all the functions of vital organs. These critical tools are life support systems, namely the central nervous system, cardiovascular system and respiratory system permanently.³⁴ This state of death is also known as human death as an individual (somatic death). The individual's death can be simply defined as the permanent cessation of life.

Death, according to Sufism, is a person who is alive but dead, numb, has no sensitivity to situations, eyes see but do not see, ears are open but do not hear, has a nose and cannot smell. A numb person is what is called alive but dead.³⁵ Following the word of Allah, which means, "*Surely you cannot make deaf people hear the call if they have turned their backs*" (QS. Al-Naml 80).

Death, according to the Quran, is the separation of the soul from the body, meanwhile life is the meeting of the soul with the body. Every human being experiences the moment the soul separates from its body when death comes to pick it up. Islam gives a positive picture of death. Life and death are signs of the greatness of Allah. Life and death are a test for humans to take valuable lessons from both and continue life's journey in this world well-prepared with good deeds that Allah approves. The purpose of human life in this world is solely to devote himself to Allah and worship Him. Human life and death are not without meaning and benefits, but the most important thing is to pass God's tests so that they reach the title of the

pious human being who Allah approves to enter His heaven.³⁶

According to scholars, death is not mere absence or destruction. Still, death is the severing of the connection between the spirit and the body, the obstruction of the relationship between the two and the change of state from one realm to another.

Psychologists say that there is a close relationship between death and religious behaviour. Death is a frightening event and hurtful. Incredible frustration comes to an individual when facing death if a servant of Allah does not prepare himself with enough good deeds to face death on his way to the hereafter.

Some people fight to the end, trying desperately to keep on to their lives. They never accept the arrival of death. Some psychologists believe that the more robust an individual's resistance to death is inevitable, and the greater their resistance, the more difficult it will be for them to die peacefully or decently. Other experts suggest that not fighting death to the end may be adaptive for some people.

Conclusion

Death, as a separation between spirit and body or a passage to what comes after life, is something all humans face. It's inevitable and unknown to everyone, even though some try to deny or avoid it. But death doesn't play favorites—it comes for everyone. Even after death, there's accountability for our actions in life. Different views exist: some religions believe in an afterlife for eternal happiness, while others don't believe in life after death. Psychologically, some see death as a big problem, a wound to our self-esteem, and a deep frustration. But there's another view: life here is temporary, and a better life awaits later. According to Sufism, the soul doesn't die with the body—it's immortal. Death is seen as a process of purification for the soul, not its end.

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