

Light in The Qur'an: Ibn Sina's Psycho-Philosophical Interpretation of Surah Al-Nūr [24:35]

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Humaidi*

UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, Indonesia
Corresponding Author: humaidi@uinjkt.ac.id

Yusuf Rahman

UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta, Indonesia
yusuf.rahman@uinjkt.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This article explains and analyzes the position and function of the soul for humans and its relationship to the Supreme Being in Ibn Sina's interpretation of the Qur'an, Q.S. al-Nūr [24:35]. According to Ibn Sina, the soul is the same as light, nūr, and non-physical being that becomes a source of knowledge, enlightenment, and truth. The method used by Ibn Sina in interpreting this verse, Q.S. al-Nūr [24:35], can be classified into rational or *manhaj al-ijtihād al-'aqlī*. Meanwhile, the scope of the study focuses on the existence, potential, and actualization of the human soul, which originates in the Universal Being, Allah SWT. The analysis concludes that Ibn Sina's rational-psychological interpretation is the first in the history of tafsir. This conclusion also responds to the accusation that Ibn Sina's interpretation is misleading, distancing Muslims from the Islamic creed. This qualitative library research applied a rational and historical approach and analysis.

Keywords: Light, Intellect, Psychological Interpretation, Philosophical Interpretation

INTRODUCTION

Ibn Sina, in the scientific tradition, is known as a philosopher, scientist, and also physician. In the field of philosophy, for example, Ibn Sina has some works such as *al-Shifā'*,¹ *al-Najāh*,² and *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*,³ as works of philosophy plus science that consist of various branches of knowledge, such as metaphysics, mathematics, astronomy, geometry, music, physics, biology, zoology, botany, psychology, and logic. Seyyed Hossein Nasr called these works *the longest encyclopedia of knowledge ever written by one man*.⁴ In medicine, Ibn Sina has the work of *al-Qānūn fi al-'ibb*. According to Mehdi Nakosteen, this work was the main source for Western universities before the modern era. Some parts of this book are still important references for teaching at the University of Bologna until 1800.⁵

Although Avicenna is well known as a philosopher, scientist, and doctor, he also has works related to the science of the Qur'an and interpretation. Very few people have done research in this area. There is no research related to the field of Ibn Sina's commentary not only in the West but also in the Islamic world. In the West, for example, as can be read in Jon McGinnis's work, the science of interpretation is

not mentioned as Ibn Sina's expertise. He only mentions several fields of science, such as logic, science, physical sciences or natural sciences, psychology, metaphysics, and medicine.⁷

In the Islamic world, especially among the Ghazalian Sunnis, Ibn Sina is known as a Peripatetics who is considered deviant from the Islamic creed, heretic, and infidel. This can be seen, for example, in al-Ghazali's book, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*.⁸ The affirmation of al-Ghazali is emphasized by Husein al-Dzahabi in his book, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*. According to him, the method used by Ibn Sina is the same as that used by the *Shī'a Imāmiyyah*, *Ismā'īliyyah*, and the Sūfis. For Dzahabi, the commentators who belong to this group are enemies of Muslims. What they do is nothing but vain and misleading Muslims.⁹

Among Muslim scholars who mention Ibn Sina as a commentator of the Qur'an is Seyyed Hossein Nasr.¹⁰ According to him, apart from philosophy, science, medicine, Sufism, and literature written in Arabic and Persian, Ibn Sina also wrote several interpretations of the Qur'an. Researchers who have conducted research related to this field are Hasan 'Ashi;¹¹ Daniel de Smet and Meryem Sebti;¹² Jules Janssen;¹³ Kayhul Fatimah al-Zahra;¹⁴ Amir Abbas Mahdavi Fard and Aminollah Shakeri Mowwahid;¹⁵ and Robert Wisnovsky.¹⁶

The research of Hasan 'Ashi contains, first, a comment and survey of Ibn Sina's interpretation, and second, contains twenty-three books of Ibn Sina's commentaries. According to him, six books are books of philosophical interpretation, and seventeen are mystical commentaries.¹⁷ The conclusion of Daniel de Smet and Meryem Sebti is very clear that Ibn Sina's approach to interpreting surah al-Ikhlā is philosophical. Even so, the purpose of its interpretation is theological, namely to assert the Oneness of God.¹⁸ The conclusion is the same as Kayhul Fatimah's finding. However, the topic of Fatimah's research is soul and cosmology.

Jules Janssen studies three of Ibn Sina's works, i.e., *al-Ishārāt*, *the Proof of Prophecy*, and *Kitāb al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ād*, on the type of Qur'anic interpretation. He concludes that all three parts of those works are almost nothing explicitly philosophical but rather kalāmīc and mystical, even though he makes an exception in explaining the power of the soul.²⁰ Likewise, the research conducted by Amir Abbas Mahdavi Fard and Aminollah Shakeri Mowwahid compares Ibn Sina's and Suhrawardi's methods of interpretation. The conclusion is that Ibn Sina's method is philosophical, and Suhrawardi's is mystical. Meanwhile, Wisnovsky's research analyzes the result of interpretations of philosophers and theologians of *al-Ishārāt*, like Nasir al-Tusi and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi.²¹ So, there is no relation directly with this topic, but only with the source of this research.

None of these studies explicitly explains the interpretation of Q.S. al-Nūr [24:35]. The only study directly related to Ibn Sina's interpretation of the verse is the work of Khalid Al Walid.²² This research has similarities as well as differences. The similarity lies in the method used by Ibn Sina in interpreting the verses of the Qur'an, namely the philosophical approach, as used in this research. This philosophical method is acknowledged by other researchers like 'Ashi, Daniel, Meryem, Fatimah, Mahdavi Fard, and Mowwahid. It differs from Jules Janssen's research, who rejects that Ibn Sina's interpretation is not philosophical but theological and mystical. We believe Janssen's result is not true for two reasons. First, he did not read Ibn Sina's work comprehensively. In his introduction of *Mi'rāj Nāma*, or Prophet Muhammad's ascent to heaven,²³ Ibn Sina says that he uses a rational (philosophical) approach in explaining *mi'rāj*. Second, philosophy, mysticism, and theology in Ibn Sina's thought are not separable.

Likewise, the object, namely Q.S. al-Nūr [24:35], has been the subject of Khalid Al Walid's research. The scope and sources of research, however, are different. This study focuses on the soul's ontological, cosmological and psychological aspects, while Al Walid focuses on the epistemological aspects. So, this

research is more comprehensive because it uses multiple methods. Besides that, the primary source is not limited to the interpretation of Q.S. al-Nūr [24:35] in the book of *al-Ishārāt*. This study compares with two other treatises, namely *Tafsīr Āyāt al-Nūr*²⁴ and *Risālah fi Ithbāt al-Nubuwwah*.

The purpose of this study is, first, to analyze and explain the philosophical method Ibn Sina used in interpreting the Qur'an verses, especially Q.S. al-Nūr [24:35]. Second, to analyze the existence of the soul, which is used as a metaphor in explaining the term *nūr* and all its gradations. Therefore, the title of this research is philosophical-psychological. That is, Ibn Sina's method of interpretation has a rational-philosophical character, while the scope of the study is psychological. Third, to respond to the statement which accuses Ibn Sina's interpretation as misleading because it contradicts the Islamic creed stated by al-Ghazali and Al-Dzahabi.

Based on these facts, the researchers conclude that Ibn Sina's interpretation of the soul includes arguments about its existence, potential, and abilities of the human soul both ontologically and cosmologically. *Nūr*, or light, is the soul itself. When it reaches the peak of actuality, the soul will receive the radiance of revelation and be connected with God. This finding supports the conclusions of Mohammad Syifa Amin Widigdo, Shams C. Inati, and Peter Heath.

Approach and Method of Ibn Sina's Tafsir

The etymological meaning of interpretation comes from the word *al-fasru* which means clear and real. In the book *Lisān al-'Arab*, it is stated that *al-fasru* has the meaning of opening the veil, while *al-tafsīr* means revealing the meaning of words that are not understood to be clear and real.²⁵ Hasan 'Ashi states that the linguistic meaning of the interpretation is *al-bayān wa al-kashf*, which means disclosure.²⁶ *Kashf* means the process of uncovering the meaning of the verses, in parts or whole, and at the same time explaining the meaning. This meaning is distinguished from the term *ta'wīl*, defined as *al-murajja'*, which means the place of return. In comparison, the interpretation is an explanation of the pronunciation or verses using clear arguments, *qat'ī*. At the same time, *ta'wīl* is an explanation of the verses by using the arguments of presumption, suspicion, and *zannī*.

Some scholars distinguish between the two classifications, but others consider the same. The difference between the two lies only in the level of disclosure and explanation of the verse being interpreted, such as a simple explanation called *tafsīr*, while a long and complex explanation is called *ta'wīl*. Ibn Sina, in his works, the treatise on *Tafsīr Ayāt al-Nūr* and also in *Fi Ithbāt al-Nubuwwah*, mentions both.²⁷ The literal meaning of *al-ramzu* is a sign, *ishārāt*, and guidance. Therefore, the term *rumūz* refers to the Qur'anic verses, especially the letter of al-Nūr [24:35]. The researchers in this paper use an interpretation with the same meaning as *ta'wīl*.

In addition to distinguishing between *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl*, the scholars also classify the models of interpretation based on the method used, such as *al-tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* or *bi al-riwāyah* and *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'yi*, which include *al-tafsīr al-falsafī*, *al-tafsīr al-sūfī*, *al-tafsīr al-'ilmī*. It is called the interpretation *bi al-ma'thūr* because it interprets the verses with other verses or with the *hadīth*. It is called *al-tafsīr al-falsafī* because its interpretation uses philosophical principles, such as narratives and arguments based on rational proof.²⁸ Using rational indicators of philosophy, Ibn Sina's approach to the Qur'an can be classified as philosophical.

As for the objects and themes discussed, the interpretation has many features and characters. Fazlur Rahman, for example, mentions ten main themes of the Qur'an: God, humans as individuals, humans as part of society, the universe, prophethood and revelation, eschatology, demons and evil, the birth of the Muslim community, the condition of Muslims, *ahl al-kitāb* and religious differences. Scholars and

exegetes explain that the Qur'an is a source of knowledge that contains various fields of discipline, and the themes that can be studied and interpreted are not only limited, as mentioned by Fazlur Rahman. Patterns and interpretations based on certain themes and topics are called thematic interpretations.

The style and model of Ibn Sina's interpretation can be classified as thematic interpretation, *maūd'ī*, which is specific to certain themes.³⁰ In addition, thematic interpretation means to interpret certain verses. Therefore, Ibn Sina does not interpret all verses, but only a few verses and letters, such as *al-Nūr*, *al-Ikhlās*, *al-Falaq*, and also *al-Nās*.

Apart from being rational-philosophical, Ibn Sina's interpretation also focused on the importance of perfecting and actualizing the potential of the human soul. This can be seen in the treatise on *Tafsīr Ayāt al-Nūr*, *al-Ishārāt*, as well as in the treatise of *Fī Ithbāt al-Nubuwwah*.³¹ These interpretations are the focus and objects of research in this paper which are analyzed comparatively with other interpretations.

Likewise, the method applied in interpreting certain verses uses the philosophical approach. It is called the philosophical method because the explanation, narration, and argumentation used in interpreting the verses of the Qur'an employ a rational or demonstrative approach, *burhānī*.³² The characteristic of demonstrative rationale is to use rational evidence based on logical premises. This method is also known as *manhaj al-tafsīr al-ijtihādī (al-'aqlī)*.³³ According to Henry Corbin, the method and process of interpretation used by Ibn Sina is nothing but a process of mental work or psychological events. Therefore, the interpretation is an attempt to understand the events experienced by the soul. The text acts as an intermediary to express the meaning of the experiences in the soul.³⁴

This argument is based on the philosophical principle of Ibn Sina himself that only the soul can understand the events and actualization processes that occur in the soul. Therefore, the soul will not carry out the process of actualization, perfecting itself, and finding the truth in the text without returning to the Truth itself. The methods and means of finding the truth are nothing but seeing and through the soul. According to al-Kindi,³⁵ this process is the main and highest goal of philosophy, which is understanding, knowing, and finding the True One, *al-haq*.

Ontological and Cosmological Argument on Soul

The soul,³⁶ in Ibn Sina's thought, is the central and most important theme. This concept always appears in his works, both in encyclopedic and general books such as *al-Shifā'*, as well as in his books aimed at special people, such as *al-Ishārāt*. Therefore, Peter Heath mentions that the study of the soul throughout Ibn Sina's thought occupies a very special position, being the heart of his philosophy, and many works are devoted to the explanation of the soul.³⁷

According to Ibn Sina, the soul is a univocal concept that humans, animals, and plants share. The soul is also a name that is not only owned by humans but also by angels and nature in general. The soul is the perfection of the material body to become a living being. According to him, another meaning of the soul is a non-physical substance that moves with free will based on rational principles in the realm of reason and potentially in humans.³⁸

Although it is called the perfection of the body, it does not mean it comes from the physic itself. Ontologically, the human soul is an emanation from a perfect being, namely the universal soul. This soul does not mean the origin of the soul itself because the universal soul becomes the intermediary of the stump known as the Necessary Being.³⁹ It accompanies the birth of humans since the beginning of creation. The soul is potential and will actualize along with human physical development. The physical body is necessarily a condition for the existence of the soul, but regarding its immortality, the soul is independent of the body.⁴⁰

In the book *al-Ishārāt*, Ibn Sina tries to prove his claim by using an intuitive experience approach. He recommends to every human being who wants to prove the existence of his soul by looking inside, thinking, and contemplating himself, to look at something very substantial within oneself. If we are healthy and fit, we will see an essential entity within us that can be distinguished from something else, namely the body.⁴¹

Having advocated to look within oneself, Ibn Sina then asks, is it possible for a person to deny the existence of something in himself and not admit it? According to him, if someone denies the existence of self-consciousness, then the statement is not in accordance with the proof that humans have a mental vision and self-consciousness. Therefore, one cannot run or escape from one's consciousness even during sleep or when one is in a drunken state. He could not deny that he was aware of himself, even if later it would not remain in his memory.

To complete the argument, Ibn Sina adds other statements and approaches as evidence that the soul exists non-physically and does not depend on the physic. This theory later became known as the flying man.⁴² He recommends that a person created with a perfect physique without any shortcomings do contemplation. Even though all five senses are complete, imagine that all five senses cannot digest the external world, as if they were cut off from all the limbs. In such a state, it is as if he is flying in the air without a physical body that can feel, hear, see, touch, and perceive. At the same time, the only thing that remains is certainly his awareness of himself. Then at a time like that, it will appear and be seen clearly that what is present and exists is none other than his separate self, without feeling and helping of sensation from the five senses. Awareness of itself, through itself, and within itself is a proof of the existence of the soul which is an independent and non-physical substance. He can digest and realize even without the five senses.

Ibn Sina's method and proof of an independent soul does not stop at the above theory, but he then continues by asking questions. If it has arrived at such a condition, then the question is, is the consciousness he has still a part of his limbs or something else that separates from the physical body? If it is considered part of the physical or part of the brain, as empirical psychologists believe,⁴³ can the consciousness that exists in the brain be proven? For example, through surgery or presenting consciousness in a physical form?

To provide an answer to this question, Ibn Sina states that even if the human head were dissected, surely that knowledge and awareness would never be found. It is impossible to find words, writings, symbols, universal concepts, and a single letter contained in the nerves of the brain. Or vice versa, the particular concept, such as the concept of a tree obtained through sensing, will also never be found in the brain. Based on these arguments, Ibn Sina epistemologically shows that consciousness is not something physical, as well as a tool for knowing that is not physical, but the soul is referred to as a non-physical spiritual substance. According to Davidson, universal human knowledge that leads to certainty and truth cannot be based on empirical evidence but is obtained from outside the physical realm, namely from Divine emanations connected to the rational soul.⁴⁴

Cosmologically, Ibn Sina rejects the existence of the human soul before the body is created or already exists before humans are born. According to him, the soul is born simultaneously with the creation of humans. The argument presented by Ibn Sina is related to the relationship of soul and body in the unity of matter and form. If the human soul existed before the body, surely the soul would be singular or plural. If the souls are plural, the argument must be wrong and impossible because it is based on rational evidence that simple abstract forms of quiddity cannot be divided among individuals.⁴⁵ Therefore, the soul cannot be divided and different from one soul to another before joining the body.

Vice versa, it is impossible when the soul is already present with the body. The soul is essentially the only one for the whole body. This means that each body has a soul that is different from other bodies. So mathematically, the soul is a lot according to the number of the body itself. The soul will be present if the body has met the appropriate level according to the soul itself. With the appropriate size, the soul can occupy and use the body as a tool for actualization.⁴⁶

Ibn Sina asserts that after the soul is separated from the body, it does not mean that it reunites as before with the body. He will continue to be personal as he is with the body according to the conditions and levels when he is with the body. Therefore, once the body dies and disintegrates, the actual soul, in particular, will not disintegrate along with the dissolution of the body. He completely became a non-physical form.

The Implementation of Ibn Sina's Interpretation

All of Ibn Sina's explanations and arguments on the soul above become the basis for explaining and interpreting the verses. Among them is when Ibn Sina interprets Q.S. al-Nūr [24:35] by using the theory of the soul or intelligence and its relationship with the process of illumination of knowledge. Shams C. Inati mentions that Ibn Sina borrowed the terminology of the Qur'an in explaining light, soul, and its powers.⁴⁷ This verse is explained in three of his works, first, in the book *al-Ishārāt*, in the sub-chapter, *Fī al-Nafs al-Arbiyyah wa al-Samāwiyyah*, the soul of the heavens and the earth.⁴⁸ The second is explained in the treatise of *Fī Ithbāt al-Nubuwwah*.⁴⁹ Third, Ibn Sina wrote a special treatise on the interpretation of this verse, namely *Tafsīr Āyat al-Nūr*.⁵⁰

Several studies stated that the book *Ishārāt* is the last and most mature work of Ibn Sina, among other works.⁵¹ However, no one knows when they were written. However, if we refer to Ibn Sina's biography, which he wrote himself, the treatise was likely written in his youth, at the age of 20 years. At that time, he wrote a work entitled *Kitāb al-hāsil wa al-Mahsūl*, as many as 20 volumes dedicated to a scientist who was an expert in the fields of interpretation and fiqh, namely Abu Bakr al-Barqī, for asking Ibn Sina to write a book in this field.⁵²

In *al-Ishārāt*, Ibn Sina interprets Q.S. al-Nūr [24:35] when it comes to the discussion of theoretical reason. According to him, the classification of reason is divided into two kinds: practical and theoretical. The function of practical reason is to maintain and regulate the body to do something related to human problems and the perfection of the soul, *al-'aql al-'amalī, fa-min quwwāhā; mā lahā bihasbi hājātihā ilā tadbīr al-badan, wa hiya allatī takhtassu bism al-'aql al-'amalī, wa hiya allatī tastañbitu al-wājiba fīmā yajibu an-yaf'ala min al-umūr al-insāniyyah juz'iyatan*.⁵³

The purpose of these actions is that what humans want specifically can be achieved. As for the way to achieve the perfection of the soul through action and to arrive at the desired goal, it must go through three aspects, namely the intermediary of basic principles (*al-muqaddimāt al-awwaliyyāt*), the training process, and the help of theoretical reason, *litatawassala bihi ilā aghrādin ikhtiyāratin-min muqaddimātin awwaliyyatin, wa dzā'atin wa tajribiyyatin, wa bi-isti'ānihi bi l-'aql al-nazarī*.⁵⁴

In contrast to practical reason, whose perfection is through its actions in the human body, the function of theoretical reason is in the context of perfecting its substance into actual reason. Before arriving at the actual mind, according to Ibn Sina, there are other powers possessed by reason, which must also be actual.⁵⁵ These powers are preparation and prelude to arriving at the actual mind. The first power is called potential intellect, *'aqlan hayūlāniyyan*. In the Qur'an, according to Ibn Sina, this power is called *mishkāh*, as contained in the snippet of al-Nur [35], *mathalu nūrihī ka-mishkātin fihā misbāh*.⁵⁶

Another ability of theoretical reason is the acquired intellect, *'aqlan bi al-malakah*. This intellect, according to Ibn Sina, is *zujājah*, as contained in the verses, *al-misbāhu fī zujājah al-zujājatu ka'annahā kawkabun durriyyun*. Intellect is acquired when the objects of reason are present in the soul through the thought process or intuition. Meanwhile, *ash-shajarah az-zaitūnah*, which is a fragment of the verse *min shajaratīn mubārakatin zaitūnatin lā sharqiyyah wa lā gharbiyyah* is interpreted as an activity of the mind when carrying out the thought process and the presence of the object being thought of. This means that when the mind carries out a thought process, then from that process, it causes the presence of something in the soul. In addition to the activity of the thought process of reason, Ibn Sina mentions the word *zaitunah* as intuition.⁵⁷

In the treatise of *Fī Ithbāt al-Nubuwwah*, Ibn Sina tries to explain in more detail which combines the exoteric and esoteric aspects of the verse. For example, when Ibn Sina interprets the word *al-nūr*, in the verse of *Allāhu nūru s-samāwāti wa l-ardi*, he mentions two meanings: substance and metaphor. The meaning of *al-nūr* is substantially the perfection of the luminous container of the light receiver itself, *"wa al-dzati hiya kamāl al-mushiffu mih haytsu hiya mushiffun."*⁵⁸ This means that *nūr* is a perfectly transparent form and can receive light rays. Ibn Sina compares the meaning of *nūr* in substantial meaning to the *mishkāh*, which is considered a receptacle for receiving light. This is seen when Ibn Sina mentions that the most important receptacle for light is air, and the best air is *mishkāh*.

Meanwhile, the metaphorical meaning of *nūr* has two aspects: first, light is referred to as goodness itself. It means that light and reason are nothing but goodness, and secondly, light is the cause for the arrival of goodness. From these two aspects, *nūr* is God because He is goodness itself and is the cause of other goodness.⁵⁹ The words heaven and earth are signs of the entire universe and its contents. This sentence is more widely explained in his other work, namely in the treatise on *Tafsīr Ayāt al-Nūr*. Ibn Sina's model of interpretation is a combination of exegetes and sufis.⁶⁰

Based on this explanation, Ibn Sina states that the meaning of soul and the meaning of *nūr* are the same: an independent substance that is spiritual existence. The soul is the light that radiates to the sensory body. Therefore, he asserts that the *mishkāh* is the material mind and the rational soul because the *mishkāh* and the material mind have closeness in terms of the best form of receiving light.⁶¹ Everyone who has closeness and similar, it will be stronger and the light will be even more. The existence of actual reason is the same as light, so it is the vessel that receives it. Thus, the actual mind, the light, and the light-receiving are one and the same.

These arguments are then used as the basis and reasons why the human soul must carry out the process of actualization and purification in order to meet and unite with the Most Actual. This means that human knowledge will not reach a transparent source of knowledge except through a form that is also transparent and able to receive light rays. Therefore, in the Qur'an, it is mentioned that glass tubes are like sparkling, clean, and transparent stars that can receive light,⁶² not colored tubes that do not receive light. If the soul is still unable to purify itself and is attached to the senses, it will not be able to receive light.

Meanwhile, in the treatise on *Tafsīr Ayāt al-Nūr*, Ibn Sina interprets the verse in a different way than the two previous interpretations. While the two interpretations above of the same verse are more psychological-philosophical, the interpretation in this treatise uses a cosmological-philosophical approach in sequence, in more detail, from the beginning to the end of the verse. In the following verse, for example, *Allāhu nūr al-samāwāti wal-ardi* is explained by using three interpretations. First, what is meant by *al-samāwāt wa l-ard* is all the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth, including the souls of both. In fact, the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth are possible beings [potential forms], as well

as atoms, in which all of these beings receive an abundance of light from the form of God and not from the light apart from that being. Ibn Sina explicitly states that light is a form, and light can shine because of the light of the divine being.⁶³ Light and being are the same.⁶⁴ That Allah is the light itself that radiates His light to the heavens, the earth, and all that are in it. This model of interpretation was also put forward by the previous interpreter of Ibn Sina, like al-Thabari,⁶⁵ who said that God gives guidance to creatures in the heavens and on earth; they are guided through His light, *Hādī man fi al-samāwāt wa al-ard, fahum binūrihi ilā al-haqq yahtadūn*.⁶⁶

Second, *nūr* is interpreted as a guide to all inhabitants of the heavens and the earth.⁶⁷ In this context, the word *nūr* is the same as guidance, which is addressed to all beings for their benefit and to be on the straight path. Meanwhile, the existence of Allah, according to Ibn Sina, extends to cover all beings, even believers, and nothing is empty of that being.

The third meaning, *nūr* is the decorator of the heavens and the earth. Allah adorns and illuminates the sky with *'arsh*, chair [throne], *lawh*, *qalam* [pen], *sidrah al-muntahā*, paradise, *bait al-ma'mūr* [comfortable paradise]. The decoration also consists of high places in heaven, with the angels and His lovers, the servants who always glorify, those who prostrate, and those who read His verses.⁶⁸ Such an interpretation is also found in the work of al-Sulami,⁶⁹ a contemporary commentator of Ibn Sina.

As for the verse, *mathalu nūrihi ka-mishkātin fihā misbāh al-misbāhu fī zujājah* has been interpreted as the nature of light and its traces, the sign is clear and bright, like a cavity through which the light of a lamp shines, and the light of the lamp is in a very clean glass, which was the light is lit because of the presence of very clean oil. According to Ibn Sina, the *mishkāh* [chimney] is like the inner side of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, which is high, noble, and holy. *Al-zujāj* is his heart which is full of goodness and clean of all impurities.⁷⁰

Compare this with the previous interpretations, which mention the *mishkāh* as a layer of the mind or soul. However, when he mentions that the *mishkāh* is the inner side of the Prophet, what is meant is none other than his soul.⁷¹ Meanwhile, *al-misbāh*, according to Ibn Sina, is the light of knowledge and faith filled by Allah through His radiance. It gathered the light of a lamp and adorned the light of a glass tube, clean from every sin and evil. So, with that dimension, he is called light above light, *nūrun 'alā nūrin*. As for the light contained in the *mishkāh*, it is the light above that light, all of which is none other than the light itself.

Based on this interpretation, it can be concluded that *nūrun 'alā nūrin* is the highest light and the purest. In *al-Shifā'*, Ibn Sina confirms that the highest level of the soul is holy intellect (*al-'aql al-quḍsi*). According to Muhammad Syifa Amin Widigdo, this holy intellect plays an important role in the revelation process.⁷² However, since this holy intellect is very high, not everyone has it, *illā annahu rāfi'un jiddan laysa mimma yashtariku fihī al-nāsu kulluhum*. This intellect is only owned by the prophets, *wa hādihā darbun min al-nubuwwah, bal a'lā quwa al-nubuwwah*.⁷³

Another illustration of *al-zujāj*, apart from being like the heart of the Prophet, is like the stars full of light. This similarity is due to the light that is the identity contained in the *zujāj* and the stars. The meaning of the stars here is the largest star, and its light and radiance are like the sun that can illuminate other stars.⁷⁴ This explanation is an interpretation of the sentence, *al-zujājatu ka'annahā kawkabun durriyyun*.

No	Verses	<i>Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbihāt</i>	<i>Fi Ithbāt al-Nubuwwah</i>	<i>Tafsīr Ayāt al-Nūr</i>
	<i>Allāh nūru s-samawāti wa l-rad</i>		Nūr has two meanings; substantial and metaphorical. Substantially, it is the perfection of the luminous receptacle of the light receiver. Metaphorically, it has two aspects: the first is goodness. Light and reason are nothing but goodness, and secondly, light is the cause of the arrival of goodness.	Ibn Sina uses three approaches. First, light is a form, and light can shine because of the light of the divine being. As for <i>as-samāwāti wal-ard</i> , it is all inhabitants of the heavens and the earth, including the souls of both. Second, Allah is the guide to all the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth. The word <i>nūr</i> is the same as guidance. Third, that <i>nūr</i> is the decorator of the heavens and the earth.
	<i>Mathalu nūrihī ka-mishkātin fihā misbāh, wa l-misbāhu fi zujājah</i>	<i>Mishkāh</i> is the power of the human soul called potential intellect, <i>'aqlan hayūlāniyyan</i> .	<i>Mishkāh</i> is substantially the same as <i>nūr</i> , which is considered a receptacle for receiving light. <i>Mishkāh</i> is also called the material intellect and rational soul. Both have closeness in terms of the best form of receiving light	The nature of light and its traces, the mark is clear and bright, like a cavity through which the light of a lamp is contained within a very clean glass.
		Zujajah is the acquisition of reason, <i>'aqlan bi al-malakah</i> .		<i>Mishkāh</i> is the inner side of the Prophet Muhammad SAW., which is high, noble, and holy.

				<i>Misbāh</i> is the light of Allah's knowledge and faith-filled through His light.
				<i>Zujājah</i> is the Prophet's heart which is full of goodness and clean of all impurities.
	<i>Az-zujājah ka'annahā kawkabun durriyyun</i>			A star and the largest star that has a light, like a sun that can illuminate other stars. Likewise, the heart of the Prophet, like a star, shines on others.

Ibn Sina mentions in *al-Ishārāt* that at a higher and more important level than the *'aqlan bi al-malakah*, the acquired intellect is the holy reason or what is known as sacred intellect, *quwwah qudsiyyah*. The existence of this soul is translated from a fragment of the verse, *yakādu zaituhā yudī'u*. The ability of this soul is the highest, most important, and perfect among the other powers and is called the holy soul. It is always lit even without being touched by fire.⁷⁵ According to Ibn Sina, if the mind or the soul has reached this level, it will reach perfection, that is, the presence of objects of reason in the soul where these objects have similarities or are identical with the soul itself. The soul that has reached this perfection is translated or called light above light, *nūrun 'alā nūrin*, from a verse, *nūrun 'alā nūrin yahdī llāhu li-nūrihi man yashā'*.

The model of Ibn Sina's interpretation above is fully affirmed by Suhrawardi and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi,⁷⁶ although al-Razi states that *al-'aql al-fa'āl* is not part of the human soul, because it is he who moves the soul from potential to actual, from actual to acquisition. *Al-'aql al-fa'āl* is called fire, *al-nār*, from the verse, *wa law lam tamsashu nār*. Likewise, he mentions that *nūrun 'alā nūrin* is *'aql mustafād*, that is, acquired intellect.⁷⁷ As for the word *al-misbāh*, according to Ibn Sina, it is a power obtained after carrying out a thought process in which the process will be present at any time when needed and without any effort to present it. This perfection is called *'aqlan Mustafādan*.

In fact, according to Scott Michael Girdner, when al-Ghazali interprets light psychologically-ontologically in his work *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, he uses Ibn Sina's interpretation as the main reference and is very dependent on him.⁷⁸ According to al-Ghazali, the rational faculty is more worthy to be named light than the outward eye.⁷⁹ Likewise, if it is traced to the works of commentary before Ibn Sina, such as the commentaries of Ibn Abbas,⁸⁰ al-Thabari,⁸¹ and Hasan Bashri,⁸² as well as those of his contemporaries such as al-Sulami,⁸³ no trace of this philosophical interpretation, can be found.

As for in the treatise of *Fī Ithbāt al-Nubuwwah*, Ibn Sina interprets the verse of *yūqadu min shajaratin mubārakatin zaitūnatin*, as the potency of reason which is the locus and material for the actions of reason in the actualization process. As oil becomes matter and is prepared for the lamp, the potency of the soul becomes material for a reason to attain actuality.⁸⁴

Another verse, namely, *lā sharqiyyah wa lā gharbiyyah*, is interpreted using a semantic approach. According to him, linguistically, *sharq* is a place where light appears, while *gharb* is a place where light disappears.⁸⁵ With this approach, Ibn Sina asserts that rationality has no limits. Rational thought includes the West and the East, including the animal, plants, human soul, rational mind, potential mind, material reason, acquired mind, and actual reason.

While the verse, *yakādu zaituhā yudī'u wa law lam tamsashu nār*, is interpreted as the glory of the ability to think. Literally, the sentence of *wa law massahā* is interpreted to touch in a connected and stretched way. As for the word fire [*nār*], which also means light metaphorically, it has the same meaning as *nūr*, in essence, namely, the owner of the essence who is the cause for others. According to Ibn Sina, *nār* owns another property: light with its radiance. This is the existence of the fire [*nār*], which shines in relation to its radiance [*al-nūr*]. Although fire does not have light in its essence, it is generally luminous. When a fire is lit, it can illuminate the surroundings. Fire gets an abundance of light from light itself. When the fire [*al-nār*] covers its origin, it resembles the whole world.⁸⁶ This scope is not in an additional sense but in the sense of metaphorical delegation, which is what universal reason means.

According to Ibn Sina, this universal mind is not the One God, as the philosopher from Apodias, Plotinus, interprets the statement of Aristotle, the immovable mover, *muharrikun lā yataharrah*. The One God is the first intellect, namely One from all aspects and sides as well as from its forms and images. The Universal reason is not one in essence but is singularly accidental. He gets an abundance of oneness from a single essence, namely God Almighty.⁸⁷ This principle is known in peripatetic philosophy as the rule that a single cause will not produce an effect except for a single one.

Meanwhile, in the treatise of Tafsir *Ayāt al-Nūr*, the verse of *yūqadu min shajaratin mubārakatin zaitūnatin*, is interpreted as a burning, *misbāh*, or it is also stated that the lit lamp comes from the tree of goodness. While the meaning of the tree in this verse, according to Ibn Sina, is the body of the Prophet Muhammad filled with goodness and luck. While olive, oil, or lubricant substitutes for trees and refers to emptiness and freedom from dirt and cloudiness. Such an interpretation can be found in al-Tabari's work.⁸⁸ Likewise, according to Ibn Sina, the tree also does not only originate or present in the West, or vice versa, namely the East, but includes both East and West.⁸⁹ This explanation is an interpretation of the verse, *lā sharqiyyah wa lā gharbiyyah*, which has the same interpretation as in the book of *Ishārāt*.

For Ibn Sina, by using the metaphor of light, there is no need for argument and proof. Light is self-evident. Whoever sees this fact, even if there is no evidence of miracles or other evidence, that person's heart will be enlightened. This is what is meant by the snippet of the verse, *yakādu zaituhā yudī'u wa law lam tamsashu nār*.

When Ibn Sina previously interpreted *nūr* as one of them as a guide, he interpreted it from the following verse; *yahdī llāhu li-nūrihī man yashā'*, which is contained in the same verse. Therefore, the meaning of the verse is that Allah is the form of the Guiding One, *al-hādī*, to his servants to convert to Islam and believe and direct them to the right path. In what ways does God guide? Ibn Sina answers the question, namely through the Prophet Muhammad SAW. In this context, Ibn Sina agrees with Ibn Abbas, al-Tabari, and Hasan Basri.⁹⁰

By referring to the Prophet Muhammad as a guide, Ibn Sina, in interpreting this verse, is consistent with the snippet of the previous verse, which states that the tree is the body of the Prophet while the lamp and light are the inner sides of the Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, whoever turns away from this guidance, his eyesight is lost, and when his eyesight is lost, all his light disappears. With the disappearance of light, he becomes a vain human. In order not to be a vain person and to be happy, please look and follow the instructions given by Allah, namely the Prophet Muhammad.

Verses	<i>Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt</i>	<i>Fi Ithbāt al-Nubuwwah</i>	<i>Tafsīr Ayāt al-Nūr</i>
<i>Yūqadu min shajaratīn mubārakatin zaitūnatin</i>	<i>Shajaratīn</i> is acquired intellect which is obtained when the objects of reason are present in the soul through thought processes or intuition.	A rational potential is the locus and material for the actions of reason in the actualization process.	As a burning <i>misbāh</i> or it is also mentioned that a burning lamp comes from the tree of goodness.
	<i>Zaitūna</i> is intuition		<i>Shajaratīn mubārakatin</i> is the body of the Prophet Muhammad which is filled with goodness and luck.
			<i>Zaitūna</i> is oil or lubricant, a substitute for trees, and refers to emptiness and being free from dirt and cloudiness.
<i>Lā sharqīyyah wa lā gharbiyyah</i>		<i>Sharq</i> is a place where light appears, while <i>gharb</i> is a place where light disappears. Rationality has no limits; the West and the East, including the animal soul, plants, human soul, rational mind, potential mind, material reason, acquired mind, and actual reason.	As a metaphor or sign of religious light, thus, the light covers both the West and the East. And not limited to countries or peoples in the West or the East. The light of Islam shone on the entire population of the land, both in the East and in the West.
<i>Yakādu zaituhā yudī'ū wa law lam tamsashu nār</i>	Interpreted as a secret sense or referred to as <i>quwwah qudsīyyah</i> . A higher and more important level than the acquired intellect.	<i>Wa law massahā</i> means to touch in a connected and stretched way. The word fire [<i>nār</i>] is also light metaphorically. It has similarities with the	The light is self-evident, and there is no need for argumentation and proof. When a person's soul is bright and luminous, even if there is no evidence of

		<p>meaning of <i>nur</i>, namely, the owner of the essence who is the cause for others. The fire in itself has no light, but it gets its abundance from light itself. When the fire [<i>nār</i>] covers its origin, it resembles the whole universe, which is majestic and equal to the universal mind. Therefore, the verse <i>yakādu zaituhā yudī'u wa law lam tamsashu nār</i> is as the glory of the ability of the mind.</p>	
<i>Nūrun 'alā nūrīn</i>	As a soul that is already perfect, up to actuality or <i>aql bi al-fa'āl</i> .		
<i>Yahdī llāhu li-nūrihi man yashā'</i>			Allah is the Being of the Guidance, <i>al-Hādi</i> , to his servants to convert to Islam and believe and direct them to the right path.

Although Ibn Sina interprets al-Nūr [24:35] in three different works, all the themes and topics described, in general, he uses philosophical methods and approaches, and the focus of the discussion is more on the inner (esoteric) aspects related to human psychological dimensions. Based on the research on the works of commentary before and contemporaries with Ibn Sina, such as Ibn Abbas, al-Tabarī, Hasan Basrī, and al-Sulamī, as well as on comparative study with the research results of Scott, Kristin, and Roxanne, it can be said that Ibn Sina is the first philosopher and commentator who interprets al-Nūr [24:35] ontologically and psychologically.

CONCLUSION

Based on a philosophical approach, Ibn Sina mentions that the word *nūr* contained in the Q.S. al-Nūr [24:35] is nothing but the soul or mind emanating from God. This light has layers and levels such as *Mishkāh*, *Misbāh*, and *Zujājah*. All these layers and levels are one substance with different abilities and powers. With this argument, it can be concluded that, first, Ibn Sina, in his interpretation, ontologically, always connects the human soul with the divine dimension, which is the origin and ultimate goal of the

soul's movement process. The potential of the human soul will actualize and become perfect only if it is connected with the Supreme Being, namely God. The more the human soul becomes a spiritual substance and purifies itself into a transparent form, the more ready and able to receive His rays of light or revelation. The second point shows that Ibn Sina's interpretation, apart from combining the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of the verse, also always integrates reason and revelation. These two points negate the accusations that Ibn Sina's philosophy or interpretation leads people to disbelief because his theories, arguments, and interpretations are considered contrary to the Qur'an and belief in Islam. Ibn Sina's philosophical approach to the Qur'an is not only applied in Q.S. al-Nūr but also in al-A'lā, al-Ikhlās, al-Falaq, al-Nās, and al-Fussilat.

This research demonstrates the validity of philosophical and psychological approaches in reading the Qur'an, namely on the surah al-Nur [24:35]. By using various methods in reading and interpreting the Qur'an, the meaning of the Qur'an is more comprehensive and more understandable. This research also shows that the goal of philosophy does not contradict the vision of the Qur'an or revelation, as has been proven by Ibn Sina. Revelation comes down through the soul or intellect, namely holy intellect, and can be understood only through and by the intellect.

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- 36 The term soul in Ibn Sina's writing is *al-nafs*, *al-'aql*, and *al-rūs*. *Al-nafs* is used when it refers to human abilities that have similarities with animals and plants. *Al-'aql* is used when the soul or *al-nafs* has reached actuality. This sense is only specific to humans. As for spirit or *rūs*, it is usually used in the inner dimension or deeper on the power of *al-nafs*, like *al-rūh al-qudsī* which is at the same level as the holy intellect, *al-'aql al-qudsī*.
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- ⁷⁷ Roxanne D. Marcotte, "Suhrawardī(d.1191) and His Interpretation of Avicenna's (d. 1037) Philosophical Anthropology" (McGill University, 2000), 151.
- ⁷⁸ Scott Michael Girdner, "Reasoning with Revelation: The Significance of the Qur'anic Contextualization of Philosophy in Al-Ghazali's *Mishkat Al-Anwar* (The Niche of Lights)" (Boston University, 2010), 205.
- ⁷⁹ Al-Ghazali, *The Niche of Lights-Mishkah Al-Anwar, A Parallel English-Arabic Text Translated, Introduced, and Annotated by David Buchman* (Utah: Brigham Young University of Science, 1998), 6.
- ⁸⁰ Ibn Abbas, *Tanwīr Al-Miqbās Min Tafsir Ibn Abbās* (Beirut: Lidar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1992), 374.
- ⁸¹ Ibn Jarir al-Thabari, *Tafsir Al-Thabari, Jami' Al-Bayan an-Takwil Ayilqur'an, Juz 19*, 158.
- ⁸² Hasan Al-Bashri, *Tafsir Al-Hasan Al-Basri, Al-Juz Al-Thānī* (Kairo: Dar al-Hadith, n.d.), 159-160.
- ⁸³ Muhammad ibn Al-Husain Ibn Musa al-Ardi al-Sulami, *Haqaiq Al-Tafsir, Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Aziz, Al-Juz' Al-Awwal*, 45.
- ⁸⁴ Ibn Sina, *Tis'u Rasā'il Fi Al-Hikmah Wa Al-Tabī'iyāt*, 127 .
- ⁸⁵ Ibn Sina, *Tis'u Rasā'il Fi Al-Hikmah Wa Al-Tabī'iyāt*, 125.
- ⁸⁶ Ibn Sina, *Tis'u Rasā'il Fi Al-Hikmah Wa Al-Tabī'iyāt*, 127.
- ⁸⁷ Ibn Sina, *Tis'u Rasā'il Fi Al-Hikmah Wa Al-Tabī'iyāt*, 127..
- ⁸⁸ Sands, "Commentary (Tafsir) and Allusion (Ishara): A Comparative Study of Exoteric and Sufi Interpretation of the Qur'an in Classical Islam," 252-258.
- ⁸⁹ Ashi, *Al-Tafsir Al-Qur'āniyyah Wa Al-Lughah Al-Sūfiyyah Fi Falsafah Ibn Sina*, 88.
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