

From Existential Vacuum to Divine Submission: A Post-Secular Hermeneutical Inquiry into Frankl and Thānwī's Doctrines of Meaning

Zafar Iqbal¹

Abstract: This paper presents a comparative hermeneutics of healing by examining Viktor Frankl's logotherapy alongside the Islamic tradition of *tazkiyah al-nafs*, particularly as articulated by Ashraf 'Alī Thānwī. While Frankl's framework locates meaning within the self through the "will to meaning," it remains ontologically grounded in secular autonomy and existential immanence. In contrast, *tazkiyah*—rooted in Qur'ānic revelation and prophetic spirituality—presents meaning as divinely anchored and realized through submission (*ubūdiyyah*). Drawing on Thānwī's texts such as *Tarbiyat al-Sālik*, *al-Takashshuf* and *Ashraf al-Jawāb*, the paper argues that these two models are not interdisciplinary partners but metaphysically incompatible paradigms. Meaning, in the Islamic tradition, is not self-constructed but revealed, not therapeutic but devotional. This paper therefore proposes a post-secular rethinking of philosophical counseling that affirms a metaphysical *either/or* rather than an integrative "and," reclaiming *tazkiyah* from the reductionism of modern psychology and repositioning it as a theologically coherent alternative to Western therapeutic discourses.

Key-words: Frankl; Thānwī; Logotherapy; Tazkiyah al-Nafs; Existential Vacuum; Divine Submission; Post-Secular;

¹Researcher, University of Karachi, Pakistan; University of Coimbra, Portugal,
Email: zafar.q.iqbal@gmail.com

Introduction

Context: The Modern Crisis of Meaning

The rise of secular modernity has yielded immense scientific and technological advancement, yet it has also intensified a pervasive existential malaise across Western societies—a phenomenon Viktor Frankl identified as the “existential vacuum” (Frankl, 2006). This emptiness is marked by spiritual restlessness, nihilism, and a loss of higher purpose, increasingly evident in the psychological landscape of post-war modernity. The human being, in the absence of metaphysical orientation, experiences an acute crisis of meaning, which therapeutic models like logotherapy attempt to address.

Viktor Frankl and Logotherapy: An Overview

Frankl’s logotherapy asserts that human beings are driven not by pleasure (Freud) or power (Adler), but by a “will to meaning”—a search for purpose even amidst suffering (Frankl, 1985). His therapeutic approach encourages clients to uncover self-determined meaning through existential responsibility and attitudinal change, without necessarily grounding that meaning in any divine or transcendent source (Batthyany, 2019). This humanistic foundation renders logotherapy accessible across secular societies, yet its metaphysical neutrality raises fundamental questions regarding the objectivity and durability of the meaning it promotes.

Islamic Spiritual Epistemology and the Tradition of Tazkiyah al-Nafs

In stark contrast, the Islamic tradition offers a metaphysically grounded and theologically structured model for confronting existential crisis—tazkiyah al-nafs, the purification of the soul. This tradition views the self not as a self-originating source of meaning, but as a moral and spiritual agent whose fulfillment lies in submission (‘ubūdiyyah) to divine will (Nadwī n.d., 52). Rooted in Qur’ānic revelation (e.g., 91:7–10) and prophetic guidance, tazkiyah is both a sacred obligation and a holistic path to inner alignment with the transcendent (Thānvī, n.d.a, 407). It addresses the human condition not through psychoanalytic categories but through an ontological map of the soul—nafs ammārah, nafs lawwāmah, and nafs muṭma’innah—each corresponding to varying levels of spiritual development. He strove for a taṣawwuf that would be in complete harmony

with the Qur'ān and ḥadīth. His remarkable contribution in this field, as Marcia K. Hermansen has pointed out, is his “attempt to rework Ṣūfism into a more acceptable expression consistent with Islamic legalism” (Hermansen 2007, 7).

Why Ashraf Ali Thānwī? A South Asian Case Study

Among modern exponents of *tazkiyah al-nafs*, Maulānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānwī (1863–1943) occupies a distinctive place for integrating classical Ṣūfī disciplines with a systematic theological framework. A master of Islamic spirituality, he was, as Barbara Metcalf notes, “widely considered the preeminent Sufi of modern India” (Metcalf 1982, 157). Drawing on Qur'ānic revelation and Prophetic tradition, his writings—such as *Tarbiyat al-Sālik (Training of the Spiritual Wayfarer)*, *al-Takashshuf ‘an Muhimmāt al-Taṣawwuf (Unveiling of the Important Issues of Sufism)*, *al-Tashsharuf bi-Ma‘rifat aḥādīth al-Taṣawwuf (Honoring the Knowledge of the Ḥadīths of Sufism)* and *Ashraf al-Jawāb (Ashraf’s Response)*—outline a structured program of moral and spiritual reformation that engages the crises of meaning and mental distress in modern life without subsuming them under secular psychotherapy. Rather than adopting Western psychological categories, Thānwī’s approach remains explicitly theological and eschatologically oriented: mental well-being is tied to ethical rectitude, repentance, and nearness to God, not merely emotional adjustment (Rizivī, 1979). His pedagogical method reflects psychological insight but is firmly rooted in the normative Islamic epistemology; for instance, he classified audiences according to intellectual and spiritual capacity, prescribed bibliotherapy through carefully selected texts, and emphasized the formative role of early moral training and family environment. These features illustrate that Thānwī’s framework cannot be reduced to Western therapeutic models. Instead, it provides an indigenous South Asian paradigm of spiritual healing that serves as a vital counterpoint to Frankl’s logotherapy—especially in a post-secular philosophical discourse where the metaphysical foundations of meaning are under renewed scrutiny.

Research Question and Methodology

This study explores the following question: To what extent can logotherapy and *tazkiyah* be seen as competing or complementary paradigms in addressing the crisis of meaning in modern life? Using a comparative hermeneutic method, it analyzes their ontological premises, epistemological claims, therapeutic goals, and views on the nature of

suffering and the self. The analysis draws upon primary sources (Frankl's texts and *Thānwī's* writings) and secondary literature in Islamic philosophy, spiritual epistemology, and philosophical counseling.

Structure of the Paper

Following this introduction, the paper is organized into six core sections: (1) the modern crisis of meaning and Frankl's logotherapy; (2) the Islamic framework of *tazkiyah al-nafs*; (3) *Thānwī's* spiritual epistemology; (4) a comparative ontological analysis; (5) the epistemological and metaphysical incompatibility between the two paradigms; and (6) implications for a post-secular hermeneutics of healing and philosophical practice. The conclusion synthesizes the findings and argues that meaning, from the Islamic perspective, is not a therapeutic construct but a theologically revealed pursuit of divine proximity.

1. The Existential Vacuum and the "Will to Meaning"

Post-War Western Modernity and Spiritual Emptiness

The unprecedented scientific and technological progress of the modern West has failed to resolve the inner emptiness of human beings. Instead, it has intensified what Viktor Frankl called the "existential vacuum"—a pervasive sense of meaninglessness and inner void (Frankl, 2006). Frankl traced this condition to the collapse of traditional values and metaphysical anchoring in post-war Europe, arguing that modern societies had become "Sunday neuroses," spiritually fatigued without moral direction (Frankl, 1985). The secular world, in rejecting divine teleology, left the self with freedom but no guidance, autonomy but no purpose. As Charles Taylor (1989) notes, modern identity became a "buffered self," sealed from transcendence. Frankl viewed this existential vacuum not as a mere psychological disorder, but as a spiritual crisis of Western civilization. In his view, this void leads to boredom, depression, substance abuse, and even suicide, as individuals fail to identify a reason to endure suffering or delay gratification (Frankl, 1985). He critiques both Freudian psychoanalysis, which locates human motivation in the will to pleasure, and Adlerian psychology, which centers on the will to power. For Frankl, the human being is ultimately a "meaning-seeking" creature, and this will to meaning must be acknowledged as fundamental.

The Concept of “Will to Meaning” in Logotherapy

Central to Frankl’s logotherapy is the conviction that the will to meaning constitutes the primary motivational force of human life. Drawing on phenomenology, he emphasized intentionality—the fact that consciousness is always directed “towards” something—as well as self-transcendence, the human orientation toward realities beyond the self (Frankl, 2004). Thus, meaning is not invented arbitrarily but discovered within concrete situations (Frankl, 1988). Even in suffering, the task of the individual is to discern what unique meaning lies latent in the experience. As Frankl noted, echoing Nietzsche, “He who has a why to live can bear with almost any how” (Frankl 1984, 97). This existential search is not merely therapeutic but ontological: being human is to be directed toward something other than oneself.

Secular Grounding of Meaning: Autonomy and Immanence

Although Frankl’s framework resists reductionism, it remains grounded in a secular-humanist ethos. Meaning, in his conception, is immanent—rooted in lived experience, moral responsibility, and creative acts rather than obedience to divine command (Batthyany, 2019). His appropriation of Max Scheler’s phenomenology of values further underscores this point: valuing is always an intentional act, whereby individuals relate to events, objects, or relationships through the meanings they ascribe (Davis and Steinbock, 2021). Yet, this very inclusivity exposes a metaphysical fragility. Without an objective transcendent anchor, meaning risks remaining contingent, unstable, and vulnerable to collapse under conditions of profound suffering (Taylor, 1989).

Frankl's Critique of Freud and Adler

Frankl diverged from Freud and Adler not only in clinical technique but in philosophical anthropology. Freud’s will to pleasure and Adler’s will to power, he argued, strip the human condition of its spiritual and moral depth (Frankl, 1985). In contrast, logotherapy situates the human subject as capable of conscience—an intentional act that discerns meaning even when it conflicts with accepted norms (Frankl, 1988). By reintegrating purpose, responsibility, and ethical decision-making into therapy, Frankl transformed psychotherapy into a quasi-philosophical discipline that addresses the whole human being rather than a mechanistic bundle of drives.

Meaning without Metaphysics: Humanism in Crisis?

While Frankl's existential analysis offered a crucial corrective to reductionist models, its post-metaphysical grounding left important questions unresolved. Meaning in logotherapy is discovered rather than constructed, yet it remains trans-subjective—shaped by individual conscience within historical and cultural frameworks, but without ultimate metaphysical accountability (Frankl, 1988). As MacIntyre (1984) and Taylor (1989) have shown, the secular moral agent is often burdened with constructing ethical meaning *ex nihilo* in a disenchanted world. In such a framework, meaning may provide therapeutic comfort but cannot ensure ultimate redemption. This limitation underscores the contrast with the Islamic paradigm of *tazkiyah al-nafs*, where meaning is divinely revealed, eschatologically grounded, and oriented toward salvation rather than existential consolation.

2. *Tazkiyah al-Nafs* in Islamic Tradition

Qur'ānic and Prophetic Foundations of Tazkiyah

In Islamic tradition, *tazkiyah al-nafs*—the purification of the soul—is not a later mystical construct, but a core Qur'ānic mandate. The Qur'ān emphasizes the success of one who purifies the soul: “He has succeeded who purifies it, and he has failed who corrupts it” (Qur'ān, 91:9–10).

This call to inner purification is repeated throughout the Prophetic tradition, where *ihsān* (spiritual excellence) is the highest of three levels of religion: *Islam* (outward submission), *īmān* (faith), and *Ihsān* (worship as though seeing God). (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 1997, Beliefs [Book 2], Ḥadīth 43) Thus, the cultivation of the soul is not therapeutic but devotional, embedded in eschatological awareness and obedience to divine command (Thānwī 1428, 29:337-338).

Theological Grounding: Tawḥīd, 'Ubūdiyyah, and Ākhirah

The foundation of *tazkiyah* (purification of the soul) lies in *tawḥīd* (divine unity), which affirms that all aspects of life—including spiritual healing—must remain oriented toward God. Unlike secular models that center the autonomous self, Islamic spirituality centers *'ubūdiyyah* (servitude), wherein meaning is not self-constructed but divinely revealed. For Thānwī, *tazkiyah* and the inner purification associated with *taṣawwuf*

are valid only when attained through strict adherence to the Shari‘ah. As he writes, “taṣawwuf is the discipline which, when practiced, leads to the purification of the inner self, through which a person attains acceptance in the Divine presence and is elevated in rank and spiritual station.” (Nadwī n.d., 29). He further insists that the true purification which ensures success is that which arises from compliance with divine law, citing the Qur’ānic verse “He has indeed succeeded who purifies it” (Nadwī n.d., 27). In this vision, the objective of tazkiyah is not merely to relieve psychological distress but to secure ultimate falāḥ (salvation), which remains inseparable from obedience to divine command.

Ontology of the Nafs: Ammārah, Lawwāmah, Muṭma’innah

The Qur’ān delineates three primary states of the soul (nafs), a framework subsequently elaborated by Islamic scholars, presenting an ontological structure wherein the soul is not a static psychological construct but a dynamic moral entity capable of spiritual elevation through human effort and divine assistance. Thānwi identifies the nafs al-Ammārah (the soul commanding to evil) as the initial and lowest stage. This state is characterized by its primary tendencies toward heedlessness (ghafalah) and desire (shahwat), which are interlinked, with heedlessness fostering desire and vice versa. In this phase, the soul exerts consistent dominance over human will, propelling individuals toward persistent engagement in immoral and reprehensible actions. It resists spiritual struggle (mujāhadah) and acts of obedience (ṭā‘āt), aligning with the Qur’ānic depiction of the soul inclined to evil (Qur’ān 12:53).

The intermediate stage, nafs al-Lawwāmah (the self-reproaching soul), is attained through spiritual exertion and piety. Here, the soul remains partially unsubdued, oscillating between succumbing to desires and striving for obedience. It alternates between dominance and submission, yet notably experiences remorse and self-censure for its failings, corresponding to the Qur’ānic portrayal of the soul that reproaches itself (Qur’ān 75:2).

The highest echelon, nafs al-Muṭma’innah (the contented soul), is described by Thānwi as a state wherein the soul is fully subdued through sustained struggle, achieving complete obedience and inner tranquility, devoid of evil actions. Though it may encounter subtle whisperings (waswās) or fleeting immoral thoughts, it swiftly rectifies itself with minimal effort, akin to a well-disciplined horse responding to its rider’s

cue. This state of absolute peace with divine will is reflected in the Qur'ānic verses (89:27–30).

Tazkiyah as Sacred Obligation, not Psychological Strategy

Contrary to modern psychotherapeutic approaches, *tazkiyah* is not an optional wellness technique. It is a religious duty (*fard 'ayn*) rooted in revelation. It does not aim to increase self-esteem or resolve cognitive dissonance but to actualize the soul's submission (*taslīm*) to the Divine. As such, it frames suffering not merely as an obstacle to be managed, but as a divinely crafted trial that catalyzes inner growth (*ibtīlā'*) (Nadwī n.d., 26–27).

Taṣawwuf, Shari'ah, and Ethical Discipline

While *tazkiyah* is often associated with *Taṣawwuf*, its legitimacy is derived not from mystical states (*aḥwāl*) but from its grounding in *Shari'ah*. Ashraf 'Alī Thānwī's work systematically integrates ethical purification within the bounds of orthodox jurisprudence. He repeatedly emphasizes that *tazkiyah* is meaningless without adherence to divine law, and that ecstasy without ethics is deception. This combination of spiritual striving and legal discipline reflects an epistemology that sees divine guidance as necessary for navigating inner transformation.

Thānwī's Position in the Tazkiyah Tradition

Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānwī stands out as one of the most methodical exponents of the *tazkiyah al-naḥs* tradition in modern South Asia. Through pivotal works such as *Tarbiyat al-Sālik*, *Ashraf al-Jawāb*, and *Tazkiyah-e-Akhlāq*, he articulated a comprehensive model of spiritual reformation rooted in Qur'ānic injunctions and Prophetic guidance (Thānwī 1983). Rather than reducing moral ailments to mere psychological dysfunction, Thānwī conceptualizes them as an ontological misalignment—the soul's estrangement from its Divine origin. His framework emphasizes *niyyah* (ethical intentionality), *mujāhadah* (disciplined striving), and *murāqabah* (continuous God-consciousness) as essential therapeutic acts. Drawing upon classical Ṣūfī insights but addressing modern anxieties, Thānwī classified audiences according to intellectual and spiritual capacity, recommended specific texts as a structured form of bibliotherapy, and highlighted the formative role of early childhood moral training—especially the mother's influence as expounded in *Bahishti Zewar* (Ornaments of Paradise). Within this schema, spiritual illnesses are diagnosed through dialogue and treated through

personalized regimens, whether via prescriptive reading, supervised retreats at the Khānqāh Imdādiyāh, or ethical reorientation under a spiritual guide. In this way, Thānwī's approach avoids emotionalism and uncritical mysticism, instead offering a systematic and scripturally grounded path of *tazkiyah* that remains deeply relevant in addressing the existential and moral crises of modernity.

3. Ashraf Ali Thānwī's Spiritual Epistemology: Between Theology and Therapeutics

Key Texts and Therapeutic Intent

Ashraf 'Alī Thānwī's writings constitute a highly organized corpus that integrates theology, ethics, and a distinctive form of spiritual therapy. His pivotal works were not conceived as psychological manuals in the modern sense; rather, they were crafted with the explicit aim of *iṣlāḥ* (moral reform) and *tazkiyah* (purification of the soul) grounded in Qur'ānic and Prophetic principles. The therapeutic dimension here is not incidental; it is woven into the very structure of his ethical discourse.

A central insight of Thānwī's method is his careful differentiation of audiences according to their intellectual and spiritual aptitude. In his counsel to seekers, he identified three broad groups: (i) those facing intricate theological or mystical problems needing technical precision; (ii) those with intermediate ethical or doctrinal struggles; and (iii) the general public troubled by everyday spiritual lapses. To address these, he deliberately adopted three registers of communication—specialized scholarly language, semi-technical discourse, and accessible vernacular—ensuring that the same ethical truths could reach people at different levels without distortion.

Another distinctive feature of Thānwī's approach is his development of what can be described as a theologically embedded form of bibliotherapy ('Arfī, 2000, pp. 75–76). Rather than issuing generic advice, he began by asking whether the individual's problem was *ikhtiyārī* (volitional) or *ghayr ikhtiyārī* (non-volitional)—a distinction he famously called “half of the spiritual path” (*nisf al-sulūk*). Misclassifying these states, he warned, leads to unnecessary guilt and deep psychological distress. For non-severe or volitional conditions, Thānwī often prescribed a targeted reading regimen. Depending on literacy level and temperament, seekers

were directed to specific texts—such as *Tarbiyat al-Sālik*, *Kamyābī kā Rāz*, or *Nisāb al-Iṣlāḥ*—with the expectation that reflection and practice upon these readings would initiate inner transformation.

Importantly, his method was dialogical and participatory rather than merely diagnostic. Reading, for *Thānwī*, was an act of *muḥāsabah al-nafs* (self-examination): the seeker engaged the text as if the shaykh were addressing him personally. This dialogical reading created an interior conversation, enabling the patient-disciple to identify misaligned intentions and reorient the self toward God. In this way, *Thānwī*'s bibliotherapy functioned as philosophical counseling rooted in metaphysics, aiming not at self-assertion but at 'ubūdiyyah (servanthood) and eschatological awareness (*Rizvī* 1985, 112–157)

What emerges from these works, therefore, is not a loose collection of moral exhortations but a coherent epistemic framework for spiritual healing. By clarifying the difference between volitional and non-volitional states and linking moral agency to divine submission, *Thānwī* sought to resolve the metaphysical confusions that often underlie both spiritual stagnation and psychological suffering. His ultimate aim was not superficial symptom management but the holistic reformation of the *nafs* through disciplined will, divine proximity, and moral clarity.

Will, Choice, and the Nature of the Soul

A cornerstone of *Thānwī*'s spiritual epistemology is his sharp distinction between voluntary (*ikhtiyārī*) and involuntary (*ghayr ikhtiyārī*) psychological states—a categorization that governs not only ethical accountability but also therapeutic response. Drawing upon both Qur'ānic ontology and psychological insight, *Thānwī* insists that the human soul (*nafs*) is shaped by its moral choices, not merely by passive emotional or cognitive states. In his diagnostic framework, many mental disorders arise when individuals confuse involuntary feelings (like fear, sorrow, or intrusive thoughts) with actionable volitional behavior. For instance, intrusive thoughts (*wasāwis*) are non-volitional and thus carry no sin or moral responsibility (*Thānwī* 1977, 143). However, choosing to dwell on or act upon them introduces volitionally and potential blameworthiness. *Thānwī*'s therapeutic insight is clear: "The failure to distinguish between what is within our control and what is not often becomes the root of mental disorder." He repeatedly emphasizes that awareness of whether a given state is actionable or not constitutes "half the path of *sulūk*." (*Thānwī* 1429,

2: 148–150, malfūz 212) This principle is not merely theological but psycho-spiritually functional. The one who confuses natural sorrow with spiritual failure will inevitably attempt to eradicate what is beyond their control, leading to despair, inner turmoil, and sometimes even suicidal ideation. Thānwī warned against such misdiagnoses, advising his disciples that therapy lies in naming, accepting, and reframing rather than controlling the uncontrollable. In sum, Thānwī's distinction between actions (af'āl) and states (aḥwāl), between choices and conditions, functions as a bedrock principle of his therapeutic model. While modern therapies often valorize emotional regulation through techniques, Thānwī places emphasis on moral discernment and theological orientation: one must know what one can will—and what one must surrender.

Role of Childhood and Early Moral Formation

Ashraf Ali Thānwī underscores the critical importance of early moral formation, positing childhood as the foundational phase for shaping the human soul. Diverging from secular developmental psychology, which often attributes personality development to unconscious drives or socialization, Thānwī anchors personal identity in moral character (akhlāq) and deems ethical cultivation during infancy and adolescence essential for subsequent spiritual well-being. He asserts that children are born with latent faculties—both constructive and destructive, noble and base—lacking inherent direction (Thānwī 2005). The early environment, particularly parental influence, steers these faculties toward virtue or vice. Among all influences, Thānwī emphasizes the mother's pivotal role, a perspective rooted in his observation that children, especially males, are predominantly nurtured in their mothers' care, where maternal ethics and habits leave a profound imprint (Thānwī 2005, 64). This conviction led him to author *Bahishtī Zewar*, not merely as a guide to ritual piety but as a psychospiritual framework for mothers, providing structured ethical and emotional training to foster morally grounded offspring. Thānwī regards the mother as the child's initial spiritual and psychological guide, shaping the inner psyche before formal education commences (Thānwī 2005).

Furthermore, Thānwī contends that many adult neuroses and moral failings trace back to childhood missteps—stemming from unmanaged emotions, blurred moral distinctions, and inadequate ethical oversight (Thānwī 2005). He illustrates this with an anecdote of a virtuous couple whose child exhibited a flaw linked to the mother's unintentional

act during pregnancy, underscoring the impact of maternal behavior even in utero (Thānwī 2005). Consequently, his concept of tazkiyah (self-purification) is inherently intergenerational and preventative, necessitating recognition of the spiritual damage originating in early familial settings to reform the nafs later in life. Unlike contemporary therapeutic models that often neglect theological intent in early development, Thānwī integrates spiritual teleology from the outset, viewing the child not merely as a social entity but as a moral traveler (sālik) whose initial steps define the soul's trajectory (Thānwī 2005). In this framework, childhood education transcends pedagogy—it is an ontological process.

Diagnosis through Dialogue and Personalized Spiritual Therapy

Thānwī's spiritual epistemology is anchored in the principle that authentic reform begins with an accurate and individualized diagnosis of moral and psychological ailments. The first and most decisive step is discerning whether the condition is ikhtiyārī (volitional) or ghayr ikhtiyārī (non-volitional)—a distinction he regarded as the very rūḥ al-sulūk (soul of the spiritual path). This classification is not a mere theoretical exercise; it determines both ethical accountability and the therapeutic course. For Thānwī, much human distress stems from confusing non-volitional states—such as grief, intrusive thoughts, or sudden fear—with volitional misconduct, resulting in needless guilt and despair. Conversely, treating sinful choices as inevitable psychological impulses fosters ghaflah (heedlessness) and moral laxity.

This diagnostic clarity structured the entire therapeutic method of Thānwī. When a seeker approached him with a spiritual or psychological concern, his first task was to evaluate whether the issue constituted an actual ailment and, if so, whether its roots were spiritual, moral, or cognitive. Only after establishing this foundation did he recommend a tailored regimen, which could include reading specific texts, engaging in devotional practices, or performing structured ethical exercises appropriate to the seeker's temperament and condition. Central to this process was dialogical engagement. In *Tarbiyat al-Sālik* and related works, Thānwī presents numerous question-and-answer cases, reflecting a case-based therapeutic approach. These are not abstract doctrinal discussions; they resemble philosophical midwifery, wherein the seeker describes their inner state and the guide offers a personalized remedy.

The therapeutic act here is as much about self-discovery as it is about divine reorientation (Thānwī n.d.b.). Thānwī's approach thus transcended both modern psychological counseling and mere moral exhortation. It constituted a dialogical and diagnostic praxis in which the goal was neither simplistic comfort nor abstract preaching, but uncovering the ontological roots of suffering and directing the seeker toward spiritually grounded healing. In this respect, his method exemplifies a post-secular model of philosophical therapy—simultaneously theological in foundation, methodical in diagnosis, and existential in aim (Khwāja, 1999).

Structured Life at Khānqāh Imdādiyāh

The Khānqāh Imdādiyāh—founded and administered by Ashraf 'Alī Thānwī—was not merely a spiritual retreat but a carefully regulated institution for ethical-spiritual transformation. Unlike modern therapeutic centers that often emphasize emotional release or subjective comfort, Thānwī's Khānqāh focused on discipline (tanẓīm), intentional living, and structured moral development. ('Alvī 1987, 112–113) A detailed daily schedule governed the activities of residents and visitors. The morning hours until noon were reserved for solitary work, reflection, and writing. During this time, Thānwī would not meet anyone except in urgent circumstances. From Ẓuhr until 'Aṣr, a general session was held where seekers could ask questions, raise concerns, and discuss matters openly. For more private issues, written slips placed in a designated box were encouraged, to which Thānwī would respond with individualized answers. This structured environment was not arbitrary—it was a therapeutic architecture. Thānwī believed that disorder in external routines contributed to internal chaos. Upon arrival, visitors to the khānqāh were asked to complete a written survey in which they recorded their personal background and spiritual history, clarified the specific purpose of their visit—whether they sought moral advice, healing, or had come out of curiosity—indicated the duration of their intended stay and any prior exposure to khānqāhi training, noted their familiarity with Thānwī's writings or lectures, and described their current emotional or moral struggles. This preliminary survey functioned as a diagnostic tool that enabled Thānwī and his aides to discern both the seeker's spiritual station (maqām) and intellectual maturity. On the basis of this information, seekers were either advised to read specific books as part of bibliotherapy, instructed to adopt particular spiritual practices, assigned to a teacher or

peer group for further guidance, or encouraged to remain in the *khanqah* for a designated period of time in order to benefit from its structured environment. The *Khānqāh* environment itself was pedagogical—residents lived in proximity, shared meals, attended daily *waʿz* (moral discourses), and often participated in *murāqabah* (spiritual vigilance) together. *Thānwī* insisted that communal life, if structured around mutual respect and shared spiritual aspiration, could act as a mirror (*mirʿāt*) for self-knowledge and ethical awareness. (Daryābādī, n.d., 22–23)

Importantly, *Thānwī* rejected any mystical romanticism of the *Khānqāh*. It was not a place for ecstatic experiences or idle piety. Rather, it was a laboratory of the soul, where the emphasis was on *muḥāsabah* (self-reckoning), *adab* (discipline), and purposeful submission to divine law. Thus, the *Khānqāh* functioned as both space and method—a concrete instantiation of *Thānwī*'s spiritual epistemology. It embedded structure not as external control, but as an ontological necessity for inner transformation.

Causal Diagnosis of Suffering and the Logic of Resignation

Ashraf 'Alī *Thānwī*'s therapeutic model is grounded in a causal and volitional understanding of suffering. Unlike modern psychotherapeutic approaches that often conflate emotional distress with pathological dysfunction, draws a sharp line between *ikhtiyārī* (voluntary) and *ghayr ikhtiyārī* (involuntary) states (Shafī n.d., 324). This distinction is not just a technical point—it forms the very epistemic and ethical bedrock of his spiritual psychology.

For *Thānwī*, many individuals suffer unnecessarily because they attempt to eradicate involuntary mental states (e.g., intrusive thoughts, sorrow, lack of spiritual ecstasy) that are not only beyond one's control but also not morally blameworthy. He repeatedly emphasizes that trying to remove such states through willful effort leads to frustration, despair, and sometimes suicidal ideation. Instead, he advises resignation (*riḍā*) and a shift in focus toward voluntary acts like prayer, repentance, and ethical self-discipline. (*Thānwī*, 1423, vol. 4, pp. 231–232, *Malfūz* 305). In his diagnostic framework, *Thānwī* first ascertains whether the problem is volitional or non-volitional—a process he calls “half of *sulūk*” (*Thānwī*, 1429 vol. 2, pp. 148–150, *malfūz* 212). Only if a state is actionable does he recommend specific strategies. Otherwise, he teaches the patient to adopt *ṣabr* (patience), *tawakkul* (trust in God), and *riḍā* (acceptance) as the

proper response. This approach also undergirds Thānwī's critique of those who seek mystical highs (dhawq, wajd, sukr) as therapeutic goals. He warns against pursuing such uncontrollable experiences, reminding seekers that authentic spiritual reform is grounded in deliberate effort, not emotional ecstasy. Just as physical illnesses are not cured by craving spontaneous health, spiritual sickness is not overcome by desiring altered states (Thānwī 2010 56-57).

Moreover, Thānwī rejects the reduction of suffering to pathology. Some forms of anguish are morally and metaphysically meaningful, especially when they signal alienation from God. In this framework, suffering becomes not something to eliminate but something to comprehend, endure, and reorient. He frequently cautions against excessive fixation on moods or inner states, advocating instead for a focus on outer discipline, inward intention, and trust in divine timing.

Finally, Thānwī's discourse of resignation is not passivity—it is active surrender (ubūdiyyah). It teaches the seeker to locate agency where it belongs: not in dominating one's psyche, but in submitting it to divine command. Therapy, in this framework, is not about mastering the self but about knowing the limits of the self and aligning it with God's will. (Nadwī n.d., 237–239).

4. Ontological Foundations: Contrasting Frankl and Thānwī

What Is the Self? Frankl: The Autonomous Moral Agent

Viktor Frankl conceives of the self as a responsible, autonomous moral agent whose core essence lies in the capacity for choice, meaning-making, and self-transcendence. In contrast to Freudian determinism and Adlerian reductionism, Frankl emphasizes that human beings retain a "freedom of will" even in the face of extreme suffering (Frankl, 2006). The human subject is not merely reactive or driven by unconscious impulses but possesses an inner freedom to take a stand toward conditions. This makes the individual both the source and bearer of meaning. The self is thus conceptualized within a secular moral humanism that posits existential freedom as central to personal identity (Batthyany, 2019).

Thānwī: The 'Abd (Servant) under Divine Command

In Ashraf 'Ali Thānwī's Islamic spiritual epistemology, the self is not an autonomous moral legislator but a divinely constituted 'abd—one

whose very being is contingent on Divine will. The nafs (soul) is understood as layered (ammārah, lawwāmah, muṭma'innah), each stage reflecting a level of moral and spiritual development. The ultimate goal is not freedom from constraint but freedom *within* divine constraint—ubūdiyyah. Selfhood is fulfilled not by asserting autonomy but by realizing one's dependence upon God. This ontological dependence transforms suffering and moral struggle into acts of worship and purification.

Where Does Meaning Reside?

Frankl: Meaning as Individually Discovered and Situational

Frankl proposes that meaning is not given but must be discovered through personal conscience and engagement with life's challenges. He defines logotherapy as the pursuit of meaning even in suffering, which becomes meaningful through the subjective stance one takes toward it (Frankl, 1985). Meaning is thus situational, individually constructed, and grounded in the immediacy of experience—what he calls "self-transcendence" (Batthyany, 2019).

Thānwī: Meaning as Divinely Revealed and Eschatologically Anchored

In contrast, Thānwī grounds meaning in revelation and eschatology. Life's significance is derived from its orientation toward the Hereafter (ākhirah) and accountability before God (Thānwī 1978). This framework transforms suffering into a test of faith and an opportunity for spiritual elevation. Meaning is neither situational nor subjective but anchored in eternal truths. Thānwī's corpus repeatedly emphasizes that divine pleasure (riḍā') is the highest form of meaning, attainable through submission, repentance, and ethical conduct (Nadwī n.d, 307).

Nature of Suffering. Frankl: Suffering as Opportunity for Meaning

Frankl views suffering as an existential given—inevitable yet potentially transformative. For him, the way in which a person chooses to bear suffering is what confers dignity and meaning (Frankl, 2006). He describes this capacity as the "last of human freedoms"—the ability to choose one's attitude in any given circumstance. The logotherapist thus reframes pain and adversity as catalysts for moral growth and self-transcendence.

Thānwī: Suffering as Divine Trial and Catalyst for Self-Purification

Thānwī understands suffering not merely as an existential challenge but as a divinely ordained trial (ibtilā'), integral to the spiritual

development of the believer. In his diagnostic method, Thānwī distinguishes between ikhtiyārī (volitional) and ghayr-ikhtiyārī (non-volitional) states, arguing that despair arises when people attempt to eliminate states that are not within their control ('Alī n.d.). Suffering, in this model, is a means of tazkiyah (purification), provided it is endured with sabr (patience) and reliance on divine mercy. It becomes spiritually damaging only when one seeks escape through autonomy rather than submission (Thānwī 1427, 167–168).

Therapeutic Roles Compared

Frankl's Logotherapy: Facilitator of Inner Discovery

In logotherapy, the therapist acts as a guide who helps the client discover meaning through introspection and choice. The process is largely non-directive, respecting the individual's autonomy and capacity to define personal values. The therapist does not supply meaning but draws it out from the client's own lived experience (Frankl, 1985).

Thānwī's Shaykh: Guide to Divine Submission and Ethical Reorientation

Thānwī's role as a shaykh is far more directive and prescriptive. He assumes the responsibility of spiritual diagnosis and intervention, often assigning specific readings (bibliotherapy), practices, or even temporary residence in the khānqāh for intensive moral rehabilitation (Rizvī 1979, 26–27). The aim is not personal authenticity but ethical and spiritual conformity to divine norms. Healing is framed as realignment with divine will, not self-expression.

Ultimate Ends of Healing

Frankl: Self-Transcendence toward Earthly Responsibility

Frankl posits that healing lies in self-transcendence—moving beyond the ego to serve higher values, which often include relationships, work, or moral responsibility (Frankl, 2006). Although his thought admits the possibility of religious belief, his model remains within a secular anthropocentric framework where meaning is generated through engagement with worldly commitments.

Thānwī: Ridā (Contentment) and Najāt (Salvation) in the Divine Order

In Thānwī's model, healing culminates not in self-expression or moral responsibility alone but in riḍā—contentment with God's decree—and najāt—salvation in the Hereafter. The goal is not simply to live

meaningfully but to die faithfully. Tazkiyah is thus both a diagnostic and eschatological endeavor, designed to prepare the soul for divine encounter (Thānwī 1978).

5. Epistemological Incompatibility: Tazkiyah and Psychotherapy

Despite superficial similarities—such as concern with the soul (*nafs*), healing, and moral guidance—Viktor Frankl’s logotherapy and Ashraf ‘Ali Thānwī’s *tazkiyah* are grounded in ontologies so divergent that they produce mutually exclusive epistemologies. This section explores the epistemic implications of these metaphysical differences and argues that any attempt to integrate *tazkiyah* into modern psychotherapy constitutes a categorical error—both conceptually and theologically.

Not a Matter of Integration but Metaphysical Contradiction

The epistemology of modern psychology is secular, post-Enlightenment, and often reductionist—treating human consciousness and suffering as phenomena explainable through neurobiology, behaviorism, or existential phenomenology. Even Frankl’s logotherapy, while more spiritual than Freudian models, remains committed to individual autonomy and humanist frameworks. *Tazkiyah*, on the other hand, is grounded in divine revelation (*waḥy*) and rooted in theocentric metaphysics. Its epistemic authority derives not from the self, but from the Qur’ān, Sunnah, and the lived tradition of the Prophet’s inheritors (*warathat al-anbiyā’*). To conflate these two models—say, by calling Thānwī a “therapist” or interpreting *tazkiyah* as “Islamic psychology”—is to obscure their ontological irreconcilability.

The Error of Psychologizing Tazkiyah

A number of contemporary Muslim scholars have attempted to reclaim Islamic traditions of inner purification through the lens of psychology. While well-intentioned, such efforts risk collapsing theology into therapy, *‘ilm al-nafs* into *‘ilm al-nafs al-ijtimā’ī*. For Thānwī, *tazkiyah* is not a psychological method but an act of divine worship, rooted in metaphysical submission, not cognitive restructuring. Its language—of sin, repentance, and eschatology—cannot be translated into clinical categories like “neurosis,” “cognitive bias,” or “emotional trauma” without distortion.

Frankl himself warned against reducing meaning to empirical metrics: “The search for a scientific explanation of meaning may rob existence of its very quality of meaningfulness” (Frankl 1985, 97). This warning applies equally to the psychologization of *tazkiyah*.

The “Either/or” Dilemma: Mutual Exclusivity

These two paradigms do not stand in *and/and* relationship, but in *either/or* dynamic. *Tazkiyah* and psychotherapy offer not complementary techniques but alternative metaphysical grammars. The former views human suffering as the consequence of spiritual veiling and divine trial; the latter, as an internal imbalance or existential tension. Their respective solutions—divine submission versus self-actualization—are ontologically exclusive. To practice one fully is to negate the premises of the other.

Western Therapy’s Immanence vs. Islamic Transcendence

Frankl’s model still operates within a secular immanent frame—God may be invoked, but only as a possible object of personal belief or symbolic meaning. *Thānwī*’s framework is transcendental and objective; the divine is not optional or abstract but real, active, and commanding. Meaning is not chosen but revealed. The therapist listens to the self; the *shaykh* diagnoses the soul in light of divine law and prophetic ethics (*Thānwī*, 2010).

Thānwī as Theologian, not Therapist

Ashraf Ali *Thānwī* was not a therapist—nor should he be cast as one retroactively. His role was that of a *ḥakīm* (sage), *‘ālim* (scholar), *faqīh* (jurist) and *murabbī* (spiritual trainer), whose entire methodology was theologically anchored. His texts do not offer techniques of emotional regulation, but pathways to salvation. To read him through the lens of therapeutic utility is to miss his normative project: reorienting the human self toward God.

The Colonial Shadow: Why the Comparison Must Be Post-Secular

Finally, the temptation to reconcile Islamic spirituality with Western psychology cannot be separated from the shadow of colonial epistemology. Under colonial modernity, indigenous forms of knowledge were often either dismissed as irrational or reinterpreted through European categories (Asad, 2003). In this context, the recasting of *tazkiyah* as “Islamic psychology” or *Thānwī* as a “therapist” risks continuing that legacy. A genuinely post-secular hermeneutics must allow Islamic

traditions to speak in their own metaphysical language—not translate them into modern therapeutic idioms.

6. A Post-Secular Hermeneutics of Healing

As the secular psychological paradigms dominate modern therapeutic practices, the Islamic tradition of *tazkiyah al-nafs* offers a distinct counter-model—one that cannot be accommodated within the immanent, human-centered worldview of modern psychology. This section develops a post-secular hermeneutic of healing that refuses both religious romanticism and secular reductionism, allowing Thānwī's theological framework to speak in its own metaphysical register while engaging contemporary existential concerns.

Reclaiming Meaning from Modern Psychology

The therapeutic industry today is saturated with models of healing that are premised upon individual autonomy, self-empowerment, and emotional regulation. Even Viktor Frankl's logo therapy, while more spiritually attuned than Freudian or Adlerian systems, remains within a framework that treats meaning as self-constructed. By contrast, Islamic tradition understands meaning as divinely revealed and soteriological grounded. Healing, in this view, is not the restoration of emotional balance but the realignment of the *nafs* with *tawhīd* and *ubūdiyyah*.

Beyond Reductionism: The Soul as Sacred Reality

A key assumption in post-Enlightenment psychology is that the human being is an assemblage of bio-chemical processes and cognitive patterns. Islamic spiritual epistemology rejects such reductionism. The *nafs* is not merely a psychological phenomenon but a metaphysical entity with eternal significance. Thānwī's emphasis on *muhāsabah* (self-reckoning), *mujāhadah* (spiritual struggle), and *murāqabah* (vigilant consciousness of God) situates healing within a sacred cosmology, not as emotional adjustment but as ontological awakening (Khawāja, 1999).

Tazkiyah as a Model of Ethical-Spiritual Reformation

Thānwī's model of *tazkiyah* was deeply systematic: he offered structured regimens of worship, moral reform, and ethical discipline. This is not merely spiritual self-care but a normative process aimed at preparing the soul for the *ākhirah* (afterlife). His teachings counter the therapeutic tendency to treat suffering as an aberration; rather, suffering

is a divinely mandated means of purification. His “treatment” of inner maladies (*amrāḍ al-bāṭinah*) like pride, anger, or despair mirrors a metaphysical ethics—not behavioral science (Khawāja, 1999).

Implications for Philosophical Counseling

Philosophical counseling—as the *Philosophical Practice* journal seeks to explore—operates at the intersection of meaning, ethics, and existential reflection. This paper proposes that *tazkiyah al-nafs*, when understood within its theological context, can enrich the field by offering a non-modern, non-psychologized model of human flourishing. It shifts the discourse from “what is the meaning of your life?” to “how does one live in submission to divine meaning?” This theological turn reframes counseling as not merely helping clients find subjective coherence, but guiding them to objective transcendence.

Challenges of Cross-Cultural Models of Healing

However, this integration is not without tension. There is always the risk of appropriation or distortion when theological categories are mapped onto psychological frameworks. The danger lies in universalizing Western categories as epistemologically neutral. Any meaningful engagement with *tazkiyah* in counseling practice must proceed with epistemic humility, acknowledging that Islamic traditions do not merely add cultural flavor to modern therapy but offer competing truth claims about the human condition (Asad, 2003).

Toward a Pluralist but Not Relativist Framework

A post-secular philosophical practice should aim neither at homogenization nor at cultural relativism. It should make room for multiple ontologies of healing, without erasing the boundaries between them. *Thānwī’s tazkiyah*—if engaged with on its own terms—offers not an exotic supplement to logo therapy but an alternative *grammar of meaning*, one in which submission, not self-assertion, is the foundation of healing. Pluralism here does not mean conflation, but dialogical engagement across metaphysical difference.

Conclusions

Summary of Contrasts and Key Findings

This paper has examined the crisis of meaning in modern secular societies through a comparative lens: Viktor Frankl’s logotherapy on one

side and the Islamic tradition of *tazkiyah al-nafs* as expounded by Ashraf ‘Alī Thānwī on the other. While Frankl rightly identifies the “existential vacuum” as a central malaise of post-war Western subjectivity and attempts to reintroduce meaning through a secular-spiritual therapy, his framework remains grounded in modern notions of individual autonomy and self-derived purpose. By contrast, *tazkiyah* anchors the self not in subjective meaning-making but in submission (*ubūdiyyah*) to divinely revealed truths. Thānwī’s model does not treat the soul’s crisis as psychological dysfunction but as ontological alienation from its Creator. His therapeutic method is not clinical but theological, not autonomous but transcendent, not immanent but eschatological. The divergence is not one of degrees but of metaphysical paradigms.

Philosophical Implications for Practice and Theory

The implications for philosophical practice are profound. If counseling is to genuinely accommodate non-Western, religious traditions, it must not merely localize secular therapy into new cultures but be willing to host fundamentally different conceptions of the self, meaning, and healing. Thānwī’s discourse compels us to rethink what it means to be a soul in crisis, what it means to “heal,” and how suffering is understood in the context of divine testing and moral reformation.

This philosophical reframing contributes to decolonial theory in philosophical practice, arguing that traditions like *tazkiyah* are not pre-modern residues to be updated through psychology but coherent, systematic approaches that must be engaged on their own metaphysical grounds.

Limitations and Scope for Future Work

This study has focused primarily on Frankl and Thānwī as representatives of broader traditions. Further research could expand this comparison to other Islamic thinkers (e.g., al-Ġhazālī, Ibn al-Qayyim, Shāh Waliullāh) or explore contemporary Muslim psychologists who seek to reconcile tradition with modern therapy. It would also be fruitful to examine practical implementations of *tazkiyah* in spiritual counseling today, and the limits of secular inclusion in institutional care frameworks. Moreover, this study has deliberately resisted integrationist models that try to harmonize Islamic and Western paradigms. Future work could investigate whether limited methodological borrowing is possible without ontological compromise.

Final Argument: Submission over Selfhood

Ultimately, this paper has argued that Islamic *tazkiyah* and Western psychotherapeutic paradigms are not complementary but mutually exclusive. The foundational question is not how to find meaning—but whose meaning to follow: the self's or the Divine's. In Frankl's logotherapy, the self-searches inwardly to generate meaning; in *Thānwī's tazkiyah*, the self must be purified, disciplined, and submitted to God. This is not merely a difference of methods or objectives, but of worldviews. A post-secular philosophical practice must, therefore, accommodate the possibility that healing may lie not in the discovery of the self but in its surrender.

References

- Alī, Syed Abrār. n.d. *Mawlānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānwī kā Ṭarīqa-i Iṣlāḥ*. Karachi: Bayt al-'Ulūm
- 'Ārfī, Abdul Ḥaiy. 2000. *Asrāf al-Maktūbāt*. Edited by Ḥassan Abbās. Karachi: Idāra al-Quran wa 'Ulūm al-Islamiyyah.
- Asad, Talāl. 2003. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Batthyany, Alexander. 2019. *Logotherapy and Existential Analysis*. Cham: Springer.
- Daryābādī, Abdul Mājid. n.d. *Ḥakīm al-Ummat*. Lahore: Maktaba Madaniyyah.
- Davis, Zachary, and Anthony Steinbock. 2021. "Max Scheler." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (winter 2021 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta. Stanford, CA: Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/scheler/>
- Frankl, Viktor E. 1985. *The Unheard Cry for Meaning: Psychotherapy and Humanism*. New York: Touchstone.
- Frankl, Viktor E. 1988. *The Will to Meaning: Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy*. New York: Meridian.
- Frankl, Viktor E. 2006. *Man's Search for Meaning*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Hermansen, Marcia K. 2007. *Rewriting Ṣūfī Identity in the Twentieth Century: The Biographical Approaches of Maulānā Ashraf*

‘Alī Thānwī and Khwāja Ḥasan Niẓāmī. Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute.

Khawāja, Ahmad Ali. 1999. *Mawlānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānwī: His Views on Religious and Moral Philosophy, and Taṣawwuf*. Delhi: Kitab Bhawan.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. 1984. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Metcalf, Barbara Daly. 1982. *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Nadwī, ‘Abdul Barī. n.d. *Tajdīd Taṣawwuf wa Ṣulūk*. Lahore: Al-Maktaba al-Ashrafiyyah.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. 1994. *A Young Muslim’s Guide to the Modern World*. Chicago: Kazi Publications.

Rizvī, Azhar ‘Alī. 1979. “Mawlānā Ashraf Ali Thānwī: A Psycho-Therapist.” *Quarterly Zehn*, December. Lahore.

Rizvi, Syed Azhar Ali. 1985. *Muslim Tradition in Psychotherapy and Modern Trends*. Unpublished PhD diss., University of the Punjab.

Siddiqui, A. R. 2012. “The Self in Islamic Spiritual Psychology: A Qur’ānic Model.” In *Tradition and Renewal*, edited by M. Malik, 215–230. Leicester: Islamic Foundation.

Taylor, Charles. 1989. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Thānwī, Ashraf ‘Alī. n.d. *Ashraf al-Jawab*. Lahore: Maktabah

Thānwī, Ashraf ‘Alī. n.d.b., *Tarbiyat al-Salik*. Lahore: Maktabah

Thānwī, Ashraf ‘Alī. 2005. *Tarbyat Aulād*. Peshawar: Maktaba Faiz al-Qur’ān.

Thānwī, Ashraf ‘Alī. n.d.a., *Bayān al-Qur’ān*. Lahore: Maktabah Raḥmanyah

Thānwī, Ashraf ‘Alī. 1428. *Khutbāt Ḥakīm al-Ummat*. Idārah Talīfāt-e-Ashrafiyyah.

Thānwī, Ashraf ‘Alī. 1977. *Malfūzāt: Maqālāt Ḥikmat wa Mujādilat Mu‘addalah*, Vol. 2. Lahore: Idārah Ta’lifāt Ashrafiyyah.

Thānwī, Ashraf ‘Alī. 1978. *Dunyā wa Ākhirat*. New Delhi: Maktaba Raḥmāniyyah.

Thānwī, Ashraf ‘Alī. 1983. *Sharī‘at wa Ṭarīqat*. Edited by Maulānā Masīhullāh Khān. Lahore: Idārah Talīfāt-e-Ashrafiyyah.

Thānwī, Ashraf ‘Alī. 1427 AH. *Malfūzāt Kamālāt Ashrafiyyah: Malfūzāt Ḥakīm al-Ummat*. Multan: Idārah Ta’līfāt Ashrafiyyah.
Thānwī, Ashraf ‘Alī. 1429 AH. *al-Ifādāt al-Yawmiyyah: Malfūzāt Ḥakīm al-Ummat*. Multan: Idārah Ta’līfāt Ashrafiyyah.
Thānwī, Ashraf ‘Alī. 2010. *Qaṣd al-Sabīl ilā al-Maulā al-Jalīl*. Edited by Muftī Muḥammad Shafī. Karachi: Idāra al-Mu‘ārif.