MA'RIFATULLAH OF IBN 'ATA'ILLAH IN THE FACE OF 'THE PEAK EXPERIENCE' OF ABRAHAM MASLOW

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Abstract

When a person achieves their life's principal goal, they feel happier. They experience a diverse psychological condition compared to the average individual, reaching the culmination of their experience at that point. Within the Islamic heritage, particularly in Sufism, the pinnacle aim is *ma'rifatullah*. The Sufi Ibn 'Ata'illah has extensively discussed the idea of *ma'rifatullah*. Meanwhile, Abraham Maslow's concept of the peak experience has gained widespread acceptance in Western psychology. This paper explores the similarities and differences between these two concepts, comparing *ma'rifatullah* with the peak experience. Data for this paper was collected using documentary techniques. The authors employ a descriptive, content-analytic comparative method to analyze these issues. This research is conducted within the discipline of psychology, utilizing a Sufi approach. The study concludes that there are both parallels and contrasts between these concepts. The similarity lies in the ecstatic condition experienced by the individual. However, the discrepancies are substantial, primarily due to the differences in the underlying worldviews. *Ma'rifatullah* is based on a revelation-based Islamic worldview, while the peak experience is grounded in a Western worldview based on secular humanism.

Keywords: Abraham Maslow; humanistic psychology; Ibn 'Ata'illah; *ma'rifatullah*; peak experiences; Sufism.

Khulasah

Ketika manusia sampai kepada tujuan utama hidupnya, dia akan merasai kebahagiaan yang memuncak yang mana dia akan mengalami kondisi psikologi yang berbeza daripada orang awam. Saat itulah dia mencapai kemuncak pengalamannya. Dalam tradisi Islam, tepatnya dalam khazanah tasawuf, puncak pencapaian mereka itu dinamai *ma'rifatullah*, yakni mengenali Allah dalam wujud dan zat-Nya. Ibn 'Ata'illah adalah tokoh sufi yang membahaskan konsep *ma'rifatullah* secara komprehensif. Manakala dalam tradisi psikologi Barat, dikenali secara luas istilah *peak experience* (pengalaman puncak) yang digagaskan oleh Abraham Maslow. Tulisan ini berusaha membandingkan *ma'rifatullah* dengan *peak experience* untuk mengetahui setakat mana persamaan dan perbezaan kedua-duanya. Data dalam tulisan ini diperolehi menerusi teknik dokumentasi dan untuk menganalisis kedua-dua isu ini, penulis menggunakan metode analisis kandungan secara deskriptif-komparatif. Penelitian ini dilakukan dalam lingkup disiplin psikologi dengan menggunakan pendekatan Tasawuf. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa antara kedua-dua konsep tersebut terdapat persamaan dan perbezaan. Persamaan kedua-duanya terletak pada kondisi ekstase pelakunya. Manakala perbezaannya cukup banyak dan itu berlaku terutamanya kerana perbezaan pandangan alam yang mendasari kedua-duanya. *Ma'rifatullah* berdasarkan pandangan alam Islam yang berteraskan wahyu, manakala *peak experiences* berasaskan pandangan alam Barat yang berasaskan humanisme sekular.

Kata kunci: Abraham Maslow; Ibn 'Ata'illah; *ma'rifatullah*; pengalaman puncak; psikologi humanistik; Tasawuf.

Introduction

One of the most fundamental subjects in Sufism is the discussion of *ma'rifatullah.* For Sufis, *ma'rifatullah* is the primary goal of their spiritual journey [1] and the peak attainment after passing through the stages of *shari'ah, tariqah*, and *haqiqah*. [2] He felt something he had never experienced before at that moment. [3] The *Ma'rifah* experienced by a Sufi is the highest spiritual station, essentially the *mushahadah* (direct inner witness) [4] of Allah's *asma'* (names), *af'al* (acts), *sifah* (attributes), and *dhat* (essence). [5] This experience becomes a very exclusive state for a Sufi because, at that time, he is in a particular condition of ecstasy. [6] Ecstasy is a state of knowledge and witness that arises from appreciating the soul and inner experience. Undoubtedly, this experience will lead him to reach the pinnacle of true happiness because he meets and truly knows God. [7]

At the same time, in the discourse of Western psychology, there is the concept of the peak

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[1] Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad Shata, *Kifayah al-Atqiya' wa Minhaj al-Asfiya'* (Kediri: al-Ma'had al-Islami al-Salafi, n.d.), 11.

[2] William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2000), 170-171, 270.

[3] Hasyim, "Perspektif Metodologis Mengenai Puncak Capaian Sufistik," *Jurnal Dirasat Islamiyah* 1(1) (2020), 52.

[4] Abu al-Qasim al-Qushayri, *al-Risalah al-Qushayriyyah* (Cairo: Dar al-Jawami' al-Kalim, n.d.), 110; Muḥammad al-'Aduni al-Idrisi, *Mu'jam Mustalaḥat al-Tasawwuf al-Falsafi* (Jordan: Dar al-Thaqafah, 2002), 189; Ibrahim Madkur, *al-Mu'jam al-Falsafi* (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-'Ammah, 1983), 186–187.

[5] Ibn 'Atha'illah al-Sakandari, *Miftah al-Falah wa Misbah al-Arwah fi Dhikrillah al-Karim al-Fattah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah), 41.

[6] Moh. Isom Mudin, "Konsep Makrifat Ibnu Athaillah Al-Sakandari," *Jurnal Kalimah* 14(2) (2016), 156.

[7] Muhammad Asra, "Ittihad dan Ma'rifat," *Jurnal Ushuluddin Adab dan Dakwah* 2(2) (2019), 155.

experience, pioneered by Abraham Maslow.[8] This concept is a key topic in Maslow's humanistic psychology theory. Maslow defined the peak experience as a stage in a person's life when they feel in the best conditions, filled with deep feelings of tranquillity, happiness, and joy.[9] This condition is what a person experiences after achieving self-actualization.[10] In these two concepts, a person who has experienced *ma'rifatullah* and the peak experience is in a state of ecstasy. There seem to be some similarities between these two concepts. However, a more critical study reveals more differences between them, which will be discussed later in this article.

One Sufi figure concerned with discussing the concept of *ma'rifatullah* is Ibn 'Ata'illah al-Sakandari, an early Sufi master of the Shadhiliyyah Sufi Order. Several writings on the concept of *ma'rifah* by Ibn 'Ata'illah, including an article entitled *Konsep Makrifat Ibn 'Ata'illah al-Sakandari* by Moh. Isom Mudin.[11] This study deals with the concept of *ma'rifatullah* as articulated by Ibn 'Ata'illah, but it is limited to *'irfani* epistemology. Another article by the same author is entitled *Shuhud al-Ahadiyyah 'ind Ibn 'Ata'illah*.[12] This work examines the theory of *shuhud al-ahadiyyah* (direct witnessing of the unity of existence), which is associated with Western realism. Hence, the discussion is more on ontology. Nur Rois wrote another paper entitled "The Concept of Motivation, Behavior, and

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[8] This concept was initiated along with two other concepts that he initiated, including self-motivation and self-actualization.

[9] Abraham Harold Maslow, *Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), xvi.

[10] Slamet Firdaus, "Orientasi dan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam, Kajian Ihsan: Relevansi Konsep Khosyah dan Musyahadah dengan *Peak Experience* dalam Psikologi Humanistik Maslow," *Jurnal Holistik* 13(1) (2012), 16.

[11] Mudin, "Konsep Makrifat Ibnu Athaillah Al-Sakandari," 155.

[12] Moh. Isom Mudin, "Syuhud al-Ahadiyah 'ind Ibn 'Atha'illah: Mafhumuha wa Lawahiquha wa Dawruha fi Ta'sis Mitafiziqa al-'Ulum al-Kawniyyah," *Jurnal Tsaqafah* 14(2) (2018), 385.

Human Spiritual Peak Experience in Islamic
Psychology". [13] This article discusses the relationship
between the concepts of motivation, behaviour, and
spiritual peak experience from the perspective of Islamic
psychology but does not specifically discuss Maslow's
theory of peak experience. After reviewing the three works
mentioned above and several other related articles, it is
evident that no work has attempted to examine Ibn
'Ata'illah's concept of *ma'rifatullah* in comparison with
Abraham Maslow's concept of peak experiences from a
psychological perspective through a Sufi approach, as will
be done in this article.

Ma'rifatullah according to Ibn 'Ata'illah

Definition of *Ma'rifatullah*

The word *ma'rifah* is derived from the Arabic word عرف,
which means to know or to know something with
certainty. [14] Some interpret it as knowing something or
knowing in a way that no longer accepts any doubt.[15] At the
same time, in terminology, as defined by al-Ghazali,
ma'rifah is a kind of convincing knowledge in which there
are no doubts or errors after certain things have been
revealed.[16] Philosophers recognize this type of *ma'rifah* and
call it *ma'rifah mubasharah* (direct knowledge or
Connaissance immédiate) with the faculty of *hads*.[17] At the
same time, Ibn 'Ata`illah defined *ma'rifah* as knowledge

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[13] Nur Rois, "Konsep Motivasi, Perilaku, dan Pengalaman Puncak
Spiritual Manusia dalam Psikologi Islam", *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama
Islam* 7(2) (2019), 184.

[14] Abu Bakar Atjeh, *Pengantar Sejarah Sufi dan Tasawuf* (Solo:
Ramadani, 1992), 67.

[15] Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, "Rawdhah al-Talibin wa 'Umdah al-Salikin",
in *Majmu'at al-Rasa'il al-Imam al-Ghazali*, ed. Ibrahim Amin
Muhammad (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Tawfiqiyyah), 120.

[16] Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *al-Munqidh min al-Dhalal* (Turki: Haqiqah
Kitabavi, 1981), 4.

[17] Mazkur, *al-Mu'jam al-Falsafi*, 257.

related to the self and attributes according to its essence. Therefore, *ma'rifatullah* is acquiring knowledge about Allah's essence, names, and attributes, which is worthy of trust in Him, and He has characterized it as His essence.[18] Therefore, *ma'rifatullah* is the most challenging goal because Allah is different from all other substances, with no beginning and no end.

From this definition, it is clear that Ibn 'Ata'illah used the term *ma'rifatullah* or *ma'rifah billah* and did not use the term *'ilm billah*. This is because *ma'rifah* is more specific than *'ilm*. The opposite of *ma'rifah* is *inkar*, while the opposite of *'ilm* is *jahl* (ignorance). [19] For Ibn 'Ata'illah, *ma'rifatullah* has its privileges. He maintained that valuable knowledge is *ma'rifah billah* (knowledge about Allah)[20] since it can instill fear of Allah, prevent neglect of Him, encourage piety and obedience, and bring one closer to Him. [21] Allah obligates all creatures to seek *ma'rifah* from Him. He rewards those who can do so and denounces those who cannot.

Degrees of *Ma'rifatullah*

Based on the level of achievement, Ibn 'Ata'illah classified *ma'rifatullah* into two categories. First, general *ma'rifah* involves establishing the existence of Allah, purifying Him from attributes that are inappropriate for Him, and affirming the attributes that He deserves to bear, as determined by the Qur'an and Sunnah. This is the *ma'rifah* that is generally known. Second, specific *ma'rifah* goes beyond mere logical comprehension; it is a form of belief

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[18] Al-Sakandari, *Miftah al-Falah*, 41.

[19] Al-Quran: al-Nahl, 83; Yusuf, 58.

[20] Ibn 'Atha'illah al-Sakandari, *Taj al-'Urus al-Hawi li Tazhib al-Nufus* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2016), 34.

[21] Ibn 'Ata'illah al-Sakandari, *al-Hikam al-'Ata'iyyah wa al-Munajat al-Ilahiyyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Alamiyyah, 2006), 232–233.

that arises after the inner witness of Allah's essence (*dhat*), names (*asma'*), attributes (*sifat*), and acts (*af'al*).[22]

In his work *al-Tanwir*, Ibn 'Ata'illah said, "A person who has *ma'rifah* witnessed the Oneness of Allah."[23] In *al-Hikam*, he wrote: "Allah made you witness Him before asking you to. Therefore, all parts of your body acknowledge His divinity, and all your hearts and inner recesses realise His oneness."[24] Someone who has reached this level is called *al-'arif billah*.[25] The difference between these two levels of *ma'rifah* lies in one's knowledge of the essence and existence of Allah, distinguishing between a belief based on logic and a direct inner witness.

Another Sufi, Junayd al-Baghdadi, divided *ma'rifatullah* similarly to Ibn 'Ata'illah. However, he did not use the terms specific and general *ma'rifah* because, for him, the object of *ma'rifah* is the same, namely Allah. According to him, *ma'rifatullah* has two levels: the level of beginning and the highest level, although in essence, Allah is without beginning and end.[26]

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[22] Al-Sakandari, *Miftah al-Falah*, 41.

[23] Ibn 'Atha'illah al-Sakandari, *al-Tanwir fi Isqat al-Tadbir* (Cairo: Dar al-Salam al-Hadithah, 2007), 246.

[24] Al-Sakandari, *al-Hikam al-'Atha'iyyah*, 257.

[25] In other terms, a designation for someone who has attained the *ma'rifah* stage is *al-'ulama' billah*. Ibn 'Ajibah expressed this opinion. According to him, *'ulama'* are divided into two, namely *'ulama' bi ahkamillah* (people who understand the laws from Allah) and *'ulama' billah* (people who know and understand Allah). *'Ulama' bi ahkamillah* is afraid of the wrath and punishment from Allah, while *'ulama' billah* is so scared of being far away and veiled from Allah. *'Ulama' bi ahkamillah* worried about committing sins, while *'ulama' billah* feared their misbehaving in front of Allah. So, *'ulama' billah*'s fear is much softer and tougher simultaneously. *'Ulama' billah* gets knowledge from Allah directly, while *'ulama' bi ahkamillah* learns from the events of death. Look into: Ibn 'Ajibah, a*l-Bahr al-Madid fi Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Majid*, vol. 4 (Cairo: al-Hai'ah al-Misriyyah al-'Ammah li al-Kitab, 1999), 537.

[26] Al-Junayd al-Baghdadi, *Rasa'il al-Junayd* (Damascus: Dar Iqra', 2005), 206.

Similarly, al-Ghazali also classified *ma'rifah* into
general and essential. General *ma'rifah* is the knowledge of
Allah's existence and attributes in which there is no doubt.
The true and essential *ma'rifah* is witnessing the essence
and attributes of Allah exclusively through the inner secret
in the heart (*maqam ru'yah wa al-mushahadah bi sirr al-
qalb*), not through feelings or reason. [27] In this condition,
Allah bestows *kashf* (removing part of the veil to allow His
servant to see the light of His essence and attributes from
behind the veil). [28] This is known as *kashf ma'nawi*
(immaterial unveiling). It is the light that reveals the
attributes of Allah and His beauty. This light is visible only
to those who attach themselves to the attributes of Allah.
This is what the Sufi seeks.[29] The *'arif* looks to Allah solely
to know Him and for no other purpose.

In the meantime, Dhu al-Nun al-Misri, in his book *al-
Qalam 'ala al-Basmalah,* classified *ma'rifatullah* into
three categories. First, *ma'rifah al-tawhid,* which ordinary
people experience. Second, *ma'rifah al-hujjah wa al-bayan*
(knowledge of argument and description of God) is
experienced by scholars, philosophers, and literary experts.
Third, *ma'rifah al-sifat al-wahdaniyyah* (knowledge about
the attributes of the oneness of God), which the saints of
Allah experience. [30] For him, *ma'rifah* is not knowledge
about God based on the *shahadah al-tawhid* experienced
by most believers or arguments and explanations as done
by theologians and philosophers. The essence of *ma'rifah*
is the knowledge about God's oneness, possessed by Sufis

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[27] Al-Ghazali, Rawdhah al-Talibin, 120–121.
[28] Ahmad Zaini, "Pemikiran Tasawuf Imam al-Ghazali", *Jurnal Esoterik*
2(1) (2016), 155.
[29] Al-Sakandari, *al-Hikam al-'Ata'iyyah*, 153; 'Abd Allah ibn Hijazi al-
Sharqawi, *al-Minah al-Qudsiyyah 'ala al-Hikam al-'Ata'iyyah*
(Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2017), 212.
[30] Abu al-Wafa al-Ghanimi al-Taftazani, *al-Madkhal ila al-Tasawwuf
al-Islami* (Cairo: Dar al-Thaqafah bi al-Nasir wa al-Tawfiq, 1981), 98.

who witnessed Him with the eyes of the heart.[31] It is
a *fitrah* that Allah has implanted in the human heart since
the beginning.[32] Thus, the classification of *ma'rifatullah*
carried out by Ibn 'Ata'illah, Junayd al-Baghdadi, al-
Ghazali, and Dhu al-Nun al-Misri is based on how much a
human knows his God.

Dhikrullah as a Method of Attaining *Ma'rifatullah*

In his teachings on Sufism, Ibn 'Ata'illah emphasized the
importance of *dhikr* as a means of self-purification and
attaining *ma'rifah*. *Dhikr* is viewed as a spiritual exercise
that connects the heart with Allah and guards against sin
and temptation. It can be performed through various forms,
such as verbal recitation and maintaining a pure heart
during worship. Perfect *dhikr* combines all aspects and is
considered a significant pillar in Sufism, leading to
ma'rifatullah.[33]

Ibn 'Ata'illah's rules of *dhikr* are rooted in *tawhid*
(oneness of God). He categorised the *dhikr* formula into
four types, including *dhikr* with the phrase "*La ilaha illa
Allah*" for negation and affirmation. The second is *dhikr
ism al-mufrad* using the singular name "*Allah*" for
affirmation. The third is *dhikr* with the phrase "*huwa
huwa*"; a subtler form called *dhikr al-haqq bi al-haqq*,
where affirmation is made in the heart without a verbal
recitation. The fourth is a deeper level of *dhikr*, where the
servant is completely immersed in witnessing Allah has
annihilated (*fana'*) himself, transcending verbal
expression.[34] In this phase, the essence of *tawhid* is found
in the heart's deepest part, beyond literal meaning and into

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[31] Ris'an Rusli, *Tasawuf dan Tarekat: Studi Pemikiran dan Pengalaman Sufi* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2013), 63.

[32] Muhammad Irfan Helmy, "Teori Ma'rifah dalam Tasawuf Dzun Nun al-Mishri", *Jurnal of Islamic Law and Studies* 4(1) (2020), 68.

[33] Al-Sakandari, *Miftah al-Falah*, 7–8.

[34] Ibn 'Atha'illah al-Sakandari, *Allah: al-Qasd al-Mujarrad fi Ma'rifah al-Ism al-Mufrad* (Cairo: Maktabah Madbuli, 2001), 82–83.

the spiritual realm. In this fourth phase, the essence of *tawhid* lies in the heart's deepest part (*lubb*).[35] Therefore, the Sufis consider *dhikr* as one of the main pillars and remain in Sufism, which can lead to attaining *ma'rifatullah*.[36]

Ibn 'Ata'illah also categorised the stages of *dhikr* into three based on the concept of *tawhid* (oneness of God). He explains these steps as follows: first, *dhikr bi al-lisan* (remembrance with the tongue), where the remembrance is expressed verbally but lacks heart involvement.[37] Second, *dhikr al-qalb* (remembrance with the heart), where the *dhakir* (the one who remembers) is fully conscious and focused, experiencing a profound connection with the meaning of *dhikr*. At this stage, *dhikr* is not only by recitation but also immersed in the ocean of love (*mahabbah*) and longing (*'ishq*) for Allah.[38] The third stage is *dhikr al-sirr* or *al-khafi* (tacit or hidden remembrance), where the *dhakir*'s heart is solely devoted to the remembrance of Allah, surpassing the self and worldly matters. This ultimate phase leads to spiritual ascension and the witnessing of divine manifestations.[39]

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[35] Compare with al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi's opinion about *maqamat al-qalb*. As quoted by Ryandi in his paper, al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi divides the level of the heart into four parts: (1) *sadr*, (2) *qalb*, (3) *fu'ad*, (4) *lubb*. The *lubb* is the essence of the heart's four levels and the centre of the light of *tawhid*. A person becomes perfect with this tawhid, Islam, faith, and *ihsan*. See, Ryandi, "Konsep Hati Menurut Al-Hakim Al-Tirmidzi," *Kalimah: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama dan Pemikiran Islam* 12(1) (2014), 120.

[36] Mahyuddin Hashim & Asman Taeali, "Uzlah dan Zikir dalam Tafsir Sufi Ishari *al-Bahr al-Madid*," *AFKAR: Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 23(1) (2022): 41.

[37] Al-Sakandari, *Miftah al-Falah*, 7.

[38] Al-Sakandari, *al-Hikam al-'Ata'iyyah wa al-Munjah al-Ilahiyyah*, 20–21; al-Sharqawi, *al-Minah al-Qudsiyyah*, 47; al-Sakandari, *Miftah al-Falah*, 9.

[39] Al-Sakandari, *Miftah al-Falah*, 9.

If reviewed further, the concept of *dhikr* described by Ibn 'Ata'illah has similarities with the concept of *fana' fi al-tawhid* initiated by Junayd al-Baghdadi.[40] Several Muslim scholars also put forward this view, to mention some of them, namely Majdi Ibrahim and 'Abd al-Qadir Mahmud. Their *dhikr* concept elaborates the *fana' fi al-tawhid* discussion by Ibn 'Ata'illah.[41] This concept is called Sufistic theology, namely *tawhid,* which is placed within a theological framework and then shifted from a logical point of view to spiritual experience through the *tawhid* of the heart and direct witness.[42]

The concept of *tawhid*, built within the Sufism framework, becomes vital to understanding and appreciating divinity. All these gifts are obtained because of Allah's lights into the heart after going through the three stages of *dhikr*; *shu'a' al-basirah* (flash of insight), *'ain al-basirah* (insight of the heart), and *haq al-basirah* (the true insight of the heart).[43] A servant can experience Allah's *mushahadah* (direct inner witness) with these three lights.

The Witness of an *'Arif* to the Unity of Allah
The previous discussion explained that the essence of *ma'rifatullah* is the recognition of the existence of God based on belief after experiencing *mushahadah* (direct inner witness). In this *maqam* (station), a Sufi can already witness the *tajalli* (manifestation) of the absolute oneness

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[40] That is when a servant no longer feels his existence because of his witness to the majesty of Divine (*tajalli*). He feels no pleasure except by witnessing Him. All sense of the body and humanity disappeared from Him. No words can be spoken. All that appeared before him was the true form of Allah as in the eternal age. Look into: al-Baghdadi, *Rasa'il al-Junayd*, 140.

[41] Ghozi, *Ma'rifah Allah Menurut Ibn 'Atha' Allah al-Sakandari* (Surabaya: Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2017), 180–181.

[42] Said Aqiel Siradj, "Tauhid dalam Perpektif Tasawuf", *Jurnal Islamica* 5(1) (2010), 157.

[43] Al-Sakandari, *al-Ḥikam al-'Ata'iyyah*, 21 and 36.

of God[44] through the eyes of the heart and spirit, rather than through the five senses or reason.[45] In his witness, an *'arif* will know that Allah is the absolute being while everything other than Him is only relative (*muqayyad*).[46] This is because the Supreme Being manifests existence other than Allah[47] through the process of *ijad*, and the continuity of its existence is due to the *imdad* (benefaction) from Allah.[48] With this argument, *ahadiyyah* (the oneness of Allah's being) can be purified from everything that would invalidate His oneness.[49] Thus, for an *'arif*, the true being is only Allah.

The central term in this concept is *ahadiyyah*. Ibn 'Ata'illah and the Sufis distinguish it from *wahidiyyah*. *Ahadiyyah* refers to Allah's independent oneness beyond any association. It is the essence of His absolute oneness without determinations.[50] Ibn Manzur and al-Qashshani similarly emphasised the absence of *ta'ayyunat* (determinations).[51] On the other hand, *wahidiyyah* is the effect of this oneness seen in nature, representing oneness in attributes.[52] Mahdi Rawwas explained *ahadiyyah* as oneness in essence and *wahidiyyah* as oneness in attributes (*sifah*).[53]

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[44] Al-Sakandari, *al-Tanwir fi Isqat al-Tadbir*, 246.

[45] Mudin, "Shuhud al-Ahadiyah 'ind Ibn 'Atha'illah," 390.

[46] Al-Sakandari, *Allah: al-Qasd al-Mujarrad*, 60.

[47] Ibn 'Atha'illah al-Sakandari, *Lata'if al-Minan* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif), 160–161.

[48] Al-Sakandari, *al-Hikam al-'Ata'iyyah*, 97-98.

[49] Dzulfikar Akbar Romadlon et al., "Ibnu Arabi on *Wahdatul Wujud* and its Relation to the Concept of *Af'al al-'Ibad*", *Jurnal Tsaqafah* 16(2) (2020), 184.

[50] Al-Sakandari, *al-Hikam al-'Ata'iyyah*, 11.

[51] Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.), 35; al-Qasshani, *Istilahat al-Sufiyyah* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, n.d.), 25.

[52] Al-Sharqawi, *al-Minah al-Qudsiyyah*, 103.

[53] Muhammad Mahdi Rawwas al-Rifa'i, *Rafraf al-'Inayah* (Dar 'Abd al-Hakim, n.d.), 45.

Sufis, including Ibn 'Ata'illah, witness the absolute
essence of Allah without determinations, perceiving the
universe as part of *Nur al-Haqq* (God's light), known as
Sufi cosmology.[54] An *'arif* experiences different levels of
Allah's *tajalli* (manifestation). First, some witness the
tajalli of Allah's deeds, where their actions merge with His,
and they see only Allah as the doer. Second, some perceive
the *tajalli* of Allah's attributes, experiencing awe and
longing for His majestic beauty. Third, the special ones
attain the *tajalli* of Allah's essence, leading to a state of
annihilation and complete faith.[55] Fourth, the *maqam haq
al-yaqin* (the station of essential belief and certainty) is
experienced as a glimpse of divine light flowing through
the whole being.[56] Generally, seekers achieve the first level,
while the essential belief is rare and obtained by notable
figures like Prophets and saints. However, anyone, if
destined, can reach these states.

The Spritual Condition of an *'Arif*

A person who attains the *maqam* of *ma'rifatullah* (*al-'arif
billah*) tends to experience a different spiritual condition
from ordinary people. In the process, they undergo two
spiritual phases. First, they experience *fana'*.
Etymologically, *fana'* means vanished or annihilated.[57] In
Sufi terminology, as mentioned by al-Qushayri,
fana' refers to the disappearance of despicable qualities and
their replacement with commendable ones.[58] Al-Tusi
defined *fana'* as the disappearance of the nature of the soul.
In a broader sense, he defined *fana'* as the disappearance of

[54] Ahmad Fakhrurrazi et al., "Pemetaan Konseptual Nur Muhammad
menurut Perspektif Kosmologi Sufi dan Kosmologi Fizik," *AFKAR:
Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 24(1) (2022), 134–135.

[55] Al-Sharqawi, *al-Minah al-Qudsiyyah*, 253.

[56] *Ibid.*

[57] Ibrahim Anis et al., *Mu'jam al-Wasit*, vol. 2 (Cairo: n.p., 1972), 704.

[58] Al-Qushayri, *al-Risalah*, 102.

a person's will, leaving only the will of God. [59] Ibn 'Ata'illah said that the servant's *fana'* in *mushahadah* is when he sees nothing other than Allah, because the real being is only Allah.[60] However, at the beginning of *tajalli*, an *'arif* often expresses *isharah* [61] unconsciously. [62] This condition is not commendable because they are trying to reveal the secrets of God even though they have not had permission.[63]

The majesty of Allah's *tajalli* often renders them unconscious and *sakr* (intoxicated), with *ghaibah* (no attention to creatures) and *jam'* (annihilated in witness of unity).[64] This is because the greatness of the various divine essences that entered their heart has not yet been explained. [65] Their *ma'rifah* at this stage is not perfect because there are still forms of self-expression. It can be concluded that the *fana'* condition experienced by an *'arif* is closely related to the pre-condition and post-condition. A *mushahadah* (direct inner witness) condition precedes this *fana'* condition, while the derivative conditions are *sakr* (intoxicated), *ghaibah 'an al-jam'*. In this case, Ibn 'Atha'illah does not explain the stages of *fana'* concretely but it can be seen that the *fana'* meant by Ibn 'Ata'illah is

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[59] Abu Nasr al-Sarraj al-Tusi, *al-Luma'* (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Hadithah, 1960), 417.

[60] Al-Sharqawi, *al-Minah al-Qudsiyyah*, 86; al-Sakandari, *al-Hikam al-'Ata'iyyah*, *hikmah* 37, 18.

[61] *Isyarah* in Sufi tradition means showing the secrets of God with a sign. See, Ibn 'Ajibah, *Iqaz al-Himam*, 170.

[62] This term is usually referred to as *syatahah*, a foreign expression heard by ordinary people from the mouth of a Sufi at the peak of his love for God. Because of this, many ordinary people criticise him with various assumptions. See, al-Tusi, *al-Luma'*, 453.

[63] Al-Sakandari, *Lata'if Al-Minan*, 63–64.

[64] Al-Sakandari, *al-Hikam al-'Ata'iyyah*, 64.

[65] Al-Sakandari, *al-Hikam al-'Ata'iyyah*, *hikmah* 215, 50.

the third *fana'* or the true *fana'*,[66] or *fana' 'an shuhud al-
fana'*.[67]

The second phase is the *baqa'* phase.
Etymologically, *baqa'* means eternal or permanent.[68] Al-
Qushayri defines *baqa'* as the condition of the servant who
adorns himself with the praiseworthy attributes of
Allah.[69] More explicitly, al-Tusi described *baqa'* as the
enduring perspective of a servant towards Allah's actions
because Allah wills it for him.[70] A true *'arif* for Ibn
'Ata'illah is the one who disappears from the *isharah*, what
is hinted at, and the means of a sign. If a signal arises from
him, he does not claim or feel it because he knows Allah is
hinting at that time, not him. This condition occurs because
he has annihilated his own sense of self so thoroughly that
he no longer perceives himself.[71] Someone who
experiences perfect *mushahadah* will get God's gift
through lights, *kashf suwari* (unveiling of the form), and
kashf ma'nawi (immaterial unveiling).[72] From these two
types of light, an *'arif* can distinguish between *haq* (truth)
and *batil* (falsehood) and become a light that shines around
them.

Peak Experiences of Abraham Maslow
Maslow's psychological theory emphasises peak
experiences as a crucial aspect attained after self-
actualisation. These experiences are only achieved once the
hierarchy of needs is fulfilled. The five hierarchical needs
are:

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[66] 'Abd al-Karim al-Jili, *Sharh al-Isfar 'an Risalah al-Anwar*
(Damaskus: Matba'ah al-Fiha, n.d.), 68.

[67] Lisan al-Din al-Khatib, *Rawdhat al-Ta'rif bi al-Hubb al-Sharif*, vol. 1
(Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabi, 1966), 495.

[68] Ibrahim Anis et al., Mu'jam al-Wasit, vol. 1, 66.

[69] Al-Qushayri, *al-Risalah al-Qushayriyyah*, 102.

[70] Al-Tusi, *al-Luma'*, 417.

[71] Al-Sakandari, *al-Hikam al-'Ata'iyyah*, hikmah 77, 26.

[72] Al-Sakandari, *al-Hikam al-'Ata'iyyah*, 153; al-Sharqawi, *al-Minah al-
Qudsiyyah*, 212.

1. Psychological needs: These are biological needs for human survival, such as food, drink, warmth, sex, shelter, and sleep. These needs must be met first, as without them, humans cannot function normally;
2. Safety needs: These include protection, security, order, stability, law, and freedom;
3. The need for love and belonging: This need pertains to the social sphere and involves the feelings of the individual, including interpersonal relationships that motivate them, such as friendship, intimacy, trust, acceptance, affection, and affiliation with family;
4. The need for respect and reputation: This includes dignity, achievement, independence, status, and prestige;
5. Self-actualization needs: These involve realizing personal potential that leads to peak experiences. This need encompasses the desire to achieve one's full potential and engage in creative activities. [73]

Maslow's pyramid of needs represents this hierarchy, starting from fulfilling basic survival needs and progressing towards achieving personal potential and peak experiences.[74] These five stages are what Maslow called the pyramid of the hierarchy of needs.

All human needs in this hierarchy of needs pyramid are interrelated. According to Maslow, the needs at the top of the pyramid will only be satisfied when the needs at the bottom are met.[75] However, this hierarchy of needs is a flexible standard form. Needs may vary based on

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[73] Abraham Harold Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (Delhi: Pearson Education, 1987), 63–64.

[74] *Ibid.*

[75] Nor Nazimi Mohd Mustaffa, Jaffary Awang & Aminudin Basir Ahmad, "Teori Maslow dan Kaitannya dengan Kehidupan Muslim," *Jurnal Hadhari* 9(2) (2017), 278.

circumstances or individual differences. Maslow also
pointed out that most behaviors are multi-motivated. He
said, "Any behaviour tends to be determined by several or
all of the basic needs simultaneously rather than by only
one." This means that all human behaviour is determined
by basic needs simultaneously. [76] In other words, basic
human needs are organised into a relative pre-potential
hierarchy.[77]

Self-actualisation is the basic force of human
motivation. Therefore, Maslow placed it as a meta-
motivation (peak motivation). When a person has
succeeded in achieving self-actualisation, then they will
experience what is called peak experiences. [78] Someone
who has achieved it feels that their life is fully functioning,
believes in themselves, wants to continue to taste the
ecstasy of life, or, in other words, experiences a
psychological condition of profound happiness and
overflowing joy, which has a transcendent and
transpersonal nuance, even though its essence is only
temporary.[79] A person who is in this state no longer has
motivation in the conventional sense. They have met their
needs from the most basic to the highest levels or meta-
motivation. [80] This experience transforms someone who
experiences it to a higher level of being.

A peak experience for Maslow is the most beautiful
human life experience. It's characterized by moments of
ecstasy or oneness when one feels as if they are united with
what they are engaging with. [81] This experience, as

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[76] Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 68–71.

[77] Abraham Harold Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation",
Psychological Review Journal 50(4) (1943), 375.

[78] Firdaus, 16.

[79] Maslow, *Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences*, xvi.

[80] Firdaus, Orientasi dan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam, 17.

[81] Abraham Harold Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (Canada:
Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1968), 7. Not infrequently, this experience is
also called a mystical religious experience. Because it is considered

described by William James, is called a mystical experience, while Freud referred to it as an oceanic experience. Despite these different terms, both groups acknowledge peak experiences, which may be separated from spiritual and supernatural values.[82] This is reinforced by Maslow's statement that "it is important to detach this experience from any theological or occult references, even if this has been going on for thousands of years."[83] Individuals experiencing peak experiences exhibit traits such as a poetic expression of their existence, heightened happiness, and transcendence. They tend to be spiritual and perceive beauty in everything.[84] From some of the psychological conditions mentioned, it is known that people who have experienced peak experiences tend to be more transcendent than others.

According to Maslow, peak experiences will make a person's life more meaningful. One who feels it will become their pure self. He calls it "the experience of being a real identity." He considers this experience a 'revelation of truth' because one can undergo mystical experiences and enjoy the ecstasy of happiness and oneness with nature.[85] The pleasure gained from this experience makes people who achieve it want to feel it continuously. In the end, they may become selfish and withdraw from other people.

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that there is a mystical dimension found by someone who experiences it. At that time, people who experience it will feel an extraordinary experience that is happy and pleasant. This sense of ecstasy is perceived as the ultimate mystical experience. Look into: Frederikus Fios, "Mengendus Pengalaman Puncak Keagamaan," *Jurnal Humaniora* 2(1) (2011), 918.

[82] Erdy Nasrul, *Pengalaman Puncak Abraham Maslow* (Ponorogo: CIOS ISID, 2010), 50.

[83] Maslow, *Motivasi dan Kepribadian*, 20.

[84] Abraham Harold Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (America: A Viking Compass, 1971), 288–294.

[85] Maslow, *Religions, Values and Peak Experiences*, 75.

Maslow also assumed that humans can transcend themselves. He said, "Man has a higher and transcendent realm which is part of his essence." [86] However, the transcendent realm he meant was only a temporary pleasure felt when experiencing peak experiences, not a domain that becomes a destination after death.[87] The consequence of Maslow's view of the transcendent potential in humans also has implications for satisfying these transcendent desires, precisely a sense of oneness with nature. Maslow maintained that in the peak experience, a person will feel united. They feel part of nature and one with it. Maslow considered this as the basic meaning of religious faith for many people.[88] People who undergo peak experiences feel they are perfect, and their self-confidence grows. Therefore, the peak experience is considered the most valuable moment. Maslow said, "Peak experiences can make life worthwhile by their occasional occurrence."[89] So, this experience makes people who feel it becomes amazed because it makes them feel alive.

Ma'rifatullah of Ibn 'Ata'illah Compared to Peak Experiences of Maslow

After discussing the *ma'rifatullah* and peak experiences, the authors identify a tangent between these concepts. At first glance, some views are almost the same, but on the other hand, there are many contrasting differences. The point of contact between *ma'rifatullah* and peak experiences lies in the assumption that both represent the pinnacle of human psychological conditions marked by feelings of ecstasy from the individual experiencing them. Both are considered optimal mental conditions since a person can feel maximum peace and happiness with them. Both are also considered a state where a person experiences

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[86] *Ibid.*, xvi.
[87] Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, 279.
[88] Maslow, *Religions, Values and Peak Experiences*, 59.
[89] *Ibid.*, 62.

self-transcendence, reaching the pinnacle of ecstasy by
feeling a union of the self with what is outside of them. In
Sufi terminology, transcendence is the central goal for
seekers of ultimate truth, known as *mushahadah al-haqq*. It
embodies the essence of *tawhid*.[90]

This similarity is also evident in peak experiences,
where a person's transcendent state leads to self-
forgetfulness and surpassing oneself due to extraordinary
intensification. [91] From this perspective, there is an
intersection between *ma'rifatullah* and peak experiences.
However, a significant difference remains between
ma'rifatullah and peak experience. *Ma'rifatullah* clearly
defines transcendence as the direct unveiling of servants to
Allah's names, acts, attributes, and essence through *kashf*.
Since the transcendent object of a peak experience is
unknown, the meaning of transcendence remains unclear.
Without Allah's presence, such an experience might merely
be a delusion or worldly (*dunyawi*), rather than spiritual.

The authors identify several discrepancies after
studying the basic concepts of *ma'rifatullah* and peak
experiences. First, in terms of orientation, *ma'rifatullah*
differs from peak experiences. *Ma'rifatullah*, the core
objective of the Sufi journey, places Allah as the ultimate
goal. The process begins with purifying the soul from sin
and culminates in recognizing and surrendering to the fact
that there is no existence except Allah. After experiencing
the inner witness to His existence, nothing exists besides
Him. Thus, the essence of *tawhid* defines the orientation of
ma'rifatullah. On the other hand, peak experiences are
solely oriented towards the peace of the human soul based
on humanistic principles. They have not yet reached the
Sufi understanding of the One Being. They only lead to the
realization of the non-existence of other beings. Therefore,
Maslow's peak experiences lack the clarity provided by

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[90] Firdaus, Orientasi dan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam, 29–31.
[91] Maslow, *Motivasi dan Kepribadian*, 138.

ma'rifatullah. With that experience, a person could simultaneously perceive both good and evil.

If *tawhid* becomes the orientation of *ma'rifatullah*, it will not be separated from religious doctrine and revelation as its foundation. This is in contrast to the peak experience, where Maslow criticized religious institutions. If so, he should acknowledge that peak experiences often necessitate religious affirmation and revelation. Religion encompasses something beyond individual experience, especially within the teachings and institutions of various religions, which include the founders and adherents. [92] For instance, numerous religious experiences within Sufism parallel the peak experiences of Prophet Muhammad and his devout followers.[93] These experiences are deeply intertwined with the spiritual and supernatural realms, devoid of secular or profane values as described by Maslow.

Secondly, the significance of life derived from peak experiences solely pertains to empirical encounters. Anything grounded in empirical matters may struggle to uncover the truth, potentially leading to the dismissal of the transcendent element (God) and the emergence of a secular understanding. This differs from *ma'rifatullah*, where the meaning of life stems from a spiritual journey that consistently involves God in every aspect. Such an experience tends to foster greater religiosity in the individual. As mentioned earlier, an *'arif* receives divine enlightenment from Allah, guiding them towards virtuous actions. Someone who follows this Sufi path until they attain *ma'rifatullah* becomes a well-rounded individual. In this state, the mind and heart are illuminated by divine light

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[92] Ninian Smart, "The Philosophy of Worldviews, or the Philosophy Religion Transformed," in *Religious Pluralism and Truth: Essay on Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Thomas Dean (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), 7.

[93] Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Some Aspects of Sufism: As Understood and Practised among the Malays* (Singapore: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute LTD, 1963), 5.

and the enlightenment of *ma'rifah*, enabling them to perpetually promote goodness, compassion, and knowledge in their surroundings.[94]

Third, peak experiences are devoid of any element of God. These experiences are attained by fulfilling the hierarchy of human needs up to self-actualization. In his hierarchy of needs theory, Maslow completely omitted the element of God. This contrasts with *ma'rifatullah*, where self-transcendence, known as fana', is integral to the process. Achieving *ma'rifah* involves constant connection to God through *mujahadah* (spiritual struggle) and the attainment of *maqamat* (spiritual stations) and *ahwal* (spiritual states). The resulting happiness transcends worldly elements. Although Sufis acknowledge the importance of fulfilling human physical needs, true happiness arises from knowing God perfectly. Human needs are inherently tied to their spiritual essence; without addressing their spiritual needs, physical needs alone will not lead to true fulfillment.[95] According to Islam, humans are creatures of faith, and without faith, they will lack spiritual health and true happiness.

Achieving *ma'rifatullah* through consistent *suluk* (spiritual journey) or worship aligns with human nature, which inherently has spiritual needs. These needs stem from two spiritual dimensions in humans: the *al-ruh* (soul) dimension and the *al-fitrah* (innate disposition) dimension. The *al-ruh* dimension involves the need for self-actualization as *khalifatullah* (God's vicegerent on earth). This is intertwined with the *al-fitrah* dimension, which encompasses the need to worship Allah. The relationship between worship and the role of caliph is reciprocal and one

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[94] Meta Malihatul Maslahat, "Manusia Holistik dalam Perspektif Psikologi dan Tasawuf," *Syifa' al-Qulub* 4(1) (2019), 25.

[95] Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi et al., "Iman dan Kesehatan Psikis Perspektif Said Nursi: Kajian Psikoterapi dalam *Risale-i Nur*," *Kalimah: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama dan Pemikiran Islam* 18(1) (2020), 5.

of necessity; worship enhances one's role as a caliph, and fulfilling the role of caliph through righteous actions and leadership inherently involves worship and devotion to Allah.

Reciprocity means that *al-ruh* (the soul) needs *al-fitrah* (innate disposition) and vice versa. The nature of religion exists due to the dimension of *al-ruh* in the human soul. The relationship of necessity means that *al-fitrah* requires humans to be religious, while *al-ruh* requires humans to be caliphs (representatives of God). Therefore, a servant can only be called *khalifatullah* (God's vicegerent) after properly knowing God.[96] May this be in line with the Qur'an in al-Dhariyat 51:56, al-Hijr 15:29, al-Nisa 4:171, and al-Anbiya 21:91. Islam does not deny the five human needs that Maslow proposed, but it also emphasizes the importance of spiritual needs, which go beyond Maslow's hierarchy.

Substantially, Maslow's peak experience is devoid of the element of God. Although he stated that individuals who experience the "peak experience" will feel self-transcendence and encounter God, this is essentially separate from the divine element. Transcendence here does not mean unveiling the veil of worldly life and opening the doors to the metaphysical realm. Instead, transcendence is more about achieving self-health within one's environment, which means the ability to self-actualize. [97] Maslow considered humans to be 'real' worldly creatures, existing in the present and grounded in reality. This reality pertains to life in a very mundane, immediate sense. Therefore, in

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[96] Baharuddin, *Paradigma Psikologi Islami: Studi Tentang Elemen Psikologi dari al-Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2007), 246–248.

[97] Abraham Harold Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (Canada: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1986), 184.

Maslow's view, the human construct has no attachment to God and was not created by Him.[98]

It differs from *ma'rifatullah*, where, at one stage, a person experiences self-transcendence called *fana'* (annihilation). Ibn 'Ata'illah said that the servant's *fana'* in *mushahadah* (direct inner witness) is when he sees nothing other than Allah, as the real being is only Him.[99] An *'arif billah* witnesses Allah for several reasons. Firstly, Allah is the one who reveals everything. Secondly, He appears to everything. Thirdly, He is in all things. Fourthly, He appears to all things. Fifthly, He appears before all things. Sixthly, He is more visible than all things. Seventhly, He is One without anything with Him. Eighthly, He is nearer than all things. Ninthly, if not for Him, all things would not be possible. This process of revealing the *hijab* proves God's power because existence (form) can appear in *'adam* (nothingness). Alternatively, how can something new coexist with the Supreme Being?[100] In this phase, an *'arif billah* will feel happiness and serenity that peaks because he is always with Allah in every action.

Based on this idea, the authors conclude that in the intersection of the *ma'rifatullah* concept with peak experiences, there are striking differences in the basic principles of the two conceptions. *Ma'rifatullah* is strongly imbued with religious principles, while peak experiences are closely related to secularism. This is because the concept of *ma'rifatullah* is based on the spiritual experience of a Sufi, which originates from religious values grounded in divine revelation. Meanwhile, peak experiences only refer to human experience based on empirical and positivistic values. This is the result of the humanistic psychology influenced by secular Western Humanism. Therefore, it is not improper to infer that those peak

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[98] Nasrul, *Pengalaman Puncak Abraham Maslow*, 36.
[99] Al-Sakandari, *al-Hikam al-'Ata'iyyah*, 37.
[100] *Ibid.*, 6.

experiences are secular, do not have a clear direction, and do not lead to the ultimate truth.

Conclusion

Ma'rifatullah, the ultimate goal of Sufis' spiritual journey, allows them to witness Allah's majestic *tajalli* firsthand through *mujahadah*, including *dhikr*. The *'arif* experiences *fana'* followed by *baqa'*, leading to the blissful state of *shuhud al-ahadiyyah*. On the other hand, Abraham Maslow's concept of peak experiences in Western thought involves ecstasy and tranquillity attained through fulfilling the hierarchy of human needs, including self-actualisation. While these ideas intersect, their foundations and orientations differ significantly due to their respective worldviews. *Ma'rifatullah* is rooted in the Islamic spiritual experience, while peak experiences are grounded in empirical humanism.

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