

Reactualizing *Ma'rifah* and *Fanā'*: A Sufi Spiritual Path for Addressing the Existential Crisis of Modern Society

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ABSTRACT

Modernity, characterized by rationalism, materialism, and the dominance of technology, has generated spiritual, moral, and existential crises in contemporary human life. This condition highlights the need to reinterpret Sufi teachings so that they remain relevant in addressing modern challenges. This study aims to analyze the concepts of *ma'rifah* and *fanā'* in the classical Sufi tradition and examine their reinterpretation within the framework of modern Sufism. This research employs a qualitative approach through library research, examining both classical and contemporary literature related to Sufi thought. The findings reveal that in classical Sufism, *ma'rifah* is understood as an inner knowledge of God attained through spiritual purification and mystical experience, while *fanā'* refers to the dissolution of the human ego in the presence of the Divine without negating adherence to Islamic law (*sharia*). In the context of modern Sufism, these two concepts have undergone a contextual reinterpretation. *Ma'rifah* is no longer viewed solely as an individual mystical experience but as a form of spiritual awareness integrated with rationality, ethics, and social responsibility. Meanwhile, *fanā'* is interpreted as the transformation of ego-centered consciousness into an ethical awareness that fosters social concern and moral commitment. This reinterpretation demonstrates that Sufism is not incompatible with modernity; rather, it can serve as a spiritual and ethical foundation for addressing the crisis of meaning in modern society. Therefore, the concepts of *ma'rifah* and *fanā'* in modern Sufism function as a spiritual paradigm capable of balancing the material and spiritual dimensions of contemporary human life..

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INTRODUCTION

This study examines the urgency of reconceptualizing Sufism within the context of modernity, where spiritual disorientation and existential crises have become increasingly prevalent due to the dominance of industrialization and scientific rationality (Falach & Assya'bani, 2022). This phenomenon is characterized by a shift in moral and ethical values, which are often perceived as irrelevant to modern progress, thereby generating a growing need for an esoteric dimension as a remedy for spiritual emptiness (Falach & Assya'bani, 2022; Nafi'a et al., 2022). Multidimensional crises, ranging from economic to social crises, are essentially rooted in moral and spiritual deterioration within contemporary society (Mannan, 2018).

Modernization grounded in secularism has encouraged extreme rationality, leading to the loss of a divine worldview and triggering a profound spiritual crisis that requires deeper intervention (Saputra et al., 2021). This condition highlights the relevance of Sufism as a discipline capable of filling the inner spiritual void and restoring balance in human life (Sakdullah, 2020). The reinterpretation of the concepts of **ma'rifah** and **fanā'** in modern Sufism offers a framework for integrating spiritual values into everyday life and addressing the alienation produced by modernity (Irawan, 2019).

Furthermore, modern psychological crises that have evolved into collective phenomena also indicate severe social consequences, making Sufism an important spiritual solution (Maulana & Irham, 2023). Modern societies that prioritize rationality and technological advancement tend to develop liberal and secular mindsets, which often lead to the neglect of religious norms and a deepening spiritual crisis (Aminudin, 2020; Fahru, 2020). This situation is further intensified by modern worldviews that emphasize materialism and positivism, thereby marginalizing spiritual and metaphysical dimensions from public life (Azizah & Jannah, 2022). In confronting this disorientation of values and the loss of existential meaning, Sufism offers a perspective that balances the outward and inward dimensions of life, while also functioning as a moral regulator against the value distortions caused by modernization (Falach & Assya'bani, 2022).

This spiritual crisis, characterized by anxiety and the erosion of sacred values, demonstrates that material advancement does not necessarily correlate with happiness and inner tranquility (Sakdullah, 2020). As a result, modern individuals experience spiritual emptiness that often leads to stress and anxiety, creating the need for Sufism as a remedy for such crises (Fauhatun & Burhanuddin, 2022). Through its fundamental teachings, Sufism offers a therapeutic solution for individuals trapped in existential crises by helping them rediscover life's purpose and overcome inner emptiness caused by materialistic and secular lifestyles (Putra, 2013; Waslah, 2017). The relevance of Sufism is not limited to the individual level but also plays a strategic role in shaping a balanced civilization in which spiritual values serve as the foundation for sustainable material progress (Falach & Assya'bani, 2022; Kertayasa et al., 2021).

However, previous studies have not comprehensively explained how the concepts of **ma'rifah** and **fanā'** can be practically integrated in addressing the dynamics of modernity without compromising their essential spiritual meanings (Falach & Assya'bani, 2022). Therefore, this paper aims to bridge this gap by developing a new interpretative framework for these two concepts that enables their relevant application in contemporary contexts (Nur & Irham, 2023; Thohir, 2016). In doing so, this study seeks to respond to the urgent need for a synthesis between the spiritual wisdom of Sufism and the challenges of contemporary life, particularly for the millennial generation, which is highly vulnerable to moral and spiritual crises (Kertayasa et al., 2021; Nur & Irham, 2023; Nuraini & Marhayati, 2020).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Concepts of Ma'rifah and Fanā' in the Classical Sufi Tradition

In the classical Sufi tradition, *ma'rifah* and *fanā'* are two central concepts that represent the culmination of a Sufi's spiritual journey in drawing closer to God. Both are inseparable from the broader framework of Sufism as a spiritual discipline that emphasizes the purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), the control of desires, and the inner transformation toward divine awareness. Classical Sufi scholars viewed **ma'rifah** and **fanā'** not merely as theoretical concepts but as existential experiences attained through a long and disciplined spiritual process.

Etymologically, **ma'rifah** derives from the Arabic word *'arafa*, meaning "to know" or "to recognize." In classical Sufism, **ma'rifah** is understood as an inner knowledge of God acquired not solely through rational reasoning but through the purification of the heart and the illumination of divine light. Al-Ghazali distinguished between *'ilm* (discursive and rational knowledge) and **ma'rifah** as direct knowledge (*al-'ilm al-huduri*), which is intuitive and spiritual in nature. According to him, **ma'rifah** is a condition in which the heart of a servant becomes a clear mirror capable of receiving the light of truth from God (Al-Ghazali, 2005).

In *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, Al-Ghazali emphasizes that **ma'rifah** cannot be attained without purifying the soul from blameworthy traits such as hypocrisy (*riya'*), arrogance (*takabbur*), and excessive attachment to worldly matters. Therefore, **ma'rifah** is the result of spiritual practices such as *dhikr*, *mujahadah* (spiritual struggle), *riyadhah* (spiritual discipline), and *muraqabah* (spiritual vigilance). However, **ma'rifah** does not mean knowing the essential reality of God—since the divine essence is beyond human comprehension—but rather recognizing His attributes and experiencing His presence within one's inner consciousness.

Meanwhile, **fanā'** in classical Sufism is understood as the dissolution of human ego-consciousness in the presence of the majesty of God. **Fanā'** does not signify physical annihilation or the ontological merging of humans with God; rather, it refers to the disappearance of egoistic human attributes, leaving only awareness of the divine will and presence. This concept was widely discussed by early Sufi figures such as Abu Yazid al-Bustami and Al-Junaid al-Baghdadi.

Al-Junaid, known as a prominent figure of moderate Sunni Sufism, interpreted **fanā'** cautiously. He asserted that **fanā'** must be followed by **baqā'**, which refers to the continuation of spiritual life in obedience and ethical awareness. According to Al-Junaid, **fanā'** is "the disappearance of self-consciousness in obedience to God without losing awareness of the *shari'a*" (Al-Qusyairi, 2007). Thus, **fanā'** does not negate the human role as a social being and a servant of God bound by the laws of Islamic law.

This view is reinforced by Abd al-Karim al-Qushayri in *al-Risalah al-Qushayriyyah*, where he emphasizes that **fanā'** is a temporary spiritual condition (*hāl*), rather than a permanent spiritual station (*maqām*). **Fanā'** occurs when a spiritual seeker (*sālik*) becomes immersed in *dhikr* and divine awareness; afterward, however, the individual returns to ordinary reality with a more mature consciousness and greater moral responsibility.

In the classical Sufi tradition, **ma'rifah** and **fanā'** are closely interconnected. **Ma'rifah** represents the ultimate goal of spiritual knowledge, while **fanā'** is the inner condition that enables **ma'rifah** to occur. By experiencing **fanā'**, a Sufi releases attachment to ego and worldly concerns, allowing the heart to open to divine knowledge. Nevertheless, classical Sufi scholars emphasized that such experiences must remain within the framework of Islamic theology and *shari'a*, in order to avoid extreme or deviant interpretations.

Thus, the understanding of **ma'rifah** and **fanā'** in classical Sufism is fundamentally spiritual, ethical, and theological, emphasizing the balance between inner experience and outward responsibility. These concepts later became an important foundation for the development of Sufism, including contemporary efforts to reinterpret Sufi teachings in the modern era.

Driving Factors for the Reinterpretation of Sufism in the Modern Context

Shifts in social, cultural, and intellectual paradigms within contemporary society have generated an urgent need to reconceptualize Sufi teachings so that they remain relevant and functional (Mannan, 2018). One of the primary factors is the spiritual crisis affecting modern society, in which Sufism is increasingly viewed as an oasis amid spiritual aridity caused by the rapid development of science and technology that is not balanced by noble religious values (Falach & Assya'bani, 2022; Nuraini & Marhayati, 2020).

This crisis is further intensified by the instant conveniences offered by modernity, which often neglect the dimension of spirituality and thereby create inner emptiness and a loss of meaningful life orientation (Azizah & Jannah, 2022; Nafi'a et al., 2022). Such a phenomenon has stimulated the need for spiritual intervention through a dynamic and open reinterpretation of Sufism, enabling it to be more easily understood and practiced by individuals in the modern era (Falach & Assya'bani, 2022).

In addition, Sufism is expected to function as a vital balancing force in addressing various problems of modern society while harmonizing the outward and inward dimensions of human life (Falach & Assya'bani, 2022). Modernity—characterized by industrialization and the dominance of scientific rationality—has transformed patterns of life and lifestyle, often leading to the neglect of moral ideals, ethical values, and religious teachings, which are sometimes perceived as incompatible with contemporary principles (Falach & Assya'bani, 2022; Saputra et al., 2021). This situation becomes increasingly complex with the rise of individualism and materialism, which significantly erode communal values and transcendental spirituality (Maulana & Irham, 2023).

The mental crises and psychological anxieties emerging from individuals' inability to cope with the pressures of modern life also highlight the necessity of Sufism as a form of spiritual psychotherapy capable of healing the crisis of the soul caused by social and moral conditions (Waslah, 2017). The widespread existential crisis and spiritual dryness in modern society further emphasize the urgency of reinterpreting Sufism to offer spiritual liberation and to help individuals recognize themselves and their Creator amid the dominance of materialism (Falach & Assya'bani, 2022; Mannan, 2018). These crises are rooted in the psychological problems of modern individuals, which at times may develop into collective crises or even social epidemics with severe consequences for social life (Maulana & Irham, 2023).

Therefore, the reorientation of Sufi teachings becomes essential in providing holistic solutions to spiritual problems arising from the loss of a divine vision and in restoring modern humanity to the center of its existential awareness (Putra, 2013). The reinterpretation of Sufism is crucial in overcoming the imbalance in the meaning of life caused by the excessive supply of material fulfillment without adequate spiritual nourishment (Aminudin, 2020). This spiritual emptiness is further exacerbated by modern civilization, which often marginalizes the essential spiritual dimension of human life, resulting in a spiritual crisis as articulated by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Falach & Assya'bani, 2022). Such conditions create an urgent need for a reinterpretation of Sufism capable of addressing inner conflicts and providing spiritual resilience in a highly materialistic and secular environment (Waslah, 2017).

The necessity of reinterpreting Sufism is also driven by the growing rationalistic tendencies of modern society, which prioritize technological advancement while gradually distancing themselves from religious norms and teachings, leading to the erosion of the divine dimension of life (Fahru, 2020).

Consequently, modernization has triggered a crisis of life's meaning, spiritual emptiness, and the marginalization of religion from the public sphere, reducing it to a purely private matter (Irawan, 2019). This spiritual void is intensified by a modern civilization built upon the gradual rejection of spirituality in human life, which in turn leaves many individuals feeling alienated and deprived of existential guidance (Fauhatun & Burhanuddin, 2022).

Under these conditions, Sufism—with its rich metaphysical, cosmological, psychological, and religious psychotherapeutic doctrines—can serve as an alternative solution capable of filling the spiritual vacuum and restoring the authentic meaning of life for modern society (Irawan, 2019). The crisis of modern civilization, rooted in the rejection of the realities of the soul, God, and the afterlife, further underscores the urgency of Sufism as a vital balancing force capable of restoring equilibrium in human life (Kertayasa et al., 2021).

These developments indicate that Sufism possesses significant potential to respond to the challenges of modernity—not only as a remedy for spiritual crises but also as an ethical and moral guide in navigating social complexity (Irawan, 2019; Sakdullah, 2020). Therefore, the reinterpretation of Sufism becomes crucial in restoring humanistic values and religious doctrines that have been eroded by materialistic lifestyles (Abidi, 2021). The **Neo-Sufism** approach proposed by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, for example, offers a perennial philosophical perspective as a response to the dysfunction of religion in social life and to the development of modern science and technology, with the aim of restoring the spiritual wisdom of the Islamic tradition (Abitolkha, 2021; Hidayatullah et al., 2023). Nasr argues that modernity has eroded transcendental awareness and the objectivity of religion, and therefore traditional Sufism needs to be revived as a spiritual solution for modern individuals experiencing alienation (Irawan, 2019).

Reinterpretation of the Concept of *Ma'rifah* in Modern Sufism and Its Relevance for Contemporary Human Life

In the context of modern Sufism, the concept of *ma'rifah* has undergone a shift in meaning and emphasis without losing its essential spiritual substance. In classical Sufism, *ma'rifah* was primarily understood as esoteric inner knowledge attained through individual spiritual experience. In modern Sufism, however, *ma'rifah* is reinterpreted as a form of transcendental awareness integrated with social life, rationality, and human responsibility. This reinterpretation emerges as a response to the challenges of modern society characterized by rationalism, materialism, individualism, and a growing crisis of meaning in life.

Modern Sufi thinkers such as Fazlur Rahman, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Nurcholish Madjid emphasize that *ma'rifah* should not be understood merely as an exclusive mystical experience. Rather, it represents an ethical and spiritual consciousness that encourages individuals to manifest divine values within social reality. From this perspective, *ma'rifah* does not only mean “knowing God” in an inward sense but also “being aware of God's presence” in all dimensions of life—personal, social, and even ecological.

One form of reinterpretation of *ma'rifah* in modern Sufism is the affirmation of harmony between spirituality and rationality. *Ma'rifah* is no longer positioned as the opposite of reason, but rather as the highest form of awareness that transcends rationality without negating it. In fact, the consciousness of *ma'rifah* deepens the meaning of knowledge itself, because knowledge is not merely a tool to dominate nature but a means of understanding cosmic order as signs of divine greatness (*āyāt kauniyyah*). In this sense, *ma'rifah* becomes an ethical foundation for the development of science and technology so that they remain grounded in humanistic and spiritual values.

Furthermore, modern Sufism interprets *ma'rifah* as a form of **engaged spirituality**. It does not end with contemplative experience but is manifested through concrete actions such as social justice, compassion for others, and commitment to peace. The consciousness of *ma'rifah* encourages individuals to perceive social reality as a space for devotion to God. Therefore, a person who attains *ma'rifah* does not withdraw from the world but instead becomes more meaningfully engaged within society.

In contemporary human life—characterized by psychological pressures, intense competition, and social alienation—*ma'rifah* is also reinterpreted as a form of holistic self-awareness. It helps individuals recognize their true nature as spiritual beings, preventing them from becoming trapped in purely materialistic orientations. Such awareness cultivates inner peace, balance in life, and a moderate attitude in responding to the complexities of modern existence.

More broadly, modern Sufism positions *ma'rifah* as a foundation for spiritual ethics that remains relevant across time and space. *Ma'rifah* nurtures humility, empathy, and ecological responsibility, as humans become aware of their interconnectedness with God, fellow human beings, and the universe. Thus, the reinterpretation of *ma'rifah* in modern Sufism transforms it from merely a theological concept into a **paradigm of life** that guides contemporary individuals toward a meaningful, balanced, and civilized existence.

Reinterpretation of the Concept of *Fanā'* in Modern Sufism: Between Spirituality, Rationality, and Social Responsibility

In classical Sufi tradition, *fanā'* is understood as the dissolution of the human ego in the presence of God, such that the dominant consciousness within a Sufi becomes the will and awareness of the Divine. *Fanā'* is often associated with a mystical experience that is personal and transcendent in nature. However, within the context of modern society—characterized by rationality, social complexity, and demands for public ethics—the concept of *fanā'* requires reinterpretation in order to remain relevant without negating the role of human reason and social responsibility.

Modern Sufism views *fanā'* not as the elimination of rational consciousness but as the transformation of ego-centered awareness into ethical and transcendental consciousness. *Fanā'* does not mean abolishing human intellect or personality; rather, it involves subduing the ego, greed, and excessive self-centeredness. In this sense, *fanā'* is interpreted as a process of liberating oneself from the domination of desires and narrow personal interests, allowing rationality to function more clearly and ethically.

One important characteristic of the reinterpretation of *fanā'* in modern Sufism is the assertion that spiritual experience must remain within the framework of rational awareness and social consciousness. Contemporary Sufi thinkers emphasize that *fanā'* is not an ecstatic condition that eliminates critical thinking, but a spiritual experience that refines reason and deepens wisdom. Reason is not placed in opposition to *fanā'*, but rather positioned as an instrument for understanding social realities and implementing spiritual values in concrete ways.

Within this perspective, *fanā'* is understood as an ethical consciousness oriented toward divine values such as justice, compassion, and social responsibility. When the personal ego “dissolves,” what emerges instead is a deeper concern for the common good. *Fanā'* encourages individuals to transcend individualistic attitudes and become actively engaged in social life. Therefore, a person who experiences *fanā'* does not withdraw from society; instead, they become increasingly sensitive to social suffering and structural inequalities.

Modern Sufism also emphasizes the close relationship between *fanā'* and *baqā'*. *Fanā'* is understood as a phase of spiritual awareness that must be followed by *baqā'*, which refers to the continuation of human life in worldly reality with a mature consciousness of the Divine. In the modern context, *baqā'*

is manifested through social participation, professional responsibility, and moral commitment across various domains of life, including education, economics, and politics. Thus, *fanā'* does not end with inner experience but culminates in constructive social praxis.

Furthermore, the reinterpretation of *fanā'* in modern Sufism also serves as a critique of the materialism and hedonism that dominate contemporary life. *Fanā'* teaches detachment from excessive attachment to material possessions and social status without denying worldly needs in a balanced manner. The awareness of *fanā'* enables individuals to manage ambition in a healthy way, allowing economic and social rationality to function without sacrificing humanistic values.

In the context of modern life—marked by pressure and alienation—*fanā'* is interpreted as a liberating form of self-awareness. By dissolving excessive ego, individuals are able to achieve balance between inner spiritual demands and external responsibilities. *Fanā'* does not distance individuals from reality; rather, it enables them to engage authentically, rationally, and ethically within the dynamics of modern society.

Thus, modern Sufism reinterprets the concept of *fanā'* as a spiritual process that strengthens rationality and social responsibility rather than negating them. *Fanā'* becomes a path of self-transformation that produces spiritually grounded individuals who are intellectually sound, ethically responsible, and committed to the common good.

The Relevance of the Concepts of *Ma'rifah* and *Fanā'* in Modern Sufism for the Formation of Spirituality, Ethics, and Life Balance in Contemporary Society

In the context of modern Sufism, *ma'rifah* refers to a profound awareness of the essence of God and its connection to human existence and the universe, forming the foundation of an inclusive spirituality (Kolis & Ajhuri, 2019). This concept goes beyond purely rational understanding and reaches the mystical dimension that cultivates *ma'rifah*-based intelligence. Contemporary psychological research has even identified the phenomenon of a “God spot” in the brain as an unusual neurological occurrence related to spiritual awareness (Mulkhan, 2018). Such knowledge does not merely involve superficial recognition but entails aligning oneself with the source of divine light, which is often overlooked amid the busyness of modern life (Aminudin, 2020). In parallel, *fanā'*, or the dissolution of the self in divine reality, offers a solution to the existential crisis and spiritual dryness experienced by modern society (Falach & Assya'bani, 2022).

The Sufi approach—including the concepts of *ma'rifah* and *fanā'*—can serve as an oasis in the barren spiritual desert faced by the millennial generation, which is often trapped in materialism and hedonism (Nuraini & Marhayati, 2020). This phenomenon of spiritual crisis encourages many individuals to turn toward esoteric dimensions in search of inner peace that cannot be found through worldly achievements alone (Nafi'a et al., 2022; Sakdullah, 2020). Sufism, with its emphasis on purification of the soul and inner alignment, offers a framework for overcoming spiritual emptiness and restoring balance in modern human life (Falach & Assya'bani, 2022). This is particularly relevant given that rapid advances in science and technology, when not balanced by noble religious values, have led modern societies to become increasingly materialistic while neglecting the spiritual dimension (Nuraini & Marhayati, 2020).

This tendency creates acute spiritual problems, distancing humans from the center of their existence and leading to crises of morality and ethics (Putra, 2013). In this context, modern Sufism—with the concepts of *ma'rifah* and *fanā'*—provides a transformative framework capable of rebalancing the material and spiritual aspects of life, thereby mitigating the negative impacts of modernization that often lead toward materialism and secularism (Safaat, 2024). The mental crises affecting modern society, often caused by frustrated desires and weakened social-moral conditions, can be addressed

through the Sufi approach, which offers spiritual remedies and resilience against spiritual crises (Waslah, 2017). This approach integrates spiritual values in responding to the challenges of modernization, thereby facilitating the reconstruction of a strong identity grounded in noble values (Falach & Assya'bani, 2022).

Sufism guides the journey of human life toward salvation in both this world and the hereafter, aiming to liberate individuals from passions and desires that deviate from religious teachings while fostering awareness of the Divine presence (Azizah & Jannah, 2022). Continuous contemplation and detachment from temporary worldly desires constitute the essence of Sufism, which is highly relevant for modern societies experiencing spiritual dryness (Falach & Assya'bani, 2022). The modern psychological crisis, which in some cases develops into a collective epidemic, further indicates the urgency of Sufism as a discipline emphasizing the spiritual dimension and seeking balance between the material and immaterial aspects of human life (Maulana & Irham, 2023).

Such harmony is essential to prevent a purely materialistic and hedonistic orientation to life that frequently ignores the spiritual and inner dimensions of human existence (Aminudin, 2020). This approach seeks to respond to the modern human need for meaning and purpose in life, which is often eroded by technological advancement and worldly pursuits alone (Azizah & Jannah, 2022). Through the understanding of *ma'rifah*, individuals are invited to recognize God intrinsically—not merely through doctrine—thereby forming a deep and personal spirituality (Kertayasa et al., 2021).

Similarly, *fanā'* guides individuals toward transcendental experience by dissolving the ego and uniting the self with Divine Reality, which is essential for overcoming alienation in modern societies that tend to be rationalistic, secular, and materialistic (Fauhatun & Burhanuddin, 2022; Mannan, 2018). The relevance of Sufism becomes increasingly crucial in light of the widespread materialistic and hedonistic lifestyles that erode human values and religious doctrines, prompting individuals to return to spiritual values and their original human nature (*fitrah*) (Abidi, 2021). This enables individuals to rediscover life's purpose and inner peace amid the rapid and competitive pressures of modernization (Azizah & Jannah, 2022).

Thus, Sufism provides moral guidance and normative inspiration that are greatly needed to balance the forces of materialism and hedonism dominating contemporary society (Nur & Irham, 2023). The Sufi approach emphasizes increasing awareness of the importance of morality and ethics as a counterbalance to lifestyles focused solely on worldly pursuits (Aminudin, 2020). Ethical Sufism, in particular, offers solutions to moral decadence caused by hedonistic and materialistic lifestyles by providing a path to balance these opposing forces (Nur & Irham, 2023).

The application of spiritual values in daily life—such as simplicity and frugality—also becomes an integral part of Sufi ethics that can help society cope with economic and health crises (Mardiantowijoyo, 2025). In addition, Sufism encourages individuals to prioritize moral values in social interactions to address the spiritual crisis caused by secularization and materialistic orientations (Abitolkha, 2021; Aminudin, 2020). This aligns with the role of Sufism as a form of spiritual psychotherapy that resolves inner conflicts and restores spiritual resilience amid an excessively materialistic and secular life (Waslah, 2017).

The practice of Sufism seeks to transform negative traits, open the heart, connect individuals with inner wisdom, and bring them closer to God (Ainul, 2017). *Ma'rifah* and *fanā'*, as core concepts of Sufism, guide individuals toward the peak of transcendent spiritual experience, enabling true recognition of Absolute Reality and the dissolution of the ego. Through *ma'rifah*, individuals can attain intuitive and direct understanding of divine truth that transcends the limits of mere rationality.

This process allows individuals to develop a deeper spiritual perspective that surpasses the positivistic and secular frameworks often characteristic of modern society (Thohir, 2016). In this way,

ma'rifah helps individuals rediscover the purpose of life and inner peace amid the rapid and competitive pressures of modernization (Mannan, 2018). Meanwhile, *fanā'* teaches total surrender and the merging of personal identity into the Divine will, effectively counteracting egoism and extreme individualism that frequently appear in contemporary societies (Falach & Assya'bani, 2022).

This represents the essence of purification of the soul and self-mastery, which is highly relevant for building strong ethics and noble morality in modern societies vulnerable to spiritual crises (Aminudin, 2020). The spiritual and moral crises affecting modern society—often identified as consequences of materialism and secularism—can be addressed through Sufi practices that offer comprehensive solutions (Mannan, 2018; Thohir, 2016). This is achieved by transforming the understanding of Sufism to become more dynamic and open, making it easier for modern society to understand and practice (Falach & Assya'bani, 2022). Consequently, Sufism functions as an approach that facilitates the integration of spiritual values into everyday life, encouraging individuals to develop strong moral and ethical awareness amid the challenges of modernity (Nuraini & Marhayati, 2020).

Table 1. The Relevance of Ma'rifah and Fanā' in Modern Sufism for Contemporary Spiritual, Ethical, and Social Life

Conceptual Aspect	Ma'rifah in Modern Sufism	Fanā' in Modern Sufism	Relevance for Contemporary Society
Conceptual Definition	A profound awareness of God and the interconnectedness of human beings with the universe, forming the foundation of inclusive spirituality.	The dissolution of the human ego in divine consciousness so that life orientation is no longer centered on personal interests.	Fosters spiritual awareness that transcends purely rational understanding and connects humans with transcendental values.
Spiritual Dimension	Develops spiritual intelligence through direct recognition of divine reality and alignment with the light of God.	Purifies the soul from the domination of ego, desires, and excessive materialistic orientation.	Serves as a means of spiritual recovery for societies experiencing inner emptiness due to modernization.
Psychological Dimension	Provides inner peace, life meaning, and deeper self-awareness.	Helps individuals detach from excessive attachment to worldly matters and personal ego.	Functions as a form of spiritual psychotherapy to address stress, anxiety, and alienation in modern life.
Ethical Dimension	Encourages the formation of spirituality that generates moral values such as honesty, empathy, and responsibility.	Reduces extreme individualism and fosters collective awareness and social concern.	Strengthens social ethics and public morality amid the dominance of materialism and hedonism.
Social Dimension	The consciousness of <i>ma'rifah</i> guides individuals to manifest divine values	<i>Fanā'</i> encourages individuals to subdue personal ego for the	Contributes to the development of a more harmonious, humane,

	within social and humanitarian life.	sake of collective welfare and social justice.	and socially responsible society.
Function in Modern Life	Serves as a spiritual foundation for understanding the meaning of life amid technological advancement and modernization.	Acts as a mechanism of self-control against excessive material ambition and worldly orientation.	Maintains balance between the material and spiritual dimensions of modern human life.
Transformational Impact	Guides individuals toward deeper spiritual awareness and a closer relationship with God.	Produces self-transformation through purification of the soul and control of the ego.	Helps individuals rediscover life's purpose, inner peace, and existential balance.

Table Note:

This table demonstrates that the concepts of *ma'rifah* and *fanā'* in modern Sufism encompass not only spiritual dimensions but also psychological, ethical, and social aspects. Both concepts function as transformative frameworks capable of addressing the spiritual, moral, and existential crises of contemporary society by restoring balance between the material and spiritual dimensions of human life.

CONCLUSION

This study finds that the reinterpretation of the concepts of **ma'rifah** and **fanā'** in modern Sufism has broader relevance than previously understood within the framework of classical Sufism. The main finding of this research indicates that these two concepts function not merely as individual mystical experiences but also as a spiritual paradigm capable of addressing the crises of meaning, morality, and spirituality in modern society. The reinterpretation of **ma'rifah** as a form of transcendental awareness integrated with rationality and social responsibility, and **fanā'** as the transformation of ego-centered consciousness into ethical and divine awareness, demonstrates that Sufism has significant potential to serve as an ethical and spiritual framework for confronting the challenges of modernity. This finding challenges the long-standing assumption that Sufism is merely an ascetic spiritual practice detached from social life.

From a scholarly perspective, this study contributes by reinforcing the view that Sufism holds contextual relevance in modern life while expanding the discourse on contemporary Sufism. This research not only reaffirms the classical understanding of **ma'rifah** and **fanā'**, but also proposes a reinterpretative approach that positions these concepts within a framework of active, rational, and socially engaged spirituality. Thus, this study introduces a conceptual perspective on modern Sufism as a spiritual paradigm capable of integrating mystical experience, ethical values, and social responsibility in contemporary society.

However, this study has several limitations. It is based on a literature review focusing on conceptual analysis of classical and contemporary texts, and therefore does not incorporate broader empirical data on the practice of Sufism in modern society. In addition, the discussion in this study is limited to two central Sufi concepts, **ma'rifah** and **fanā'**, and does not include other Sufi concepts that may also contribute to the development of modern spirituality. Future research is therefore recommended to conduct empirical studies involving Sufi practices in broader social contexts and to

explore other Sufi concepts in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of Sufism in contemporary society.

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