Maslow's hierarchy of needs: An Islamic critique

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Abstract: Abraham Maslow's model of the hierarchy of needs is pervasive in many academic specialisations. After a short description of the model, this article summarises the existing criticisms. While criticism on the empirical validity of the model and its ethno-centricity are frequently mentioned in the literature, the authors of this article give special focus on the missing consideration of the spiritual aspect of human existence in Maslow's model. The study explores reasons for the commodification of the model (i.e. the divorcing of the model from its substance and using it simply as a commodity) and the non-consideration of Maslow's later changes. Special focus is laid on the usage of this model in marketing, given its position as a field which embodies the capitalist perspective so completely through, particularly, advertising but also through the conceptualisation of people. The article describes the model's diverse reception in Muslim academic circles. It offers an Islamic critique of both its foundations and its usage. The study concludes that attempts at harmonising the model with the higher objectives (*maqāṣid*) of the *Sharī'ah* do not do justice to either model.

Keywords: Hierarchy of needs; *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*; marketing; Maslow spirituality.

Abstrak: Penggunaan Model Abraham Maslow tentang hierarki keperluan adalah cukup berleluasa dalam kebanyakan pengkhususan akademik. Selepas penerangan ringkas model tersebut, artikel ini meringkaskan kritikan-kritikan

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yang sedia ada. Kritikan terhadap kesahihan empirik model tersebut di samping isu yang berorientasikan etnik kerap diperbincangkan dalam sorotan litertur. Namun, pengarang kertas kerja ini memberikan fokus yang khas terhadap pertimbangan yang tidak terdapatnya aspek kerohanian dalam kewujudan manuasia bagi model Maslow tersebut. Kertas kerja ini membincangkan sebab-sebab model tersebut dilihat sebagai satu komoditi (memisahkan model daripada bahan dan menggunakannya sebagai satu komoditi) dan bukan menjadi satu pertimbangan untuk perubahan model Maslow. Tumpuan khusus diberikan atas penggunaan model ini dalam pemasaran, berdasarkan kedudukannya sebagai satu bidang yang merangkumi perspektif kapitalis sepenuhnya, terutama sekali bagi bidang pengiklanan. Tetapi ia juga melihat pembentukan konsep manusia itu sendiri. Artikel ini menerangkan kepelbagaian penerimaan model tersebut dalam kalangan para akademik Islam. Ia memberikan kritikan secara Islam terhadap asas dan penerimaannya. Kertas kerja ini cuba untuk mengharmonikan dan menyatukan kedua-dua model tersebut dengan berobjektifkan Sharīʻah (*maqāṣid*) yang lebih tinggi lagi; namun ia tidak dapat memberikan keadilan kepada kedua-dua model tersebut.

Kata Kunci: Hierarki keperluan; *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʻah*; pemasaran, Maslow; kerohanian.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs – developed in the 1950's in the U.S. by Abraham Maslow, son of Ukrainian Jewish immigrants – is a pervasive model, often presented in the simplified form of a pyramid, to students of different specialisations. As Yang states, Maslow's *Motivation and Personality,* first published in 1954, "has been one of the most extensively referenced publications in the past 46 years" (Yang, 2003). The model has persisted ever since in psychology, education, economics, marketing, management, sociology, political science, and others. It has thoroughly permeated public consciousness. Although Yang's statement refers predominantly to the U.S., it cannot be denied that the model has left an imprint on public consciousness wherever it is taught.

In the wake of Western hegemony and the academic proliferation of study plans and contents, the hierarchy of needs model has gained worldwide acceptance. Although very much embedded in capitalist ideology, its universal validity is, most of the time, assumed; it is hardly taught in a critical way that encourages discussion on its possible weaknesses.

It cannot be reconstructed whether Maslow has considered his own model to be of universal nature, applicable worldwide. Recent

theorists have contended that Maslow did not intend his hierarchy to be universal (Loh, Wrathall, & Schapper, 2000), although Wahba and Bridwell (1976) note, "Maslow postulated [in his own works] that his needs are 'more universal' for all cultures than other superficial desires or behaviours (p. 213, citing Maslow, 1970, p. 54). It seems, however, to have been received as such. As Yang infers, "his emphasis on the instinctual nature of basic needs easily leaves the impression that his theory is universally applicable" (Yang, 2003, p. 171).

The field of marketing has been chosen as a case study to exemplify the commodification of the model. We understand commodification as the choice of certain ideas, their simplified symbolic representation (sometimes with a lack of consideration of their intellectual or societal background) and their translation into a standard and/or merchandise. Marketing is particularly suitable for this purpose, as its own substance concerns promoting a perspective, rather than the substance of an item, and the reduction of that item or idea or experience to "what sells" being intrinsic to it. This paper attempts to reconsider Maslow's model and its usage and reception in the academic field, particularly in Muslim academic circles.

A brief description of Maslow's model

Maslow promoted a "humanistic" approach to studying humankind, rejecting the "value-free, value-neutral, value-rejecting" (Maslow, 1971, p. 4) hegemony in the science of his time (and ours). As an atheist, Maslow considered the scientific thinking of his day as undervaluing human experience by referring to the natural sciences for models without consideration for the complexity and scope of human experience. In developing his model, Maslow believed that "the growing tip" should be modelled – those who were exceptional – to show humankind its potential:

> The growing tip is where all the action takes place, this is where all the chromosomes are diving, where all the growth processes are most vivid and most active. What I've done as a technique is pull out the best specimen rather than sampling the whole of the population (1971, p. 5).

Maslow attempted to derive "a psychology from healthy people rather than sick ones" (Maslow, 1982, p. 235). The pyramid model seems to be the most common representation of his model of the hierarchy of needs

with the exceptional right at the top, occupying and personifying the "self-actualisation" level. Maslow himself never seems to have used the simplified pyramid scheme.

Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs" model appealed very widely as "it provides both a theory of human motives by classifying basic human needs in a hierarchy, and a theory of human motivation that relates these needs to general behaviour" (Wahba & Bridwell, 1986, p. 213). According to Westwood (1992) in Loh et al. (2000, p. 3), the model is based on three main principles:

1. The Deficit Principle – if a need is not satisfied, it generates tension, motivating action towards satisfaction. This assumes a satisfied need does not motivate; also, unmet needs are assumed to predominate (Maslow, 1970, p. 293).
2. The Prepotency Principle – the needs must be met in their ascending order, and only after each lower stage needs are at least partially met, can the next higher stage needs be pursued (Maslow, 1982, p. 236).
3. The Progression Principle - physiological needs, such as food, shelter and warmth must be met before a person will look to needs further up the pyramid (Maslow, 1982, p. 236).

Further, the model neatly separated the needs into "growth" needs (achievement, self-actualisation) and "deficit" needs (safety, belonging) (Wahba & Bridwell, 1976). The paradox of this model is that Maslow maintained that all levels of needs are interdependent (Maslow, 1970, p. 97), whilst asserting that they are prepotent and progressive. The model has been taken into "operation" without attention being paid to this last note on interdependence. Similarly, consideration of Maslow's later development of the model – which made it much less neat, has also not been operationalised (Koltko-Rivera, 2006). In fact, Loh et al. (2000) contend that, "despite overwhelming evidence that the intrinsic nature of the theory does not work, its relevance stems not from the feasibility of the theory, but from the "usability" of the theory" (p. 21).

Business subjects – Economics and Management, and from them, Marketing, Finance, Information Systems and the like – have modelled their theories and research on the hard sciences. However, in some areas of business, such as Management and Marketing, the inevitable

influence of the social sciences has been felt, due to the concentration in these areas on people – as workers, as owners, as buyers, as sellers, as suppliers. As such, anthropology, sociology, education and especially psychology, have been mined for theories and models.

In business, Maslow's model is still taught as a textbook fundamental (for example, Kotler's *Principles of Marketing* (2015) first published in 1957 and now in its 16th edition and Robbins' *Management* (2013), now in its 12th edition). The model has also been widely used especially with regard to: 1) consumer motivation to buy (e.g. Guarin & Knorringa, 2014; Taormina & Gao, 2013); and 2) as a model for increasing worker productivity (e.g. Jerome, 2013; Ramprasad, 2013; Jarkas, Radosavljevic, & Wuyi, 2014). The model, particularly packaged as an eye-pleasing pyramid, both appeals to people's "common sense" and is easy to understand and explain. It can be seen in action in advertising campaigns, which frequently leverage a "perceived need gap" and the tension surrounding it to evoke purchase. In addition, it can be perceived right through to the so-called "corporate social responsibility" initiatives by businesses where employees are allowed a half-day a month to do community work such as help out with reading in schools or working for the disabled. These programmes have the double benefit for companies in being very motivating for staff, who feel they are contributing to the community and discouraging staff turnover due to staff feeling committed to the programmes they participate in (Korschun, Bhattacharya, & Swain, 2014; Lee, Park, & Lee, 2013). Additionally, they have the benefit of the company seemingly concerned with the community and its needs and requirements (Chomvilailuk & Butcher, 2013; Smith, Read, & López-Rodríguez, 2010). All of which bring bottom line (i.e. monetary) rewards (Shauki, 2011), consistent with their overall goal of profit maximisation.

Different critiques of Maslow's model

The model has been criticised as ethnocentric and also as "self-aggrandising" in the self-actualisation stage – a stage which resulted in Maslow himself finding fault with the original formulation, and working towards a very different formulation of his model of human motivation.

It is not difficult to find diverse critiques of Maslow's model. There have been ample criticisms on its empirical validity. Maslow, in fact, made limited personal observations the basis of his model (as he

mentioned himself, he only took into consideration model behaviour (Maslow, 1971). There was no empirical study covering different sections of even American society at the time he formulated his model.[1]

Most of the conceptual and validity criticisms have focused on two foundations of the model: the model's reliance on "Western" individualism as opposed to more collectivist societal forms of organisation, and its ethno-centricity. Hofstede (1984, pp. 389–398) criticises the model for its ethno-centricity (Loh, 2000). Hofstede's own research on "universal" values highlights factors like individualism versus collectivism, large or small power distribution, the degrees of uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, and short and long term orientation across a wide-range of cultures (Gambrel, 2003, p. 144). Maslow used the observations of his immediate surroundings. He formulated his model on the highly individualistic society of the U.S. in the 1950s. He did not consider more collectivist societies (Far and Middle Eastern) and the impact of their collectivism when talking of the hierarchy of needs. Edwin C. Nevis (1983), an American psychologist who taught organisational psychology in Shanghai, identified the model as being unsuitable for the Chinese context, and developed his own: Nevis's hierarchy of needs. Nevis realised that need hierarchies of different cultures are classifiable based on the dimension of individualism-collectivism as well as an ego-social dimension (Loh et al., 2000, p. 9). Not unlike Maslow, Nevis never made empirical data the foundation of his research (Loh et al., 2000). He did not test his hierarchy with actual Chinese people.

Gambrel and Cianci (2003) have pointed out the limitations of Maslow's Western-based model by using his motivation theory model in international management, contrasting it with the special needs of a more collectivist culture such as China's. The authors state that the three most well-known content theories, including Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's two-factor theory, and McClelland's three-factor theory, have all been developed by American theorists. These theorists used only American subjects in their research (Gambrel, 2003). The problem of universalisation seems therefore quite common. This approach to cross-cultural research remains prevalent today, for as Smith (1999) states, "research in itself is a powerful intervention, which has traditionally benefited the researcher and the knowledge base of the dominant group in society" (p. 176). Cofer and Apply (1964) pointed

out that the contrast between growth and deficiency needs characterised the views of many prominent theory-building psychologists of the time such as Rogers, Allport and Fromm as well as Maslow (Wahba & Bridwell, 1976, p. 236).

Contrasting Maslow's individualist approach to a Far Eastern (Chinese) collectivist approach is to be expected in view of the concentrated attempts at creating new models applicable in economic relations between "West" (here: the U.S.) and "East" (here: China) (Loh et al., 2000).

More refined models have been developed on this basis. Yang (2003) criticises Maslow's model with regard to its "hierarchical unidimensionality" and "cross-cultural validity", developing what he calls a "Double Y-model of Basic Human Needs." He tried to re-arrange human needs in terms of their relative potency in a non-linear model and distinguished between collectivistic and individualistic needs. It is interesting to observe that the criticism of Maslow's model that seems to be given most attention to is the one that promises more success in the international business (management, marketing) field, while the mere insight into truth and falsehood is not a primary motif in the deliberations.

Commodification of the model and Maslow's later changes

Koltko-Rivera gives ample consideration to the later version of Maslow's hierarchy of needs model, which places "self-transcendence as a motivational step beyond self-actualization" (2006, p. 302). The author mentions a number of important consequences of this re-consideration for theory and research, among them the integration of spirituality into the mainstream of psychology, and a more multiculturally integrated approach to psychological theory (p. 302). Koltko-Rivera describes "the typical textbook version of Maslow's hierarchy of needs" as "seriously inaccurate as a reflection of Maslow's later formulation of theory" (p. 306):

> The later model places the highest form of human development at a transpersonal level, where the self/ego and its needs are transcended. This represents a monumental shift in the conceptualization of human personality and its development. … At the level of self-transcendence, the individual's own needs are put aside, to a great extent, in

> favor of service to others and to some higher force or cause
> conceived as being outside the personal self (pp. 306-307).

Koltko-Rivera's paper is not only interesting with regard to Maslow's later version (as postulated in a number of public lectures held from 1967 onwards and his "The Farther Reaches of Human Nature", published in 1971), and why it never found the appreciation it deserves, but also with regard to the methodology of (humanist) psychology itself, with the latter being vested in the structure of modern psychology and its non-recognition of spirituality.

According to Koltko-Rivera, the misconception of the later version is so persistent that "there is no mention of self-transcendence as a motivational status distinct from self-actualization in almost any textbook treatment of Maslow's theory" (p. 307). Reasons for this relate to Maslow having little opportunity to publicise the amended theory himself (p. 308), the difficulty to access the material (p. 308), and inherent reasons relating to the structure of psychology and its unwillingness to give credit to spirituality in peoples' lives and "stigmatize serious researchers of religion" (p. 309). Perhaps this is why Maslow added, as a level higher than self-actualisation, a self-transcendent level which operated as a "religion-surrogate" with "much more personal meaning and effectiveness than the established idolatries which pass as established religions" (Maslow, 1982). As part of this theory development, Maslow proposed that a self-actualising individual would experience an increase in the importance of self-actualisation once the need was gratified (Wahba & Bridwell, 1976) in contrast to his deficit principle.

The second aspect, based on a review of some of Maslow's journal entries, reveals the limited scope of personal experience and observation of the limited human behaviour that found access into model-making, such as taking American presidents as samples. The very fact that Maslow experienced an almost fatal heart attack in this later phase of his life (1967) and the transcendental experience it involved may have drastically shown him the limitations of human existence. Maslow's journal entries, following his heart attack, identified his work motivation as being "determined (unconsciously) by the Jewish passion for ethics, utopianism, Messianism, the prophetic thundering. My whole value-laden philosophy of science could be called Jewish – at least by my personal definition. I certainly wasn't aware of it *then*" (Maslow, 1982, p. 233).

Maslow's opinion that self-actualisation rarely happens, could engage some criticism on the materialistic side of the "American dream". Maslow states:

> There's so little love in the US family, too. Is this because of the narrowed-down blood family (instead of the extended family a la Auntie Pearl? Frustration of belongingness? Of the clan? Of the oasis in a crappy world?). I've rarely seen a happy marriage and a happy family. What did this do to the kids? All the hopes pooped out. Not only the social institutions, but also the ultimate: affluence itself. To yearn for a car or a house and then *still* be miserable – smack up against the inadequacies of materialism. Materialism is a marvellous philosophy and it works beautifully. It's sparked revolutions and people have willingly died for it. *Until* you get affluence and prosperity and you're just as miserable – even more so (Maslow, 1982, p. 221).

Maslow's concerns with the unexpected emptiness of materialism have also been a source of some interest in the academic literature (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2004), particularly in psychology and business. However, attempts to reconcile the cause of this lack of fulfilment have been largely futile. Some suggestions for increasing happiness (utility) have been to "get out into nature" (Nisbet, Zelenski, & Murphy, 2011) or "volunteer more" (Borgonovi, 2008; Lui & Aaker, 2008).

Marketing has looked at this area intensively through the lens of one of its founding theories – the globalisation thesis (Levitt, 1983). This thesis contends that as people become wealthier and move beyond concerns for basic needs they will expand their consumption to include "global products" or "global brands". The expending of their newly acquired greater disposable income on these goods, would represent a convergence of symbols and, therefore values – Western, specifically American, values (De Mooij, 2009). Inherent in this theorised universalised convergence of Western values was the belief that secularism would be more and more widely adopted – indeed, this is a stated premise of Inglehart's World Values Survey, one of the most extensive values data collections in the world (Hossli, 2007):

> We're dying from a lack of spirituality. The metapathologies, the value disturbances. We can't stand being poor or crippled

> of diminished or evil human beings or being cowardly Jonahs.
> We *must* like ourselves. But this can never be achieved – it
> must keep on becoming and growing. You have to keep on
> earning it and deserving it, It's awful to be a bastard; it's
> awful to be unloved; it's awful to feel cheap, guilty, ashamed,
> embarrassed (Maslow, 1982, p. 62).

Although Maslow calls for spirituality, he was doubtless aware that
within secular materialist Western academic scholarship his call would
not be taken up. In fact, the marginalisation of religious or spiritual
viewpoints in Western social sciences is inherent in its underlying
epistemological bias (Habib, 1993). The adoption of a spiritual, or even
a more spiritual, perspective in Western academic scholarship would
undermine the "rational science", the objectivity of the research and,
as such, it would not meet the needs of the societal (capitalist) model.

Maslow's locus of "spirituality" as a source has not been pursued
with any real vigour in the literatures. Habib (1993) puts this down to
the epistemological bias in Western academic scholarship which sees
religion or spirituality as "unscientific" or inconsistent with humanist
scientific thought. Certainly in marketing, the early and unquestioned
adoption of the ethnocentric "globalisation thesis" (Levitt, 1983),
encouraged a myopia that was replicated across the social sciences.
De Mooij (2009) credits this to an ethnocentrism so deep that it goes
unnoticed, both by the countries of origin themselves, as well as those
countries the systems are exported to. This leads to on-going replication
of the same ideas, based on the same frameworks, and inherently holding
the same biases (see also Mukherji & Sengupta, 2004).

Obviously, although the secularisation anticipated by Inglehart and
others has not cascaded across societies, the commitment to the Western
view of humankind, also an inherent part of the bias of Maslow's original
model, persists. This means that any reformulation of Maslow's model
with the same premises cannot be successful, because the foundations
remain unsound.

Maslow in marketing: A case study

Marketing, as a field of study, is seen as an ideal case study for the
illustration of Maslow's model. Not only is marketing, as it is enacted in
societies today, a product of the capitalist economic system, it also has a
long association and fascination with the hierarchy of needs.

As mentioned, Maslow's model is used across business disciplines and is a fundamental concept taught in introductory marketing courses (see Kotler, for example). As a Consumer Behaviour topic, Maslow's hierarchy shows students how people are motivated to meet needs, being unable to advance until lower-order needs are met. In advertising and promotions courses, Maslow can be used to show how people, upon noticing a perceived gap between their current state and ideal state, are moved to act to put their lives back into balance.

Marketing itself is an organically Western discipline, an outgrowth of economics developed in U.S. business schools in the 1960's. As such, given both the time and the locational context of its formation, marketing is a product of Western individualist secular capitalism and, so, naturally operates on a profit maximisation model (Ali, al-Aali, & al-Owaihan, 2013; Saeed, Ahmed, & Mukhtar, 2001).

Businesses developed in this environment exist solely to make money for shareholders and can be said to have no obligation to ethical considerations beyond what is legal, according to a civil system of law (Alserhan, 2012). Capitalism itself challenges characteristics of humankind as noble creations. "Humankind's very being is related to the amount of things humans can produce, the level of technological development they can attain, and the degree to which they can modernise consumer products. The role of the individual, then, is greater consumption and a better standard of living" (Habib, 1993, p. 134).

Marketing is a mechanism established in and drenched with the assumptions and biases of the superiority of a Western capitalist model. It deals in perceptions, as opposed to realities, so despite the fact that Maslow himself did not distinguish between needs and wants (Sheth & Mittal, 2004), it is a short leap from "needs" (Maslow's lower order "deficit" needs) to "wants" (states or goods above the lower-order – "growth" needs). The expansion of the "needs" category to include perceived wants is very beneficial for businesses as it increases both number of purchases and repeated purchase. Therefore, attracting customers as young as possible into the consumption cycle maximises customer lifetime value – or number of purchases over the course of a life. Positioning products in minds of consumers as having human/ friend characteristics, as is the case with branding, allows consumers

to feel they have relationships with products – proxies for Maslow's higher order needs (social, esteem, etc.).

Maslow's model has been used very extensively in marketing to leverage consumer perceived unmet needs and wants into sales. In fact, the model is so pervasive, despite a lack of evidence of its efficacy that a marketing paper has been written on this very topic (Soper, Milford, & Rosenthal, 1995). Keynes (1931), the famous economist, has written that "the needs of a human being may seem insatiable" (1931, p. 365).[2] He nevertheless divides them into two classes – absolute needs (related to self) and relative needs (your situation compared to that of others).

Presentation of Maslow's model to business students results in little questioning. The model neatly serves the required training the workforce needs to be good "citizens" in a capitalist economy (Habib, 1993). This, despite the fact that this model, as many others, is intrinsically wrong for leaving out the spiritual aspect of human life. In fact, to acknowledge humankind as more than "consuming units", the model would need to be completely inverted, so that self-transcendence was the initial step, the step which defined purpose, before eating, drinking, and seeking shelter. The objective in this case is to increase the speed and rate of consumption amongst humankind. This one-dimensional exploitation of people brought about by peddling a one-dimensional view of human beings is damaging both for the people themselves and their societies; both in terms of societal development and the development of business ethics and practice (Boulanouar & Boulanouar, 2013).

Muslims' receptions of Maslow's model

The following will attempt to give an overview of Muslim academics' reception of the model. They may vary from positively uncritical to harmonising to critical approaches.

Ali (1995) does not criticise Maslow's model as such, but rather addresses the humanist approach as a third force (after psychoanalysis and behaviourism) it is embedded in. He sees humanist psychology as a response to the shortcomings ("mass dehumanization", p. 55) of the preceding models (psychoanalysis and behaviourism), attempting to give more importance to the human being by placing him at the centre of deliberations. "Humans have limitless capacity for growth and self-improvement; in a nutshell, man is his own god. Consequently, the aim

of the humanist is to spend time and effort on explaining what a person is capable of doing, more than talking about what he/she is" (p. 55). Ali rightly identifies the potential for this psychological approach with regard to commodification:

> The humanist approach to the study of psychology meant to many of its adherents adoption of a secular kind of humanism and rejection of God, coupled with complete commitment to the concept of the *self*. Freedom is the driving force that energizes human action, with the ultimate goal of life being *self*-esteem and *self*-actualization. The momentum for this model of man was boosted by the fact that the economies of the industrialized nations began to need consumers (p. 55).

Given its proliferation and importance for so many different syllabi, it is to be expected that the model found some amount of attention and criticism within the Islamisation of the Human Sciences approach.

Ibrahim Ragab, in his 1997 paper entitled "Creative Engagement of Modern Social Science Scholarship: A Significant Component of the Islamisation of Knowledge Effort" refers to the later version of Maslow's "Theory of Metamotivation", as an exceptional case for "describing in very formal statements what clearly looks, in every way, like the spiritual dimension of most religious teachings" (p. 44), even referring to religious terminology, but being bound by the "cultural taboos of the scientific community in which he functions" (p. 44).[3] However, Ragab criticises Maslow's approach for asserting the rootedness of "spiritual life" in the biological nature of the species, amounting to nothing but higher animality (p. 44). Ragab states: "He [Maslow] thus imposes on the reader his unwarranted and unsubstantiated denial of anything of a supernatural nature. He gives us mere assertions in this particular respect, without ever proving them" (p. 44).

Khaidzir, Anwar, and Hamsan (2011) mention Maslow's model as an example of the self-centeredness of humanist psychology. They conclude:

> Maslow believed that any human intelligence has the potential to get to the point of self-actualization, but if the basic level is not met, then it is a fatal failure to address human potential. However, the question is could an intelligent man struggle to beat the system with the lack of basic need? In many cases,

what are the things that cannot be provided by the basic need
of intelligence? (p. 200).

In her paper on "The Innovation of Human Nature in Islam", Shadiya
Baqutayan mainly criticises the missing spiritual aspect in Western
representations of the human nature, with Freud, Maslow and Marx
viewing the "human as an evolving animal" (p. 172).

Other authors have attempted to relate the model to the *maqāṣid*
pattern, the higher objectives of the *Sharī'ah*. One common approach
seems to be to pragmatically attempt to join both the commodified
Maslow model and the commodified *maqāṣidic* model, while failing to
relate either model to their original worldview.

We may quote as one example for this approach Zakaria and Abdul
Malek's (2014) paper entitled *"Effects of Human Needs Based on the
Integration of Needs as Stipulated in Maqasid Syariah and Maslow's
Hierarchy of Needs on Zakah Distribution Efficiency of Asnaf
Assistance Business Programme."* The authors attempt to incorporate
the beneficiary categories of the Islamically defined alms, *zakāh*,
into Maslow's hierarchy of needs model into the theory of the higher
objectives of Islamic Law (referred to as "needs"). Referring to Rosbi
and Sanep, the authors equate Maslow's concept of self-actualisation
with religion, tacitly bearing with the difference in ranking awarded to
both the Maslowian self-actualisation (ranking last) and "religion" as a
"need" (ranking first) respectively. The authors do not attempt to answer
the question of the necessity to involve Maslow's model for their *zakāh*
distribution scheme.

In a more critical approach, Alias and Samsudin (2005) declare
the Maslowian hierarchy of needs model as unsuitable to explain, for
instance, the Prophets' Companions' motivated behaviour "in neglecting
their physiological needs (life) in order to fulfil their self-actualising
needs (*jihad*)" (p. 13). They still consider the model as relevant, but
give preference to the principles of explaining this hierarchy using the
principles of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*: "Consistent with the training of
'aqidah, 'ibadah, and akhlaq in Makkah and Medina, the Sahabahs had
naturally prioritised religion over life, which is the correct hierarchy
of needs for Muslims" (pp. 13-14). Interestingly, the authors equate
maqāṣid with needs rather than objectives, adding: "The obvious
difference between maqasid al-shar'iyyah and Maslow's theory, in

terms of content, is the inclusion of religion as a basic human need" (p. 10).

Explaining the dimensions of *maqāṣid*, Auda (2008) makes a similar observation. He writes:

> I find the levels of necessity reminiscent of the twentieth century's Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of human (rather than 'divine') objectives or 'basic goals,' which he called, 'hierarchy of needs.' Human needs, according to Maslow, range from basic physiological requirements and safety, to love and esteem, and, finally, 'self-actualisation.' In 1943, Maslow suggested five levels for these needs. Then, in 1970, he revised his ideas and suggested a seven level hierarchy. The similarity between al-Shatibi's theory and Maslow's theory in terms of the levels of goals is interesting. Moreover, the second version of Maslow's theory reveals another interesting similarity with Islamic 'goal' theories, which is the capacity to evolve (p. 8).

Unfortunately, the equation is void of any substantial attempt at identifying the different underlying worldviews as well as the terminology. The *maqāṣid* or (higher) objectives of the *Sharī'ah* are defined as this and other worldly values or results that are realised upon the implementation and following of Islamic legal rules in their entirety. Scholars writing on the *maqāṣid* have, from their assessment of numbers of specific legal rules and principles, inferred that certain objectives are met through the implementation of certain legal rules – like the protection of *al-dīn* (the Islamic way of life), life, intellect, offspring and wealth. The observation of these objectives may play a role in *ijtihād*, the derivation of legal rules, and in questions deciding on the priority of actions. Needs in the motivational understanding, on the other hand, are rather unreflected, physical or innate, and stand at the beginning (representing the motivation) of undertaking an action, they are not the result of an action. In addition, the Muslim's aim in pursuing any activity is to achieve the pleasure of his Creator by following His commandments, regardless of whether the named objectives are met or whether he knows about them in the first place. It seems that the commodification of both the Maslowian and the *maqāṣidic* model converge at this point in the literature.

Striking a balance: Maslow's hierarchy of needs from an Islamic perspective

Islam as a way of life, brought to life through its *Sharī'ah*, acknowledges the different human needs and instincts, the instinct for survival and procreation, just like the instinct of worship. It does not negate or neglect any of these instincts and needs. It teaches the human being to channel them, through the observance of the Islamic rules, towards his own worldly and other-worldly benefits and that of society. The Islamic way of life does not ask for or even condone the suppression of any of these instincts at the expense of the other.

The demand to perform pure acts of worship, praying and fasting, for instance, does not transgress the human's capacities, and does not keep him or her from pursuing studies, trade, or leading a fulfilled family life. It is for this reason that there is no celibacy in the Islamic system. The Prophetic Sunnah is reminiscent of asserting this balance. Al-Bukhārī narrates the following *ḥadīth* from the Prophet (S.A.W.), on the authority of Anas ibn Mālik: "Three people came to the chambers of the Prophet's wives (S.A.W.), asking them about his worship. When they were informed about it, they seemed to belittle it, and said: "Who are we in comparison to the Prophet (S.A.W.). All his preceding sins and even those to happen have been forgiven. So one of them said: "I will pray the entire night", and the other said: "I will fast every day and not break it" and the last said: "I will stay away from women and never get married." The Prophet (S.A.W.) came to them and said: Have you said this and that? I am, by Allah, the most humble and Allah fearing among you, but I fast and then break my fast, and I pray and sleep, and I marry women. Whoever turns away from my Sunnah is not from me" (al-Bukhārī, 1949:4476).

In a longer *ḥadīth*, the Prophet told his companion Abū al-Dardā': "Your body has a right over you, and your Lord has a right over you, and your family has a right over you, so fast and break your fast, and pray and join your family, and give everyone his right" (al-'Asqalānī, 209:4903).

It has been established by the Prophetic *ḥadīth* that every human being has Islam as his human nature (*fiṭrah*) when he is born. It is only his parents who turn him into a Christian, Jew or Magian (al-Nawawī, 158:2658). On this basis, human nature is essentially the

same everywhere, and this human nature has a strong spiritual need it is trying to satisfy. A neglect of this need, as prevalent in secular (Western) culture, or its complete annihilation (as was the case in communist countries) leads to an imbalance, just as the sole focus on it, as is prevalent in some religions, would.

Islam allows and stimulates trade, professional life, and economic activity. It does lay down clear guidelines to regulate the same. Striving and working to obtain your daily income (*ṭalab al-rizq*) is a means to an end, not the ultimate goal in life. The following *ḥadīth* on the human being's want of possession shows that it is part of human nature never to reach satisfaction when it comes to possessions. It should therefore not be turned into the main purpose of life, as its fulfilment is impossible by definition.

> If the Son of Adam had two valleys full of possessions, he would wish for a third one. Only dust will (finally) fill the stomach of the son of Adam, and Allah forgives whom He wants (al-Nawawī, 113:1048).

Capitalism plays on this innate disposition by making people believe they will reach happiness owning/acquiring material possessions and pleasures, thereby eternalising the circle of demand and supply, with the result that people are finally thrown into an abyss of never-ending unhappiness – which can then unsuccessfully be treated with the other "alternatives" the market has to offer. Thus, the circle of commodification is perpetuated.

The spiritual aspect in human life is not reserved for those who have their basic needs saturated. Islamic experience is, rather, reminiscent of actualising the link towards one's Creator prior to and whilst saturating these needs by evaluating any action within the five values of the Islamic legal rule.[4] This is achieved by reflecting on the permissibility of, for instance, the food one is about to eat, the way to buy a car, etc. In addition, a Muslim is supposed to invoke the name of Allah (by reciting the *basmalah*) whenever starting any action. They thereby actualise the (spiritual) link towards the Creator in any moment of their lives. Additionally, any situation involving a lack of saturation of the named "basic needs" leads to a deeper reflection, invoking the Creator's name, supplication (*du'ā'*, *ṣalāt al-ḥājah*, etc.). These situations are spiritually and intellectually reflected as situations of personal growth and tests of

perseverance; passing them leads to happiness. The highly spiritualised experience of fasting in the month of Ramadan, performed by Muslims worldwide every year, actualises the self just because the very basic need of food is not met from dawn to dusk.

Most fundamental Islamic concepts such as that of *'ibādah* (worshipping Allah), *rizq* (the provisions provided for by Allah) (S.W.T.), *tawakkul* (relying on Allah), and the belief in *qaḍā'* and *qadar* (fate and predestination) are all expressive of the fact that spiritual concepts permeate the entire life, actions and decision making process of the individual and community. Self-actualisation is therefore most prevalent at any level of human existence.

In summary, the Islamic idea of self-transcendence permeates the entire human life in any of its aspects, by continuously establishing the link towards the Creator. The capitalist system promotes the (empirically false) idea that happiness lies in the sheer accumulation of wealth and physical pleasures of all sorts. As it is human nature never to be satisfied with these acquisitions, the human being will never be able to reach happiness, thereby remaining in a perpetuated cycle of consumption, in spiritual, mental, and finally physical imbalance on the individual, societal, and international levels. The percentage of depression, mental illnesses, violence and despair in the highly developed industrialised parts of the world, and those parts of the world adopting the same system is a clear indicator to the destructivity of this system, its underlying ideas, and application.

Contrary to this, the Islamic approach sees happiness in obtaining the Creator's approval and reward in the Hereafter. Happiness can therefore be reached under any material situation. Although Islamic concepts recognise the basic human needs and consider meeting them a necessity, the spiritual actualisation of the human being is prevalent under any situation.

Conclusion

Maslow's model of the hierarchy of needs, though being pervasive in many specialisations and textbooks, has been criticised on different grounds, for not being empirically proven, for being universalised on the basis of American values (its ethnocentricity), for internal contradictions and other reasons. The proliferated pyramid-shaped model does not even incorporate Maslow's own later developments in thought.

The model is used in different specialisations, such as marketing, in a way that is narrowed down from the original. The developments its author has added to it are not given due consideration. It may be symptomatic of our time and age and the state of the academia worldwide that the more simplified and diluted a model seems to be in relation to its original idea, the more successful it is.

Many criticisms tackle the role of spirituality in Maslow's model. Islamic receptions of the model primarily focus on this point. Some contributions attempt at harmonising between a narrowed-down model of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, the higher objectives of the *Sharī'ah*, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This article has shown that this harmonisation does not give justice to either model.

It is the basic line of the Islamic approach to strike a balance between material and spiritual needs in any situation of human existence, in times of saturation and need, stability and change, health and illness, happiness and distress. A model of a hierarchy of the different needs like Abraham Maslow's can therefore not give credit to the reality of the interaction between material and spiritual aspects of the human being in different life situations, even if the spiritual aspect was to be named first.

It is therefore our opinion and conclusion that a model like Maslow's cannot simply be "Islamised" by adding or dropping, or attempting to combine them with Islamically generated models such as the paradigm of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*.

Endnotes

1. For the numerous studies criticising Maslow's model on these and other grounds, see Yang, 2003, pp. 176-177.

2. Compare the part on Islamic critique on Maslow's model below.

3. See also Kerim Edipoglu (2006), *Islamisierung der Soziologie oder Soziologisierung des Islam? Indigenisierungsansätze in Malaysia, Iran und der arabischen Welt*, Doctoral Dissertation, Tübingen, p. 54.

4. i.e. by evaluating an action as being obligatory, recommended, legally indifferent, discouraged, or prohibited.

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