SOCIAL THEOLOGY: RE-ACTUALIZING CULTURAL VALUES INTO SOCIETY TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract

This paper discusses the issue of theology that is indebted to sciences and technology. Technology, even though imposes a negative impact on theology particularly to those whose faith is still unstable, has strengthened Muslim’s belief and does not become a threat. How technology reinforces the faith of Muslim is strongly related to the agenda of reactualization through the praxis activities. The mode of social life should be put on the basis of social transformation in accordance with needs and challenges. The transformation is closely tied to the development with race structure or human consciousness with the environment. The modification of human life in order to achieve such transformation can be actualized through four basic cultural structures: ethical constitution, esthetic, work orientation and the knowledge of technology. The writer concludes that four elements mentioned above determines the success of Islamic civilization for the future life.

Keywords: Social theology, faith, good deed, moral constitution, industrial technique

Abstrak


Kata kunci: teologi sosial, iman, perbuatan baik, konstitusi moral, teknik industri

Introduction

Taufik Abdullah raised a magnificent statement that when word is upgraded to concept, it becomes meaningfully problematic. While dictionary cannot represent the meaning but it states the point. Determining the meaning is hegemonic working from an interest. ¹ This notion proposed the difficulty to understand a word in utterances. For instance, the word ‘teology’ means a science of God. ² This word presumably came from western intellectual treasure which possess their own sosiologic. In accordance with Mircea Eliade, theology was firstly adopted by Christians related to the

¹ Taufik Abdullah, Strategi Kebudayaan untuk Pemberdayaan Masyarakat: Sebuah Sketsa Penyelidikan
connotation of their God and its doctrins, historically, this discourse was influenced by Hellenis’s models. Theology originally came from the Greek word, theos and logos. In English, theos is synonymous to the word God, while logos is synonymous to word, discourse, thought, and reason. Referring to the lexical meaning, theology can be defined as a rational discourse of God. In the development, it was broadly interpreted because it includes the relationship between God and universe and human beings. Based on the broad meaning of theology, it today becomes a trend among Moslem society, although Islam has its own term ‘Kalam’ which is purely Islamic product. According to Afif Muhammad, this tendency emerges from nasty assumption toward Kalam and its discussion that is regarded as merely the science of God. Whereas ‘belief’ as the main discussion in Kalam is not only related to the meaning of God in ‘academic’ meaning, it is also related to Moslem historical experiences and daily life.

Theology is more used rather than Kalam may be caused by some reasons. First, Kalam is considered as the science discussing unreachable substance of God. Contextually Salaf clergy deem that the limitation of human mind cannot reach the Greatness of God. Second, the discussion in Kalam is dialectic-based and includes numerous technical terms, therefore, it is quiet difficult for laymen to understand them. Third, jadal (dialectic) as the method in Kalam claimed by Abul A’la al-Maududi is often potential to be problem.

The previous reasons indicate that the concept of ‘Kalam’ needs to be formulated in order to generalize the concept. In other words, the use of term ‘theology’ is a common phenomenon as the demand from reinterpretation and reactualization of Islamic thoughts-treasure, thus, the writer prefers to use the term ‘theology’ than ‘Kalam’ in the title of this article. Furthermore, when ‘theology’ is linking up with the word ‘social’ which relates to society existence, therefore, the meaning of both words become a unit concept that refers to the human historical experiences. In other words, the label ‘social theology’ implies other topics other than deism such as human transformation. The meaning is believed to be reflection of theology dynamics which is not discussing the deductive character of God, but induce real problems faced by people. The idea of God still becomes mainstream even the focus is directed to globalize theologic view to concrete reality. The discussion of God through dialogue of realities including human issues, religions pluralism, poverty, and human transformation becomes a method and characteristic of contemporary theology.

This article presents a part of contemporary theology problems namely deity taken from social approach through cultural values research. The perception is imbued by Malek Bin Nabi theory, an Aljazair expert,
who proposed the existence of human civilization, turab and time.

Social Theology as the Human Transformation

The perception of human prestige related to individual and social rights is an undebatable reality. Individual right in society indicates a joint responsibility toward society prosperity, while social right in individual indicates an obligation of each individual toward society. The undeniable right of individual is based on theology principle namely human responsibility to God in the Judgment Day (Yaum al-Hisab).\(^\text{12}\)

The individual responsibility arises principle implication in the pattern of human life, a person will not be prosecuted except for what did. One of the consequences is pre-judgment that every individual is able to select what will be right or best to be done.\(^\text{13}\) Nurcholis Madjid stated that in praxis order, an individual is not free individual, but he is related to other individuals. Thus, he needs to consider his action to be ‘shaleh’ (appropriate with individual right and duty). If a person goes across other’s line, it may cause chaos or sin in religious term.\(^\text{14}\) This notion is in line with the one proposed by Murtadha Muthahhari, if an individual is potential to have individual sins, members of society are potential as well.\(^\text{15}\) Social problem solving pattern is needed to avoid social sins which includes a social changing to be better or it is known as social transformation. Thus, the writer positions social theology as social transformation.

Moreover, social problem solving or social engineering, as propsoed by Less and Presley, or M.N. Ross called it social planning, or changing management, proposed by Ira Kaufman contains essential refusal toward history determinism and acceptance toward human existence as an entity that does not include only individuals.\(^\text{16}\) Social transformation is a proprietary and care for its own social existence. It comes from an exhortation to form a society as it should be (das sollen), but the reality is what it be (das sein). In other words, transformation is transforming to be better or having a progress in society, as stated by Dawam Rahardjo.\(^\text{17}\)

Dawam Rahardjo added that the theory of transformation covers two locus developments, first, the development in ‘race structure’ or ‘awareness’ of themselves and the surroundings, proposed by August Comte, second, the development in ‘bottom structure’ or social and material condition in the human life, proposed by Spencer, Saint Simon, and Karl Mark.\(^\text{18}\)

Reunderstanding the meaning of ‘Human as Agent of Change’

According to Malik Bin Nabi,\(^\text{19}\) human world ('ālam al-insān) is more salient part of cultural parts other than ground world ('ālam at-turāb) and time world ('ālam al-waqt). Human will later be able to take the culture into social change to be better.
In the context of human change, Malik Bin Nabi presented historical facts in three phases. First, faith period (marbalat al-imân) started from the first day of Al-Qur’an revelation until Siffin war. In this era, spiritual element was so strong, but it decreased at Siffin war. Second, Islamic cultural phase (marbalat as-saqîfah al-Islâmiyyah) remarked by maturity in thoughts and understanding of Al-Qur’an and al-Hadits as the concept. This condition is regarded as the collapse of Muwahhidin dynasty. The third phase is the backwardness and decline period started after the collapse of Muwahhidin dynasty. Moslem society in the phase of pasca Muwahhidin are the people who are qâbil li al-isti’mâr (imperialable: ready to be- colonized), more than is colonized (musta’mar).

There is a significant difference between al-isti’mâr (Imperial: colonization) and qâbiliyyat al-isti’mâr (imperialability: ready to be- colonized). "A moslem who has nothing to improve or achieve the goals of his life,” Malik said, is a colonized moslem. He is categorized into mustad’afîn (weak people) those who may God forgives them.

However, “if a Moslem is reluctant to utilize his possession and struggle to improve his life, thus, he is ready to be colonized,” Malik added. This means that before being colonized, he himself is ready to be colonized. In conclusion, internal factor has main role to make a person to be as he is. In searching the reason for the decline of moslem, people often direct it to the cruel of western colonizing without awaring that the main cause is coming from themselves.

The analysis from Malik is reinforced by Al-Quran verse which means “Indeed, Allah will not change the state of a group except they struggle to change their own state” (Q.S. ar-Ra’d: 11). The words "mâ bi qawmin" in this verse means “the states of a group including decline, progress, and external civilization”. The words "mâ bi anfu-sihim” at the end of the verse means “what they own such as thought, the way of thinking, mentality, and progression spirit, or the words "mâ bi anfu-sihim” may have different meaning that is factors or variables in a group. Based on the interpretations, it can be concluded that to go from decline to the progress, Islam people need to change the way of thinking and mentality (as the form of “ma bi anfusibim”). This has become main focus lately to develop Islamic civilization individually or in group.

The change should start from individual (fard) of Moslem to transform it into person (syakhi). The transformation allows a modification of important elements in oneself in relation with his community and develops social tendencies in relation with his society. According to Malik, person (syakhi) is not only an individual with special characteristics, but also with better ability to produce and as the product of civilization.

Active interdependence between a person (syakhi) and society will shift and stimulate the action of society, and it will affect the action in the journey of society and history. Malik stated that in a person may include two characteristics. First, it is absolute and cannot be influenced by history, but it is natural and a gift from God. Second, it is not absolute, dynamic, and can be influenced by social change and history. The second characteristic, according to Malik, is a social entity. Malik related the first characteristic (absolute) to anatomical and physiological characteristics which determine the external

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23Fawzia Bariun, “Social Change as Seen by Malik Bennabbi” dalam The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, Vol. 8, No. 1, Maret 1991, h. 34
form of a person. On the other hand, the second characteristic (changeable) is a mental and psychological format formed from social behavior and history’s journey. This socio-historic thought seems to be Malik characteristic. In addition, he added that social action and history’s journey is the product of three human elements: hand (yad), heart (qalb) and mind (‘aql). Every activity is boosted by emotional motivation, mind’s guide and consideration, and physical movement.

Every event and historical action cannot be separated from interaction of three worlds: (a) world of figure/personage (‘ālam al-asykhâsh), (b) world of mind (‘ālam al-afkâr) and (c) world of materials (‘ālam al-asyyâ’). Although figure/personage (asy-khâsh) is the main element, Malik considered that world of mind (‘ālam al-afkâr) plays a dominant role. The wealth of a community is not measured by the materials they own, but ideas they explore.

Furthermore, mistakes in Moslem community especially the Arabic nations producing oil, in accordance with Malik, is that when they receive political independency from their colonial nations, they apply “materials civilization” (al-budâ‘ir asy-sya’îyyah) which based on wealth accumulation and thinking development through interaction with other nations is pushed away.

Malik argued that attempt to develop and build a community (Moslem community) may be inspired from Western community. This implies that interaction between two civilizations arises the development of both civilizations. Therefore, the civilization will never develop without any positive interaction between communities. Anyway, Western civilization will never be achieved without interaction with Islamic civilization by adapting positive progressive thought. The shellacking of Moslem in competing with Western community in fact is caused by the fault in comparing real needs (adrâ’irâ’irat al-baqi`iyyah) with side needs (adrâ’irâ’irat al-muzayyafah). The confusion affects the world of figure and mind of Moslem people, thus it causes irregular moral and behavior decadence.\textsuperscript{25}

Then, Malik concluded that the real problem is not “how to teach Moslem people their faith and belief”, but rather “how to recover faith and belief effectivity to create social effect”. It can be implied “The problem is not to prove the existence of God, but to remind that the awareness of God existence enable one soul to grow moral power.”\textsuperscript{26}

Based on the previous explanation, Malik Bin Nabi proposed a modification for awareness, the way of thinking, and social condition through actualization of four cultural basic values: moral constitution (al-dustûr al-khuqî), aesthetics (al-dzawq al-amâlî), logic working (al-manthiq al-amâlî), and industrial technique (ilm al-shinâ’î). Malik considered that these four elements may represent the elements of society to better change.

\textbf{Moral Constitution (al-Dustûr al-Khuluqî), and Aesthetic (al-Dzawq al-Jamâlî)}

Discussing ‘moral’ and ethic does not merely mean a polite matter, but rather basic meaning as a comprehensive concept as starting point of life view on right or wrong, so that, ethic constitution (al-Dustur al-Khuluqi) in a broad meaning covers whole world look and way of life.\textsuperscript{27} According to Karl Barth, as quoted by Nurcholis Madjid, ethic (from ethos) is equal with moral (from mos). Both are phylosophies of customs (sitten). Germany

\textsuperscript{25}Malik Bin Nabi, \textit{Musykilât al-Afkâr}, Maktabah 1Ammâr, Kairo, h. 25
\textsuperscript{26}Malik Bin Nabi, \textit{Wijhat al-’Alam al-Islâmi}, Dar al-Fikr al-’Arabî, Damaskus, 1991, h. 55
\textsuperscript{27}Nurcholish Madjid, \textit{Islam Doktrin…}, h. 467
word *Sitte* (from Germany kun, *situ*) means *moda* (*mode*) human behavior, a constancy of human action. Thus, in general ethic and moral is philosophy, science, or discipline about human behavior mode or human action constancies.\(^{20}\)

Referring to the meaning above, the moral constitution proposed by Bin Nabi is related with human moral force in response to change of modern life. This means that as its duty moral constitution is expected to bind up cultural parts so that all of them interweave and characterize the culture, on the other side, these bounds seems enable to create the character of the way of life and behavior of individual.

Malik asserted that there is a special relationship between moral principle and aesthetics,\(^{21}\) in fact, it is an organic interaction and has an important social function because the interactions determine cultural characteristic and civilization direction profoundly when they are attached to life pattern and individual behaviors. The organic relationship is obvious when it is focused on the aesthetic, which grows a civilization, but it is ended in ‘a great fire’ caused by a man like Nero or a woman like Messaline. On the other hand, a culture prioritizing moral principles created a civilization with static and petrified deity, and ended by the backwardness led by *tarekat* commander.\(^{30}\)

Further investigation will show that ethic principle and aesthetic affects other life areas including *patrilineal* and *matrilineal* family structure, ideology ‘art for art’ which prioritises aesthetic and ideology ‘bound literature’ which prefaces ethic values to political method issues. In this political concept, how glory skyscrapers seen as aesthetic motive, while ‘society prosperity’ is unfurnished. Therefore, it is obvious that ethic values and aesthetic affects the direction of purposed transformation (change).

**Work Orientation (*al-Manthiq al-‘Amali*)**

Work orientation or work ethos often raises hot talk when it is connected to the view of social transformation. The issue is a fact that no nation with Moslem citizen becomes developed country. A discussion about the growth level in Islamic countries can mean discussing an unreached thing.\(^{31}\) The class of unemployed people in Islamic countries becomes a class to be questioned about the social transformation. Is there any discussion about work orientation is Islam? or Is there concept of Qur’an which motivate people to work? If the answer to the question is reverse about the reality in Islamic society in which poors and low class people gather, so that no reason needs to be questioned. The concept of Al-Qur’an is fascinating in declaring the criteria of ‘al-mukminun’ with work requirement. Every word ‘*‘Amān*’ (people who have faith) is accompanied by ‘wa *‘amīl al-shālib’ (and people who do good deeds).\(^{32}\)

Muhammad ‘Âbid Al-Jâbirî stated that the values of good deeds is based on faith and faith itself (in Islam) is not oriented to Allah because He is the Great Rich but to human.\(^{33}\) So that, it is not uncommon that the word ‘al-Îmân’ in Al-Qur’an is attached to the word ‘al-‘amal al-shâlib’ by relating to *syarat* and *masyrut*,

\(^{20}\)Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Doktrin…*, h. 468
\(^{21}\)Orientasi estetika yang digagas Malik bin Nabi diilhami dari sahda Nabi Saw.: “Tidak akan masuk surga orang yang di dalam kalbunya terdapat sebiji sawi kebonggan.” Sesuatu bertanya kepada Nabi, “bagaimana jika ada laki-laki yang senang jika baju dan terompahnya bagus?” Nabi menjawab, “Sesungguhnya Allah itu indah dan jika ada laki yang senang jika baju dan terompahnya bagus.” (Sahih Muslim, I: 193, hadis ke-137; Lihat juga, Musnad Ahmad bin Hambal, I: 299, dengan redaksi dari Muslim).
\(^{31}\)Malik Bin Nabi, *Syurût al-Nabdbab…*, h. 110
\(^{32}\)QS. Al-‘Asr: 1-3
that is faith requirement to form good deeds. The repeatedly concept of faith and good deeds reflects that good deeds is a representative of Al-Qur’an ethical values or real Islamic ethical values.34

Moreover, the synergy between faith and good deeds emerges religious term ‘taqwa’ as the top character of perfect person. In any verses, taqwa (godfearing) relates to the relationship between Mu’min people and Allah (habl min Allâh) and between Mu’min people each other (habl min al-Nâs). In significance, faith does not reflect godfearing except following by good deeds. Al-Jâbirî added that if godfearing is the main value in Islam as the religion, good deed is the main value in character reflecting Islamic ethic, so that it is called good deeds ethic.35 Ironically, this glory concept is not followed by the real action by the people. Thus, what is the real problem of this ‘lazy’ culture?

Nurcholish Madjid said, if it is allowed to see the case only in the tenet side – the meaning is taken from the concept of Al-Quran—, therefore, a classic controversy raises about the human capability in determining work (Qadariyyah) or human forcing to unable to determine their own work (Jabariyyah). Both tenets raise an issue that Moslem people opt to fatalistic Jabariyyah, especially after the domination of al-Asy’ari tenet. This assumption can be seen from its concept about kasb in the book Jawhar al-Tawhid, which is considered as the reason for fatalism. “Wa ‘indana li ‘l- ‘abd-i kasb-un kullifa wa lam yakunun min ’attasiraa ja ’l-ta’rifa, Fa laysa majuraan wa la ikhtiyaran wa laysa kulan yaj’alu ikhtiyarin Fa in yutubna fa bi mabdi-l-i ‘l-fad’il-l-i Wa in yu’adzdzib fa bi mabdi-l-i ‘l-adli-i.”36 (For us, the servants abandoned kasb, but the kasb will not affect, so that, people are not forced or free or even act freely. If He bestows reward, it is His own generous, and if He tortures, it is only for his justice).

In response to this tenet, Ibn Taymiyyah critically commented this theory as irrational theory, thus, he categorized it as the miracle of Kalam science. Then, Ibn Taymiyyah straightened the theory by saying: (no solution for people to get out of His certainties, but people may choose the correct or wrong thing. Thus, it is not forced without a will, but rather he intends by his own will).37 Although this is a sharp and rational critic, only minority class adopted it. Hence, work orientation of Moslem people is influenced by fatalistic theology system. This is the reason for Malik Bin Nabi to call Islam people to do self-introspection through motivation and work education. At last, it is a must that methodological orientation about working is the first prerequisite before providing pecial facilities for life.

**Industrial Technique (ilm al-Shinâ’ah)**

The industrial issue covers technologies, professions, abilities, and applications of many sciences. The main problem is how to create individual to carry risalah of history. It is impossible to generate as if smart person or layman of technology because they are controlled by instinct not vision and mind,38 as the water flows through damaged turbine. Hodgson supported this by saying that the development of era is the result of transmutation or change through science and its application by technology. Hence, the positive attitude toward technology and industry through faith system will complete the process involving inter dynamics which supports to be better. Islamic country is not a child asking for importing everything from

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36 Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Doktrin*, h. 598-599
37 Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Doktrin*, h. 598-599
other countries without any effort to ‘create something’. How people achieve a transformation, when a need for needles still be fulfilled by importing from China.

Conclusion

The writer asserts that the faith system in Islam is supported by science and technology. In other words, the fact that universe is originated from sometime in the past in which is created from nothing (created ex nihilo) indicates the existence of God supported by modern scientific theory. William Craig, a Berkeley modern philosopist stated that Kalam cosmologic argument guides us to the declaration of one Khâliq in the universe without any change both before and after the universe created.

This cosmologic proving is expected to be substantial materials for Moslem that Islamic theology is supported by science and technology. Therefore, Islam people need to welcome the technology as faith strengthen, not threat. The reactualization of this principle should be done through variation of practical activities later on.

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