

Modern World and the Trend of Human Religiosity: An Overview of Theological Perspective¹

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Abstract:

Technological advancement and modernity have a great positive impact for nowadays human life in one hand. But, it might bring some negative dimensions in the other hand. This paper aims at exploring some consequences of modernity, by its technological advancement, to a contemporary human religiosity. Using theological approach and descriptive model of writing scientific papers, this article traces humans' trend religious behavior by describing a condition of modernization and its relation to some religious and cultural practices. This article finds that people in modern society more have great satisfaction with the use of technological advancement then the use of religious norms. This condition often makes negative impact of modernization like dehumanization and moral degradation. The findings reveal that religion should becomes primary control of democratization from its normative essence. Spiritual dimension and

¹ The earlier version of this article was presented in International Workshop on Financial Management and Policy in Higher Islamic Education, Marmara University, Turkey 21st November 2016.

ethics which are written in Islam and other religions definitely might give optimism in facing disruptive modernization era.

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A. Introduction

In this modern disruptive era, Religion is likely to be almost out of date. That is because religion's function as human control might be replaced by late science and technology development. Science and technology are like "messias" of modern society. Moreover, they are so enthusiastic about putting great hopes in science and technology to solve various problems concerning human life. Inevitably, in the lives of modern society, the problems that concern the needs of human life manifested in matter have been answered by science and technology. Apparently, technology is satisfying modern society today. Thus, technology could be a tool of civilization in everyday reality, where it becomes humans' basic need.

However, it is undeniable that science and its application, which is called technology, apparently cannot solve all human problems and does not always result in a positive impact. On the contrary, it might have negative impacts such as cultural dehumanization and moral degradation.²

If we see this fact, it turns out that science and technology have a negative impact. We also know, honestly, that with the advancement of science and technology, people feel more comfortable in doing something. According to A.E. Saefuddin, the use of science and technology must be looked at axiologically. In other words, science and technology must first consider the normative aspects. In addition, science and technology must be closely related to the ontological and epistemological aspects of knowledge.³

Furthermore, it can be explained that science and technology must also be based on the Qur'an as a paradigm of science. Because not all knowledge is beneficial to human survival, sometimes it would threaten human's life. In fact, the aim of science and technology in the concept of Islam is to serve and serve as a tool to manage nature and prosper it. In other words, products of

²Jujun S. Suriasumantri, *Filsafat Ilmu*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1984), h. 229-236

³Selengkapnya lihat A.M. Saefuddin, et.sl., *Desekularisasi Pemikiran Landasan Islamisasi*, (cet. I, Bandung: Mizan, 1987), h. 18

science may be value less, but the use of science and technology in the Islamic view is related to certain values.⁴

It can be realized that science and technology is an object of truth through an experimental and autonomous approach. So, it must consider the aspects of the importance of mankind's survivality through a theological perspective. Don't consider religion has rivalry with science and technology which may brought to life disorder like what earlier primist philosopher. Karl Marx argued that religion as opium for society. Furthermore, God is died according to F. Nietszche. Religion is considered to be the culprit of trouble on this earth, according to A.N. Wilson.⁵ With such a pessimistic argument, it is unthinkable that religion will be able to participate in resolving humanitarian problems, it does not pose a threat to people's lives. These perceptions have some reasons, the problems that have been mentioned often occur in the history of the life of the people of the earth up to now Often religion is ignored, both concretely and covertly in various engagements of war and oppression in various parts of the world.⁶

In post-modernism society, the spiritual and ethical dimensions embodied in Islam certainly provide optimism and, at the same time, provide inner satisfaction. As for modern society, which views materialism as tending to ignore religion, it appears even in hedonistic life, such as sexual exploitation that deviates from the principles of Islam or/and other religion as indicated by Madonna's sexual behavior, for instance, as very extreme example for describing this case.⁷

of course, the sorrow that engulfs modern society is increasingly worrying many people. The emergence of moral decadence, anxiety and worry caused people to lose their way. This is the disorder condition of modern society that has been ensnared and enslaved by science and technological advancement which makes an ignoration of how the way to get happiness and peace. This is what cannot be solved completely by science and technology in the contemporary world of modern society.

⁴ *Ibid.*, h. 18-20

⁵ Ahmad Suaedy, "Agama; Spritualitas dan Keadilan", dalam Th. Sumartana, et.al., *Spiritualitas Baru; Agama dan Aspirasi Rakyat*, (Yogyakarta: Dian/Interfidei, 1984), h.155

⁶ *Ibid.*, h. 15

⁷ Akbar S. Ahmad, *Postmodernisme Bahaya Dan Harapan Bagi Islam*, (Bandung: Mizan, 1993), h. 200

Some scholars termed a Modern society as described above by "modern jahiliyyah".⁸ Jahiliyyah is the Muslim's terminology that describes a pre-Islamic social condition era. The modern jahiliyah manifested by several ideologies bellow:

1. Humanism (godless humanity). Humanism has confirmed humans as superior things. Through his brilliant brain, modern humans who only rely on reason form life principles that conflict with human dignity as religious beings, because the scientific paradigm and the methodology used are entirely lack of spiritual values.
2. Materialism. Modern humans are so interested in material that they assume that the reality of life is only material matter.
3. Atheism (godless behavior). Conceptually, atheism is reluctant to acknowledge God. In addition, atheism also appears in real behavior. This means that humans are always busy looking for material so that they are ignorant of God. Atheism like this is very much found in the formal structure of modern society today.⁹

From the above facts, modern society seems to ravage the beauty of the material so that it is neglect the right and proper role of religion. Whereas, the only one of alternative that can solve the dilemma of humanity today is only religion. In his various writings, Sujatmoko argued that religion could participate in solving the problems of modern humans who are now in a condition of spiritual crisis. In fact, religion does not only appear to solve the threat of moral and ethics, but it can play a further role like solving an economic problems and poverty.¹⁰

Those who are optimistic in their opinion put their hopes on the ethical dimension of religion or the essence of religion which is expected to be able to help and guide humans to get out of this dilemma. In this dimension of "religious ethics" there is a role of religion in bringing modern society towards a better life, a life full of happiness, peace and tranquility. Therefore, human tendency towards religion in the middle of modernization is a natural thing. There are many empirical and actual evidences available that can be explored to present religion as the only alternative for solving various problems of modern society today.

⁸M. Saefuddin, et. all., *op. cit.*, h. 158

⁹ *Ibid.*, h. 158-160

¹⁰ Sujatmoko, *Etika Pembangunan*, (Jakarta:LP3ES, 1984), h. 181.

In the framework of this condition, all major religions (Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism and Buddhism) have their own idioms and visions of the concept of human liberation from the shackles of misery and modern *jahiliyah*.

B. Modern and Modernization

In the development of the modern world today, there are many things that make people confuse, one of which is the problem of linguistics. We often encounter literature, magazines, newspapers about modern terms and modernization. Then the question arises what is modern and modernization? To provide an understanding of the two words, I should give a brief understanding for guiding this discussion.

Modern is literary means newest or current. In other context, it terminologically means as an attitudes and ways of thinking and acting in accordance with the guidance of the times. Thus, modern can be said something new and has current characteristics. The term modern can be used for everything like music, architecture, art and culture. The relevant understanding of modern in this article is those which have tastes, paradigm and thought that are compatible with the contemporary era.¹¹

Based on the modern understanding above, it can be understood that modern "leaves the old to the new", because in this case what is new is fun and is liked according to the style that compatible with the goal of achieving a more proper life. Meanwhile, the definition of the term modernization is the process of shifting attitudes and mentalities as citizens or communities to be able to live according to the current guidelines.¹² Modernization in Western society means as a mind and flow of movements and efforts to change old ideologies, traditions, institutions and so forth, to be adapted to the new atmosphere created by contemporary advancement of science and technology.¹³

According to the above understandings of modernization, the meaning of modernization can be simplified as abandoning the traditional way and then turning to a new way of life. In other words it means to leave an old ideology that are considered to hinder the progress and development and then turn to

¹¹ K.H. Amir Ma'sum, *Al-Qur'an dan Modernitas, dalam Buku "Al-Qur'an dan Tantangan Modernitas" (Penyunting)*, Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif dan Said Tahuleley (cet.I. Yogyakarta: Sipes, 1990), h. 104

¹² Dedikbud, *op. cit.*, h. 589

¹³ Harun Nasution, *Pembaharuan Dalam Islam*, cet.II, (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1982), h. 11

new ideology in accordance with the guidance of life and compatible with scientific and technological advancement.

In the Indonesian context some scholars argue that modernization demands that the Indonesian people:¹⁴

1. thinking of a better future
2. prioritizing productive activities
3. Giving special attention to the development of nation, either in human resources or public infrastructure fields;
4. Increasing a quality of scientific studies in every educational institution;
giving priority to things that have been achieved by someone, without dealing a social discrimination;
5. Giving the greatest attention to concrete goal, and global issues.

According to Harun Nasution, one of earlier prominent Muslim scholar in Indonesia state that the term of modernization has more negative understanding than the positive one. Therefore, for obscuring the negative understanding of modernization, it might call *pembaharuan* (in Indonesian language; it means changing to the new one) .¹⁵ Whereas Nurcholis Majid said that "modernization means the process of changing mindsets of irasional framework to the rational paradigm."¹⁶

From this opinion, it can be understood that modernization is a renewal, which in this case, leaves a traditional mindset by replacing the old irrational mindset to a new rational work procedure according to the development of science and technology. Regarding this understanding, Sidi Gazalba argues that modernization is a process of renewal and change that leads to more effective and efficient. By utilizing the tools of science and technology, people will be able to develop a more peaceful social life, a prosperous economic life philosophically.¹⁷

Based on some of the explanations above about the modernization, I try to describe the common thread, that modernization means having a great intention to keep abreast of developments and change the way of thinking to new things. In other words, changing traditions is in accordance with the

¹⁴Muhammad Kemal Hassan, *Modernisasi Indonesia*, (Surabaya: PT.Bina Ilmu Offest, 1988), h. 20

¹⁵Harun Nasution, *op. cit.*, h. 12

¹⁶Nurcholis Majid, *Islam Kemoderenan dan ke-Indonesiaan*, cet.II, (Bandung; Mizan, 1989), h. 172

¹⁷Muhammad Kamal Hassan, *op. cit.*, h. 42

development of science and technology, considering effectiveness and efficiency.

C. Some Characteristics of Modern Society

Basically, humans have enormous potential to develop and fulfill their needs. The intended potential is logical ability and emotional ability power. These two abilities are basically inseparable but have their own objects. Logical ability, usually, used as a tool for thinking, and also as a centralization for capturing all empirical matters. While the emotional ability is usually intended as a tool for capture everything that is spiritual matters.

The logical and emotional ability inspire modern humans to be able to create science and technology and develop it become more valuable than before. However, keep in mind, that the main purpose of developing science and technology is to facilitate some human needs that they can not to do. However, this goal exceeds the limits of its use, so it can destroy the noble human culture that has been built for so long.

As the result, the development of science and technology has produced modern peoples with their own characteristics. In this case, at least it can be mentioned in four characteristics:

1. Rationalist

Rationalistic is the human character that bases its judgment on what can be produced by the human mind, which can be used as a basis for measuring science. As stated by Mulder "The only way to get the truth is to use reason, in other words everything can be solved through reason, mind, after all reason is autonomous, reason will reject all everything that doesn't make sense."¹⁸

Another scholar argued that the source of sufficient knowledge and that which can be trusted is the reason, only knowledge gained through reason can produce scientific knowledge.¹⁹

Based on these definitions above, we can conclude that rationalism only relies on the ability of reason because the source of all truth is the mind. For those who adhere to this school, it clearly sets aside the truth apart from the truth that comes from the ratio.

¹⁸ H. Abd. Rahman Musa, H. Nihaya M. "*Filsafat Aliran-Aliran.*" (Ujung Pandang: Fak. Ushuluddin IAIAN Alauddin Ujung Padang, 1992), h. 49

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

2. Materialist

In contemporary modern life, human tendency run in prioritizing material things because it is able to provide lasting happiness. therefore, it is natural that in today's world life many adhere to the flow of materialism as a way of life. Materialims is the ruler of market share in the economic field, and forerunner of the birth of capitalism.

Modern humans become materialist because they acquiesce in sacrificing noble human feelings, even to get financial profit as much as possible. At the level of mastery or authority (both are often difficult to distinguish), they consider people (or employees in a social stratification) as numbers that they can manipulate for their benefit. They don't see anymore as equally created people by the god, has relatives. At the level of small people, they find people who kill their humanity just to get a bite of rice.²⁰

Based on the facts mentioned above, we can conclude that humans living in this era of globalization always deify material things because they have a strict paradigm that material should make their live comfortably.

3. Individualist

A reality that cannot be refuted in this modern world that has developed, is the existence of individuals maintaining personalities and self-freedom. In other words, they are selfish in their human relationship.

With the technology, some people feel that they have ability to overcome and fulfill their own problems and human needs, this fact might lead to selfish and individualistic attitudes. Furthermore, being too confident about yourself can lead to atheists. Winning an amazing achievement caused by the application of technology could led to the awareness of human autonomy of its own ability. With this condition, they will consider themselves to be masters of all things and lead to rejection of the existence of God.²¹

Based on the description of the individual above, we can draw a conclusion that individualists make people to power everything. In other word, he considers himself to be a master and always selfish. They do not want to have organic relations with each other. They have to create their own power in

²⁰ Jalaluddin Rakhmat, *Islam Aktual*, cet, VI, (Bandung: Mizan, 1994), h. 157

²¹Said Tuhuleley, (*Penyunting*) *Permasalahan Abad XXI Sebuah Agenda*. Cet.I, (Yogyakarta: Sipress, 1993), h. 24

communication to each other. This behavior has literary falsified by religion (especially in Islam) which gave some ethical codes in communication.²²

4. Secularist

Secularization derived from the word “seculer” which means mundane, mortal, temporal; which is not eternal and sacred. While the secular definition according to Nurcholis Majid is seculer originating from the Latin "seculum" means the present age. And these words are one of the words from two Latin words that mean the world. The other word is "maudus", but if the seculum is the word describing a time, then maudus is the word describing a space.²³

The development meaning of secularization is inseparable from religious cartian orthodoxy and the development of thinking methods which gave birth to renaissance. Since then the western world has leaved the dark ages, and went to a bright place and time, namely modern times. Harvey Cox, as quoted by Ali Dessauki, argues:

*“Secularization contains the notion of the release of the world from the notions of religion and which are considered as pseudo-religions, dispelling all narrow worldviews, solving all supra-natural myths and sacred symbols. Liberation of the human mind from the shackles of religion and metaphysics”.*²⁴

Based on the opinion, I give a brief conclusion that secularization is is the process of changing sacred things towards profane things. This ideology is the contrary of religion’s rule that religious activity has a dynamic interlpay with the social activities. The dakwah (or another religious proselytizing) could be conducted in every realm; social, political and economics. Furthermore, religious proselytizing should impact in social changes.²⁵

D. The Role of Religion for modern Society

To neutralize the presence of modernity, it is certainly quite interesting to combine it with the functions and roles of religion:

²² A.M Ismatullah, *Etika Berkomunikasi dalam Al-Qur’an: Analisis Penafsiran Hasbi Ash-Siddiqie dalam Tafsir An-Nur*, Lentera: Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah dan Komunikasi Vol.1 No.1 June 2017. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21093/lentera.v1i2.918>

²³ Nurcholis Majid, *op.cit.*, h. 216

²⁴ Ali Dessouki, *Sekularisasi; Ke arah Study Tentang Pengalaman Dunia Nasrani dan alam Islam*, Trej. Djhohan Efendi (Jakarta: Dialog, vol. 3. 1997), h. 21

²⁵ Abu Bakar Madani, *Dakwah dan Perubahan Sosial: Studi Terhadap Peran Manusia Sebagai Khalifah di Muka Bumi*, Lentera: Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah dan Komunikasi Vol.1 No.1 June 2017. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21093/lentera.v1i01.851>

1. Educational Role

Humans trust educative functions to religion, because in this case it includes teaching assignments and guidance tasks and can provide authoritative teaching even in sacred matters.²⁶

2. Salvation Role

Based on daily experience, it can be ascertained that humans always want themselves to be safe from danger, both in the world and after death. Religion guarantees that and indeed humans find in it. Especially because religion teaches and provides guarantees in typical ways to achieve the last happiness.

3. Unifying Function

If reality talks about the situation of a world ravaged by humans with their intellectual abilities, the creation of advanced science and technology and then alienating people from religious values, then that does not mean that religion is not able to unite among them. However, this happened because the religious teachings carried out were not perfect, and the understanding of religion was not profound.

Religion teaches human unity, in order to create an atmosphere of peace, peace, full of compassion towards true salvation and happiness. conversely, religion does not teach evil and barbarity. But religion teaches true goodness.

4. Humanitarian Function

The world today is filled with fighting, oppression, rape, robbery, and persecution that happens everywhere. The reason is the lack of understanding of human essence in which humans in religion have the same degree to each other. Long before Marx developed the teachings of socialism, religion had already taught about the concept of human life above nature so that humans did not destroy each other, as we see and witness on television screens that were aired all the time. How human beings are so fierce towards other humans. in philosophical terms, "homo humini lupus".

5. Social Control

Peter L Berger again tolerates his words that the concerns faced by humans towards the possibility of chaos arising from fear confront experiences that change and persist, without having a comprehensive framework to interpret them.

²⁶ D. Hendro Puspito, O.C., *Sosiologi Agama*, cet VII, (Jakarta: Kanisius, 1991), h. 38
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He believes that within the people feeling, there are innate fears that have no meaning, so that humans hold on systems of meaning that are socially objectified. If Berger is right, it seems that religion, which has function to strengthen and give rise to social solidarity is even weaker in Modern American society. Whereas religion is a stronghold for achieving animosity as long as a human being is not an epiphenom of social structure, or merely as a rationalization or dramatization of daily worldly activities.²⁷

6. The Role in Controlling Culture and Civilization

Modern culture and civilization are the continuation or development of cultural life in the final stages. Life in the latest stage of human civilization is characterized by the development and progress of science and technology that dominates market places in people everyday life.²⁸

With sophisticated science and technology, feel that they are independent so that they try to reject influence and control of any force outside of themselves, including religion. Religion has no longer a role as controller of socio-cultural developments. As a result, the development of disrupted socio-cultural life under the influence of science and technology became a cultural system of modern civilization.

The current system of socio-cultural life and modern civilization might be a problematic situation. In order to overcome this problematic condition, it is time for religious people to involve the intervention of universal values and the existence of power or power of control and control into them by a spirit of religiosity.²⁹

Universal values function to integrate and synchronize interim goals and conditions between community groups / nations that have the potential to create a conflict of interest. Thus, the potential for conflict between community groups / nations can be avoided. While the controlling force has a function to control various freedoms which are characteristic of the cultural system of the modern civilization, to be a more responsible freedom then

²⁷ Peter L Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a sociological theory of Religion*, (New York: Anchor, 1990)

²⁸ Muhaimin, Tadjab, Abdul, “*Dimensi-dimensi Studi Islam*”, (Surabaya: Karya Abditman, 1994), h. 66

²⁹ Sukanto MM, “*Vitalitas Islam: Ungkapan Islam Dalam sistem Nilia*”, (Surabaya: Amar Press, 1990), h. 54

before. With the condition of demazhabization nowadays, everyone could take a role as a “controller” by positioning himself on a preacher stage.³⁰

In this perspective, the search for knowledge, the remembrance of God, the struggle for moral and spiritual equality of humanity, and the upholding of economic and political justice could be appreciated as an act of "worship" to God.³¹ Probably, the greatest act of worship is constant worship to maintain the greatness of religion and make it operational in all aspects of life, and in any society.

If we want to restore the role and function of religion as above in the field of modern civilization which is characterized by sophisticated science and technology, modern society must have and be able to realize the following:

1. The need for trust in God.
2. Personal and intimate relationship with God.
3. The doctrine of the functionalization of science; that life is not just to achieve progress in the field of science and technology, but in the way of its use and clear direction for the benefit of human life and the surrounding environment in order to serve him and recognize the signs of his power.
4. Confirmation of things that cannot be approached empirically or inductively. In other words, we have to believe to supranatural beliefs
5. Trust in the existence of another life after the life of the world (eschatological beliefs). This is of higher value.³²

The five things mentioned above, are expected to be the basis for the study and reflection of the people of the nation in modern civilization. These efforts were carried out to anticipate the negative impact caused by this modern cultural and civilization system, which now dominates the structural functions of society.

³⁰ More detail of demazhabization discussion please read: Saiful Hamdi, *Demazhabization of Islam, Divinity Economy and Narratives of Conflict of the Tablighi Followers in Samarinda East Kalimantan*, Al-Albab Journal, Vol.4 No 2 2015. <http://jurnaliainpontianak.or.id/index.php/alalbab/article/view/285>; Mukhamad Ilyasin, *From Madhab to Social Dogma: The Tablighi Jemaat's Fluidity of Teachings and the Integration of Ummah*, Lentera Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah dan Komunikasi, Vol.1 No.2 2017. DOI: 10.21093/lentera.v1i2.944

³¹Zainuddin Sardar, *"The Future of Moslim Civilisation, "Rekayasa Masa Depan Muslim"*, a.b Rahmani Astuti, cet. II, (Bandung: Mizan, 1989), h. 30-31

³² Muhaimin dkk, *op. cit.*, h. 69

E. Concluding Remarks

Religion provides life guidance from all aspects of human life; personal life, family, society and relationship to God, relationships between humans, even relationships with the universe and other living things. If the guidance is carried out correctly, it will guarantee the happiness and inner security of this life. There is no mutual dispute, no sheep fighting, no suspicion and hatred in social interaction. Live peacefully and love each other.

The difficulty most people face is disappointment. This feeling will always bring people to feelings of inferiority, pessimism and apathy in their lives so that it is very disturbing to the heart. In time, maybe he will bestow his mistakes on others who do not want to be responsible for the mistakes he made. Maybe finally, some people will cause actions that will harm others. It's different with people who truly believe. Every disappointment that saves it will not hit his soul. He will not despair, but he will face it calmly, soon he will remember God.

Religion can provide excitement for souls who are anxious. Not a few we hear people who are confused in their lives before they are religious, but after starting to recognize and practice religious values, the peace of mind will come naturally.

Based on the description of the function and role of religion, religion can function as an instrument of self-control of very negative things, because with the existence of religion we are always calm, and far from anxiety. Therefore, religion, will always be needed by humans, thus, religion is truly a vital thing, not only for individuals, but also for society as a whole. So, religion is the "the way of life" that can be guided universally and deeply by every person. as "the way of life", religion is based on a spiritual and emotional approach, certain beliefs and guidelines that speak of value in dealing with humanitarian problems including human destiny.

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