ABSTRACT

A DECONSTRUCTIVE READING OF NURCHOLISH MADJID'S THOUGHT ON

RELIGIOUS REFORM

by

MOHAMMAD HANAFI

(Under the Direction of ALAN GODLAS)

Nurcholish Madjid (1939-2005) is an icon for reform of Islamic thought. He is the champion of

the so-called, Islamic neo-modernism thought. His claim that the universality and transcendency

of his thought inclines to negate the understanding of the "other" and puts his own on a higher

level. Thus, his religious discourse becomes totalitarian and hegemonic leading to a one

dimension understanding. It functions as a rule to justify the legitimacy of the other. Many

attempts have been made to overide his authority but they have not shaken it; on the contrary,

those criticisms have been considered immature and amature as well. Based on this concern, this

study seeks to use Nurcholish's own work to dethrone his authority from its ivory tower by

employing deconstructive criticism because of its assumption that a text is heterograph. This

study focuses on Nurcholish's three major themes: secularization, *masyarakat madani* (Islamic

civil society), and pluralism.

INDEX WORDS: Islam, Neomodernism, Nurcholish Madjid, Indonesia, Deconstruction,

Logocentrism, Secularization, Masyarakat Madani, Islamic Civil Society, Religious Pluralism.

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MAg., The State Institute for Islamic Studies Sunan Ampel Surabaya Indonesia, 1999

A Thesis Submitted the Graduate Faculty of the University of Georgia

in Particular Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA
2006

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December 2006

DEDICATION

To The Other

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I know that my praise to all my professors is not for their sake. They do not need such words to remind them of the tangible role they have played in my life. It is just for my own sake to mention their merits for having provided me such significant guidance to accomplish my study. I would like to thank Dr. Alan Godlas for his precious time in walking me through writing my thesis, giving priceless inputs, and helping to make my thesis readable. His creative, sharp, and insightful thought, like he usually puts into his Religiological and Hermeneutical Analysis, seemed to constantly break apart my own constrained nutshells of thought, helped me out to look at a thing from other perspectives and wider horizon, and to accept differences as a part of live experience. It is hard to say just a few things about Dr. Kenneth Honerkamp. His courtesy and sincerity are so pervasive that he has made UGA and Athens like a home for me during my study. His thoughtful ideas and profound wisdom have awakened my consciousness to appreciate the forgotten religious traditions. Dr. Carolyn Medine, I thank you for your witty insight through a Dr. Pepper can and the Giant Hand illustrations in class; for your time reading my raw English expressions in the midst of your own busy research; and your incalculable contributions that have brought me to this point.

Thanks to all my fellow graduate students who have helped to provide significant improvements for my thesis. Without your help, this thesis would not be complete. Bryan-Abu Ilyas-Gallant, his presence in my hard times will stay engraved in my memory, and his incessant passion to seek the truth encourages me to learn more from others. Yunus Wesley, his wide-read

and theophonic views help me to fix my intermittent remembrance to the Holy Other. Matt Long, his three C's: coffee, company, and correction have kept me awake to finish my research. Svend White, I know you came late, but your suggestions are extremely helpful.

I realize that my overseas studies would never have even begun without the consent of my Emak, Bapak, and Ibu. Thank you for your earnest and endless prayers and readiness to take care of my family. Thanks to Pak Nasir Alsun, who has encouraged me to keep reading all kinds of books and introduced me to a structuralist discourse while I was still so green. Thanks to the Athens Muslim society: Imam Hisham, Bashir Mundi, Khalil Kaskus, Syaif Al-Talib, and the others for having welcomed me as a part of their community and provided me different images of Islam.

Last but not least, to my wife, Endah Suciastuti and my kids, Failasofi and Zayta, I want to give special thanks for their trust and bravery to let me pursue my dream to study anywhere and anytime. Again, thanks Honey for having encouraged me to get my thesis done soon and come home by sending me a beautiful song, "Home" from Michael Bubble, and as you pushed me to leave the country without hesitation by giving me "Leaving on a Jet Plane" from Chantal Kreviazuk.

Thanks everyone!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background, Aim, and Problem

This study attempts to examine the works of Nurcholish Madjid, known as Cak Nur, one of the most authoritative, celebrated, and influential scholars in Indonesia during and after the New Order regime of Soeharto. Nurcholish (that is the way he will be called throughout this study because he was more known as Nurcholish than Madjid) was a prolific writer who wrote fourteen books, thirteen articles and other scholarly works. He was an icon of religious reformation in Indonesia and has been serving as a main reference to understand not only religious matters but political issues as well. He had been regarded as the conscience of his nation or *Guru Bangsa* (the nation's teacher).[1] He was one of the foremost champions of Islamic neo-modernism in Indonesia,[2] and his encounter with distinguished scholars such as Leonard Binder and Fazlur Rahman at the University of Chicago made him gain an international scholarly reputation as an authority in religious understanding.

Nevertheless, his philosophy of religious reformation was not always welcomed by Indonesian Muslims, especially those who already had their own religious authorities within their religious organizations or affiliations. Nurcholish, however, gained support from young

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[1] Fachry Ali, "Nurcholish Madjid sebagai Guru Bangsa," in *Tarikat Nurcholishy*, ed. Jalaludin Rakhmat, et.al. (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2001), xxii.

[2] Neo-modernism is a term coined by Fazlur Rahman to describe and identify a new response towards Western modernity that synthesizes Modernist rationality and *ijtihād* (an exempt to have a new religious understanding) and classical learning. See Fazlur Rahman, "Islam: Past Influence and Present Challenge," in *Islam: Challenges and Opportunities* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1979), 315.

educated Muslims who wanted to release themselves from domineering paternal authorities and growing urban middle class Muslims who did not want to be led either by the old-fashioned and rural *ulama'* (religious scholars) or by the newer group of thinkers within modernist Islam.[3] Moreover, the aversion of the authoritarian New Order regime to political Islam became an overriding factor allowing Nurcholish's liberal thought to develop freely in Indonesia.[4] Under this social and political condition, Nurcholish's religious reformation became deeply entrenched, widely infused, and very dominant in current religious discourse.

Many critics have addressed his works but most of them failed to undercut his position as an authoritative religious reformer. The failure was due to the fact that critics engaged in different episteme from what Nurcholish employed. Most of the critics' episteme was scripturalist and conservative modernist (and hence was oriented to the past), an episteme that was abandoned by Nurcholish in favor of Western social sciences. Moreover, the reassertion of conservative-revivalist orthodoxies was presented as a bulwark against the advancing of Nurcholish's thought. However, his works remain influential even after his death in August 2005; and his provocative statements still receive wide popular attention and scholarly debate. As a consequence of the hegemonic discourse[5] shown by Nurcholish's liberal works, I was drawn to study his thought by using deconstructive analysis. Deconstruction means disarranging the construction of terms in a work and dissembling the parts of a whole, by turning the text

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[3] R. William Liddle, *Leadership and Culture in Indonesian Politics* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 161.

[4] Greg Barton, *Gus Dur: The Authorized Biography of Abdurrahman Wahid* (Jakarta: Uquinox Publishing, 2002), 127.

[5] Robert W. Jenson, "On Hegemonic Discourse," *First Things: the Journal of Religion, Culture, and Public Life.* 1994 August/September; 45. http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft9408/opinion/jenson.html (accessed December 12, 2006)

against itself to locate the difference or otherness within the texts itself that has been suppressed by the spoken or written texts.[6]

During his lifetime, the provocative public statements that Nurcholish made about the need to rethink petrified modes of Muslim thought and patterns of actions in the name of Islam gave him the reputation of the chief legitimizer of the New Order's policies towards Islam.[7] His call for secularization was considered as espousing Islamic secularism and therefore was regarded by some to be dangerous because of its association with excessive tolerance of the West and with non-religious based method.[8] On the one hand, his secularization went down well with the regime's agenda to depoliticize society and destroy the political power of Islam; even his secularization was charged as an accommodationist attitude towards the regime's policy. On the other hand, his convincing argument to ask Soeharto to resign from his twenty two years of power played an important role during reformation era. Martin Van Bruinessen, a Dutch anthropologist, describes Nurcholish as the only one who had the courage to ask Soeharto in polite words to step down after his 32 year reign. It was his calling for religious reformation rather than his political thought that was considered to be a devastating critique of the existing Muslim parties and religious organizations, their obsession with the ideal of an Islamic state, and the general staleness of their religious ideas.[9]

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[6] See Jacques Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend" (Professor Izutsu), in *Derrida and Differance,* ed. Wood & Bernasconi (Warwick: Parousia Press 1985) 1-5; http://www.hydra.umn.edu/derrida/letter.html (accessed December 12, 2006)

[7] Martin Van Bruinessen, "Nurcholish Madjid, Indonesian Muslim Intellectual," in http://www.isim.nl/files/Review_17/Review_17-22.pdf#search=%22nurcholish%20madjid%22 and http://www.let.uu.nl/~martin.vanbruinessen/personal/publications/nurcholish_madjid.htm (accessed October 17th, 2006)

[8] Howard M. Federspiel, *Muslim Intellectuals and National Development in Indonesia* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 1992), 43.

[9] Van Bruinessen, "Nurcholish Madjid."

B. Previous Research on Nurcholish's Works

Given the fact that Nurcholish's works are influential, controversial, and provocative, many scholars have become fascinated with his thoughts. Current studies on Nurcholish's works can be classified in four categories: descriptive, responsive, reactive, and critical responsive analysis. The descriptive studies are commonly done by Western scholars; they map Nurcholish's thought within western academic tradition and examine it from analytic and synthetic perspectives to see the originality of his ideas and their historical, political and social influences in Indonesian Muslim community. The second category consists of responsive studies. Such studies were undertaken by Nurcholish's proponents, what Nur Khalik[10] calls "the pawns" of Nurcholish, who defended, clarified, elaborated, interpreted, and made sense of Nurcholish's controversial and provoking thought. The third consists of reactive studies from the so-called conservatives, old modernists, and the Islamists.[11] They have done some studies on Nurcholish in order to correct and reject his ideas based on their conservative modernist and revivalist paradigm which emphasizes Islam's ideological self sufficiency.[12] The fourth is critical-responsive study. It criticizes Nurcholish's works from critical theory's point of view and employs Foucault's historicism of genealogy and archeology; to some degrees this fourth category incorporates deconstructive reading in the manner of Derrida.

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[10] Nur Khalik Ridwan is on of the most strident critique of Nurcholish from left-wing readers. He criticizes Nurcholish as the prophet of bourgeois in his book *Pluralisme Borjuis: Kritik atas Nalar Pluralisme Cak Nur* (Yogakarta: Galang Press, 2002).

[11] Islamist is a new classification of Muslim thinkers who understand and advocate Islam as a political ideology. A common among characteristic of Islamism is a selective and literal approach to the foundation of texts, Qur'an and Hadith, that is, selecting Qur'anic verses Hadith reports without due sensivity to context or alternative traditional interpretations, but whose literal sense is conducive to their political objectives. See Nelly Lahoud, *Political Thought in Islam: A Study in Intellectual Boundaries* (Oxon: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 2. In Fazlur Rahman's typology of Islamic reform movement, the Islamist would correspond to the neo-revivalist; Al-Maududi with his Jama'ati Islami is a good example of this type of reformism.

[12] John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 67.

The followings are descriptive studies done by Western scholars to map, describe, and examine Nurcholish's thoughts. Charles Kurzman, the editor of *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A Sourcebook* and *Liberal Islam: A Sourcebook,* put Nurcholish in his lists of liberal Muslim thinkers. Two of Nurcholish's articles, "The Necessity of Renewing Islamic Thought and Reinvigorating Religious Understanding" and "Reinvigorating Religious Understanding in the Indonesian Muslim Community,"[13] are included in the book *Liberal Islam: a Sourcebook.* Greg Barton, an Australian scholar, studied *The Emergence of Neo-Modernism; a Progressive, Liberal, Movement of Islamic Thought in Indonesia*; he situated Nurcholish in his list of the champions of neo-modernism in Indonesia alongside Abdurrahman Wahid, Djohan Effendi, and Ahmad Wahib. Barton identified Nurcholish as the first spokesman for neo-modernist thoughts. Without disparaging their original thought (which had come out of Indonesian socio-political discourse), Barton found that the thought of Indonesian neo-modernists had similarities with that of Fazlur Rahman.[14] The difference between Rahman and Indonesian neo-modernists was that the former was forced to flee Pakistan, his homeland, because of political hostilities to his progressive ideas; whereas the latter had an opportunity to develop their liberalism largely because of the New Order authoritarian regime's aversion to political Islam.[15] The distinct characteristic of Indonesian neo-modernists is that they had a solid and double education from both traditional Islamic schools and modern secular scholarship.[16] A different outlook about the successful development of Nurcholish's philosophy of reformation is given by M. Deden

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[13] Charles Kurzman, *Liberal Islam: a Sourcebook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 284-294. Nurcholish's articles in *Liberal Islam* were originally written in Indonesian and translated by Muhammad Kamal Hassan into English.

[14] Greg Barton, *The Emergence of Neo-Modernism; A Progressive, Liberal, Movement of Islamic Thought in Indonesia: A Textual Study Examining the Writings of Nurcholish Madjid, Djohan Effendi, Ahmad Wahib and Abdurrahman Wahid 1968-1980* (Monash University, 1995), 370.

[15] Barton, *Gus Dur,* 127.

[16] Barton, *The Emergence of Neo-Modernism,* 390.

Ridwan. He argues that dominant factor in the development of Nurcholish's philosophy of reformation was the use of the media on the part of nationalist and socialist institutions who had same modern orientation as him and were ready to publicize, disseminate, and socialize his thought.[17] Fauzan Saleh attempts to examine Nurcholish's theological thought through his *Modern Trends in Islamic Theological Discourse in 20th Century Indonesia: A Critical Study.* He ascertains that the emergence of Nurcholish's neo-modernist thought is as a response to the real cultural and social necessities of Muslim community to bring down to earth a purified belief.[18]

Ann Kull, a Swedish sociologist and anthropologist, is another Western scholar who has studied Nurcholish in her *Piety and Politics: Nurcholish Madjid and His Interpretation of Islam in the Context of Modern Indonesia.* Basing her study on Peter Beyer's work on "*Religion and Globalization,*" which discusses religious function versus religious performance (which can be liberal or conservative);[19] she concluded that Nurcholish represented the liberals who had advocated ecumenism, inclusivism, and tolerance of plurality regarding religious function. However, Nurcholish's liberal approach had the same main point of reference as the conservatives. They all took Ibn Taymiyya as their inspiration.[20] Jennifer N. Bright also identified Nurcholish as being closely related to Ibn Taymiyya's philosophy in her comparative study, *The Contemporary Islamic Discourse in Indonesia: the Philosophical Formulations of Nurcholish Madjid and Mohammad Amin Rais*. She held that even though Nurcholish had a different political approach from Amin Rais as a modernist representative scholar, their

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[17] M. Deden Ridwan, *Gagasan Nurcholish Madjid Neo-modernisme Islam dalam Wacana Tempo dan Kekuasaan,* (Yogyakarta: Belukar Budaya, 2002), 27.

[18] Fauzan Saleh, *Modern Trends in Islamic Theological Discourse in 20th Century Indonesia: A Critical Study* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 308.

[19] Ann Kull, *Piety and Politics: Nurcholish Madjid and His Interpretation of Islam in the Context of Modern Indonesia* (Stockholm University, 2005), 13.

[20] Kull, *Piety and Politics,* 274.

perspective could be located constructively within the context of the writing and thought of the classical thirteenth century jurist, Ibn Taymiyya.[21] Anthony H. Johns and Abdullah Saeed, in their study on *Nurcholish Madjid and the Interpretation of the Qur'an*, concluded that Nurcholish was not an exegete and that his treatment of the Qur'an did not derive directly from any one stream in the diverse traditions of Qur'anic exegesis. His reference to Qur'anic interpretation in general did not extend beyond the mythically tinged translation and commentary of Abdullah Yusuf Ali, or the more bleakly rationalist rendering and notes of Muhammad Asad.[22] Furthermore they said that Nurcholish was not developing any intellectual tradition but was instead responding to the Indonesian political environment, for which the guidance of Fazlur Rahman had provided him a road map.[23]

Nurcholish might not have developed a new theoretical construct, as Johns and Saeed have argued,[24] but his ideas had a tremendous influence in Indonesian religious discourse and Western academic tradition as well. For instance, Abdullahi A. An-Na'im has given high praise to Nurcholish's effort to find the root of secularization in early Islamic history and religious texts.[25] Secularization was the first perspective that Nurcholish employed to convey his ideas to revitalize and reinvigorate religious understanding and initiate his reformation agenda. However, secularization had stimulated reactive responses and forced conservative wings to criticize and

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[21] Jennifer N. Bright, *The contemporary Islamic Discourse in Indonesia: the Philosophical Formulations of Nurcholish Madjid and Mohammad Amin Rais* (Arizona State University, 1996), 2.

[22] Anthony H. Johns and Abdullah Saeed, *"Nurcholish madjid and the Interpretation of the Qur'an,"* in *Modern Muslim Intellectuals and the Qur'an*, ed. Suha Taji-Farouki (London: Oxford University Press, 2004), 91.

[23] Johns and Abdullah Saeed, 92.

[24] Johns and Abdullah Saeed, 92.

[25] Abdullahi A. An-Na'im, The Politics of Religion and the Morality of Globalization, in *Religion in Global Civil Society,* ed. Mark Jurgensmeyer (London: Oxford University Press, 2005), 31.

condemn his secularization. HM. Rasjidi, one of the Masyumi[26] proponents and modernist

leaders, wrote a long critique of Nurcholish in *Koreksi terhadap Drs, Nurcholish Madjid tentang*

Sekularisasi (A Correction to Nurcholish Madjid on Secularization). Being offended by

Nurcholish's general criticism towards the modernist movement's being too apologetic in

understanding religion, Rasjidi accused him in response as being one who suffered from an

inferiority complex; because by simply incorporating Western values into Islamic beliefs, he

showed his own weaknesses.[27] Another reactive response made by Endang Syaifuddin Anshary

in his book *Kritik atas Paham dan Gerakan "Pembaruan" Drs Nurcholish Madjid* (A Criticism

of the Concept and Movement for "Renewal" of Dr. Nurcholish Madjid). He charged that

Nurcholish misunderstood the the nature of the relationship between Islam and the state. Anshari

regarded Medinan prophetic society as an ideal social system for the ideal state. By denying the

idea of the Islamic state, Anshari argued, Nurcholish did not produce reinvigoration but rather

obscurantism in religious understanding.[28] A Malaysian scholar, Mohammad Kamal Hassan was

also provoked to give a mordant criticism to Nurcholish in his dissertation *Contemporary*

Muslim Intellectual Responses to "New Order" Modernization in Indonesia. Hassan charged that

Nurcholish's response to modernization with his concept of secularization was only conveniently

accommodating to New Order interest and tended to capitulate to the prejudices of the socio-

political status quo.[29] Another critique was written by Abdul Qadir Djaelani in his book

Menelusuri Kekeliruan Pembaharuan Pemikiran Islam Nurcholish Madjid (Investigating the

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[26] Maysumi was a unified Muslim political federation that advocated the establishment of an Islamic state in Indonesia.

[27] HM Rasjidi, *Koreksi terhadap Drs. Nurcholish Madjid tentang Sekularisasi* (Jakarta: Bulang Bintang, 1972), 28.

[28] Endang Syaifuddin Anshary, *Kritik atas Paham dan Gerakan "Pembaruan" Drs Nurcholish Madjid* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1972), 74.

[29] Mohammad Kamal Hasan, *Contemporary Muslim Intellectual Responses to "New Order" Modernization in Indonesia* (Kuala Lumpur: Percetakan Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1980), 181.

Mistakes of Nurcholish Madjid's Islamic Renewal Thought). He condemned Nurcholish as having interpreted Qur'anic verses according to his own vested interest.[30]

Unlike the above reactive readings and studies, the responsive studies on Nurcholish's works attempt to elaborate and interpret his influential and controversial ideas. Siti Nadroh who wrote *Wacana Keagamaan dan Politik Nurcholish Madjid* (Religious and Political Discourse of Nurcholish Madjid) attempted to elaborate and comprehend Nurcholish's thought and to extend it to postmodernist discourse. Nurcholish's paradigm of *tawhid* (oneness of God)*, according to Nadroh, would complete and guarantee the ideals implicit in postmodernism and give adequate answer to the problems engendered by totalitarian modernism. Further she says that once *tawhid* is understood as an inclusive, overarching concept, within which every religion has a place, there will be no scope for any one religion to claim superiority over another, let alone wage war in defense of its unique claim to truth.[31] The other responsive study of Nurcholish's ideas was done by Sufyanto in *Masyarakat Tamaddun: Kritik Hermeneutis Masyarakat Madani Nurcholish Madjid* (Tamaddun Society: Hermeneutic Critique of Nurcholish Madjid's *Masyarakat Madani*). He tries to elaborate and bridge Nurcholish's concept of *Masyarakat Madani* (Medinan society) to the concept of "civil society." He also fills and fixes the gap of Nurcholish's thought, which relied upon a good social system and which overlooked the prerequisite that the success of Medinan society depended upon an authoritative leader with the qualities of the Prophet Muhammad.[32] The universal value of Islam must be constantly synchronized Indonesian local cultures, as represented by *Pancasila* (the foundational principles of the state), otherwise there

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[30] Abdul Qadir Djaelani, *Menelusuri Kekeliruan Pembaharuan Pemikiran Islam Nurcholish Madjid* (Jakarta: Yadia, 1994), 7.

[31] Siti Nadroh, *Wacana Keagamaan dan Politik Nurcholish Madjid* (Jakarta: PT. Raja Grafindo Persada, 1999), 93.

[32] Sufyanto, *Masyarakat Tamaddun: Kritik Hermeneutis Masyarakat Madani Nurcholish Madjid* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar and LP2IF, 2001), 174

would be a clash within the culture and in turn *Masyarakat Madani* would end up being

conceptual thought and nostalgic idea.[33]

Neo-modernism as a trade mark for Nurcholish's philosophy of reformation has

influenced many scholars to do responsive interpretative study on its controversial points.

Ahmad Amir Aziz is one who sees that Nurcholish's neo-modernist thought is no more than an

attempt to overcome the gap between the Islamic vision and the Indonesian indigenous values

and to contextualize universal Islamic texts in Indonesia's particular context.[34] A similar

assessment is given by Budhy Munawar Rahman. He considers neo-modernism as a

methodology or a way of understanding Islam that can allow for the solving of individual

problems such as the question of the meaning and goal of life.[35] Further, he says that

Nurcholish's understanding of the direct relationship of the human being and God led him to

oppose the idea of human intercession (*shafā'a*) between God and human beings. Another

responsive study has been done by Sukidi. Nurcholish's concern about a doctrinal failure

suffered by Muslims, a failure to provide an inclusive theology despite their communal victory (a

theology that would promote a tolerant religious life), urged Sukidi to systematize Nurcholish's

inclusive theology. He elaborates and develops Nurcholish's inclusive theology in his book,

Teology Inklusif Cak Nur (Cak Nur's Inclusive Theology).[36]

The fourth category of the studies on Nurcohlish is critical responsive. One of the most

strident critiques on Nurcholish's thought is from Nur Khalik. He uses Foucault's archeology

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[33] Sufyanto, 186.

[34] Ahmad Amir Aziz, *Neo-Modernisme Islam di Indonesia: Gagasan Sentral Nurcholish Madjid dan Abdurrahman Wahid* (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 1999), 75.

[35] Budhy Munawar Rahman, *Pemikiran Keislaman Nurcholish Madjid: Sebagai Hasil dari Hermeneutika Neo-Modernisme* (Jakarta: Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Driyakarya, 1998), 69.

[36] Sukidi Mulyadi, *Teology Inklusif Cak Nur* (Jakarta: Kompas, 2001).

and genealogy to unveil the ideology behind Nurcholish's idea of pluralism. Nur Khalik

concludes that Nurcholish's pluralism was generated from his bourgeois, middle-class circle who

had struggled to be the beneficiary of the government bureaucracy.[37] Ahmad Baso assesses

critically Nurcholish's idea of *Masyarakat Madani* (Medinan society). He says that *Masyarakat

Madani* is not the same as civil society because the former comes from a well-established middle

class while civil society rises up from a marginal and low-class society.[38] He also criticizes

Nurcholish's inclination to glorify the historical past of Islam through Western scholarly

descriptions while overlooking the works of Muslims historians, such as al-Tabari, Ibn Hisham,

and al-Maqrizi.[39]

C. Theory and Method

Given the fact that the number of critical responsive and especially deconstructive readings

on Nurcholish's work are far less than any other readings, such as descriptive-objective, reactive,

and responsive, this thesis will take form of the last category of readings, which is

deconstructive. It does not mean that this study is meant to belittle the previous studies that

describe, represent, elaborate, and interpret Nurcholish's ideas, because those studies have

played an important role in conveying Nurcholish's ideas to a wide range of readers. However, a

different reading must be attempted in order to respect and answer Nurcholish's own call for

reformation. The reading does not have necessarily to be interpretative. To a certain extent an

interpretation could be justified in order to make texts intelligible by disclosing their true

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[37] Nur Khalik Ridwan, *Pluralisme Borjuis: Kritik Nalar Pluralisme Cak Nur* (Yogyakarta: Galang Press, 2002), 66.

[38] Ahmad Baso, *Civil Society versus Masyarakat Madani: Arkeology Pemikiran Civil Society dalam Islam di Indonesia* (Bandung: Pustaka Hidayanh, 1999), 279.

[39] Baso, 277.

meaning to "illiterate" readers; yet that interpretation, in turn, is just another different text that seeks and invokes authority from the authoritative interpreted texts. As Susan Sontag has put it:

> Interpretation thus presupposes a discrepancy between the clear meaning of the text and the demands of (later) readers. It seeks to resolve that discrepancy. The situation is that for some reason a text has become unacceptable; it cannot be discarded. Interpretation is a radical strategy for conserving an old text, which is thought too precious to repudiate, by revamping it. The interpreter, without actually erasing or rewriting the text, is altering it. But he can't admit to doing this. He claims to be only making it intelligible, by disclosing its true meaning.[40]

So, the interpreters not only search and discover meanings behind the texts, resolve their discrepancies, and solve their controversies; but they also seek authority from the authoritative authors and invent new meanings. Jonathan Culler, a leading figure in structuralism, is among those who have called for an end to the workaday business of 'interpreting' texts. He argues that criticism should better concern itself with deep underlying system and structures of convention which make up the 'grammar' of competent literary response.[41]

The appropriate perspective and analysis to avoid such an interpretative reading is to bring into play deconstruction, a term coined by Jacques Derrida. Since Derrida did not give a lucid definition of deconstruction, except to provid lexical-dictionary words as substitutes—words such as "ecriture," "trace," "difference," "supplement," "hymen," "parmakon," "marge," "entame," "paragon," etc[42]— the writer will borrow the definition of deconstruction from different scholars within different contexts concerning especially religious matters. Mark C. Taylor in his *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology* identifies deconstruction as an anti-structural criticism; it is an attempt to resist the totalizing and totalitarian tendencies of criticism and its

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[40] Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Picador, 1990), 6.

[41] Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), 4.

[42] According to Derrida any definitions depend on a context and thus it opens to many possibilities. See Jacques Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend," in *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion: A Selection of Critical Readings,* ed. Carl Olson (California: Thomson Wadsworth, 2003), 586.

own tendencies to come to rest in some mastery over the work. The deconstructive reader takes

the book as heterograph,[43] which is where the book is understood as providig by itself the

difference and otherness. In Derrida's own word, the book itself is always grafted onto

otherness.[44] Gayatri Spivak, the translator of Derrida's *Of Grammatology* describes

deconstruction as an attempt to locate the promising marginal text, to disclose the undecidable

moment, to pry it loose with the positive lever of signifier, to reverse the resident hierarchy, only

to displace it; to dismantle in order to reconstitute what is always already inscribed.[45]

As a form of thought, deconstruction might seem an unlikely partner of religious

reflection, since Derrida asserts that deconstruction blocks every relationship to theology.

However, it is this antithetical association with theology that lends deconstruction its religious

significance for marginal thinkers.[46] It provides a reflection on the contemporary religious

meaning that has been established through the marginalization of God as a result of the prevalent

belief of the death of God and the transcendental or extremely transcendent God that does not

have authority in the human public sphere. Given such marginality, deconstructive scholars will

invert the established meaning and subvert everything once deemed dominant.[47]

Deconstruction is based on the assumption that dominant thought in theWest has rested

upon bipolar and binary oppositions. It is crucial to the Western tradition of thinking about

language from Plato to Kant, Hegel, Husserl and other representative thinkers,[48] in which speech

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[43] Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 93.

[44] Jacques Derrida, *Glass* (Paris: Edition Galilee, 1974), 183.

[45] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (John Hopkins: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997), lxxvii.

[46] Taylor, *Erring,* 6.

[47] Taylor, 6.

[48] Christopher Norris, *Derrida* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987), 33.

is seen as a natural, direct communication while writing is an artificial and oblique representation of a representation.[49] Other common binary oppositions besides speech/writing are masculine/feminine, presence/absence, origin/supplement, intelligible/sensible, fact/fiction, meaning/form, signified/signifier, soul/body, nature/culture, transcendental/empirical, science/poetry, fact/fiction, real/manifestation, etc.[50] these oppositions are hierarchic. Within these Western-traditional hierarchies, the first categories count as superior and are therefore privileged whereas the others are inferior and have to be controlled for the sake of stability.[51] Eve Tavor Bannet in her *Postcultural Theory: Critical Theory after the Marxist Paradigm* describes how the thought of binary opposition has attempted to control the other; and she discerns this suppression in Plato in order to have a stable Republic:

> Banishing the poet from his Republic, Plato is, like us, banishing inspiration and feminization, and with them the socially disruptive and destabilizing possibility that persons can be possessed by a *Geist,* a spirit, visitant or vision. Plato wants to control the malleability of the subject both in theory and practice. He wants to control education and, with it, the models and myths to which subjects are exposed. He wants to reform society by im-printing subjects according to rational, theoretically determined models.[52]

Derrida sees that language has a power to release human beings from this repressive mode of thought because it is through language that the human mind is constructed;[53] and hence to deconstruct the mind we have to deconstruct language. Thus language stands for the socially constructed order within which human beings think and move and have their own being. Their speech and action are always-already situated, and hence conditioned, by one vocabulary or

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[49] Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (New York: Cornell University Press), 100.

[50] Culler, 93.

[51] Culler, 254.

[52] Eve Tavor Bannet, *Postcultural Theory: Critical Theory after the Marxist Paradigm* (New York: Paragon House, 1993), 56-57.

[53] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, xiv.

another.[54] Therefore language system and discourse in a certain culture sometimes is different

from the other. This difference is part of incommensurable human nature. Lyotard, one of

postmodern philosophers, argues that traditional theory is in danger because of its desire for a

unitary and totalizing truth.[55] Many scholars seek to allow any religious language systems to be

as they are unless they are hegemonic, in which case, they need to be deconstructed. In

commenting on unitary and totalizing truth Mark C. Taylor says,

> It is necessary to develop comparative analysis that do not presuppose universal
> principles or reinscribe ahistorical essences. Whether or not it is possible to realize such a
> comparative program, many critics schooled in poststructuralism insist that every effort
> to establish similarities where there appear to be difference is, in the final analysis,
> intellectually misleading and politically misguided. When reason is obsessed with unity,
> they argue, it tends to become hegemonic as political and economic orders constructed to
> regulate whatever does not fit into with governing structures. In this situation, critical
> theory becomes a strategy for resisting dominant power by soliciting the return of the
> repressed.[56]

This 'linguistic turn' of the condition of postmodernity is at the same time a political

condition because the differences inscribed in language privilege certain forms of social

organization rather than others. Those who get to make the distinctions control the social

imagination and thus hold the reins of social power;[57] those who have power have the right to

say what knowledge is.[58] Secularization is a good example for such working episteme. Like any

powerful modern discourse on religion that came out the Enlightenment project, secularization,

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[54] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Theology and the Condition of Postmodernity: A Report of Knowledge (of God), in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology,* ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 13.

[55] Jean Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: Report on Knowledge,* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis University Press, 2002), 12.

[56] Mark C. Taylor, *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 15.

[57] Vanhoozer, "Theology and the Condition of Postmodernity," 13.

[58] Joyce Appleby, *Knowledge and Postmodernism in Historical Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 18.

as Tomoko Masuzawa observes, becomes a discourse of othering.[59] Religion that is not secularized is regarded as being primitive and has no role in future.

Deconstruction came out of poststructuralist discourse as a critique of modern rationalism that tends to have and grasp meaning fully, search for a "transcendental signified," a final stopping place, a guarantee of indubitable meaning.[60] Derrida argues that since a term is constituted by its difference from other terms, meaning is never fully present in the one word itself; it is deferred, constituted as much by absence as presence.[61] It is a critique of the human Renaissance and Enlightenment's "subject." The Renaissance presupposes that human beings as subject of their history are free, intellectual agents; and that thinking processes are not coerced by historical or cultural circumstances.[62] The Descartes' maxim *Cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am), which has been underlying modern and scientific projects, is now considered naïve and illusiory. The Renaissance "subject" assumes that there is a distinct separation between subject and object. Cartesian 'I' assumes itself to be fully conscious, and hence self-knowable,[63] as if this subject does not need any tradition and language to know reality. This subject is unaware that language mediates its relationship to an object or reality.

The Renaissance and Enlightenment managed to wake up human beings from their dogmatic slumber. However, they do not realize that they are in anthropological slumber; they are not free and liberal, as they had thought. The idea of free and liberal –namely, autonomous-- subject only serves to justify and mask their will to power. At any rate, the enlightenment claim

[59] Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religion* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 20

[60] Dan R. Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language: Sign, Symbol, and Story* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 183.

[61] Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy,* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 3.

[62] Madan Sarup, *An Introductory guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism* (Georgia: The University of Georgia Press Athens, 1989), 1.

[63] Sarup, 1.

to have broken with tradition is self-deluding and devoid of critical power. The will to power is also supported by the idea of progress;[64] specifically in the sense of progress to the last standing system, which is the peak or culmination of all civilization. Knowledge, however, is still mediated by acquired language and ceaselessly reinstates the new terrain on the oldest ground, thereby inhabiting more naively and more strictly than ever inside what one declares that one has deserted.[65] The enlightenment is not enlightening anymore, instead it turned out to be a regime of truth that constitutes and legitimizes what is perceived as true or false. Foucault identifies that the regime of truth in every society,

> Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politic" of truth, that is, the types of discourses which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the status of those who are in charge with saying what counts as true.[66]

It is through language that the regime of truth might be overthrown; it has the force that can liberate from metanarratives and the tyranny of reason.[67] Language, however, in a poststructuralist perspective is not simply considered as means of mediation. It is a source that enables the subject to grasp knowledge. Furthermore, it is language and its system that has absorbed the subject. Foucault, in his much quoted passage in *The Order of Things,* describes 'man'—or the imaginary self-possessed subject of humanist discourse—as a figure drawn in sand at the ocean's edge, soon to be erased by the incoming tide.[68] Saussure is one of the chief instigators of the dissolution of human being into system. Saussure established a structural

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[64] Appleby, *Knowledge and Postmodernism,* 18.

[65] Christopher Norris, *Derrida* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 220.

[66] Michel Foucault. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Order Writing, 1977-84*, trans. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 131.

[67] Paul Hayes, "Postmodernism," in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. John R. Hinnells (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 269.

[68] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: an Archeology of Human Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1970), 442.

linguistics that leaves no room for the individual subject as origin or locus of meaning.[69] The

other instigator of decentering the subject is Nietzsche, who believed that human beings are

unable to escape the constraints of language, in other words they are trapped within language and

its concept.[70] Therefore, what is left is *Dasein* (Being there, not being itself), Heidegger's

concept for self-interpretative being.[71] Putting it differently, in Nietzsche's words, there are

only perspectives or interpretations.[72] Like Nietzsche, Derrida abandons the human subject in

favor of the text.[73] Its implication is that the subject becomes a part of the text;   the subject is

"always already" a text constituted by the play of identity and difference.[74] The text is a tissue of

quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture.[75]

The text is a fact in a scientific field. Even the idea of "fact" as being objective has been

challenged by current scientists as being the produc of local socio-cultural norms and convention

adopted and imposed by a particular group. A fact is simply a 'language game' and 'form of life

that is characterized with incommensurability.[76] It is fictitious, fabricated, constructed, and

nothing but a statement with no modality and no trace of authorship.[77] Even more radical,

Vaihinger and Nelson Goodman see facts as fictions. They have observed that

> scientists often choose an 'amenable and illuminating lie' over an awkward truth or over
> one which does not fit comfortably with other principles, and that simplicity, cogency,

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[69] Norris, *Derrida*, 218.

[70] Sarup, *An Introductory Guide*, 50.

[71] Hugh J. Silverman, *Inscriptions after Phenomenology and Structuralism* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 33.

[72] Sarup, *An Introduction Guide*, 50

[73] Sarup, 49.

[74] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, xii.

[75] Culler, *On Deconstruction,* 33.

[76] Pierre Bourdieu, *Science of Science and Reflexivity*, trans. Richard Nice (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press. 2004), 18.

[77] Bourdieu, 19.

compactness, comprehensiveness and organizing power of a theory are generally more important than its true reality.[78]

More moderate but still thoughtful thinking to understand the above opinion was given by Michael Polanyi, who points out that the criteria for evaluating scientific works cannot be completely articulated. There is always an implicit, tacit dimension, a conventional wisdom engaged in evaluating scientific works; this practical mastery is a kind of 'connoisseurship' which can only be communicated through example, and not precept; it is not so different from the art of recognizing a good picture, or identifying its period and author, without necessarily being able to articulate the criteria that one is applying; in short, scientific research is an art.[79]

Like Foucault, Thomas Kuhn also shows that the development of science is not a continuous process, but it marked by a series of breaks and by the alteration of periods of 'normal science' and 'revolutions'.[80] This idea challenges a conclusion sometimes drawn from Western Darwinian evolutionary thinking. The grand theory of human societal evolutionary history, in which society passed through savagery and barbarism to attain civilization, seemed to have provided the justification for denigratint others who do not the same values of the dominant Euro-American culture. As Herbert Spencer commented on social failures, "The whole effort of nature is to get rid of such, to clear the world of them, and make room for better. Progress is not an accident but a necessity." Gone further, Summer echoed the idea by saying that "law of the survival of the fittest was not written by man and cannot be abrogated by man. We can only, by interfering with it, produce the survival of the unfittest."[81]

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[78] Bannet, *Postcultural Theory,* 114.

[79] Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 54.

[80] Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 56.

[81] Appleby, *Knowledge and Postmodernism,* 12.

The Renaissance and enlightenment subject is identified as being logocentric.[82] It invokes the hope of saying the last word, arresting the process of commentary. In searching for stable meaning, the logocentric subject supports the superior pole of opposition while suppressing and abandonning the others. Logocentrism, or the metaphysics of presence, assumes that ideas come into being first, and seek expression in speech, which is then transcribed into writing.[83] Deconstruction will demonstrate how a logocentric text always undercuts its own assumptions, its own system of logic. It does this largely through an examination of the *traces, supplements,* and *invaginations* in the text. Among the thinkers who are aware of the constricting and unliberating quality of Western modern thought is Wittgenstein. He asks people to let the meaning return "Back to the rough ground!"[84] So we put "mental cramps" in language, as Wittgenstein charges; and this problem of "mental cramps" can only be solved by returning words to the streams of life, or he put it picturesquely, by showing "the fly the way out of the bottle."[85] The meaning must be returned to the public by opening the phenomenological *epoche* or bracket that was intended to tame wild knowledge and revelation.

Deconstruction is not only against interpretation but also against any attempts to tie, nail, or anchor meaning into history. History is not a privileged authority but only part of what Derrida call *le texte general*- the general text, which has no boundaries.[86] The preoccupation

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[82] It is the Western methods of analysis, explication, reading or interpretation that is based upon the centrism itself – the human desire to posit central presence at the beginning and end – or the self presence of full-self consciousness. See Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, lxviii. Logocentrism is also identified as Metaphysics of Presence." It is an attempt to find the transcendental signified or ultimately self-sufficient meaning. It underrates difference in favor of identity and presence. Therefore, it expresses a privileging of the signified (Presence/Speech) over the signifier (Absence/Writing), ultimately asserting the signified's status as more natural or pure. See Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 7.

[83] James K. A. Smith, *Jacques Derrida: Live Theory* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 31.

[84] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigation,* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1985), 107.

[85] Wittgenstein, 309.

[86] Culler, *On Deconstruction,* 130.

with the historical dimension of the text has often led to neglect of literary dimensions and even directed attention away from the text itself in favor to the world behind the text.[87] The dangers of these principles are fairly obvious. The principle of analogy, for example, could lead to a kind of cultural imperialism, with everything being interpreted in terms of current understanding.[88] To a certain extent, deconstruction problematizes historicity, questioning how it is possible for a historical activity, such as scientific activity or religious interpretation, to produce transhistorical truths, independent of history, detached from all bonds with both place and time and therefore eternally and universally valid. This is actually a problem that philosophers have posed since the nineteenth century under the pressure of the nascent social sciences.[89] They also use history, however, to gain power by claiming (explicitly or implicitly) to know the law of nature or society.

Modernist theologians do not attempt to gain authority only with history; in addition, they use original-authentic revelation to support their understanding. Nevertheless, a deconstructive critique of this questions how they could possibly reach the original meaning of revelation if it is "always already" depicted textually? They are not aware that what they think of as a revelation is only a trace, the mark of meaning, but not the full revelation.[90] Jorn Borup's thought on "Zen and the Art of Inverting Orientalism" might help to understand what not being "full" revelation means,

> Studying religion is not like looking through a window. It is necessary to see with glasses, to use models and maps to see religion not as a metaphysical truth to be perceived, but as a cultural phenomenon, itself construction, a living reality. Though both constructivism and processes of relational interconnectedness are also keywords within

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[87] Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language,* 36.

[88] Stiver, 36.

[89] Bourdieu, *Science of Science and Reflexivity,* 1.

[90] Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language,* 183.

Buddhist discourse, our "constructions" need not to be in harmony with theirs. But ideally they need to be potentially reflecting each other. Though a mirror can be used for reflection and illumination, the images reflected in the mirror are not the thing itself. Historians of religion are not supposed to reveal a "truth," but to reflect on an always ongoing discourse about their truth-and on our own discourse.[91]

The historical analysis and religious interpretation through which Nurcholish invented his religious neomodernist discourse will be looked at—in this thesis—from a deconstructive perspective. The goal of this study is not simply to invert the binary oppositions found in Nurcholish's text, since Derrida repeatedly insists that deconstruction should not be content to simply invert certain cardinal oppositions so as to leave the inferior term henceforth firmly established on top,[92] because that would make another hegemonic concept. However through textual subversion and inversion, the otherness of the text will become apparent and will be freed to play with the previous hegemonic reading of the text.

This thesis will discus how Nurcholish, with his historical approach and neomodernistic interpretation, invented a new understanding of Islam, by situating him in his religious and socio-political background. This study will focus on three major themes of Nurcholish's religious thought: secularization, *masyarakat madani* (civil society), and pluralism. Secularization is his first key idea to challenge the traditional system of religious beliefs, in spite of the fact that some scholars consider secularization as an obsolete issue to address, regarding it already as a major twentieth century myth; Thomas Luckmann, for example, commented that the secularization thesis is best described as a mythological account of the emergence of the modern world.[93] Peter

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[91] Jorn Borup, "Zen and the Art of Inverting Orientalism" in *New Approaches to the Study of Religion: Volume 1: Regional, Critical, and Historical Approaches,* ed. Peter Antens, Armin W. Geertz, and Randi R. Warne (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 482.

[92] Norris, *Derrida*, 23.

[93] Judith Fox, "Secularization," in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. John R. Hinnells (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 302.

Berger, who used to support secularization project, even went further, saying that given the historical ubiquity of religion, what needs to be explained is the presence of secularization rather than of religion.[94] Since Secularization functions as a foundation of the whole of Nurcholish's reformation agenda, deconstruction must begin with it. *Masyarakat madani* is the second theme that needs to be addressed because it is the solution that Nurcholish offers after he rejects—with his secularization—the idea of Islamic state. Pluralism, as an implication of both secularization and civil society, is the last theme treated in this study. With pluralism Nurcholish wants to make Islam an overarching religion, as mediator to preserve the differences within religious community.

Having in this first chapter introduced the background necessary for gaining a basic understanding of Nurcholish's perspective and the orientation of this thesis, in the chapter of the thesis, I will represent and describe the general text and its interplay regarding the circumstances of Nurcholish's first acquisition of the language that he would use it to articulate his idea. Different religious and socio-political discourses (that were competing during his life) will be presented in order to see his existential responses. Thus, Nurcholish and his works, like any other text that is socially constructed, will only be properly understood in relation to his social context. The third chapter will discuss the three major themes: secularization, *masyarakat madani,* and pluralism. This chapter concentrates on the efforts to investigate and identify binary oppositions embedded in Nurcholish's work and constructed by him within the three issues. In addition to concluding remarks, the final chapter will focus on dismantling binary oppositions

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[94] Peter L. Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview," in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politic,* ed. Peter L. Berger (Washington: The Ethic and Public Policy Center, 1999), 2.

and dissembling the parts of a whole by turning the text against itself in order to locate the

suppressed otherness or difference within a text.

CHAPTER 2

GENERAL TEXT

A. The Interplay of Family and Early Education

Nurcholish, like all children, was born in a *fiṭry* state (a pure condition), but similarly, like

all children, after being born he became effected by a variety of languages whether religious,

social, cultural, political, and ideological. He was the subject of his own language but at the same

time became subjected to it too. Before becoming an active speaking subject, he was subjected to

the language already surrounding him; he was spoken by the language with which he lived. Just

as a subject is constituted in and through language,[95] so the information about the environment

where Nurcholish acquired his language must be taken into account to know and understand his

thought.

Nurcholish Madjid was born in Jombang, a small town in the plains of East Java on

March 17, 1939 CE, or Muharram 26, 1358 AH, six years prior to Indonesia's independence on

August 17, 1945. He attended a local public school, *Sekolah Rakyat*, in the morning; and he

studied in the afternoon at the Islamic school, *Madrasah Al Wathaniyah,*[96] founded by his father,

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[95] Christopher Norris, *Derrida* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 221.

[96] This and other Indonesian proper names or direct quotations are spelled according to the conventional Indonesia transliteration of Arabic words.

Haji Abdul Madjid. He graduated from both schools in the same year 1953.[97] Then at the age of

14, Nurcholish went to study at *Pesantren*[98] *Tebuireng Darul 'Ulum Rejoso* in his hometown

Jombang. This *pesantren* was established by Kiai Haji Hasyim As'ary, one of the founding

fathers of Nahdlatul Ulama[99] (The Renaissance of Religious Scholars, abbreviated as NU in this

paper). After two years he broke off his studies from Tebuireng and moved to another small

town, Ponorogo, and enrolled in the *Pesantren Modern Darussalam Gontor.*[100] He was 16 years

old when he came to Gontor and remained there, studying and teaching until he was 21, when he

graduated in 1960. One of the reasons that he moved from Tebuireng to Gontor was on account

of feeling unpleasantness and suffering due to other students' taunting.[101] They taunted him

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[97] Greg Barton, *The Emergence of Neo-Modernism: A Progessive, Liberal, Movement of Islamic Thought in Indonesia: a Textual Study Examining the Writings of Nurcholish Madjid, Djohan Effendi, Ahmad Wahib and Abdurrahman Wahid 1968-1980* (Monash University, 1995), 59. Barton's premises in his studies on the emergence of Neo-Modernism is that the neomodernists, where Nurcholish counts as the first spokesperson for these ideas, had a double education in traditional Islamic school and secular universities in Indonesia.

[98] *Pesantren* is a religious boarding school run on a communal basis. It is located mostly in rural settings and serves the poor farming communities especially in Java. It is led by *kiai* (ulama'), religious scholars. A *kiai* is accorded considerable respect as a spiritual teacher and guide because of the religious traditions emphasis on Sufism or Islamic mysticism. See Greg Barton, *Gus Dur: The Authorized Biography of Abdurrahman Wahid* (Jakarta: Uquinox Publishing, 2002), 37.

[99] Islamic association founded in 1962. It is so called traditionalists because of their rigorous attitude towards the conservation of the discipline of Islamic scholarly tradition. The Modernists commentators described this attitude as *taqlid* (a close following of accepted texts/authorities of one of the four Sunni schools). This pejorative description could be found in the Modernist comment. See Deliar Noer "Contemporary Political Dimention of Islam," in *Islam in South-East Asia*, ed. M.B. Hooker (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983). According to Hooker, the actual use of the sources called *taqlid* and the terminology traditionalist is overlooked, unfortunate, and misleading. He proves and shows that *ijtihad* exists among the NU Ulama but one must be *alim* (religiously qualified or knowledgeable). See *Indonesia Islam: Social change through contemporary fatāwā* (Australia: Alan &Uwin, 2003), 27.

[100] This Pesantren was assumed belonged to the Masyumi. It is not NU or Muhammadiyah's *pesantren* and the students were free to practice according to their religious organization. See Nurcholish Madjid, "Menyambung Matarantai Pemikiran yang Hilang" (connecting the missing link of thought), in *Tidak Ada Negara Islam: Surat-Surat Politik Nurcholish Madjid-Mohamad Roem* (No Islamic state: Nurcholish Madjid-Mohamad Roem's Politic Letters), ed. Agus Edi Santoso, (Jakarta: Djambatan, 1997), 37.

[101] Nurcholish was considered Masyumi's son going astray to NU's barn. See *Zaman Baru Islam Indonesia, pemikiran dan aksi politik Abdurrahman Wahid, Amien Rais, Nurcholish Madjid dan Jalaluddin Rakhma,t*, by Dedy Djamaluddin Malik dan Idi Subandy Ibrahim, (Bandung: Zaman Wacana Mulia, 1998), 123.

because of his father's political affiliation with Masyumi.[102] NU used to affiliate with this party but finally withdrew from it in 1952 because of the growing antipathy between the traditionalist NU and the modernists represented by Muhammadiyah,[103] Al-Irsyad, and Persis who held the leadership within Masyumi.[104]

In Gontor, Nurcholish encountered a new educational system. Gontor's curriculum represented a liberal synthesis of classical Islamic learning with a modern Western style education that manifested itself just as much in its didactic approach as it did in content.[105] Arabic was not only taught in the traditional grammatical approach, as in any common *pesantrens*, but was also practiced communicatively. Moreover, Gontor taught English to their students. English was a strange language for the common *pesantren's* circle. The students were required to communicate either in Arabic or in English in their daily activities at the *pesantren*. The majority of the student population came from middle class families. They were regarded as being rather urbane, not *kolot* (old fashioned or traditional).[106] Lance Castle who did observations on *pesantren* in early 1965 saw the potential of Islamic reformation from *Pesantren*

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[102]Masyumi (*Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia,* the Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims) is Islamic party sponsored by the Japanese. It was established in November 1945 in Yogyakarta. All the important Muslim social and educational organizations are affiliated with the party. They pledged that the Masyumi would be the only political party for Muslims. For further discussion see *Contemporary Political Dimension of Islam*, by Deliar Noer, in *Islam in South-East Asia*, ed. M.B. Hooker (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983.

[103] It was founded in 1912 at Yogyakarta by Kiai Haji Ahmad Dahlan, a champhion of Modern Islamic reform. It conceived itself as a propagator of Muslim culture and non-political modernist movement. It left its members to take any political activities on their own. Kahin, based on Bousquet observation, says that it would be wrong to suppose from this that its members entertained no political members. They were the leading figures in Masyumi. For further discussions see George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952), 87.

[104] Bahtiar Effendy, *Islam and the State in Indonesia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003), 34.

[105] Barton, *The Emergence of Neo-Modernism*, 60.

[106] Barton, 60.

Gontor.[107] Later, Nurcholish described Gontor as a place where the emphasis was on developing the intellectual aspect of religion, in contrast to most other *pesantrens* which usually placed emphasis merely on its religio-spiritual aspects.[108]

In term of subject matters and method, Gontor made progress by integrating the system of *pesantren* with the system of contemporary education. Each semester they evaluated the learning process.[109] This was considered something new for conventional *pesantrens*. Gontor taught some familiar subject matters, such as al-Qur'an, *tajw d* (Qur'anic recitation rules), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *ush l al-fiqh* (principle of jurisprudence), and new subjects such as comparative religion, the history of Islamic civilization, etc. They even taught the comparative Islamic legal text, *Bidayat al-Mujtahid* (written by Ibn Rushd) at an early stage, i.e. in the fifth grade.[110] Even though Gontor had already integrated the *pesantren* system with the school system, like the other *pesantrens* they did not issue the certificates that were acceptable in the public schools or universities.[111] However, the *pesantren's* graduates were acceptable to Middle Eastern countries, such as University of al-Azhar in Egypt. Nurcholish was prepared to study in al-Azhar, but due to the political tumult in Middle East at that time his plan to go and study was cancelled. Instead, Kiai Haji Zarkasyi, as a leader of *pesantren* Gontor, sent Nurcholish with his recommendation to the State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN, Institute Agama Islam Negeri, now changed to UIN, State Islamic University) Syarif Hidayatullah in Jakarta.[112]

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[107] Barton, 61.

[108] S. Fathimah, *Modernism and the Contextualization of Islamic Doctrines; the Reform of Indonesian Islam Proposed by Nurcholish Madjid* (Canada: McGill University, 1999), 21.

[109] Nur Khalik Ridwan, *Pluralisme Borjuis: Kritik Nalar Pluralisme Cak Nur* (Yogyakarta: Galang Press, 2002), 50.

[110] Ridwan, 50.

[111] Malik dan Idi Subandy Ibrahim, *Zaman Baru Islam Indonesia,* 130.

[112] Ridwan, 53.

The following is the way Nurcholish identified himself. He said that

> If we believe in the psychoanalytic notion that sees the importance of childhood experiences until the first half of one's teen years, we can conclude that I am (culturally) NU, even though I am not a member of NU; because until around 15 years of age, my prominent activities were studying religious books (in Indonesia known as *kitab kuning*, literally means yellow book)and memorizing collections of aphorisms (*na am*) such us *Hidayat as-Sibyan*, *'Aq dat al-'Awwam*, *Jauhar al-Tawh d*, *Bad' al-'Amal*, *'Awāmil*, *'Imriti*, *Alfiyah*, etc.[113]

Furthermore, he said that his parents were culturally NU. The reason that his father remained in the Masyumi, Nurcholish argued, was that he held tight to the *fatwa,* religious opinion issued by Kiai Haji Hasyim 'Asy'ary,[114] who said that the Masyumi was the only legitimate Islamic political party in Indonesia.[115]

Syu'bah Asa, an Indonesian senior journalist, had made an observation on the issue of an Islamic state in Indonesia. The result of the observation reminded Nurcholish of NU's political language when he was a child. Syu'bah said that the idea of an Islamic state came from the peripheral Muslim community, like Kartosuwiryo; it did not come from the central circle of Muslim community, like *kiais* or religious scholars.[116] This statement might be simple but its implication was very profound since it dealt with political-ideological legitimacy. The *kiais* or religious scholars could not accept and depend on the authority of non-religious scholars for religious matters, especially when the idea of the state had been appropriated into Islam.[117] From their perspective, the nation state was an idea that had been adopted from Western countries that

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[113] Madjid, "Menyambung Matarantai Pemikiran yang Hilang," 38.

[114] He was one of the founding fathers of NU. He was born in Jombang, East Java in February 1871, and died in July 1947. He died before NU decided to withdraw its political affiliation from the Masyumi and established itself as a political party in 1952.

[115] Nurcholish Madjid, "Menyambung Matarantai Pemikiran yang Hilang," 37.

[116] Madjid, 37.

[117] Madjid, 37.

had colonized the Muslims and then appropriated it into Islam. In other words, the Islamic state was seen to be a human construct or projection deriving from a reading of Islam based upon a modernistic perspective rather than original Islamic doctrine. This observation reminded Nurcholish of one of his uncles who had questioned his father's reasons for why he had remained in the Masyumi: "*Gus sampeyan niki lak ulama, kok tumut tiyang sekolahan?*(Gus,[118]you are a religious scholar, are not you? Why do you follow non-religious scholars [who had been educated in the Dutch schools]? Nurcholish's father simply replied, "*Aku melok Masyumi mung ing dalem perkara politik, dene perkara agama, aku tetep muride Hadratusy-Syeikh Muhammad Hasyim 'Asy'ari!"* [119](I follow the Masyumi only in political matters, whereas in religious matters I am still a disciple of Hadratusy Syeikh Hasyim Asy'ary).

B. Religio Socio-political Language and Higher Education

In 1961, Nurcholish moved to Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia. He reached a new chapter in his intellectual maturity and encountered the clamorous socio-political languages that were ready for him to acquire. Prepared with his peripheral-rural but modernized language, Nurcholish had to engage in a relationship with a central language overwhelmed with diverse political interests. In this stage he was not only a passive spoken subject but also an active

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[118] Gus is a respect and prestigious call for high ranking family within kiai or religious scholar circle. For example, Abdurrahman Wahid, the former leader of NU and president of Indonesia is also called Gus, i.e. Gus Dur. Abdul Madjid had such close and personal relationship with Hasyim 'Asy'ari as if his own father. See Fathimah, *Modernism and the Contextualization of Islamic Doctrines; the Reform of Indonesian Islam Proposed by Nurcholish Madjid* (Canada: McGill University, 1999), 45.

[119] Nurcholish Madjid, "Menyambung Matarantai Pemikiran yang Hilang," 37.

speaking subject, especially through HMI[120] (*Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam*, the Association of Muslim Students) when he became the chairperson.[121] At this time, he was widely touted as a "Young Natsir"[122] who, following in the steps of the former Masyumi chairman, Mohammad Natsir,[123] would lead a new generation of activists on to victory in the political arena.[124]

The belief that Islam could not be detached from any aspect of life including political matters was very pervasive among modernist Muslims such as the Masyumi and Muhammadiyah.[125] They were true universalists who believed that Muhammad's message in the Qur'an and ḥadīth is essentially complete and can be applied directly in all Muslim societies. Furthermore, according to them, Islam is not in conflict with modern science and technology.[126] They even thought that Islam is better than Western civilization and were against the idea of separation of the state and religion that was championed by the nationalists, whose leader was Soekarno, who later became the first president of Indonesia in 1945.

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[120] Nurcholish was also President of the Union Southeast Asian Islamic Students from 1969 to 1971 and Assistant Secretary General and founder of the International Islamic Federation of Students Association. See Barton, *The Emergence of Neo-Modernism,* 63.

[121] After two years of college, in 1963, Nurcholish started participating in the HMI and in 1967 he was elected president. He was also elected for the following term in 1969. He was the first person to be elected twice consecutively in the HMI organization. See Nurcholish Madjid, "The Issue of Modernization among Muslims in Indonesia: From a Participant's Point of View," in *Reading on Islam in Southeast Asia*, ed by Ahmad Ibrahim et.al. (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), 379.

[122] Barton, *The Emergence of Neo-Modernism,* 44.

[123] He was a strong proponent of Islamic State. He was from Minangkabau and had been educated in the European school system and attended Islamic school. He was associated with the extreme modernist thinking of Persatuan Islam (Islamic association founded in 1923. He used to be a minister of information and a prime minister in the Soekarno government. But finally he was arrested because his allegiance with some Islamic rebellions. See M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c. 1300* (California: Stanford University Press, 1993), 189. The debate between Natsir and Soekarno concerning Islamic understanding on liberalism see M.B. Hooker, *Indonesian Islam* (Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2003), 30.

[123] Barton, *The Emergence of Neo-Modernism,* 44.

[124] Barton, 44.

[125] R. William Liddle, *Leadership and Culture in Indonesian Politics* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 158.

[126] Liddle, 75.

The supporters of this Muslim nationalism were convinced that Islam, not secular liberalism or socialism, was the proper ground on which to build the nation. Even though the modernists believed that Islam was not in conflict with modern values, they thought that secular nationalism was too Western. For them, secular nationalism looked like a modern version of the tribal and ethnic solidarities that had divided the Arabs in pre-Islamic times and against which the Prophet Muhammad had struggled.[127] Modernist Muslims at this time insisted that Islam provided a more meaningful basis for fraternity than Western-derived notions of ethnicity and socialism.[128] In addition, Muslim leaders said that Islam was not merely a matter of individual piety and private belief, like modern Christianity or any other religion particularly worldly religions. Islam, according to them, is a civilization and social order, which is to say a complete and self-sufficient system into itself. Its components cannot be artificially separated from one another, as Western liberalism's separation of religion and state would require.[129] This image of Islam as an eternal, complete (*kāffa*), and social order (*al-ni ām al-ijtimā'iy* has been a recurrent theme in modern Islamist politics; and it has divided Indonesian Muslims to this day.[130]

The idea of an Islamic state as an obligation and a goal that good Muslims must struggle to achieve is largely a development of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and of Islamic modernism. It entered Indonesia via students of the Middle Eastern Pan-Islamism of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897) and Rasyid Ridha (1865-1935).[131] Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), in particular, was the one who had a tremendous influence in Islamic modernism.

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[127] Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 39.

[128] Delia Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia, 1900-1942* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1973), 66.

[129] Hefner, *Civil Islam,* 39.

[130] M. Syafi'i Anwar, *Pemikiran dan Aksi Islam Indonesia* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), 175.

[131] Liddle, *Leadership*, 157.

The Muhammadiyah, one of the modern Islamic organizations in Indonesia, was founded under Abduh's Islamic reformation.[132] Abduh's slogan "Back to the Qur'an and *Sunna*," was very familiar among the modernists. The slogan itself sounds like the Romantic maxim of Rousseau, "Back to Nature." They wanted to break free of the hegemony and domination of the four major Sunni medieval schools of law and to return to the original sources, asserting that the Qur'an and *Sunna* alone should be the basis of law (*Sharī'a*).[133]

The modernists saw that the medieval schools of law had arisen through a process of reasoning (*ijtihād*); and it had engendered many different opinions in law; and hence it was a product of history. The differences among the schools of law were only in particular cases (*furū'īya*), not the principle matters (*usūlīya*). Fazlur Rahman said that the differences in these bodies of legal thought were largely due to the various ways in which the Qur'an was interpreted in the light of local customary law.[134] The schools of law only concerned and dealt with the difference of particular cases that, in turn, could lead to the disagreement within Muslim society. In order to keep the *Umma* united and prevent further dissension among the adherents of the different schools, the scholars made a consensus (*ijmā'*) concerning the interpretation of the sources of law. According to Rahman, *ijmā'* was to declare the final interpretations; and that the closing of the door of *ijtih d began* at the beginning of 10th century.[135] The consensus led to the establishment of the medieval schools of law and the stability of the Muslim community after passing through great conflicts of opinions and doctrines during the three preceding centuries.[136]

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[132] Liddle, 73.

[133] Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 169.

[134] Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 81.

[135] Rahman, 77.

[136] Rahman, 77.

The modernists, as the enlightened and romantic Westerners denied their tradition, questioned the establishment and the authority of that consensus and insisted that it must be reinvestigated. They viewed consensus as being an arbitrary human choice and, in contrast, felt the need to go directly to the original divine sources rather than to follow the consensus. They advocated that Islamic law and its values must be purified from illegal innovation (*bid'a*).[137] The reformation took two opposite directions; the first was scripturalist, fundamentalist, and, in spirit, puritanical (*salafīya*);[138] while the second was modernist, and characterized by the holding of a conviction that a new *ijtihād* must be afforded with the help of the scientific advances or modern values.[139] In spite of their differences, both directions of reform, however, supported the idea of the Islamic state.

Malay-Indonesian religious scholars who happened to study in Middle Eastern schools reinforced the influence of the ongoing reformation. Ahmad Surkati, who had studied in both Mecca and Medina, was one of the first scholars to introduce and disseminate the reformation by establishing the journal *Azzachierah al-Islamiyya* and founding Islamic organization called al-Irshad.[140] Surkati had a close associate, Kiai Haji Ahmad Dahlan, who founded the Muhammadiyah at Yogyakarta in 1912. Both Surkati and Dahlan were in favor of promoting the ideas of Muhammad Abduh.[141] They criticized the traditionalists who appeared to them to protect and defend unquestioningly the domination of conservative religious scholars in the

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[137] Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 169.

[138] Every Muslim, whether they are fundamentalists, modernists, or traditionalists claim that they are *salafy*, following the tradition of the righteous forefathers, the first generation after the Prophet Muhammad. Esposito calls this group Neo-revivalist. See John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 67.

[139] Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 169.

[140] Peter G. Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World: Transmission and Responses*, Honolulu: (University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 209-210.

[141] Riddell, 210.

sphere of Islamic worship and belief. In Indonesia, these modernists and reformists were called

Kaum Muda (Young Generation), whereas the traditionalists were called *Kaum Tua* (Old

Generation). In 1929, through *Al-Ikhwan,* one of the reformist journals, *Kaum Muda* commented

on *Kaum Tua*:

> The *Kaum Tua* behave as if it were necessary to accept every single word of the writings
> of the *'Ulama'*, as if they were equal to the Qur'an…while the *Kaum Muda* consider that
> the Qur'an and adīth alone have this authority, that no *'Ulama' is infallible,* and that
> God provided us with reason and intelligence to enable us to critically examine the
> statements of the *"Ulama'*.[142]

The interesting thing is that not all the graduates from Middle Eastern schools, especially

Mecca and Medina, had the same attitude and response to the prevailing reformation. For

example Hasyim 'Asy'ari and Bisri Syansuri did not respond in the same manner as *Kaum*

Muda, Instead, after seven years (from 1892) of study in Mecca they established Nahdlatul

Ulama' (*the Renaissance of Scholars*) in 1926,[143] a social-religious organization that continued

the previous *old scholars*' method of propagating Islam culturally. The traditionalists also relied

heavily on classical scholarship and had a deep appreciation for Sufism. Although they felt the

need to incorporate key elements of modernism into their *pesantren* system, this addition did not

mean loosing their communal way of life and commitment to Sufism. This transformation was

also noted by Nurcholish, who remarked that the modern values which seemed to be the

monopoly of the reformist or *Kaum Muda* were in fact also accepted by the traditionalists or

Kaum Tua.[144] Underscoring this point was that Ahmad Wahib, one of the Indonesian neo-

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[142] Riddell, 11.

[143] Barton, *The Emergence of Neo-Modernism*, 39.

[144] Madjid, "The Necessity of Renewing Islamic Thought and Reinvigorating Religious Understanding," 288.

modernist thinkers, saw that the possibility of development and openness within the traditionalists was much larger than in the modernists.[145]

The modernist *Kaum Muda* not only criticized the Islamic laws but also the whole popular religious practice, including Sufism. One of moderate critics of Sufism was Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, known as Hamka[146] (1908-1981). He had been referred to as the 'Hamzah Fansuri[147] of the modern era.' Hamka wrote many essays and books on Islamic mysticism, *Tasawuf Perkembangan dan Pemurniannya* (The Development and Perfecting of Mysticism [i.e. its purification]) and *Tasawuf Modern* (Modern Mysticism) (1939). He also wrote *Tafsir al-Azhar* and delivered it from 1959 to 1964 at al-Azhar Mosque in Jakarta. He was Nurcholish's teacher. Howell argues that Hamka's modernist understanding of refigured Sufism as a source of ethical reflection and devotional practices that individual Muslim could engage in without connection or affiliation to the supposedly authoritarian and other worldly *tarekat*.[148]

When Nurcholish was studying in IAIN Jakarta he lived in al-Azhar, the mosque in which Hamka used to teach. After studying seven years in the faculty of *Adab* (Arabic Literature and Islamic Culutre), Nurcholish graduated in 1968. His undergraduate thesis was entitled "*Al-Qur'an, 'Arabiyun Lughatan wa 'Alamiyyun Ma'nan*" (The Qur'an: Arabic in Wording,

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[145] Ahmad Wahib, *Pergolakan Pemikiran Islam: Catatn Harian Ahmad Wahib,* ed. Djohan Effendi and Ismed Natsir (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1981), 61. Wahib argues that Muhammadiyah as a modernist organization tends to be conservative because they stick to the jargon "Back to the Qur'an and Sunna" and in turn they will be anti-culture.

[146] He was the son of Haji Rasul from West Sumatra. He was a passionate adherent to Muhammadiyah and Masyumi. For further discussion, see B.J. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia*, (The Hague: Nijhoff), 1971. He was put in prison by Soekarno resulting from regime's wariness of his wide political influence. See Riddle, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World,* 218.

[147] Hamzah Fansuri was a great *wujud ya sufi* of Malay in the late 16th century. He was initiated into the Qadiriyyah Sufi Order in Arabia. He died around 1590. For further detail discussion, see Peter G. Riddel, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World,* 104.

[148] Julia Day Howell, *Seeking Sufism in the Global City: Indonesia's Cosmopolitan Muslims and Depth Spirituality* (Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong, 2002), 2. This is quoted from Kull, *Piety and Politics*, 89.

Universal in Meaning).[149] It was through Hamka, Nurcholish asserted, that he became familiar

with Ibn Taymiyya. Hamka often quoted Ibn Taymiya's disciple, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziya, rather

than his master, because the latter was more readable. Although expressing identical ideas to Ibn

Taymiya, Ibn Qayyim was more quotable because his mode of presentation was considerably

less bombastic.[150]

Hamka's reputation of moderation did not detract him from his commitment to the

purification campaign. He strongly opposed and criticized the tendency towards syncretistic

practice.[151] He wanted to purify Islamic practices from traditional customs (*adat*) that were

exerted upon them.[152] In combating Javanese-syncretism, Hamka used doctrine of *tawhīd*. Here

is one conclusion in his discourse of *tawhīd*,

> In summary, belief in all which is unseen is not intended to increase one's doubt and
> superstition, but to reinforce our faith, exclusively intended for the One God, Allah.
> Nothing moves in this world if God does not wish it. Everything only exists with the
> permission of God.[153]

This doctrine did not belong exclusively to the modernist or reformist Muslims, but the

traditionalists who strongly identified themselves as *Ahl al-Sunna wa-al-Jamā'a* also held such a

doctrine of *tawhīd*. The traditionalists, however, were more tolerant of the syncretistic practices.

As long as the popular-syncretistic practices had a foundation in the Qur'an and Sunna,

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[149] Kull, *Piety and Politics*, 48.

[150] Kull, 103.

[151] Further discussion on syncretistic practice between Islam and indigenous values see Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976). According to Marshall Hodgson, Geerzt's thesis was marred by a major systematic error because he was influenced by the polemics of a certain school of modern *shari'ah* minded Muslims. Geerzt divided the religious community in Java into three categories, *santri* (normative Muslims), *abangan* (village Animists), and *priyayi* (noble Javanese). See another study on the relationship between Islam and indigenous values, Mark W. Woodward, *Islam in Java Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta* (Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 1989). Instead of using *shari'ah* minded perspective as taken by Geerzt, Woordward choose to apply a larger perspective focusing on Islam tradition in Sufism.

[152] Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World*, 219.

[153] Riddell, 220.

according to traditionalists, they were acceptable.[154] Hence, for the reformists, traditional Islam as practiced by NU is a complete anathema.[155]

The religious reformation in Indonesia did not only reverberate from Middle Eastern educated scholars but also came from intellectuals educated in the Western European tradition. Ahmad Soekarno, a Dutch-educated engineer, demanded religious reformation.[156] Trained at a time when the colonial state required growing numbers of native administrators, Soekarno was attracted to the ideas of the European Enlightenment and socialist liberalism. Like many other native Indonesians, this experience led Soekarno to embrace a concept of nation that transcended ethnicity, region, and religion.[157] Soekarno's non-confessional conviction was reinforced by his belief that "historical Islam," as he called it, had diverged from Islam's original ideals and, in so doing, only exacerbated the plight of Muslims relative to the West. The young Soekarno argued that the union of religion and state in traditional Muslim governance had contributed to the Muslim world's stagnation. Separating Islam from state, Soekarno argued, would liberate Islam from the tutelage of corrupt rulers and unleash its progressive potentialities.[158] In 1940, Soekarno wrote an article in which he praised the Turkish secularist leader Mustafa Kemal Attarturk for his successful secularization. He blamed the backwardness of the Muslim world on the tendency of traditionalist Muslims to reduce Islam to matters of jurisprudence (*fiqh*).[159] In 1962, when the Muhammadiyah commemorated its fiftieth anniversary, Soekarno gave a speech and raised the

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[154] Saleh, *Modern Trends in Islamic Theological Discourse,* 70.

[155] Greg Barton, *Indonesia's Struggle: Jemaah Islamiyah and the Soul of Islam* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2004), 42.

[156] Hefner, *Civil Islam*, 38.

[157] Hefner, 39

[158] Hefner, 39.

[159] Hefner, 86. See the original article written by Soekarno, "Apa Sebab Turki Memisah Agama dari Negara" (Why has Turkey separated religion from state?) in *Di Bawah Bendera Revolusi* (Under the flag of revolution), (Jakarta: Panitia Penerbitan, 1964).

issue of Islamic rejuvenation. He introduced the slogan "*Menggali Kembali Islam*" (Recultivate

the spirit of Islam).[160] To support his secular ideas in the nation building, Soekarno established

the Indonesia Nationalists Party, which based its ideology on multi ethnic nationalism

(*kebangsaan*) not on religious sentiments.[161]

The Nationalist Party was not the only one to champion western secularization. There

were two other parties, the Indonesian Socialist Party and the Indonesian Communist Party,

which supported secularization and modernization. The Socialist Party was headed by Sutan

Sjahrir (1909-1966)[162], a Muslim democrat and an elitist, an anti-imperialist and an admirer of

the West, and yet a Marxist with a liberal commitment to individual freedom. He urged that

Indonesia had to follow a course of social evolution like that of Europe, had to develop a modern

and rational culture, and therefore it had to break away from tradition. Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana,

another secular modernist, felt that Indonesia had to adopt many of the values and institutions

from the West. He argued that since the indigenous people were not ready for these innovations,

the artistic and intellectual *avant garde* had to facilitate the transition from an immobile tradition

to modernity.[163] The radical secularization that tended toward anti-religion was championed by

the Indonesian Communist Party.[164] They wanted total separation between state and religion.

Before the party was banned, they suspected evangelical Christians as being agents of Western

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[160] Ahmad Ibrahim, et.al., *Readings on Islam,* 379.

[161] Hefner, *Civil Islam*, 38.

[162] He is the first prime minister of Indonesia. He attended Dutch University in Leiden and took a law school. In 1959, together with Masyumi, the Indonesian Socialist Party was banned by Soekarno because of their opposition to the regime's policy of Guided Democracy, an Indonesian value based democracy. See Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, 1993 and Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952).

[163] Hefner, *Civil Islam,* 73.

[164] After several devastating rebellion attempt, Indonesian Communist Party was outlawed in March 12 1966 by Soeharto. See Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia,* 1993.

civilization.[165] Finally, when Soeharto came to power, his new regime issued a policy that every citizen must embrace one of any of he legitimate religions in Indonesia: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, Islam, and *Aliran Kepercayaan* (Javanist belief in One God).[166] Massive conversions took place as former communists embraced Hinduism and Christianity.[167]

The modernist Muslims could not accept any ideology from Western civilization. They fought against materialism, individualism, rationalism, egoism, capitalism, imperialism, etc.[168] Islam, for them, is the only legitimate ideology.[169] Islam is *al-dīn wa-al-dawla* (religion and state) and Islam is *all* (solution); it is a synthesis or middle way between socialism and capitalism. According to them, the true Holy War (*jihad*) meant more than the fight for freedom against the Dutch, which was merely a little *jihad.* The great *jihad* however was the fight of humankind against its self's negative inclinations and all sorts of passions as embodied in the lists of various isms or ideologies.[170] Therefore, the modernist-reformist Muslims could not approve *Pancasila*[171] (which literally means five principles) as a foundation of state or official state ideology. They denied the formulation of *Pancasila* in favor of the *Piagam Jakarta* (Jakarta Charter). The only difference between Pancasila and the Jakarta Charter was in the first principle. The first principle of Jakarta Charter said "Belief in God, with the obligation for adherents of Islam to practice Islamic law." *Pancasila* kept the first two sentences and excised

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[165] Hefner, *Civil Islam,* 107

[166] Julia Day Howell, "Indonesia: Searching for Consensus," in *Religion and Societies: Asia and the Middle East,* ed. Caldarola C. (Berlin: Mouton Publisher, 1982), 500.

[167] Hefner, *Civil Islam*, 107.

[168] B.J. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia*, 78.

[169] Boland, 79.

[170] Boland, 78.

[171] The principles are Believe in One God, Humanitarian, National Unity, Government by Consensus, and Social Justice. See M.B. Hooker, *Indonesian Islam*, 262.

the rest of it. In the present day, this deleted phrase is known as the seven missing words, i.e, "*dengan kewajiban menjalankan Syari'at bagi pemeluk-pemeluknya*." ("with the obligation for adherents of Islam to practice Islamic law").[172]

The seven missing words were the result of lengthy consultation and negotiation, since non-Muslims objected to having those words in the constitution and the state ideology. At the recommendation of Muslim leaders in NU, however, Soekarno excised the seven words and added a clause to the first principle of the *Pancasila* so that it read not just as "Belief in God" but "Belief in a singular God" (*Ketuhanan yang Maha Esa*). The concession brought the first principle closer to the central Muslim doctrine of *tawhīd*, the affirmation of God's indivisible oneness.[173]

For the modernist-reformist Muslims, *Pancasila* was a symbol of Muslim defeat. They felt betrayed because they could not establish an Islamic State. Therefore, they saw that independence from the Dutch was not the final goal. There were some attempts to rebel and establish an Islamic State in a couple places. Finally, Soekarno arrested Natsir because of his allegation of his involvement with the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia in Sumatra, known as PRRI (*Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia*).[174] Because of his insistence on the establishment of Islamic state, Natsir was viewed as the recalcitrant member of the old guard of the modernists.[175]

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[172] Boland, *The Struggle of Islam*, 27.

[173] Boland, 42.

[174] Boland, 89.

[175] Mark R. Woodward, "Mohammad Natsir," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World,* ed. in John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 239.

HMI, the so-called "younger brother" of Maysumi, did not want their major political attitude to be the goal of attaining an Islamic State. In 1953, they showed their preference for a secular state, rather than an Islamic one. They recognized the necessity of adopting a pluralistic approach to politics in Indonesia.[176] In the political realm, HMI had shared similar strategy with NU; the struggle to achieve certain political goals took second place to ensuring the survival of the organization. Both saw their greatest responsibility lying with the preservation of their organization as vehicles of education and care of the Muslim community.[177] Therefore, when Nurcholish was elected President of HMI in 1966, the modernist-reformist Masyumi held out new hope for HMI, because they knew that Nurcholish was well acquainted with the ideals of the modernism and would serve as its spokesperson. This can be recognized from his article that he wrote before his visit to America for the first time, "*Modernisasi ialah Rasionalisasi bukan Westernisasi*" (Modernization is rationalization, not westernization).[178] The considerable obvious influence from the modernist discourse was displayed in Nurcholish's first article. To show his attachment to the modernists' circle and their thought, Nurcholish quoted the United States Minister of Health Education and Welfare, John W. Gardner: "Behind every great civilization lie great ideas, great systems of thought – without them the civilization quickly dies."[179] He also quotes Benda for the idea of having an Islamic state:

> Harry J. Benda said, in his book *The Crescent and the Rising Sun.* "The separation of religion and politics in Islam, at the very least can be described as unrealistic."
>
> He continued to say: "The separation of religion and politics, in other words, simply represents a temporary phenomenon seen when Islam is experiencing a period of retreat. In a period of revival the separation of religion and politics can no longer be maintained,

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[176] Barton, *The Emergence of Neo-Modernism,* 48.

[177] Barton, 48.

[178] Barton, 70.

[179] Madijd, *Islam, Kemodernan dan Keindonesiaan* (Bandung: Mizan, 1994), 177.

whether in independent Islamic nations or in Islamic regions that are governed by non-Muslims."[180]

In the article, Nurcholish criticized the idea of modernization and secularization disseminated by the secular modernist journalists like Rosihan Anwar and Mochtar Lubis. They were even often condemned as infidels.[181] Nurcholish said that Masyumi's hope for him was not entirely wrong, because he had tried to bring Masyumi's idea to the HMI and had tried to reconcile the former leaders of HMI (who did not acknowledge the idea of an Islamic state) with Masyumi even though the reconciliation was not successful. He also tried to rebuild the banned Masyumi as a political party but his effort was in vain because the new government of Soeharto did not provide for the political rehabilitation of Masyumi leaders.[182]

The failures to rebuild Masyumi and a new Islamic party, called Parmusi (Partai Muslimin Indonesia, Indonesian Muslims' Party), made Nurcholish and HMI realize that the Masyumi leaders suffered from inflexibility, almost dogmatism, in practical considerations.[183] Having encountered that failure and finding that HMI had not attracted many members in Bandung—where the slogan, "Islam Yes, HMI, No!" was so prevalent and threatening to the survival of HMI that a number of its members working in the government would be dismissed from their jobs—Nurcholish felt the need to change their strategy to develop his organization. He learned from Imaduddin, the founder of Salman Mosque in Bandung, to gain members of the organization from a wider background. Imaduddin reminded Nurcholish that to obtain the ends of propagation, political issues must be set aside because the logic of propagation was based on

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[180] Madjid, 178.

[181] Madjid, 380.

[182] Madjid, 380.

[183] Madjid, 383.

inclusivity and openness to encompass as wide audience as possible.[184] Nucholish adopted the slogan "Islam Yes, HMI, No!" into "Islam Yes, Islamic Party, No!" In October 1968, he visited several Middle Eastern countries and performed pilgrimage in 1969. During his second visit to the Middle East, he came to Iraq and met Abdurrahman Wahid, who at this stage Nurcholish knew only as being the son of his father's teacher.[185]

An important early vehicle for Nurcholish's expression of his ideas for reform was a training manual that he had written for HMI, "The Basic Principles of the Struggle" (*Nilai-Nilai Dasar Perjuangan, NDP*). In this book, Nurcholish advocated reform or change in Islamic understanding in Indonesia by using the common symbols and expressions of the modernists. He called his method '*penetration pacifique*,' the smuggling method of introducing new ideas.[186] For someone who had seen Nurcholish's effort to smuggle his reformation ideas into the officially accepted policies, they would say that Nurcholish's speech on January 2, 1970, at the *Halal bi Halal* or *Id al-Fitri* celebration, was his 180-degree turning point from Masyumi's ideals to secular modernism. *Pelajar Islam Indonesia* (Islamic Movement for Indonesian Secondary Movement) organized the event. This organization also had strong affiliation with the modernists.[187] So, not more than three years after being HMI's president, Nurcholish showed his disenchantment with the ideas of his elder modernists and started championing his own religious reformation by introducing liberalization, secularization, and rationalization.

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[184] Nurcholish Madjid, "Saya Banyak Kesalahan" (*I have done many mistakes*), in *Tidak Ada Negara Islam: Surat-Surat Politik Nurcholish Madjid-Mohamad Roem*, ed. Agus Edi Santoso, (Jakarta: Djambatan, 1997), 106.

[185] Barton, *The Emergence of Neomodernism.* 64.

[186] Madjid, *Islam, Kemodernan dan Keindonesiaan*, 385.

[187] Madjid, 380.

Nurcholish read his paper in front of hundreds of people from the old and new generation of modernists.[188] His paper was entitled *Keharusan Pembaharuan Pemikiran Islam dan Masalah Umat* (The Necessity of Reforming Islamic Understanding and the Problem of Islamic Integration).[189] The controversial issues that he raised were secularization, desacralization, liberalization, and socialism. His famous slogan "Islam Yes, Islamic Party No?" also came from that paper.[190] His presentation made the modernists furious. In fact, some of his adversaries suggested that he repent and apologize. However, Nurcholish disregarded that suggestion because he believed that even though his approach was wrong, his purpose was right.[191] He made his second presentation in 1972, in Taman Ismail Marzuki Jakarta. He hoped that his article presentated there would rectify the previous misconception. His article was titled "*Menyegarkan Paham Keagamaan di Kalangan Umat Islam* (Reinvigorating Religious Understanding within the Indonesian Muslim Community). However, this article did not help to clarify the misconception. Natsir and the other modernists even regarded his speech as a "sell out" to Soeharto and the New Order regime; and they viewed him as an apostate and a traitor to the cause of an Islamic state.[192]

What made the situation worse was that Nurcholish'a article was published in *Indonesia Raya,* the newspaper of the socialist journalist who had been an opponent to the modernists.[193] After his first presentation, Nurcholish became an active participant in several influential groups, such as Yayasan Samanhudi, where he met with Djohan Effendi, Ahmad Wahib, Dawam

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[188] Madjid, 380.

[189] This paper was included in *Islam Liberal: A Sourcebook,* ed. Charles (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 284-289.

[190] Madjid, *Islam, Kemodernan dan Keindonesiaan*, 384.

[191] Madjid, 384.

[192] Kull, *Piety and Politics,* 61.

[193] Madjid, *Islam, Kemodernan dan Keindonesiaan*, 380.

Rahardjo, Syu'bah Asa, and on occasion with Abdurrahman Wahid. Those were the proponents of the so-called Neo-Modernism.[194] In 1973, Nurcholish was invited by Fazlur Rahman and Leonard Binder to be a participant in a lengthy workshop at the University of Chicago, sponsored by the Ford Foundation. The workshop lasted a half year in 1976. Nurcholish went home to take part in the 1977 election campaign program, but in 1978 he returned to US and the University of Chicago. Before he studied Islamic studies, however, Nurcholish took political science with Leonard Binder. He graduated in 1984, writing a dissertation, *Ibn Taymiyya on Kalam and Falsafah: A Problem of Reason and Revelation in Islam.*[195]

So for six years, Nurcholish studied at Chicago. As a part of his program, he took religious studies from a school of thought referred to by George Lindbeck as the "experiential-expressive" approach to religion, which is one of dominant schools of thought in the modern theology. Lindbeck said that

> Preeminently identified with Friederich Schleimarcher, the key to this perspective is that the basic experience of religion is the same. In this way, religion can dialogue with one another around the assumption that their differences are verbal but not substantial. Ecumenical and interreligious dialogue is a matter of finding agreements in words about a common experience. As he points out, "There is at least the logical possibility that a Buddhist and a Christian might have basically the same faith, although expressed very differently."[196]

In addition to that, Fazlur Rahman, whose main concern was how to redefine Islam in the modern context, had a big influence on Nurcholish's intellectual development. During his career, Rahman has expressed the view that non-Muslim scholars of Islam should learn something of

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[194] Barton, *The Emergence of Neo-Modernism,* 66.

[195] Barton, 68.

[196] Dan R. Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language: Sign, Symbol, and Story* (*Massachusetts*: Blackwell Publisher, 1998), 145.

what Islam does to a Muslim from inside;[197] they should be open minded and, if possible, sympathically attuned towards their object of study.[198] In particular, he proposed a method of how to understand the Qur'an so as to derive legislation from it:

> In building any genuine and viable Islamic set of laws and institutions, there has to be a twofold movement: First one must move from the concrete case treatments of the Qur'an-taking the necessary and relevant social conditions of that time into account – to the general principles upon which the entire teaching converges. Second, from this general level there must be a movement back to specific legislation, taking into account the necessary and relevant social conditions now obtaining.[199]

Upon returning home from Chicago, Nurcholish joined the teaching staff of the Post-Graduate Faculty in IAIN Jakarta where Harun Nasution, a neo-Mu'tazilite champion who had graduated from al-Azhar and Mc Gill University, was the rector.[200] In 1986, supported by his friends, Nurcholish established Paramadina, the socio-religious organization whose audience is the middle and upper class milieu in Jakarta. (Now Paramadina has developed into a University. Howell notes that Paramadina functions as a prototype for university-styled adult educational institutions.[201]) During this time, Nurcholish wrote many articles and books to spread his reformation ideas. In December 1990, Nurcholish encouraged the establishment of *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia* (ICMI, the Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals Association). ICMI was in fact a Soeharto-sponsored association designed to mobilize Muslim support at a time when segments of the military were challenging the president;[202] and today it even has many

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[197] Rahman, *Islam*, xi.

[198] Fazlur Rahman, "Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies: Review Essay," in *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1985), 192.

[199] Fazlur Rahman, *Islam & Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (London: University of Chicago, 1985), 20.

[200] Saleh, *Modern Trends in Islamic Theological*, 197.

[201] Howell, *Seeking Sufism in the Global City*, 5.

[202] Hefner, *Civil Islam*, 164.

fundamentalists in its rank.[203] A problem, however, arose when Abdurrahman Wahid, the chairman of NU, refused to join and criticized the establishment of ICMI as a sectarian organization that was reconfessionalizing politics and society.[204] His critique of ICMI made Gus Dur (which is how Abdurrahman Wahid is affectionately known) Soeharto's number one enemy. Gus Dur even established *Forum Demokrasi* (Democratic Forum) with forty-four other prominent intellectuals from different religions to challenge the idea of the establishment of ICMI.[205]

It was at the inaugural meeting of ICMI on December 7, 1990, that the concept of a civil society was first introduced for intellectual discourse.[206] However, this concept was only accepted with reluctance by the modernists, simply because it came from countries that champion liberalism both politically and economically. Instead of adopting directly the concept of civil society, the modernists attempted to find an Islamic concept that could substantially render (and support) civil society. They found within Qur'anic terms concepts such as *Khayr Ummah* (prominent society), *Baldah Tayyibah* (prosperous country) and Farabi's concept *al-Madinah al-Fadilah* as an identical concept to the Civil Society.[207] However, some of ICMI's members insisted on using the term "civil society" as a working concept and even further identified the newly emergent ICMI as the embodiment of civil society in Indonesia.[208] In contrast, the Indonesian tradionalist Muslims claimed that NU was the embodiment of Indonesian civil society. They said that from the beginning of Islam traditionalist Muslims were

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[203] Hefner, 163.

[204] Hefner, 125

[205] Hefner, 125.

[206] Ahmad Baso, *Civil Soiety versus Masyarakat Madani*, 86.

[207] Baso, 89.

[208] Baso, 130.

concerned with issues of civil society; whereas (the traditionalists asserted) the modernist

Muslims (who were the backbone of ICMI) were concerned with statist discourse (namely, with

pursuing the establishment of an Islamic state). A non-Muslim perspective on ths was given by

Douglas E. Ramage and Daniel Dhakidae, who reinforced the claim of the traditionalists by

claiming that the NU is "the last bastion of civil society in Indonesia.[209]

The attempt to find an appropriate Islamic concept to render civil society ended on

September 26, 1995, when Anwar Ibrahim, a former deputy prime minister and finance minister

of Malaysia, came to Indonesia and introduced the term *Masyarakat Madani*[210] to render civil

society. *Masyarakat Madani* as a concept was first coined by the Malaysian scholar Naquib al-

Attas.[211] Anwar Ibrahim, when encountering the weakness and the backwardness of the

Muslims, tried to solve such problems through religious principles such as morality, justice,

equality, consultation, and democracy. According to him, religion is the source, civilization is the

process, and urban society is the result.[212] One year after *Masyarakat Madani* was introduced,

Nurcholish start addressing together the issue of "civil society" and *Masyarakt Madani*. Citing

Robert Bellah, Nurcholish declared that the society that was built by the Prophet Muhammad

was too modern for its era.[213] Of course, what Nurcholish was implying was that that the time

had now come to implement the ideal *masyarakat madani* in Indonesia.

Nurcholish and Gus Dur played a pivotal rule in the late Soeharto's presidency and his

resignation. They worked as mediators between the masses of students led by Amin Rais, on the

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[209] Mohammad Fajrul Falaakh, "Nahdlatul Ulama and Civil Society in Indonesia," in *Islam and Civil Society in Southeast Asia*, ed. Omar Farouk Bajunid, Mitsuo Nakamura, Sharon Siddique (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2001), 33.

[210] *Madani* refers to Madina, the city where the Prophet established the first Islamic communal or political entity.

[211] Sufyanto, *Masyarakat Tamaddun*, 95.

[212] Sufyanto, 95.

[213] Baso, *Civil Society*, 223.

one hand, and the government of Soeharto, on the other. They worked in accordance with the constitution and through negotiations. Eventually they managed to urge Soeharto to resign from power on May 21, 1998; and Habibie, the vice-president, was installed as president.[214] During the general election 2004, Nurcholish was nominated by Golkar (the Functional Group)—which is the government sponsored and biggest political party who had supported Soeharto during his New Order—to be president. Under Habibie, the successor of Soeharto, Golkar was dominated by ex-leaders of HMI and ICMI,[215] which might have been the reason that Nurcholish was willing to join and be nominated by Golkar as a presidential candidate. After several debates for the presidential candidate, Nurcholish withdrew because of ethical concerns over the nomination process.[216] Nurcholish died in the year 2005 at the age of 66, after a long surgery for a liver transplant.[217]

The conflict between the old or conservative modernists in the early seventies, represented by Masyumi, Muhammadiyah, al-Irsyad, and Persis, on one hand, and the neo-modernists, represented mostly by HMI with Nurcholish as its president, on the other hand, was a conflict between two different enlightened groups with the same epistemological outlook but having different interests. Both groups claimed reformers who were willing to be open to modern values; and they popularized the slogan that Islam is a modern religion that is not opposed to scientific discoveries. They wanted to differentiate Islam from Christianity, whose history, as they portrayed it, was characterized by a rejection of scientific thought.[218] Modernist Muslims

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[214] Kull, *Piety and Politics,* 83.

[215] Leo Suryadinata, *Elections and Politics in Indonesia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002), 76.

[216] Suryadinata, 86.

[217] Suryadinata, 86.

[218] Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban* (Jakarta: Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina, 1992), xxxv.

saw that the emergence of the Western Renaissance scientifically falsified Western religions. The falsification was that geocentric theory appropriated by a Biblical or Christian belief had been falsified by scientific heliocentric theory during Renaissance era.[219] Both conservative modernists and neo-modernists have been influenced by the romantic tradition that yearns for the idea of originality and purity.[220] To a certain degree, this romanticism brought them in the very least to an implicit apologetic attitude, a defense of the need to regain the lost original purity (just as others who argued apologetically for the idea of an Islamic state). In embracing the enlightenment and romantic subject --with its rootedness in the need to preserve their freedom and liberty above all-- they assumed that they had the right to judge others according their own transcendental subjectivity. It is no wonder that the conservative modernists and neo-modernists have judged each other's interpretations as being apologetic in interpreting religious basic sources, al-Qur'an and *Sunna*.

Nurcholish accused the idea of an Islamic state as being an apologia on the part of his elder modernists due to their inferiority complex with regard to modern Western ideologies such as democracy, socialism, communism, and others.[221] Nurcholish said that these ideologies are often totalitarian in character, in the sense that they are comprehensive in scope and cover every sphere of life in detail, particularly the political, social, economic, and cultural spheres. Further, he says that apologetic implication led to the emergence of apologetic thinking which declared that Islam was not merely a religion such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and others, rather, Islam is "*al-dīn*" , which is to say that it is a total religion that includes all aspects of life-

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[219] Madjid, xxvi.

[220] It can easily be argued that both religious discourse about "paradise lost" and messianism are certainly related to the romantic yearning for the idea of originality and purity. See Michael Löwy, "Revolution Against 'Progress': Walter Benjamin's Romantic Anarchism," New Left Review I/152, July-August 1985 http://newleftreview.org/?page=article&view=870 (accessed on December 18th, 2006)

[221] Madjid, "The Necessaty of Renewing Islamic Thought," 290.

political, economic, social, cultural, and so on.[222] Nurcholish criticized this totalitarian

understanding on Islam through his secularization thought; yet he did not look at and treat his

elder modernists from a scientific point of view. He was oblivious to the fact that the idea of an

Islamic state arose as a logical consequence of the belief in the transcendental subject and

application of the modern scientific method. It is therefore understandable that the proponents of

modernism accused him, in return, as being an apologist with his secularization.[223] Nurcholish

endeavored to give more appreciation to the traditional normative and intellectual sources after

being disappointed with the conservative modernists' negative attitude that neglects Islamic

traditional sources. Nevertheless, throughout his works, Nurcholish also did not show his

intention to cultivate the traditional sources; rather, he based his works on the authority of

Western scholars on Islamic studies. Instead of direct accessing and relying upon the first

traditional sources, Nurcholish, for the most part, went to the secondary sources that are modern

scholarly works. Ahmad Baso, who studied Nurcholish's thought about civil society, observes

and discerns that it is mostly on the authority of Ibn Taymiyya that Nurcholish based his

intellectual works.[224]

I have indicated that the idea of an Islamic state arose as a result of the modern approach

and logocentric mode of thought – that there is pure, nature, authentic, and original reality.

Logocentric subjects believe that they can access this pure, objective reality without any help

from the previous tradition. Modernists believe in the modernist scientific doctrine that the

objective subject encounters immediately the self-evident reality that in turn speaks by itself.

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[222] Madjid, 293.

[223] Anshary, *Kritik atas Paham dan Gerakan*, 70.

[224] Baso, *Civil Soiety versus Masyarakat Madan,* 278.

Hence modernists erroneously thought that after being liberated from traditional doctrines they would arrive in the pure history of the Prophet Muhammad. From the perspective of this modern scientific and phenomenological approach—the pure, authentic, original history of the prophet Muhammad with his social system (which modernists now call the "Islamic state") would reveal itself after being purified from the traditionalists impurity and distorted understanding of the original doctrine and history of the Prophet.

Nurcholish (who believed in the idea of progress in history,[225] another doctrine of modern science) saw the failed attempt of the modernists to establish an Islamic state as being evidence that the Islamic state was not the right understanding of the Prophet's society. In other words, Nurcholish took the modernists' failure to establish an Islamic state as an evident proof that their idea was mistaken. It did not pass a "natural selection" in which the truth was justified and determined by its survival. Nurcholish's junior colleague at Paramadina, Budhy Munawar Rachman, regards this as a form of falsification theory[226] in Nurcholish's epistemology. He ascribes it to Karl Popper and even praises Nurcholish as not only being a pure rationalist but also an empiricist thinker.[227] Nurcholish's use of and respect for falsifiability could be discerned more clearly in his later writings. He quoted Paul Davies who says, "That no religion that bases its belief on demonstrably incorrect assumption can expect to survive very long."[228] Nurcholish faithfully used the idea of progress throughout his thought on religious reform and in his reconstruction theories concerning secularization, *masyarakat madani*, and pluralism.

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[225] Madjid, "The Necessaty of Renewing Islamic Thought," 287.

[226] Karl Popper, "Science as Falsification" originally published in *Conjectures and Refutations* (1962); http://www.stephenjaygould.org/ctrl/popper_falsification.html (accessed on December 18, 2006)

[227] Budhy Munawar Rachman, *Islam Pluralis: Wacana Kestaraan Kaum Beriman* (Jakarta: Penerbit Paramadina, 2001), 297

[228] Poernomo Sidi & Nurcholish Madjid, *Kemungkinan Menggunakan Bahan-Bahan Modern Untuk Memahami Kembali Pesan Islam* (Jakarta: SERIE KKA 21/Tahun II/1988), 22. Nurcholish quotes Paul Davis in *God and New Physics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 3.

CHAPTER 3

NURCHOLISH'S WORK AND ITS INTERTEXTUALITY

Based on the general description of the previous chapter it seems that Nurcholish did not make a considerable epistemological break from his previous affiliation with the modernists. What happened between Nurcholish and his predecessors was merely a fight between two liberal logocentric subjects, a conflict between the old modernist generation and the neomodernist one. Nurcholish continued to employ modernist epistemology incorporating Islam with reason and science, but he could not accept the result of the *ijtihād* engaged by the modernists, resulting in their view of the necessity of having an Indonesian Islamic state. He did not struggle to represent the *form* of an Islamic state; instead, he made a big leap and strove to affirm the *substance* or the *spirit* (not to say the specter) of an Islamic state in modern life.

Ahmad Wahib, one of Indonesian neo-modernist thinkers, comments on Nurcholish's idea of secularization (which was rejected by the guardians of modernism) as nothing more than what the Muhammadiyah had promoted to purify religion from parochial practices. Wahib argued that Nurcholish, basing himself on the modernist agenda, developed the framework and extended it to socio-political realms.[229] Having been introduced by his modernist mentors to a modern discourse, Nurcholish continued their work and went beyond them by deliberately employing approaches from Western social sciences and comparative religious studies. He started quoting Western scholars' ideas directly to support his own project of religious

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[229] Madjid, "Menyambung Matarantai," 21.

reformation.   Since we have already covered many different discourses within which Nurcholish actively engaged, the next discussion will focus on the intertextuality interwoven in Nurcholish's works on secularization, *masyarakat madani* (civil society), and pluralism.

A. *Tawhid* as a Secularization Tool.

Nurcholish's first encounter with modern discourses occurred through the Indonesian Muslim modernists. However, he could not accept the rigid and totalitarian understanding of Islam undertaken by the modernists after he moved to the HMI, a young modernist community whose members came from a variety of Muslim backgrounds, including traditional, modern, and secular ones. As Nurcholish's close relationship to the modernists made him a good spokesperson for them, so his new relationship with the members of HMI made him a strong voice for their ideas that set them apart from the older generation and established a new link to young Muslims of different backgrounds. He was articulate enough to represent effectively the ideals of the group to which he belonged.

The first attempt that Nurcholish made to move beyond the ideals acquired through the older, modernist generation and to become liberated from their tutelage was to quote Andre Beufre, a French military strategist:

> Our traditional lines of thought must go overboard, for it is now far more important to be able to look ahead than to have a large scale of force whose effectiveness is problematical.[230]

This quotation was addressed to members of the HMI who had been struggling to bridge the gap between them and the old guard modernist generations and to rehabilitate Masyumi and its

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[230] Madjid, "The Necessity of Renewing Islamic Thought," 285.

founding father from the allegation that they were against the legitimate government and supported rebellion and separatism in order to establish an Islamic state. However, when it became apparent that their campaign to rehabilitate the reputation of their senior leadership was unsuccessful, these young modernists were unwilling to follow their leaders into opposition to the state. They felt that there was still opportunity to work within the system of government for changes beneficial to Muslim Indonesians. Furthermore, Nurcholish argued for the ultimate separation of Islam and politics. Here is his view of the relationship between Islam and the state,

> The codification [of Islamic law] was undertaken to fulfill the needs of legal system which regulated the government and the state which, at that time, embraced a very large region and huge populace. This "*fiqh*-ism" is so dominant in the Muslim community that even reformist movements for the most part still concentrate their objectives in that domain. This legal composition is sometimes also called *shari'ah* [Islamic law]. The "Islamic state" is likewise an apology by which the Muslim *umma* hopes to be able to manifest laws and regulation, Islamic *shari'a,* that are superior to other laws and regulations. But it is already clear that, despite the renovations of the reformist, *fiqh* has lost its relevance to the present mode of living. Its complete renovation, however, such that it might become suitable for modern life, would require a comprehensive knowledge of modern life in all aspects, so that this does not become an interest and a [matter of the] competency of Muslim *umma* alone, but also of others. Its results, then, does not have to be in the form of Islamic law per se, but a law which embraces everybody for the regulation of life shared by all.

> From a more fundamental point of view, the concept of 'Islamic state' is a distortion of the [properly] proportioned relationship between state and religion. The state is one of aspect of worldly life whose dimension is rational and collective, while religion is an aspect of another kind of life whose dimension is spiritual and personal.[231]

The modernists took this criticism as being too close to the liberal West where, in their view, Western religion had been "defeated" and discredited by the Renaissance, the humanist movement, and the scientific-rational system of knowledge of the Enlightenment. They could accept the concept of separation of religion and state as an inevitable process for the West but not for Islam. They did not want to adopt it because Islam, in their view, had not yet been refuted

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[231] Madjid, 294.

and falsified by scientific discoveries.[232] They believed that reason, science, and philosophy were

not foreign to Islam and upheld the autonomy and self-sufficiency of Islam.[233] On the contrary,

Nurcholish put Islam in the same position as other religions and looked at it through the lens of

Western social sciences. He emphasized the importance of finding an understanding of Islam that

is true, precise, and simultaneously applicable to the realities of the contemporary world.[234] He

believed that the truth of Islam is universal, but its form is contingent, changing according to

time, place, and circumstances. Nurcholish took the dialog of the universal Islam and its

temporal application as a continuous process; this creative dialog was necessary to keep the

absolute values of universal Islam dynamic and vital.[235] This contention is very similar to the

description given by Marshall Hodgson, one of Nurcholish teachers, (whom he frequently cited),

a description of the Islamic vision of Muslim civilization. Hodgson said that

> Soon after the founding of the faith, Muslims succeeded in building a new form of
> society, which in time carried with it its own distinctive institutions, its art and literature,
> its science and scholarship, its political and social forms, as well as its cult and creed, all
> bearing an unmistakable Islamic impress. In the course of centuries, this new society
> spread over widely diverse climes most of the Old World. It came closer than any had
> ever come to uniting all mankind under its ideals… In every age, pious Muslims have
> reasserted their faith, in the light of new circumstances that have risen out of the failures
> and also success of the past. The vision has never vanished, the venture has never been
> abandoned; these hopes and efforts are still vitally alive in the modern world. The history
> of Islam as a faith, and of the culture of which it has formed the core, derives its unity
> and its unique significance from that vision and that venture.[236]

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[232] Rasjidi, *Koreksi terhadap Drs. Nurcholish,* 19.

[233] John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 53-54.

[234] Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Agama Kemanusiaan: Membangun Tradisi dan Visi Baru Islam Indonesia* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), xvii.

[235] Madjid, xvii.

[236] Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization, Volume One: The Classical Age of Islam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1974), 71.

Nurcholish's outlook on religion was based on the view of Western scholars concerning religion, a view that treats it as a social institution, a symbolic means of allowing individuals to understand or relate to the 'ultimate condition.'[237] Religion, according to Durkheim, is a major source of thought and knowledge. Following Comte, he argued that with the progress of civilization all other modes of thought will be replaced by science, at least in part. However, this is only a difference in degree, not in kind; since scientific knowledge also becomes obligatory, it is a higher form of religion.[238] Durkheim also made distinction between the sacred and the profane within religious beliefs that was later adopted by Weber. Nostalgically Weber argued that there are some spheres in which science has no role to play. He asserted that traditional life with its religious belief is permeated by sense of a magical enchantment, but enlightenment rationalism, he predicted, will lead to a progressive 'disenchantment' and, ultimately, to a world in which religion would no longer play a role in public life. Nevertheless, religion would increasingly become a matter of private choice. At any rate, he found this modern development to be a profoundly disturbing trend, but one that was also inevitable.[239] Nurcholish, however, seems to have gotten his idea of religion from Weber rather than Durkheim.[240]

Concerning Islamic modernization and secularization in Indonesia, its *raison d'être* was based on the authority Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, an Indonesian Muslim secular modernist from the Indonesian Socialist Party. Nurcholish, on his part,to support his idea of secularization, not only quoted Alisjahbana's opinion but also described him as a noted authority on philosophy. Alisjahbana was known for urging Indonesians to adopt many values, institutions, innovations,

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[237] Seth D. Kunin, *Religion: The Modern Theories* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 73.

[238] Martin Riesebrodt and Mary Ellen Konieczny, "Sociology of Religion," in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. John R. Hinnells (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 128.

[239] Fox, "Secularization," 293.

[240] Kull, *Piety and Politics,* 33.

and practices discovered through the encounter with the West and its notions of modernity.[241]

Islam, he asserted, inherently promoted freedom. He described the characteristics of Islam as

follows,

> One characteristic of Islam that clearly distinguishes it from Hinduism is its uncompromising monotheism. In contrast also with Hinduism and the indigenous Indonesian religions, in which animals, human beings and super-natural powers were not sharply separated and could easily be changed into one another, Islam gives Man a special position above the animal and the vegetable world. By virtue of his separation from both Allah and the Animal and vegetable worlds, Man is given an opportunity to build his own world guided by his own intelligence. Islam also differs from indigenous Indonesian and Hindu cultures in that it offers an opening for the growth of a body of secular knowledge, autonomous of religious influence, permitting freedom of thought and enquiry.[242]

Nurcholish responded, combining the call of innovation from Alisjahbana with the call for

reform from Ibn Taymiyya, whom he learned about through the modernist thinker, Hamka.

Nurcholish adopted the idea of reopening the "gate" of *ijtihād* and engaging in it in order to push

his stagnant community, to inspire the young intellectuals to answer the call of *ijtihād,* and to

provide updated Islamic responses to the problems of the modern era. Nurcholish ascribed the

call for *ijtihād* to Ibn Taymiyya and described it as follows,

> It was the belief of Ibn Taymiyya that the Muslims were not responsive to the challenge of their times, because they misconceived their religion, which made it irrelevant to the demands and problems of ever-changing situations, on other words, Ibn Taymiyya found the community's conceptions of Islam had been so long obsolete because, among other reasons, of the sweeping practice of *taqlīd* [slavish obedience to the religious authority] and other uncritical acceptance of the religion.[243]

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[241] Hefner, *Civil Islam,* 73.

[242] Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, *Indonesia: Social and Cultural Revolution* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1966), 11.

[243] Nurcholish Madjid, *Ibn Taymiyah on Kalam and Falsafah: Problem of Reason and Revelation in Islam* (Chicago: Chicago University, 1984), 53.

The first attempt that Nurcholish made to initiate *ijtihād* was phenomenological. He employed the transcendental phenomenology formulated by Husserl from Hegel's dialectical phenomenology. This transcendental phenomenology begins with the exploration of a phenomenon that presents itself to a subject as a means to grasp the absolute, logical, ontological and metaphysical spirit that is behind phenomena. Phenomenology attempts to extract the essential features of experiences and the essence of what is experienced.[244] It is no wonder that Kull notes that Nurcholish used many times the term "spirit" in his works. The usage of the term "spirit" in Nurcholish's writings, as Kull explains, was meant to legitimate his ideas or explain societal phenomena properly.[245] Because of this frequent usage of the term "spirit," some scholars call him a universalist and elitist,[246] a substantialist,[247] an accomodationist,[248] and a generalist.[249] Nurcholish emphasized the importance of finding an understanding of Islam that is true, precise, and simultaneously applicable to the realities of the contemporary world. It is an arduous task, he said, requiring the cooperation of numerous individuals and groups. Furthermore, he argued that in a number of his sayings the Prophet encouraged humanity to seek knowledge from everywhere and everyone. He also urged that Muslims have to understand that while the truth of Islam is universal, its outer form can change according to time, place, and circumstances.[250]

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[244] Hugh J. Silverman, *Inscriptions after Phenomenology and Structuralism* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 18.

[245] Kull, *Piety and Politics,* 134.

[246] Kull, 118.

[247] Liddle, *Leadership and Culture*, 13.

[248] Riddell, *Islam and the Malay*, 262.

[249] Saleh, *Modern Trend*, 247.

[250] Madjid, *Islam Agama Kemanusiaan*, xvii.

The realization of his accomodationist and universalist attitude necessitated his being open to any dominant idea and his being unafraid to employ secularization, the most despised concept among Muslims. Nurcholish borrowed Harvey Cox's justification and application of how to secularize religious tradition by penetrating his secular outlook into the main source of religion. Therefore, Cox with his "secularization project" in *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in the Theological Perspective,* was another model and authority that Nurcholish quoted to support his Islamic secularization. Just as Cox claimed to discover the sources of secularization in the Bible, so Nurcholish, as a Muslim who did not want to be left behind, sought a similar justification for secularization in the Qur'an and Islamic tradition. He argued that Islam itself, if examined truthfully, began with the process of secularization. Indeed, the principle of *tawhid* represents the starting point for a much larger secularization.[251] He read the history of the Prophet Muhammad as a history of secularization. He quoted Harvey Cox:

> In any case, secularization as a descriptive term has a wide and inclusive significance. It appears in many different guises, depending on the religious and political history of the area distinguished from secularism. Secularization implies a historical process, almost certainly irreversible, in which society and culture are delivered from tutelage to religious control and closed metaphysical world views. We have argued that it is basically a liberating a development. Secularism, on the other hand, is the name for an ideology, a new closed world view which function very much like a new religion.[252]

However, Nurcholish did not continue the citation to rest of the passage that says:

> While secularization finds its root in the biblical faith on Western history, this is not the case with secularism. It is a closed ism. It menaces the openness and the freedom secularization has produced; it must therefore to prevent its becoming the ideology of a new establishment. It must be especially checked where it pretends not to be a worldview but nonetheless seeks to impose its ideology through the organs of the state.

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[251] Madjid, *Islam Kemodernan dan Keindonesiaan*, 222.

[252] Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), 18.

If he had mentioned the above passage he might not have won the attention and support from his own young modernist community, who mostly still had a thought that Islam is superior to other religions and therefore does not need to learn from any other religions. Even worse, Nurcholish did not show the astonishing fact that Cox took the idea of secularization from the "Dutch"—specifically the previous Indonesian colonizer-theologian C. A. van Peursen, who said that secularization was the deliverance of man "first from religious and then from metaphysical control over his reason and his language." Cox had appropriated Peursen's concept to the Christian faith and applied it not to the main religious text, the Bible, but to its understanding. With secularization, Cox wished to liberate the world from religious and quasi-religious understanding of itself, the dispelling of all "closed" worldviews, the breaking of all supernatural myths and sacred symbols.[253] Secularization for him occurs when man turns his attention away from worlds beyond and towards this world and this time (*saeculum*).[254]

Nurcholish defined secularization in contrast to secularism. It was just like Cox's definition; the latter term was a name of closed ideology that refers to an atheistic system of thought and worldview indicated by the term "secular humanism." Nurcholish explained:

> By "secularization" one does not mean the application of secularism and the transformation of Muslim into secularists. What is intended is "temporalizing" (Ind. menduniawikan) of values which are in fact temporal (Ind. duniawi from dunyawi-mundane; temporal; worldly) and the freeing of the *umat* from the tendency to spiritualize them. In this manner the mental readiness to always test and retest the truth of value in the face of material, moral or historical facts (may) become a characteristic of Muslims.[255]

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[253] Cox, 1.

[254] Cox, 1.

[255] Madjid, "The Necessity of Renewing Islamic Thought," 286.

Cox's terms in secularization such as *saeculum* (this present age), *aeon* (a word of time that means age or epoch), *mundus* (a word of space that means cosmos, the universal and the created order) are also utilized by Nurcholish in order to locate the roots of secularization in the Qur'an as the main legitimate source of Islamic epistemology.

Nurcholish combined Alisjahbana's appreciation for Islam over indigenous Indonesian and Hindu cultures (in which the former offers an opening for the growth of a body of secular knowledge) and Cox's appreciation of the impact of Biblical faith on the Hellenistic world (in which the former managed to temporalize the dominant perception of reality). Just as in Cox's attempted transformation, where the world becomes history; *cosmos* becomes *aeon*; and *mundus* becomes *saeculum*, Nurcholish also tried to differentiate the Day of the World (Ar. *yawm al-ula, literally, the first day*) from the Day of Religion (Ar. *yawm al-akhirah, literally the last day or yawm al-din, literally, the day of religion*); and, like Cox, he attempted to free the domain of this world (the Day of the World or the First Day) from the laws governing the World Beyond (the Day of Religion or the Last Day).

Although the phrases "*yawm al-ula*" and "*yawm al-din*" are found in many places in the Qur'an[256] Nurcholish, like Cox, in order to argue for secularization, elaborated on his understanding of the distinction between the two during his discussion of the Qur'anic chapter "*al-Infitar*" verses 17, 18, and 19, which reads:

> Ah, what will convey unto thee what the Day of Religion is! Again, what will convey unto thee what the Day of Religion is! A day on which no soul hath power at all for any (other) soul, and all affairs on that day will be solely in hands of God. [257]

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[256] Nurcholish Madjid, "More on Secularization," in *Muslim Intellectual Responses to "New Order" Modernization in Indonesia*, by Muhammad Kamal Hassan (Kuala Lumpur: Percetakan Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1980), 208.

[257] Madjid, 208.

Nurcholish said that Muslims commonly misinterpret this verse and neglect its true significance, oversimplifying its meaning as a means to engage in emotional apologetics and portray Islam a something more than just a religion. As matter of fact, Nurcholish argued, *al-din* (the Qur'anic concept for religion) applies to all different systems of faith such as Judaism, Christianity, Manichaeism, and even the religions of the Arab polytheists.[258] From the above verses, Nurcholish concluded that the "Day of Religion" signified the time when the laws that govern human relationships was no longer operate; secular or *al-ula* laws would no longer operate in that time. On the other hand, in the present "Day of the World," the transcendental or the religious laws were not yet operative. The laws that should regulate the secular world are social laws of man. Moreover, with all confidence Nurcholish says that the social laws are not the creation of man himself but also the creation of God which is called *Sunnat Allah*. The *Sunnat Allah* (social law) was not to be explained as religious doctrines. Therefore, the human being himself has to endeavor to understand them by exercising his bestowed intelligent.[259] This process of striving is called *ijtihād*. The main goal of *ijtihād* is to discover objective realities. He asserted that one's success in facing and solving temporal matters did not depend on one's diligence in performing religious rites, but rather upon one's intelligence, the breadth of one's knowledge, and its objectivity.[260] Ultimately, for Nurcholish, the main goal of engaging in objective intellectual work that is not explained in religious doctrines is to regulate the social order.[261]

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[258] Madjid, 207.

[259] Madjid, 208.

[260] Madjid, 209.

[261] Madjid, 208.

The remaining step in the application of the secularization is desacralization or deconsecration of religious traditions. Nurcholish applies the concept of *tawhid*, the uniqueness of God, to desacralize or secularize the supposed secular values that had been consecrated throughout history. *Lā ilāh illā Allāh* (common simply rendered to "There is no god but God"), the "profession of faith" that the Prophet used to show his sacred covenant and devout worship to the One God, was once exploited by his adherents to secure their hidden desire and justify deadly warfare to establish a kingdom or state. In the hands of Nurcholish, it became an intellectual tool for secularization. The profession of faith or "the sworn faith," borrowing Derrida's term, now turns to be "the sword with which to fight." He used it to attack and accuse his modernist predecessors of having an ideological religious understanding. Ironically, the weapon that the modernists used to condemn the parochial religious practices as *bid'a* (innovative religious deviation) became a boomerang. A direct outcome of the doctrine of *tawhid*, as Nurcholish argued, is the rejection of all forms of idolatry and ideology, including orthodox religious idolatry in the form of human tradition. He says:

> As a logical consequence of tauhid (belief in the absolute Oneness and Otherness of God as summed up in the first part of the Islamic profession of faith), Muslims should automatically posses an attitude that is realistic and in accordance with what is towards the world and its problems. The fact that absolute transcendence pertains solely to God should actually give rise to an attitude of "desacralisation" (Ind. desakralisasi) towards that which is other than God, namely the world, its problem and values which are related to it. For to sacralise anything other than God is, in reality, 'syirik'[blasphemous] (Ar. ascribing partners to God or attribution of God qualities to other than Him), the opposite of tauhid. So now secularization acquires its concrete meaning that is desacralisation of everything other than those which truly possesses divine (Ind. *Illahy*) attributes, in other words the world.[262]

Muhammad Iqbal, a Pakistani modern thinker, was also one of authorities used by Nurcholish to construct his secularization. On one occasion, Nurcholish used Iqbal's critique of

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[262] Madjid, 208.

the religious practice of Muslims and their attitude towards tradition, asserting that it is as if they

have read the Qur'an with a dead person's eyes.[263] Another statement of Iqbal's concerning

tawhid that Nurcholish quoted is that Islam is "Bolshevism plus God." Furthermore, Nurcohlish

said:

> The object of the process of desacralisation is everything pertaining to the world, both
> moral and material. Values are included among moral worldly objects, while matter
> constitutes the material objects. Now, if one hears the statement that "Islam is
> Bolshevism plus God" (Iqbal), one of its meanings is that the outlook of Islam regarding
> the world and its problems is the same as that of the communists (realistic, in accordance
> with what is, and without giving value to the object more than that which it actually
> possesses). The only different is that Islam postulates the existence of transcendental
> being – Allah. The Islamic Weltanschaung regarding the relationship between the
> universe and God is like that of the body, with the head above and the legs below (term
> used by [Karl] Marx [German socialist, 1818-1883]). This means that [for Muslim] faith
> in God forms the basis of [their] outlook towards the universe, and not the reverse as in
> dialectical materialism.[264]

Nurcholish read the first formula of the "sworn faith" or in his own words the "profession

of faith", *Lā ilāh illā Allāh* in the light of phenomenology. He asserted that Human beings had to

negate any kind of deity in order to obtain the true meaning of God. He argues:

> The *kalimat* [sentence *Lā ilāh illā Allāh*] draws a line of demarcations between a true
> believer (Ind. *mukmin*) and a non-beilever (Ind. *kafir*). Two meanings are contained in the
> *kalimat*: negation and affirmation. The two words "There is no God" constitute a
> negation, while "but Allah of The True God" is an affirmation. Look at how Islam, which
> completely negates (the Arabic term is *nafy li'l-jins* [exception]) any kind of God or
> deity. It is important to understand this. In the profession (*sjahadat*) an exception follows
> immediately, namely that not all deity is non-existent; the exception is God Himself, or
> Allah ("*Allah*" comes from the word "*ilah*") with the prefix "*Al*" as the definite article).
> So the negation of God in the *kalimat sjahadat* is qualified, not absolute. Because that is
> not what is intended. What is intended is to liberate man from belief in all manner of
> deities which he has been worshipping and then affirm the belief in the One True God.[265]

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[263] Nurcholish Madjid, "Interpreting the Qur'anic Principle of Religious Pluralism," in *Approaches to the Qur'an in Contemporary Indonesia,* ed. Abdullah Saeed, 89 (London: Oxford University Press, 2005). Nurcholish quoted Iqbal's statement from Roger Garaudy, *Al-Usuliyyat al-Muasira*, trans. Khalil Ahmad Khalil (Paris: Dar Alfain. 1992), 97.

[264] Madjid, "The Necessity of Renewing Islamic Thought," 287.

[265] Hasan, *Contemporary Muslim Intellectual Responses,* 185.

Nurcholish—unlike many modern Western sociologists who do not allow space for God in the public sphere or even personal life, since it has culminated in the death of God proclamation—leaves some space for God; but he places God in the transcendental realm so that the idea will not interrupt the free market of social ideas. However, he himself invokes the idea of God by means of his citation of Qur'anic verses (with, albeit, his liberal, individual, and transcendental interpretation) to justify his theological system. Nurcholish criticized the society of Eastern Europe that followed Marxism. He charged that the society of Eastern Europe went bankrupt because they did not give room to religion and God as well. Ironically, he continued, Marxism turned out to be quasi-religion, lower, worse, or even more primitive than common religions. He acknowledged that Communism managed to liberate its adherents from many false idols; but its adherents fell into worshipping lower idols, who enslaved them and confiscated their freedom; those idols were their tyrants and authoritarian leaders.[266]

Nurcholish faithfully followed the phenomenological perspective that is based on the belief that any current knowledge simply counts as a perception of phenomena. To obtain absolute knowledge, one must first reduce and negate the shadowy phenomena; and second, one must put all natural beliefs in brackets (or the so called *epoche*) in order to strip away perceived foreign appearances and allow the essence to be found.[267] Nurcholish forgot, as a consequence of being logocentric, his criticism towards Communism. By putting God, the Truth, the Absolute, only in the transcendental realm, or transcendentalizing God, Nurcholish also put himself in transcendental realm as the transcendental authority who gives justification from ahistorical perspective. As a result, like the Communists whom he criticized, he saw and judged everything

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[266] Madjid, *Islam, Doktrin dan Peradaban,* xviii.

[267] Carl Olson, *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion: A Selection of Critical Readings* (California: Thomson/Wardsworth, 2003), 103.

from the universal, "untouched," overarching, and transcendental perspective; and like the Communists, transformed himself into an authoritarian thinker.

The secularization and descralization initiated by Nurcholish took the form of two binary oppositions in two different realms: between transcendent and immanent, universal and particular, fundamental and cultural, natural and artificial, heavenly and mundane, eternal and temporal, sacred and secular; with a final consequence being that such binary oppositions give rise to the distinction between *Ibadah* (act of worship to God) and *Muamalah* (inter and intra human-relationship).[268] In fact, the division between *Ibadah* and *Muamalah* is a common division in Islamic tradition. Nurcholish just relates the first category or pole of all of the abovementioned binary oppositions to *Ibadah* and the second category or pole to *Muamalah*.

It is *Muamalah* that is subject to *ijtihād*, reformation, and falsification and therefore it has to compete with and adapt to the fittest contemporary social laws (because of the principle of natural selection). *Muamalah* does not have right to dictate social laws and monopolize the ongoing opinion about society. Nurcholish argued that the survival of *Muamalah* must be based on free trade in ideas. He quotes Oliver Wendell Holmes [U.S. judge, 1908-1894] when he said: "The ultimate good desired is better reached by free trade in ideas – get itself accepted [in the] competition of the market, and that truth is the only ground upon which their wishes can safely be carried out."[269] In his later writings Nurcholish also acknowledged that Islam basically does not separate profane and sacred activities, while nevertheless asserting that they are distinct but inseparable.[270]

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[268] Madjid, "The Necessity of Renewing Islamic Thought," 286.

[269] Madjid, "The Necessity of Renewing Islamic Thought," 287.

[270] Nurcholish Madjid, *Cendekiawan & Religiusitas Masyarakat: Kolom-kolom di Tabloid Tekad* (Jakarta: Tabloid Tekad & Paramadina, 1999), 53.

Nurcholish believed in the concept that man is intrinsically good, pure, and always yearns for truth and progress.[271] This is similar both to the predominant perspective of an enlightenment Kantian that sees human nature as liberal subject as well as to the view of a romantic Rousseauian that holds that human nature is good only in state of nature and therefore becomes increasingly corrupt as it develops. Nurcholish intended secularization to be liberation from the tutelage of tradition. Through secularization, the temporal role of man as God's vicegerent (caliph) on earth becomes fully consummated. God, Nurcholish argued, provides man with enough space for his freedom to choose and decide for himself; acting as vicegerent of God means acknowledging man's responsibility before God.[272] The human being is created by God with *fiṭra* (natural disposition to the good) and endowed with the *ḥanīf* quality that inclines to truth.[273]

Nurcholish also urged Muslims to be open minded so that they could readily discard corrupted old values, preserve what is still good and accept and take temporal values from whatever sources as long as they contained the truth.[274] This idea is very much like Rousseau's educational theory. Rousseau said that despite their natural endowment with goodness, children have to pursue their own natural goodness by protecting themselves from cardinal source of corruption, society.[275] This conviction might explain the reason Nurcholish preferred to follow modern readings on Islamic history by Western scholars as his authorities rather than to read the classical primary textual sources. With his ideas of secularization and desacralization,

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[271] Madjid, "The Necessity of Renewing Islamic Thought," 287.

[272] Madjid, 286.

[273] Madjid, 287.

[274] Madjid, *Islam Agama Kemanusiaan,* 35.

[275] Mark Sydney Cladis, *A Communitarian Defense of Liberalism: Emile Durkheim and Contemporary Social theory*, (California: Stanford University Press, 1992), 186.

Nurcholish seems to have managed to get rid of the language of his predecessor modernists and

traditionalists (in addition to getting rid of the shackles of the so-called primary texts); but he

relied upon the discourse of modern Western scholars, who are largely "unknown" and do not

hold any authority in religious matters for the common Muslim community.

On the one hand, he asked and advocated Muslims to be free and liberal, encouraging

them to know God directly without attachment to *tarekat kiai*.[276] Yet ironically, on the other

hand, Nurcholish, as charged by Anthony H. Johns and Abdullah Saeed, did not directly interpret

the Qur'an per se but rather he used the translation and commentary of Abdullah Yusuf Ali and

Muhammad Asad.[277] On the one hand, Nurcholish was free in term of quoting, choosing, and

electing the most comprehensive explanations that had simplicity, cogency, compactness, and

organizing power; yet on the other hand, in his works he relied upon and incorporated citations

from the two translators noted above.

Did Nurcholish quote those different authorities out of yearning for truth or was he

driven by what Durkheim calls the egoistic natural desire, or what Nietzsche identifies as the

will to power, or what Freud recognized as helplessness and anxiety, or the comfortable feeling

under authoritarian regime of Indonesian state and the Western dominant discourse? His own

texts may help to us figure out the answer. In *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia,* Nurcholish

wrote his 'confession,' (after being attacked by his modernist circle for advocating

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[276] Nurcholish Madjid, "Tasawuf dan Pesantren," in *Pesantren dan Pembaharuan,* ed. Dawam Rahardjo, 111 (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1988). Nurcholish says that It cannot be denied that membership in a tarekat can give extraordinary inner peace. From the point of view of doctrine, it is *zikir*, or being conscious of God that delivers peace. But in the social reality, what functions more is 'attachmnet' to a *tarekat* organization lead by a *kyai*. Because of this, what frequently occurs is that somebody with extensive religious learning, who theoretically already understands themselves how to carry out *dhikr* and *'ibāda*, still feels the need to attach themselves to a *tarekat kyai* and an expert in reciting the Qur'an whose level learning is lower. It seems that in this way they obtain a way of freeing themselves from the burden of solitude or *kijenan* (Javanes) in carrying out their spiritual responsibilities, and surrender almost all responsibility to another person, namely the *kyai.* This translation is based on Barton, in *The Emergence of Neo-Modernism,* 127.

[277] Johns and Abdullah Saeed, *"*Nurcholish Madjid and the Interpretation of the Qur'an," 91.

secularization) in the article "The Issue of Modernization among Muslims in Indonesia: From a Participant's Point of View,":

> The Leaders [Nurcholish was the president] of the HMI worked for the survival of the organization at almost any cost because of their belief in the future. Furthermore, if the HMI had been outlawed, thousands of its members would have been banned from universities, and hundreds of alumni who once had belonged to the HMI would have lost their jobs. But the leaders of the older generation in the *Masyumi* did not appreciate these reasons and, they argued, that it would be better to have martyrs for an ideology than to practice hypocracy. Of course the leaders of HMI were of opinion that there was nothing hypocritical about the policy of accommodation; in fact, they viewed it is a tactical and strategic measure- a necessary. They further said that sacrificing a potentially powerful organization for mere sake of heroism and martyrdom was irrational and too costly.[278]

The above citation shows that the idea of Indonesian secularization came out of a desire

for political "salvation" which fit comfortably with other principles of cogency,

comprehensiveness, and the organizing power of the state and Western episteme, rather than

being based on its truths about reality. On several occasions, Nurcholish expressed some

misgivings at his choice of the term secularization, commenting publicly that his reference to it

had invited misinterpretation.[279] Though conceding that his choice of the term had caused some

confusion, Nurcholish never recanted his earlier conviction and previous attitude that the Muslim

community should take toward the New Order government. From his discussion with Hefner on

June 19, 1993, Nurcholish again affirmed or verified that he was "still quite comfortable" with

his views on secularism and secularization.[280] At any rate, he had already anchored

secularization strongly to Qur'anic verses and the sacred history of the Prophet. Nurcholish was

quite aware that the idea of the Islamic state was a human fabrication, construction, or even

purely ideological—keeping in mind that all of these descriptions are those that a positivist-

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[278] Madjid, "The Issue of Modernization among Muslims in Indonesia," 382.

[279] Madjid, *Islam Kemodernan*, 221.

[280] Hefner, "Islamization and Democratization in Indonesia," 117.

materialist and enlightenment perspective would attribute to religion in general. However, Nurcholish forgot that secularization was also a human theory or ideological tool to liberate someone from a dominant belief system; and as a result of his neglect of this principle, he was able to appropriate and acknowledge secularization as a part of his religious reform.

The idea of secularization—since it came from the same enlightenment tradition as the notion that religion is an ideological tool—is deemed by Thomas Luckmann as a mythological account that attempts to make sense of the manner of the emergence of the modern world.[281] Since—as Popper, the proponent of falsification theory, believes—secularization cannot be properly tested (i.e. counter-examples cannot be found to falsify secularization theory), secularization theory cannot be included in the scientific realm.[282] It is just another ideological means that can be used to undermine religious or quasi-religious authorities. Ironically, Nurcholish—the one to whom Budhy Munawar Rachman gives credit for utilizing Karl Popper's falsification epistemology—[283] could not himself recognize secularization as a myth.[284]

Berger might help to shed light on the issue of global secularization. He suggested that far from being an increasingly secular world, empirical data suggest that the world may be moving in an opposite direction. The theory and assumption of modernization and secularization has turned out to be wrong. Modernization in deed, as he argued, has had some secularizing

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[281] Fox, "Secularization," 302.

[282] Fox, 303.

[283] Budhy Munawar Rachman, *Islam Pluralis: Wacana Kestaraan Kaum Beriman* (Jakarta: Penerbit Paramadina, 2001), 297

[284] Poernomo Sidi & Nurcholish Madjid, *Kemungkinan Menggunakan Bahan-Bahan Modern Untuk Memahami Kembali Pesan Islam,* (Jakarta: SERIE KKA 21/Tahun II/1988), 22. Nurcholish quotes Paul Davis in *God and New Physics,* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 3.

effects, but it has also provoked a powerful movement of counter-secularization.[285] He further said that the enlightenment bias against religion played a role in the failure of secularization. In other words, the secularization thesis has focused on a subculture, which is the educated elite class, and therefore the thesis missed what is happening in the wider societal level. The elite educated subculture does not represent society; but they want to generalize their values based on belief that whatever the process of the evolution of elite Western civilization culminated in must apply to the rest of the world. In fact, they do not represent society as a whole. Berger suggests that the religious upsurge is a populist movement, which in part is a reaction against the elite subculture.[286] Berger used to be an advocate of secularization theory, but now he has moved from being an exponent of it; and he happily admits that evidence shows that his secularization theory has proven to be falsified. He said that "one advantage of being a social scientist, as against being, say, a philosopher or a theologian, is that you can have as much fun when your theories are falsified as when they are verified![287]

B. Masyarakat Madani: an Attempt to Tame the Idea of Civil Society.

Nurcholish, with his philosophy of secularization, utterly managed to undermine his predecessors' ideological understanding of Islam as a state and religion. Many researchers have done studies to discover the dominant factors of Nurcholish's success. Those factors (in no particular order) are as follows:

- the authoritarian regime's not giving a chance for political Islam to develop, which was the same as as the Dutch government's policy during their occupation,

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[285] Berger, *The Desecularization of the World,* 3.

[286] Berger, 4.

[287] Berger, 2.

- the accomodationist attitude that Nurcholish and his HMI adopted with regard to the circumstances of the modern world and when faced with opposition,

- the support from the elite and middle class in cities who are in need a new religious-understanding,

- the inclusivity of his religious thought as a part of accommodating the differences within his liberal-individual supporters,

- the nationalist-modernist news media that whole-heartedly disseminates Nurcholish's ideas.

Scientifically, however, from the phenomenological point of view that Nurcholish himself strove to employ, he failed to fulfill the next methodological step. He was trapped in the first step of phenomenology, which is eidetic reduction;[288] he managed to scrutinize the ideology lurking behind the statist understanding of Islam promoted by the modernists since he had a longstanding acquaintance with them and knowledge of their statist perpective. He knew how to dispel their mythical illusions and shatter their "idol," but he did not know how to fix it, as the second step of phenomenology requires. Since the goal of phenomenology deals not only with stripping away the perceived appearances--which in this case was the illusion of the necessity for an Islamic state--, but also with finding the essence of "what is already conceived as an Islamic state," and since Nurcholish could not name and articulate that essence conceptually, therefore his scientific work was incomplete. In general, Nurcholish claimed, as his weekly Friday sermons mention, that the core or the kernel of religion is not an Islamic state but

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[288] For an understanding of "eidetic reduction," see David Woodruff Smith and Ronald McIntyre, *Husserl and Intentionality: A Study of Mind, Meaning, and Language* (Dordrecth and Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1982), 93-104. http://www.Csun.edu/~vcoao087/method.pdf (accessed on December 19th, 2006). See also Max van Manen, "Inquiry the Eidetic Reduction: Edios," at *Phenomenology Online* (2002). http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/inquiry/14html (accessed December 19, 2006).

takwa (Ar. taqw , fear of God).[289] In addition, he identified three primary "spirits" of the communal system practiced by the Prophet's community. Those spirits are *sh ra* or *mushāwara* (democracy), *keadilan social* (social justice), *pembelaan terhadap kaum lemah, miskin, dan tertindas* (the care and protection of the weak, poor, and oppressed).[290]

It was only after twenty-five years that Nurcholish began to recognize and be able to name "what is not an Islamic state" (namely, the Islamic alternative to an Islamic state) as a *Masyarakat Madani* (an Islamic civil society). Previously, he had only used a common term, *umma* to denote the Prophet's Medinan society. Ultimately, the dynamic Indonesian discourse on civil society saved him, enabling him to conceptualize *Masyarakat Madani* by the early nineties. Ironically, the emergence of the discourse of civil society in Indonesia was brought up partly by the young generations of conservative modernists, who were struggling to establish an Islamic state and by the young traditionalist generations who were not acquainted with a statist Islam.

This thesis does not discuss in a detail the general issues on civil society. Formulating a definition that is both precise and that enjoys wide acceptance is not easy because its definition and actualization are often affected by the purposes to which a given group directs it. However, the term "civil society" must be clarified to get a better understanding of Nurcholish's appropriation of that term into *Masyarakat Madani*. Like the term civilization, civil society has its roots in the ideas of the enlightenment thinkers, such as Locke and Rousseau. Hegel and Marx developed the term with a somewhat different meaning, namely that of "bourgeois society."[291] It referred to an emerging social reality and a rise of institutions that occurred outside the official

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[289] Kurzman, 288.

[290] Madjid, *Islam Kemodernan dan Keindonesiaan,* 204.

[291] Peter Berger, "Religion and Global Civil Society," in *Religion in Global Civil Society*, ed. Mark Jurgensmeyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 12.

hierarchies of church and state. The rise of the bourgeoisie was at the center of this phenomenon.

After being long neglected, the term civil society came again into discourse as an opposition

movement against Communist totalitarianism.[292] Ernest Gellner gives a definition asserting that

civil society is a "set of diverse non-governmental institutions, which is strong enough to

counterbalance the state" and which can prevent the state from "dominating and atomizing the

rest of society."[293] Diamond, who agrees that civil society is only defined in its relation to the

state, conceives of it as the realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self generating, self

supporting, autonomous from state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules.[294]

Concerning the diverse definitions of civil society, Don E. Eberly concludes that,

> For some, civil society is synonymous with a search for civility. For conservatives, it embodies a vision for a larger role for community-based charities, especially faith-based one, which can be substituted for flawed governmental programs. Libertians have recently embraced the term civil society and frequently use it as a synonym for privatization, implying that the term's major attraction may be its usefulness in expanding the marked place and limiting the sate.[295]

Chris Beem, a political theorist and civil society scholar, gives a radical comment on the

"clamorous" definition of civil society. He argues that "one's understanding of civil society has

been narrowed analytically by one's normative objective; in a phrase, civil society is what you

want it to do."[296]

Once Nurcholish took part in a national debate on the discourse of civil society, he

appropriated that discourse to *Masyarakat Madani*. He was criticized the so-called post-

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[292] Berger, 12.

[293] Gideon Baker, *Civil Society and Democratic Theory: Alternative Voices* (London: Routledge, 2002), 8.

[294] Baker, 9.

[295] Don E. Eberly, "The Meaning, Origins, and Applications of Civil Society," in *The Essential Civil Society Reader Classic Essays in the American Civil Society Debate,* ed. Don E. Eberly (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, 2000), 5.

[296] Eberly, 6.

traditionalist Muslims,[297] for having misunderstood civil society and usurped the traditionalist discourse. From the beginning, the Indonesian traditionalist Muslims never had a "dream" to have an Islamic state instead of simply a society with Islamic values. When Nurcholish had to face the challenge that *Masyarakat Madani* was not identical to civil society,[298] he simply replied, "What is in the name."[299] That is the last "weapon" used by typical modernist logocentric thinkers. Nurcholish had used that expression earlier when he had to defend his secularization from the modernist critics.[300] It seems that during the twenty-five years from 1970 to 1996 Nurcholish had been overshadowed by the specter of Islamic state. The authorities, whom Nurcholish based his analysis on, kept describing the social system performed by the Prophet and his community as a state, although they do not appropriate or describe it as an Islamic state. Robert N. Bellah, one of the authoritative historical sociologist of Islamic tradition whose ideas Nurcholish often quotes, always describes the social system of Prophet's life as "a state too modern for his time". The following lengthy quotation from Bellah in *Beyond Belief: Essay on Religion in a Post Traditionalist World* will show how he identifies the Prophet's social system,

> There is no question but that under Muhammad, Arabian society made a remarkable leap forward in social complexity and political capacity. When the structure that took shape under the prophet was extended by the early caliphs to provide the organizing principle

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[297] These are young generation from NU tradition. Some of their authorities in Islamic discourses are Muhammad Abed al-Jabiri, Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, Hassan Hanafi, Muhammad Syahrur, and Mohammed Arkoon.

[298] The first scholar who questions and differentiate concept of *Masyarakat Madani* from Civil Society is Abdul Mun'im D.Z. in seminar forum on Islam and Civil Society in Indonesia. He declared that NU accepts Civil Society but rejects *Masyarakat Madani*. NU, influenced by the democracy revolution in Eastern Europe, tends to place civil society in opposition to the state, as a 'counter hegemony' to it or even an alternative to it. They strongly emphasize the universality of both the concept and practice of civil society. That is the reason they do not follow the modernists rendering Civil Society to *Masyarakat Madani*; Instead, he translates it as "*Masyarakat Sipil.*" This translation does not connote to any religious affiliation. See David C. Schak & Wayne Hudson, *Civil Society in Asia* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003), 76.

[299] Baso, *Civil Society versus Masyarakat Madani,* 17.

[300] Madjid, "Menyambung Matarantai Pemikiran yang Hilang," 22.

for a world empire, the result is something that for its time and place is remarkably modern. It is modern in the high degree of commitment, involvement, and participant expected from the rank and file members of the community. It is modern in the openness of its leadership position to ability to judge on universalistic grounds and symbolized in the attempt to institutionalize a nonhereditary top leadership. Even in the earliest times, certain restraints operated to keep the community from wholly exemplifying these principles, but it did so closely enough to provide a better model for modern national community building than might be imagined. The effort of modern Muslim to depict the early community as a very type of equalitarian participant nationalism is by no mean entirely an unhistorical ideological fabrication.

In a way the failure of the early community, the relapse into pre Islamic principles of social organization is an added proof of the modernity of the early experiment. It was too modern to succeed. The necessity social infrastructure did not yet exist to sustain it.[301]

Based on that description, it is no wonder that Nurcholish lukewarmly saw Islam's first emergence as a general state without necessarily being Islamic, because it already had a constitution, *Mithāq al-Madīna* (commonly rendered to the Medinan Charter). The modernist view of Islam focusing only on the Medinan period was still well-embedded and nailed down in Nurcholish's perspective; as if the Meccan period, the initial impetus of Islam, was unimportant. The following excerpt from Nurcholish reflects his outlook on the Medinan period:

> The religion of Islam, especially in its early stages of development, was principally an urban phenomenon. The word '*madinah*' give its derivatives of '*madaniyyah*' and '*tamaddun*,' meaning 'civilization.' It is therefore clear in the eye of early Muslim – but also of Muslim later times – that civilization is closely related to a settled mode of life, implying that another mode of life, i.e., especially the nomadism of the Arabs, is either crude or simply 'uncivilized.'(Besides the words '*madaniyyah*,' and '*tamaddun*,' another Arabic word for civilization is 'hadarah [*sic*!] which etymologically means something related to the settled mode of life, as the word is the opposite of '*Badawah*' which means 'rural areas,' 'country side,' 'Nomadism). It is for the reason that the Prophet often stressed the superiority of the first mode of life to second one, saying, in famous

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[301] Robert N. Bellah, *Beyond Belief: Essay on Religion in a Post Traditionalist World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 150. Nurcholish quotes very often the above excerpt from Bellah and puts it in his different writings. For example, see Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam, Doktrin dan Peradaban: Sebuah Telaah Kritis tentang Masalah Keimanan, Kemanusian, dan Kemodernan* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2000), 13. Nurcholish Madjid, Potential Islamic Doctrinal Resources for the Establishment and Appreciation of the Modern Concept of Civil Society, in *Islam &Civil Islam in Southeast Asia* ed. Mitsuo Nakamura, Sharon Siddique, Omar Farouk Bajunid (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2001), 150. Nurcholish Madjid, *Cita-cita Politik Islam Era Reformasi* (Jakarta: Yayasan Paramadina, 1999), 32. Nurcholish Madjid, *Tradisi Islam: Peran dan Fungsinya dalam Pembangunan di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Penerbit Paramadina, 1997), 84.

Tradition (*Hadith*): 'He who dwells in the desert (*al-badiyah*) becomes rough in disposition.' The Qur'an even suggests that nomadic mode of life does not go very well with the Islamic ideals of civilized life based on the true faith in God."[302]

In the above excerpt, Nurcholish has not yet mentioned the term society; rather he focused on the term civil (*madanī*) or civilization (*madanīya*). Apparently Nurcholish did not want to dwell within the discourse of Islam as *al-dīn wa-al-daula* (a religion and state), because that discourse was already copyrighted by the conservative modernists. Instead, he took another derivative form of the word *al-din*, which is *madanī, madanīya, or tamaddun* (civil, civility, or civilization). For Nurcholish, Islam is *al-dīn wa-al-madanīya* (a religion and civilization). If the conservative modernists want to make Islam as an ideology of state, Nurcholish had a bigger goal, which was to make Islam a foundation of civilization. According to him, what the Prophet did during his ten years in Median was to build a civilized society through inner reformation and individual transformation with the dimensions of faith, acts of worship, and morality.[303]

Concerning the statist understanding of Islam, Nurcholish asserted that the apologist-modernists, who were preoccupied by their ideology, have missed the point that the spiritual aspects of life are just as important as its worldly aspects and that Islam is superior in this respect. Further, he suggests that once Muslims have realized this fact, they can happily learn from others who are superior in other worldly field.[304] If the earliest Muslims, Nurcholish argued, had not lived in accordance with their superior spiritual dimension, there would have been no Islamic culture and civilization of which to be proud.[305]

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[302] Nurcholish Madjid, "Urbanisasi in Islam and Indonesian Indigenous Enterpreneurship," in *Mizan* (Jakarta, vol. III No.2 1990), 54.

[303] Madjid, *Cita-Cita Politik Islam,* 168.

[304] Madjid, *Islam Kemodernan dan Keindonesiaan,* 253.

[305] Madjid, 212.

According to Nurcholish, civil society is the house wherein a variety of associations, groups, clubs, guilds, federations, political parties, and the like become a shield between society and state.[306] This idea is very similar to the idea of Alexis de Tocqueville, the famous author of *Democracy in America*, who articulated the need for strong, independent associations-'*corps intermediaries*' to stand between the individual and the state.[307] Nurcholish argued that civil society since it is conceived as an anti-state society would have a chance to topple despotic and authoritarian regimes, which is what has happened in Eastern Europe and Latin America countries. Civil society is considered to have a great merit of protecting and defending itself from an authoritarian and leviathan state. Nevertheless, civil society does not overthrow the state even if the state is corrupt, because it will then lose its legitimacy and fall from inside. This formulation of civil society contradicts the voluntarism-radical theory that asserts that the loss of legitimacy for the powers in state only comes about through the organization of counter-hegemony.[308] Nurcholish prefers to have a pro-state civil society that can cooperate with the legitimate state and function as the means for check and balance.[309] This notion of civil society reflects a statist political approach and, to use Baker's expression, "an implicit acceptance of the thesis that liberal democracy represents the "end of history" or, to put it bluntly, an elitist fear of "too much" democracy.[310]

Nurcholish was against the idealization of civil society as being means to achieve perfect morality. According to him, civil society should be a beneficiary of the state more than being a

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[306] Nurcholish Madjid, "Dinamika Budaya Pesisir dan Pedalaman: Menumbuhkan Masyarakat Madani," in *HMI dan KAHMI: Menyongsong Perubahan, Menghadapi Pergantian Zaman*, ed. Abdullah Hafidz (Jakarta: Majelis Nasionla KAHMI, 1997), 294.

[307] Baker, *Civil Society*, 6.
[308] Baker, 110.

[309] Madjid, "Dinamika Budaya Pesisir," 294.

[310] Baker, Civil Society, 111.

force to capture the state power. Just like any social phenomena, civil society could have bad sides, such as privileging self, prejudice, and hatred and, as a consequence, would abandon altruism, justice, and civility. Nurcholish argued that not all ideals of civil society should be welcomed, especially the unrestricted civil society because it could create a chaotic situation that would lead to the emergence of a new totalitarianism.[311] He points out that civil society is an organic part of democracy. Democracy in Indonesia requires a non-coercive culture of civility that encourages citizens to respect the rights of others as well as to cherish their own. This public culture depends on mediating institutions in which citizens develop habits of free speech, participation, and toleration. Moreover, he says that there is nothing undemocratic about Muslim voluntary associations playing a role in the public life of civil society as well as in personal ethic.

Concerning individual freedom, Nurcholish said: "God teaches individual freedom, but He also teaches that an individual's freedom is [namely, it should be] limited by the freedom of other individual.[312] Nurcholish seems to treat civil society as an exclusive property of formal liberal democracy, a property the function of which is viewed a fully present only within a legal democracy. That democracy is a process that occurs at the level of the state. Therefore, this understanding of civil society has the result of emasculating self-organization in civil society.

The next step that Nurcholish took right after examining the basic idea of civil society, its promise and threat, was to "end" the discourse of global civil society and formulate an Islamic civil society based on the Prophet's Medinan society. He followed Ibn Taymiyya's *salafī* method harking back to a state of purity that must have existed before all the past and present religious corruption. The *salafī* epistemology is characterized by the belief that all valid knowledge is

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[311] Madjid, 295.

[312] Madjid, *Islam, Kemodernan dan Keindonesian*, 188.

dictated by the letter of the Qur'an and the *Sunna* of the Prophet.[313] Nurcholish supports Ibn

Taymiyya's preferenctial attitude towards the *Sunna* of the Prophet and the tradition of Medinan

first inhabitants. He quotes from Ibn Taymiyya,

> "The consideration of the first three generations of the Muslim community as authentic
> constitutes the temporal concept of *Salafism*. Ibn Taymiyya combines this temporal
> concept with the spatial one by taking al-Madina, the City of the Prophet and the original
> seat of the *Salaf,* as the exemplary city and the source of *Salafi* inspiration….the most
> ideal place on earth within the first generations of the Muslims community, quite
> naturally, was the City of the Prophet, al-Madina. According to Ibn Taymiyya, the
> 'ulama' never considered the consensus of the community of any city as having religious
> authority, not of Mecca, nor Kufa, nor Basra, nor Damascus, but only the consensus of
> Medinese.[314]

Even though Nurcholish's encounter with the idea of civil society was relatively late

compared to the other Indonesian young scholars, he still had the courage to say that it was Islam

that brought the idea of civil society and the idea of human freedom to the West. His argument

was based upon the account that the western Renaissance was a result of the influence of Islamic

medieval philosophy. He justified his argument based on the writing of Pico in his famous and

influential *Oratio de Hominis Dignitate* (*Oration on the Dignity of Man*). Pico began his *Oratio*

with an assertion as follows:

> I have read in the records of Arabians, reverend Fathers, that Abdala ('Abd-Allah) the
> Saracen, when questioned as to what on this stage of the world, as it were, could be seen
> more wonderful than man", In agreement with this opinion is the saying of Hermes
> Trismegistus: "A great miracle, Asclepius, is man."[315]

Pico seems to have almost the same type of reading as Nurcholish who sought to find the

similarities and the roots of any progressive idea within the old tradition. However, Nurcholish's

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[313] Wael B. Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya against the Greek Logicians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), xii.

[314] Nurcholish Madjid, *Ibn Taymiyya on Kalam and Falsafa: A Problem of Reason and Revelation in Islam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1984), 93.

[315] Nurcholish Madjid, Potential Islamic Doctrinal Resources for the Establishment and Appreciation of the Modern Concept of Civil Society, in *Islam &Civil Islam in Southeast Asia* ed. Mitsuo Nakamura, Sharon Siddique, Omar Farouk Bajunid (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2001), 150.

preoccupation with his desire to declare that the Islamic tradition had lent invaluable merits to modern Western civilization caused him to be unaware of his blind spot. He did not see that the last part of the citation implies that the dignity of man as a wonderful creature is also found in the older tradition, which is Hermiticism, as it is shown by his citation from Hermes Trismegistus.

According to Nurcholish, following the structuralist-salafi Ibn Taymiyya, Medinan society is the ideal social system that must be applied to all Muslim society. This society was the final process of *tamaddun* (civilization) established by the Prophet and the peak of the progress from '*badāwa'* (which means 'rural areas,' 'country side,' and 'nomadism') to ' *a āra'* or *madanīya* (both commonly rendered as "civilization" and meaning urban, modern, and cosmopolitan life).[316] Here Nurcholish puts a demarcation and boundary between the urban Muslims and the rural Muslims; the urban Muslims are civilized whereas the rural Muslims are 'barbarians' who have not become transformed into civilization. The demarcation itself is not value-free, since the former entertains a pure and developed Islam while the latter practices a corrupted and backward Islam. As a logical consequence, the latter has to entail the former as their ruler.

Nurcholish argued that individual freedom can survive only under a system of law to which the ruler and ruled are mutually obligated to conform.[317] Such a system of fundamental laws is known as a constitution. Furthermore, he identifies the document of the Constitution of Medina as a representative of system of law:

> The spirit of the document is the very spirit of *madinah,* "city", which is etymologically derived from the same root as the verb "*dana-yadinu*", meaning, "to obey", just as

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[316] Madjid, *Tradisi Islam*, 84.

[317] Madjid, "Potential Islamic Doctrinal Resources," 156.

religion is "*din"*, meaning "the doctrine of obedience to God", which is also the meaning of "*Islam*". Therefore, "*madinah*" conceptually means "a place where people live together in a settled community, obeying the rule of law", that is, "state", "polity" or "*civitae"*, similar to its Hebrew cognate "medinat" (thus the official Hebrew name of the State of Israel, "*Medinat Yishrael*").[318]

Nurcholish's appropriation of civil society to *masyarakat madani* is no more than just an attempt to tame the radical discourse of civil society that sees society as instrumental to democratizing the state rather than as a democratic end. He does not accept the civil society thesis as being an opposition to the state, as a counter hegemony, or counter statist discourse because he sees that the Medinan society had a cooperative relationship with the legitimate rule. Nurcholish forgets that the Medinan society was called *umma wāhida* (one community) not simply because they upheld tight to the *Mithāq al-Madīna* as a social contract. It was an undifferentiated society that treated the Prophet as a single authority based on the divinely ordained rule just like any other traditional social systems. However, it does not mean that the prophet never untilized the principle of "consultation" at all. The prophet always asked the opinion of his companions when drawing up a plan or strategy concerning social and military matters.

The considerable respect to the authority and greatness of the Prophet as the embodiment of God's sovereignty was even shown by a very rational companion of the Prophet 'Umar, who denied the death of the Prophet. Abu Bakr's pronouncement of the death of the Prophet finally made 'Umar conceded. After all, the Prophet was a very charismatic and religious leader, a

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[318] Madjid, 156.

quality of leadership that modern values portray negatively in favor of the achievement and secular leadership orientation.[319]

Ibn Taymiya's idea of the legitimacy and exemplary quality of Medinan traditions and Bellah's sympathetic description on the Prophet and the early caliphs' community provided an influential model for Nurcholish to revive and reform society under the idealization of Medinan society. Here a relevant question is "Had previously Khawarij –the pious, puritanical, and fanatical group-- attempted to idealize and establish the Medinan-like social system?"[320] They were the first Muslim group who abandonned the community because they thought that 'Ali as a caliph did not follow the Prophet (by applying the Qur'an and the Prophetic Medinan tradition), when he followed human arbitration, i.e. when he compromised with Mu'awiya, who subsequently became the first founder of dynastic system in Islamic history.[321] Nurcholish, however, did not follow the literal or formal method of the Khawarij to build a Medinan-like society, because he would take the present Indonesian condition into consideration to contextualize the ideal form. What he did was to make the Medinan society as a legitimate historical reference to support the perspective of modern civil society.

Nurcholish lamented the loss and the absence of the harmony of Medinan society after the *Khilāfa al-Rashīda,* the rightly guided caliphs that changed into a dynastic system. He said that the failure until today had never been corrected, to the extent that Muslims among

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[319] William J. Crotty, *Science*: *Theory and Practice of Political Science* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 210.

[320] John L. Esposito identifies Khawarij as the first significant Islamic extremist movement in Islamic tradition. They were the follower of 'Ali, the fourth legitimate caliph, who broke away from him. After breaking with him, they eventually assassinated him and established their own separate community, based on their vision of true charismatic society strictly following the Qur'an and *Sunna*. See John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 41-42.

[321] Khaled Abou El-Fadl & et.al., *Islam and the Challenge of Democracy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 7-8.

themselves only had genealogical dynasties and did not know how to have leaders through election until the introduction of the idea of democracy with universal suffrage.[322] What he lamented actually is not the loss of characteristic Medinan society but the "power" and legitimacy which compelled every citizen of Medina to obey the constitution. He also equated *Mithaq al-Madina* with *Pancasila*, the Indonesian state philosophy and ideology; both represent a social contract. Dawam Rahardjo, one of Indonesian neo-modernist thinkers, observes that Nurcholish had been attempting to provide Indonesian Muslims with a theological basis for dealing with the problem of "split personality" commonly suffered by Muslims caught between accepting Pancasila as an ideology and being devout Muslims.[323] The following quotation reflects his theological formulation regarding to the obedience to a social contract,

> The Holy Prophet changed the name of his migration town Yathrib into Madinah, alluding to the spirit of civilized community dwelling in a place, obeying the law and honoring social 'contracts' between the citizens, such contracts that should be considered as of the same power and authority as the covenants between man and God in the sacred teaching.[324]

Ironically, after lamenting the failure of the three early generations of the community and relapse into pre-Islamic principles of social organization–as Bellah indicates–Nurcholish glorifies the civilization made by Muslims after the caliphate era. He quotes Max I. Dimont's assessment of the Western nations' attitude towards the golden era of Islam and Muslims in first seven centuries:

> For seven centuries the magnificent Islamic civilization had illuminated the cultural scene of the world with its beauty and grandeur, its wit and valor, its relevance for learning and penchant for business – a busy civilization, though never too busy to pause and pay tribute to a stanza of poetry. Neglected by most Western scholars because of their

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[322] Madjid, "Potential Islamic Doctrinal Resources," 158.

[323] Madjid, *Islam Kemodernan,* 30.

[324] Madjid, 156.

narcissistic preoccupation with Greek and Roman Classicism, perhaps future writers with broader concepts of history will restore this vanished civilization to its rightful place in the museum of past civilization.[325]

Ibn Taymiyya takes the first three generations of the Muslim community as an authentic and legitimate source for dictating the nature of Muslim society to the entire Muslims community. He sees the first generation of Muslims as a self-evident reality before being abstracted by any rational works, just like the first Arabic Grammarians who took the language of *Quraysh* (the tribe in whose language the The Qur'an was revealed) and Qur'anic passages as a self-evident source for establishing linguistic norms for standard Arabic.[326] In turn, the *salafy* society as a whole tended to regard the Arabic language as a superior language because God had chosen it to convey and reveal His words. Thus, Arabic grammar must be a ruler or standard for other prevailing languages such as Persian, Hebrew, and Turkic.[327] Just as Arabic grammar became the standard and rule of other languages, so *fiqh* (the "grammar" of Islamic legal law) also became a standard or a *wasī* (a judge or ruler) for the entire Muslim communities. Because of their universal claims combined with the generalizing inclination of a modern scientific worldview, both the modern-*salafy* proponent and Muslim modernists justify and insist upon molding and constructing others with their values and moral standards.

The way Nurcholish made Islam analogous to civilization is similar to the way conservative modernists made Islam analogous to the state. The conservative modernist had attempted to Islamize the liberal idea of the Western nation-state, whereas Nurcholish had struggled to Islamize the idea of Western civil society. Apparently, a post-colonial syndrome

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[325] Max I. Dimont, *The destructible Jews* (New York: New American Library, 1973), 209.

[326] Kees Versteegh, *Landmarks in Linguistic Thought III*: *the Arabic Linguistic Tradition* (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), 162.

[327] Versteegh, 166.

inflicted both Nurcholish and the conservative modernists; they accepted Western thought and appropriated it to Islamic values. The Western nation state became, in the hand of conservative modernists, an Islamic state, whereas Western civil society became a *masyarakat madani* (an Islamic civil society) in the hand of neomodernists. They had tried to show that Islam is a universal religion. Every good thing had been written in Islam fourteen centuries ago. As the understanding of Islam as a religion and state is full of ideological contents, so is the understanding of Islam as a religion and civilization. The idea that civilization is considered an ideology came from Bruce Mazlish, professor of history at Columbia University, in his book *Civilization and its Contents*.[328] He argues that for someone who believes that they are "civilized," they take civilization as a representation of the epitome of human achievement, and therefore they have right to dictate to others. It has served as a colonial ideology.[329] Komaruddin Hidayat, one of Nurcholish's close friends, describes Nurcholish's idea of "*Masyarakat Madani*" as the "Modern interpretation of Madina + American = Indonesia today."[330]

The next question posited to Nurcholish's idea is about civil society is "Which conception of Medinan society and its historical practice would he choose?" since the early Muslims had their own unique and different ideal descriptions of the Medinan society and claimed that their conception was the right one. The Sunnis had their own ideal society distinct from that of the Shi'is, the Kharijites, or the Mu'tazilis albeit their main reference was one, i.e. the Qur'an and *Sunna* of the Prophet. In addition, which American civil society would Nurcholish adopt since--Berger and Neuhaus have identified--America itself has two seemingly contradictory tendencies with regard to the public policy. The first is a continuing desire both for

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[328]Bruce Mazlish, *Civilization and its contents,* (California: Stanford University, 2004), 17.

[329] Mazlish, 20.

[330] Kull, 146.

services provided by the modern welfare state as well as for the expansion of such state. The second tendency is one of strong animus or enmity against government and its unwieldy bureaucracy at all levels, but especially against non-local state and federal levels.[331] Berger even warns against insisting on the notion of civil society worldwide, in particular in the form of voluntarism (with which it has been generally associated in America, where citizens come together voluntarily to carry on certain collective agenda). This value of voluntarism in a civil society was shared by Alexis de Tocqueville in his interpretation of America democracy.[332]

Actually, Berger has no objection to de Tocquevilles' conception of democracy and voluntarism of civil society, but a heightened awareness of the multicultural nature of contemporary world suggests concern with the possibility of pluralism in democracy rather than concern with the legalistic principle of democracy. Anthropologically, now even "the West" is understood to be diverse in its cultural genealogies.[333] For his *Masyarakat Madani,* however, Nurcholish wanted to adopt just one variety amongst the diverse and competing ideas of Western civil society (while providing its theological basis from the sacred history of the Prophet).

Despite Nurcholish's attempt to set down and delineate a theological basis for Islamic civil society, Indonesia itself, Hefner argues, has a wealth of civic resources for civil society despite the fragility and variability of its democratic process. Hefner shows in his book *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* that civil society has long been in existence in Indonesia. He asserts that in matters of civic association, Indonesian Muslims showed

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[331] Peter L. Berger and Richard John Neuhaus, "To Empower People: From State to Civil Society," in *The Essential Civil Society Reader Classic Essays in the American Civil Society Debate,* ed. Don E. Eberly (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, 2000), 143.

[332] Berger, "Religion and Global Civil Society," 13.

[333] Hefner, *Civil Islam,* 5.

themselves to be second to no one.[334] From the beginning of colonial times, most religious-based organizations have kept a distance from the state bureaucracy. Even though, Muslim leaders rarely state that the fusion of religious leadership with the state is a profane matter, their practices--by keeping a distance from the state--have indicated that political interests would have a chance to put Islam in a subordinate position to state.[335] Beside the NU, the biggest traditional Indonesian religious organization and the Muhammadiyah, there are many religious or non-religious and non-government organizations that function as bulwarks in the face of state power.

C. Pluralism as an Agenda to Establish an Overarching Religion

Nurcholish developed his idea of pluralism earlier than his "*masyarakat madani*" because it is one part of the modernization and secularization process, since pluralism acknowledges individual rights and subjectivities. In the literature of contemporary social theory, pluralism is usually taken to mean the multiplicity of beliefs and ways of life that are characteristic of modern society.[336] Contrary to the secularization thesis, however, pluralism is associated with increased religious adherence.[337] As conceived in its concept, the term pluralism does not reflect a single or univocal meaning. There are many perspectives attached to religious pluralism. The sociological fact that there are many living religious traditions in this global city is simply called religious

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[334] Hefner, 217.

[335] Hefner, 220.

[336] George Crowder, "From Value Pluralism to Liberalism," in *Pluralism and Liberal Neutrality,* ed Richard Bellamy & Martin Hollis (Oregon: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999), 2.

[337] Bruce, *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 5.

diversity or plurality, whereas the attitude and belief that diversity and plurality is legitimate or even valuable called pluralism.[338]

Nurcholish asserted that the consciousness of the Muslim worldview is that Islam is a universal religion for everyone. Even though such consciousness of universal validity concerning their own religiouns is also commonly held by Christians and Jews, for Muslims—according to Nurcholish--this awareness bears with it a socio-religious attitude that is unique.[339] His perspective is that their tolerance, freedom, transparency, justice, fairness and honesty constitute their unique attitude in relation to other religions. Nurcholish wanted to prove the validity of the unique universal claim from both a historical and normative perspective. He attempted to show that Islam is inclusive and pluralist, in harmonily with fits modern universal values; and that it is Islam that had initiated pluralism. For his discussion of the historical perspective, he relied on Western authorities to show that from its beginning Islam was a pluralist religion, with the exception of the recent intolerant religious features practiced by some Muslims who do not know how to respond to the modern challenges. Nurcholish observed that both cults and fundamentalist have taken root in Indonesia because of an extraordinary rapid period of social change; and that such extrimists fail to adapt to the new values.[340]

Nurcholish stated that Islam is a modern religion;[341] it is the culmination of the progress of all religions; and no religion will come after. That is part of the meaning of Muhammad as the

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[338] David Ray Griffin, *Deep Religious Pluralism* (Lousiville: Westminter John Knox Press, 2005), xiii.

[339] Nurcholish Madjid, "Islamic Faith and the Problem of Pluralism: Relations among the Believers," in *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspective,* ed., John J. Donohue & John L. Esposito, 489 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[340] Madjid, *Cita-Cita Politik Islam*, 230.

[341] Madjid, *Islam, Doktrin, dan Peradaban,* xl.

khatam, the ring or the seal of universal prophecy.[342] It has the potential to be more modernized easily than other religions, because—according to Nurcholish-- Islam is a myth-free religion. Pluralism is of his attempts to make Islam adaptable to modernity.[343] It is not a big task to make Islam adaptable to modern values because Islam itself is *ālih li kull zamān wa-makān,* impeccable, for all epochs and places (beyond time and place).[344] Nurcholish argued that Islam came last in order to cleanse religion of mythologies that had inflicted and characterized previous religions. Islam is a demythologizing[345] and amythical religion.[346] He based his idea on the contention of Ernest Gellner that Islam is amythical; and therefore ultimately Muslims will have more benefits from modernity. Gellner says that:

> Only Islam survives as a serious faith providing both folk and a Great Tradition. Its Great Tradition is modernisable; and the operation can be presented, not as an innovation or concession to the outsiders, but rather as the continuation and completion of an old dialogue within Islam. Thus in Islam, and only in Islam, purification/modernization on the one hand, and affirmation of a putative old local identity on the other, can be done in one and the same language and set of symbols.[347]

Nurcholish argued that unlike Genesis, chapters of the Qur'an do not contain mythological description about the creation of human being. If there are some mythological descriptions, they must be treated as metaphorical descriptions.[348] Nurcholish based his analysis on Western scholarly works, such as Joseph Campbell's *Myths to Live By* and Carl Sagan's *Cosmos*. In contrast to the amythological quality of Islam, Nurcholish asserted that Christianity

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[342] Madjid, *Kontekstualisasi Islam Doktrin Islam dalam Sejarah*, (Jakarta: Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina, 1994), 533.

[343] Nurcholish Madjid, "Interpreting the Qur'anic principle of Religious Pluralism," in *Approaches to the Qur'an in Contemporary Indonesia,* ed. Abdullah Saeed (London: Oxford University Press, 2005), 224.

[344] Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Agama Kemanusiaan, Membangun Tradisi dan Visi Baru Islam Indonesia* (Jakarta: Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina, 1995), 4.

[345] Madjid, *Islam, Doktrin, dan Peradaban,* xxii.

[346] Madjid, xlii.

[347] Madjid, "Interpreting the Qur'anic Principle," 224.

[348] Madjid, *Islam Doktrin,* xxxviii.

contains a lot of Greek mythology; while its history has been characterized by its fight against and opposition to sciences.[349]In spite of Campbell's positive assessment and praise of the dynamic Muslim attitudes towards science, Nurcholish denied another assertion of Campbell's in which he said that said that to a certain degree Islam also "had divorced" science just as Christianity did. Finally, Nurcholish, who did not want his religion misperceived and decentered, started to question the authority of Campbell. He stated that Campbell was just a mythology expert not an historian of Islamic traditions. Nurcholish turned to Robert N. Bellah, who once made the assertion about Islam that "It was too modern to succeed" at its initial emergence. He did it in order to place the blame for any failures of on the backword world in which it emerged and thereby to justify Islam as being both the final step in the progress of religions and a religion that in principle can do nothing wrong.[350] Max I. Dimont and Bernard Lewis are the other scholars whom Nurcholish quoted to justify that Islam is a pro-science and tolerant religion.

Because of its emergence as the last religion, Islam functions as confirming, and justifying the essential teachings of religion, and correcting deviation made by previous religious communities.[351] Therefore, Nurcholish argued that the Qur'an must be seen as "the continuity" of any teaching of any religions.[352] The fundamental truth of every religion lies in the teaching of the oneness of God, which is known as *tawhid* in Islam. The core of any religion, which is called in Arabic as *al-dīn*, conceives spiritual unconditional truth revealed by God. All the messengers and prophets whom God sent to different communities brought with them same spiritual unconditional divine messages but a different system of law (*shir'ah, sharī 'ah*) and way of life

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[349] Madjid, xxi-xxxv.

[350] Madjid, xl

[351] Madjid, *Kontektualisasi Doktrin Islam*, 529.

[352] Madjid, 530.

(*minhāj*).[353] The differences within these (*shar'ī* and *minh jī*) dimensions gives rise to the

plurality of religions. The plurality of religions must not be lamented or regretted because it is

the will of God, as it is shown in the Qur'an. In support of this, Nurcholish brings lengthy cited a

lengthy quaote from Muhammad Asad's commentary on the Qur'an 5: 48,

> The expression "every one of you" denotes the various communities of which mankind is composed. The term *shir'ah* (or *shari'ah*) signifies, literally, "the way to watering place" (from which men and animals derive the element indispensable to their life), and is used in the Qur'an to denote a system of law necessary for a community's social and spiritual welfare. The term *minhaj*, on the other hand, denotes an "open road", usually in an abstract sense: that is, a way of life". The term *shir'ah* and *minhaj* are more restricted in their meaning than the term din, which comprise not merely the laws relating to particular religious but also the basic, unchanging spiritual truths which, according to the Qur'an, have been preached by every one of God's apostles, while the particular body of laws (*shir'ah* and *shari'ah*) promulgated through them, and the way of life (*minhaj*) recommended by them, varied in accordance with the exigencies of the time and of each community's cultural development. This "unity in diversity" is frequency stressed incorruptibility of its teachings as well as of the fact that the Prophet Muhammad is the "seal of all prophet", i.e. the last of them – the Qur'an represent the culminating point of all revelation and offers the final, perfect way to spiritual fulfillment. This uniqueness of the Qur'an of the Qur'anic message does not, however, preclude all adherents of earlier faiths from attaining to God's grace: for – as the Qur'an so often points out – those among them who believe uncompromisingly in the One God and the Day of Judgment (i.e. in individual moral responsibility) and live righteously "need have fear, and neither shall they grieve."[354]

This Qur'anic inclusive injunction had been reflected by classical Muslims throughout

their history. This is, Nurcholish stated, the reason why classical Muslims were so open,

inclusive, and encouraging of other groups while they were in power.[355] In order to justify his

argument, he quoted Max I. Dimont, who wrote about the Jews' experience in classical Islamic

societies:

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[353] Madijid, 531.

[354] Madjid, "Interpreting the Qur'anic Principle," 218.

[355] Madjid, "Islamic Faith", 496.

When the Jews confront the open society of the Islamic world, they are 2,500 years old as people….

Nothing could have been more alien to the Jews than this fantastic Islamic civilization that rose out of the desert dust in the seventh century. Yet nothing could have been more the same. Though it represented a new civilization, a new religion, and a new social milieu built on new economic foundations, it resembled the packaged "intellectual pleasure principle" presented to the doors of Hellenistic society to them. Now Islamic society opened the doors of its mosque, its school, and its bedrooms for conversion, education, and assimilation, the challenge for the Jews was how to swim in this scented civilization without drowning, or in the language of modern sociology, how to enjoy the semantic, intellectual, and spiritual comforts offered by the dominant majority without disappearing as a marginal minority.

The Jews did what came naturally. They fired the old scriptwriters and hired a new set of specialists. Instead of rejecting the Muslim civilization, they accepted it. Instead of keeping themselves apart, they integrated. Instead of becoming parochialized fossils, they joined the new swinging society as sustaining members. Arabic became their mother tongue, wine, women, and secular songs their pastime avocations; philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, diplomacy, medicine, and literature, their full-time avocations. The Jews never had it so good.[356]

Another excerpt Nurcholish quoted from Dimont:

The Arab conquest of Spain in 711 had put an end to forcible conversion of Jews to Christianity begun by King Reccard in the six century. Under the subsequent 500-year rule of the Moslems emerged the Spain of three religions and 'one bedroom'. Mohammedans, Christians, and Jews shared the same brilliant civilization, an intermingling that affected 'bloodlines' even more than religious affiliations'.[357]

In addition to Dimont's description of the inclusive and tolerant glory of classical

Muslims' history, Nurcholish quotes another famous historian in Islamic studies, Bernard Lewis:

For Christians and Muslims alike, tolerance is a new virtue, and intolerance a new crime. For the greater part of history of both communities, tolerance was not valued nor was intolerance condemned. Until comparatively modern times, Christians Europe neither prized nor practiced tolerance itself, and was not greatly offended by its absence in others. The charge that was always brought against Islam was not that its doctrines were imposed by forced – something seen as normal and natural – but that its doctrines are false. Similarly on the Muslim side, the claim to tolerance, now much heard from Muslim

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[356] Madjid, 496.

[357] Madjid, "Interpreting the Qur'anic Principle," 215.

apologists and more especially from apologists from Islam, is always new and of alien origin.[358]

Nurcholish provided even more evidence of Islamic pluralism from the work of Lewis:

> In earlier times a good deal of easy social intercourse existed among Muslims, Christians, and Jews who, like professing different religions, formed a single society, in which personal friendships, business partnerships, intellectual disciplines, and other form of shared activity were normal and, indeed, common. This cultural cooperation is attested in many ways. We have, for example, biographical dictionaries of famous physicians. These works, though written by Muslims, include Muslim, Christian, and Jewish physicians without distinction. From these large numbers of biographies of the medical profession – we get a very clear impression of a common effort. In hospitals and in private practice, doctors of the three faiths worked together as partners or as assistants, reading each other's books and accepting one another as pupils. There was nothing resembling the kind of separation that was normal in Western Christendom at that time or in the Islamic world at later time.[359]

Nurcholish's logocentic mode of thought that saw the self as a center could be discerned in his quotation from Muhammad Farid Wajdi, a Muslim thinker from Egypt, and a follower of Muhammad Abduh's renewal movement, who himself cited Max Muller's anthropological finding concerning India's religiosity:

> The Activities of the Orientalists in India should be regarded as a part of their brilliant achievements. We should not forget that the most prominent among them is Dr. Max Muller, a German anthropologist, whose greatest contribution was deciphering Sanskrit. Dr. Muller proved that human communities in earlier times already adopted a pure monotheism, but the idolatry which prevailed among them was the result of the acts of religious leaders who competed against one another. Therefore the result of Dr. Muller's research justifies the truth of scientific miracle of the Qur'an. It is so because there are definite texts in the Qur'an regarding the matter which was finally discovered by Dr. Max Muller through his research and study.[360]

This quotation confirms Nurcholish's belief that God is a source of all different religions and that the fundamental spiritual teaching of all religions is same. They teach the same universal

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[358] Madjid, 214.

[359] Madjid, 215.

[360] Madjid, "Islamic Faith," 490.

truth which is the oneness of God, or called *tawhid*. From the beginning of their existence,

humans professed *tawhid*, which is symbolized both in Adam and in his faith. Later this belief

started to differ because many interpretations of the oneness of the truth developed. This

development, differentiation, and deviation became ever sharper because of certain stakes,[361] just

as Muller above indicates it. The interesting thing here is why Nurcholish quotes Muller (through

Wajdi), who used the evolution and development of Indian religion in order to describe how

religion started to deviate. Are there no occurances of development, evolution, and deviation in

Middle Eastern religions? On the other hand, is there no competition within what he conceived

of as originally one religion? How did he explain the differentiation within his concept of one

religion, are all of religions legitimate or is it only one that is right?

Immediately after quoting Wajdi, Nurcholish cites Ibn Taymiyya concerning the meaning

of *tawhid* and *Islam*. The following is an explanation by Ibn Taymiyya, a famous figure of

Islamic reformation:

> The (Arabic) word "*al-Islām*" contains the meaning of the words "*al-istislām*" (self-surrender) and "*al- inqiyād*" (submission, obedience), and also contains the meaning of the word "al-ikhlas" (sincerity)…. Therefore it is necessary in Islam to submit in oneself to God the One, leaving behind submission to others. This is the essence of our saying, "There is god but God" (*lā ilāha illā 'l-Lāh*). If one submits to God, while at the same time submitting himself to others, then he is polytheist.[362]

He quoted another passage from Ibn Taymiyya in order to show the oneness and unity of

religion, which is Islam:

> Because the origin of religion, that is *al-Islam*, is one, even though its *sharī'āh* varies, the Prophet Muhammad says, in valid   ad   th, "our religion and the religion of the prophets

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[361] Madjid, 490.

[362] Madjid, 491.

are paternal brothers, [even though] their mothers are different," and "the nearest of all the people to Jesus, the son of Mary, is me," [363]

Apparently, Nurcholish accepted the thesis of the most dominant modern theology developed in Chicago; that the basic experience of religion is the same but expressed in different ways.[364] This pluralism sounds like John Hick's conception (which uses Kantian language) that religious phenomena can be distinguished and categorized and that all point toward the single noumenal real, the overarching truth.[365] The position of ethical pluralism presupposes a commitment to individual rights, Kantian autonomy, and liberal ideas of the self as a self-regulating and autonomous moral agent subject to dicta of a transcendental reason rather than those of a transcendent heteronomy. Only from such a set of presuppositions with their inherent distinction between public and private realms, selves and desiderata, can a principled acceptance of ethical pluralism be advocated and advanced.[366]

Nurcholish, in holding the beliefs that Islam is an impeccable religion beyond time and place,[367] and that it is the most modernisable religion,[368] felt challenged to formulate a theology of pluralism to update and adapt to the current and dominant academic theology. In order to formulate a theology of pluralism, Nurcholish followed a common modern distinction that religion comprises two different aspects, the soul and the body, the spirit and the form, and the generic and the distintive, with the emphasis on the first part (of these binary oppositions) as

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[363] Madjid, 491.

[364] Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious*, 145.

[365] Barnes, "Religious Pluralism," 412.

[366] Richard Madsen and Tracy B. Strong, *The Many and the One: Religious and Secular Perspectives on Ethical Pluralism in the Modern World* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), 220.

[367] Madjid, *Islam Agama Kemanusiaan*, 4.

[368] Madjid, "Interpreting the Qur'anic Principle," 224.

being superior. According to Nurcholish the word "Islam" in the Qur'an, commonly, does not necessarily mean an historical religion revealed to the Prophet, or in distintive sense.

Islam in the Qur'an has a generic meaning; it is the noumenal Islam, which means *al-istislām* (self surrender) and *al-inqiyād* (submission, obedience).[369] With this perspective, the unique claim of Muslims that Islam is the true religion in God's sight as it is in the Qur'an 3: 19 ("The only true faith in God's sight is al-Islam"), must be now looked as in generic sense.[370] Islam as in the generic sense is the core or noumena of all different religions. This generic Islam is the "one meeting point," or to use the Qur'anic term, it is the *"kalīma sawā'"* (common platform) of all different religions.[371] Here, Nurcholish's inclusive religious understanding can be discerned. He identified certain documents in Islamic history, such as the Medinan Charter between the Prophet and the Jews; Aelia, the agreement of the second caliph 'Umar with the inhabitants of Bayt al-Maqdis,[372] and Pancasila between Indonesian Muslims and non- Muslims, as actualization of *kalīma* sawā'. Following Yusuf Ali, he extended the meaning of the term *ahl al-kitāb* (people of the book) to cover earnest follower of Zoroaster, the Vedas, Buddha, Confucius, and other teachers of moral law.[373]

When Nurcholish discussed the condition of religious plurality as *Sunnatullah,* (Law of God)[374]--noting that the differences among them are not principal but merely different human responses to one divine revelation--he asserted that all those responses hold internal absolute claim that should not be forced upon other people. He accepted such ifferences as an imperative

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[369] Madjid, "Islamic Faith," 491.

[370] Madjid, 491.

[371] Madjid, 492.

[372] Madjid, 498.

[373] Madjid, 495.

[374] Madjid, "Interpreting the Principle," 217.

condition that people must have and promote pluralism; and he recognized that pluralism cannot simply be translated as common tolerance, an acknowledgement of the condition of plurality, or an eradication of fanaticism; but even more than this qualities, pluralism must be a true meeting point of diverse perspective within the bonds of civility.[375]

In order to establish pluralistic Islam as overarching truth, Nurcholish argued that the existence of significant non-Muslim groups in the Muslim worlds out side Mecca and Medina is a proof of the openness, respect, and tolerance of Muslims from classical time to the present. The reason why classical Muslims were so open, inclusive and encouraging of other groups is that they were in power.[376] With this statement, did Nurcholish want to say that Islam is open, inclusive, and tolerant only if Muslims are in power? Is Islam only a religion concerned with power, areligion that will do good things only when its adherents are holding power? This outlook came as result of focusing on Islam in the Medinan period, when the Muslim became the ruling class. Nurcholish and the other modernists very seldom talked about the period, when the early Muslims, the persecuted minority, acted as an opposition to the ruling merchant Quraysh.

Nurcholish's problrmatic thought (such as in his preference of the ideal of Islam as a religion of "civilization" over "state") came up again when he determined which part of Muslim history served as the ideal form for pluralism. On one hand, he glorified the achievement of 'Umar, the second caliph, for promoting religious freedom in Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) as it was written in the Aelia agreement.[377] On the other hand, he did not address the policy of 'Umar's policy of expelling all Jews from the Hijaz for the sake of the unity of Muslim

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[375] Nurcholish Madjid, *Cendikiawan dan Religiusitas Masyarakat* (Jakarta: Paramadina & Tabloid Tekad, 2001), 63.

[376] Madjid, 496.

[377] Madjid, 498.

community,[378] an act that was clear contrast to the pluralism exhibited by 'Umar concerning Jerusalem. Nurcholish emphasized religious pluralism in the entire Golden age of Islamic civilization,[379] under the Muslim dynasties. On one hand, for his *Masyarakat Madani* he idealized the Medinan society as it was practiced by the Prophet and his caliphs and charged the Muslims with consenting to the dynastic system;[380] on the other hand, he glorified the achievement of their religious pluralism. Nurcholish's glorification of the history of Islamic pluralism under the dynastic system was based in part on Dimont's description that he did not find the trace of pluralism in Mecca and Medina anymore. On one hand, Nurcholish, following Ibn Taymiyya's notion on *aṣāla* or authenticity of Islamic doctrines, wanted to have pure and original Islamic doctrine by returning to the Qur'an, ḥadīth, and the history of *salafī*'s practices; but he glorified the Golden Age's achievement, the very same Golden age that he accused for failing to keep the ideal Medinan values and relapsing into pre-Islamic principles.[381] From the perspective of the scholar-observer, we can see that the idea of purification and puritanisation of Islamic doctrine seems to function as an ideological tool to undermine previous religious authorities. For example, the puritanist-movement of Wahhabism, with its slogan "back to the Qur'an, *Sunna*, and *Salafī*'s tradition," succeeded in gaining political power. Eventually, however, they also followed the system of dynastic system.

Nurcholish viewed religion from two different perspectives: theological and humanistic. From a theological perspective, religion is the action of the absolute higher reality in the world; whereas from a humanistic perspective, religion is the human responses to the perceived

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[378] Watt, *Islam and the Integration of Society*, 59.

[379] Madjid, *Cendikiawan dan Religiusitas Masyarakat*, 489.

[380] Madjid, "Potential Islamic Doctrinal Resources," 158.

[381] Madjid, 159.

presence of that higher reality. According to him, since religions theologically are the act of the single ultimate reality, all religion has the same message. In contrast, religions (when seen from his humanistic perspective) as human responses to the one ultimate reality have many different forms. Concerning this seemingly paradoxical outlook, Waldman comments, in *Primitive Mind/Modern Mind: New Approaches to an Old Problem applied to Islam*, that for many committed adherents of given religions, the humanistic approach has understandably seemed appropriate to all traditions but their own, for which only the theological approach yields and adequate explanation.[382]

Apparently, this description applies to Nurcholish's religious understanding. Despite his inclusive and pluralist religious understanding, Nurcholish still held tightly to the idea of the superiority and authenticity of Islamic doctrine as well as to the belief that the authentic understanding can be obtained by referring directly to the main referent, al-Qur'an and ad th. Since he believed that Islam is a universal religion that teaches universality and oneness as other religions do too, Nurcholish, as a consequence, believed that the differences between Islam and other religions are only on the level of humans' responses. Given the fact that Islam is the last religion ever revealed, then it gives the most updated and authentic response to divine revelation and serves as a mediator amongst different religions.[383] To support his opinion, Nurcholish quoted Yusuf Ali who says that as God's Message is one, Islam recognized true faith in other forms, provided that they were sincere, supported by reason, and backed up by righteous conducts.[384] Moreover, Nurcholish argues that although someone may be socially dubbed "Islamic" or "Muslim," if their attitude is not reflecting true Islam, they are categorized

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[382] Waldman, "Primitive Mind," 91.

[383] Madjid, *Kontektualisasi Doktrin Islam*, 530.

[384] Madjid, "Islamic Faith," 494.

religiously as ingenuine and are denied legitimacy. Affirmation of this in the Qur'an is found in the famous saying of God: "*The only true faith in God's sight is al-Islam.*"[385]

Concerning the diversity of religions, as mentioned above, Nurcholish identifies their adherents as people of the book, despite the dispute whether the "holy books" belonging to the Indians, Chinese, and Japanese contain the teaching of monotheism. He argued, however, that if those "holy books" are understood in terms of "their original version or teaching," then such a view is in line with the pure monotheism.[386] The original teaching of all religion, according to Nurcholish, is the generic Islam that teaches *al-ḥanīfīya al-samḥa*, a spirit to seek the truth with purity and openness in accord with the natural uprightness of humans.[387]

Islam, as Nurcholish put it, is the foundation of all universal teaching of religion.[388] It acknowledges the plurality and accepts the diversity as the *Sunnat Allah* (God's will). The term Islam itself is meant to be universal religion which is distinguished from any other names of religions that are ascribed to their founders, tribes, or places. In one of his arguments for the universal understanding of Islam, he gained support from Wilfred C. Smith, who reported his observation on the different religions:

> The first observation is that of all the world's religious traditions the Islamic would seem to be one with a built-in name. The word 'Islam' occurs in the Qur'an itself, and Muslims are insistent on using this term to designate the system of their faith. In contrast to what has happened with other religious communities, as we have partly seen, this is not a name devised by outsiders, those who inside resisting or ignoring or finally accepting.[389]

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[385] Madjid, 492.

[386] Madjid, 496.

[387] Nurcholish Madjid, "Beberapa Renungan tentang Kehidupan Keagamaan di Indonesia untuk Generasi Mendatang," in *Menggugat Gerakan Pembaharuan Keagamaan Debat Besar Pembaruan Islam*, ed. H. Lukman Hakiem (Jakarta: Lembaga Studi Informasi Pembangunan, 1995), 71.

[388] Madjid, *Islam, Doktrin, dan Peradaban*, 133.

[389] Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 80.

With the accounts of Muslim religious practices during the Golden Age of Islamic civilization and the universal teaching of the Qur'an and   ad th, Nurcholish made an effort to establish a universal theology, one that was all encompassing, overarching, and including all of various religions. In this theology, Nurcholish viewed Islam as the final religion, being the apex of all religions, and serving as a mediator for different beliefs.

CHAPTER 4

DECONSTRUCTION AND CONCLUSION

A. Transcendentalization as an Authorization Seeking Process

Nurcholish used the same formula of the profession of faith as his modernist predecessors did

to liberate themselves from the shackle of traditions that were no longer capable to distinguish

the transcendental values from those that are temporal. He charged the traditions did not know

the difference and division between the worldly matters and the eternal matters, they even lump

together those different values and matters into the transcendental spheres. Therefore, Nurcholish

felt the need to separate the transcendent and immanent part of religions and to put the

transcendent part in a higher position in immutable realm whereas the immanent part in the

temporal and worldly realm. Theoretically, this separation seems very distinct and simple but in

reality, it turns out to be complicated.

One of the aims of Nurcholish religious reform through his secularization was to liberate

Islam and Muslims from the burden of traditions. From this point of view, we can understand

why Nurcholish wanted to purify the true Islam from the temporal tradition or culture as a result

of the interplay between the universal Islam and Muslim temporal settings. However, Nurcholish

did not clearly discuss what he meant by the true Islam. Is it Islam that has been written in the

Qur'an and   ad th or Islam that was practiced by the Prophet and his companions? Is there any

such true or ideal Islam that is transcendent without being intertwined within culture and

tradition? The most often cited slogan by Nurcholish "Back to the Qur'an and Sunna," lead us to figure out what he meant by true Islam. Is not this slogan also very prevailent among the fundamentalist Muslims? What makes it different? Despite their claim of following the same *salafī* method, their difference lies on the approach that they employ to treat the Qur'an and Sunna. While the fundamentalist Muslims understand the meaning of the revelation based on historical past and literal interpretation, Nurcholish advocates reinterpretation the revelation in the light of the modern condition and rational way.

Within the content of revelation, Nurcholish distinguishes two different dimensions, *'ibāda* (act of worship, human-divine relationship) and *mu'amala* (human interrelationship). The division and separation itself between them is very common among the Muslims, but Nurcholish put a theological value in it. He put *'ibāda* in an immutable and transcendent realm, whereas *mu'āmala* in a mutable and temporal realm. While the former does not subject to the *ijtihād* or human efforts to think and change, the latter subjects to changing process. *'Ibāda* is not only dealing with, according to him, immutable God but it also involves and relates to mutable human beings. Nurcholish has certain blind spots in his view of *'ibāda-mu'āmala* division. Not all *'ibāda* ordained by God to the Prophet was new or does not have any historical roots. Pilgrimage or *hajj*, for example, was not something new for the Arabs; it was already there despite the claim that it used to be performed by the monotheist patriarch, Ibrahim and his wife; however, it had its historical story. What the Prophet did was *desecularizing* instead of secularizing the form of previous *hajj* and giving new meanings on it.

In the matter of *mu'āmala*, there are many new forms and practices revealed and ordained and some of them were never been known, let alone practiced in the Arabian Peninsula. For example, in the division of heritage and family matters, before revelation women never got

their part of inheritance, they were even considered stock of inheritance. That is just an example

to show that there are no clear boundaries between *'ibāda* and *mu'āmala*; both have transcendent

and immanent values at the same time. To put *'ibāda* in the transcendent realm would be

contradict to Nurcholish's own view, because he said that the absolute transcendent pertains

solely to God; and furthermore he said that to sacralize anything other than God is, in reality,

shirk (association or polytheism). However, Nurcholish himself associated *'ibāda,* the immutable

acts of worship, with the immutability and the transcendence of God.

I would argue that there should be no theological distinction between *'ibāda* and

mu'āmala. Both represent the function of human beings as *'abd*, the servant of God; and *khalīfa*,

the vicegerent of God. The different between *'ibāda* and *mu'āmala* lies on the interlocutor of its

act. The main interlocutor of *'ibāda* is God whereas main interlocutor of *mu'āmala* is human

beings. *Mu'āmala* is just another form for *ibāda* with a different interlocutor. Just as another

form of *mu'āmala*, *'ibāda* is also subject to the practice of *ijtihād* because it also involves

mutable and contingent human beings who are bound always bound to their ever-changing

setting.

It is of great significant that much detailed guidance for the major *'ibāda* such as

canonical prayer (*alāh*), alms giving (*zakāh*), fasting (*aum*), and pilgrimage (*ajj*) was not

written in the Qur'an--as an immutable written revelation. Even the details of those *'ibāda*

mentioned in the Qur'an are its human dimensions and interrelation, such as to whom the *zakāh*

is supposed to be delivered, and what to do if a human being does not have the ability to perform

a certain formal *ibāda,* on example for the latter case is if a person cannot fast because of being

sick or in the journey. On one hand, the detailed instructions for *mu'āmala* such as the division

of inheritance, marriage, and criminal punishments are written in the Qur'an and on the other

hand, the detailed instructions of *ibāda*, which Nurcholish counted as transcendent and immutable, are mentioned in *ḥadīth*, which is a secondary authority after the Qur'an. It is not contradictory to have immutable acts or *ibāda* based on a mutable source like the history of the Prophet and mutable acts or *mu'āmala* in the immutable source like the Qur'an. This distinction, of course, does not mean to devalue the authority of the Prophet.

The contradiction happens because Nurcholish distinguishes and separates two inseparable concepts *'ibāda* and *mu'āmala*, and then puts one in a higher position than the other. Both *ibāda* and *mu'āmala* are part of religion. Nurcholish understands the concept of religion (*al-dīn*) as an act of obedience or surrendering. He forgot that the word *al-dīn* also means a covenant. It is covenant between human beings and their Creator. Muhammad was the messenger and the representative of human beings for that covenant. The revelation and the history of the prophet (along with his cultural background) should be considered the document and history of that covenant. Religious people put in their faith on their prophets as their representative for communicating with God; and the covenant has brought responsibility for human beings to fulfill it. Since there is no compulsion in religion, everyone has the same right to accept and follow (and even to deny as well) the authority of any prophets as their representatives. Some Muslims take this covenant in definite literal senses asserting that its meaning is already final; while others find that the covenant and its understanding is old and therefore needs to be updated in the light of modern values. Both, however, indicate that what they believe as the original covenant is just their own reflection or projection from their ideals and social background. What Nurcholish believed as true Islam, what he acquired from phenomenology, was not the self-evident Islam; it was just another religious reflection from

modern point of view. Those who have power or are supported by external power such as government institutions have the right to say which one is legitimate interpretation.

Nurcholish took the term "transcendent" from the discipline of phenomenology, which at first rose as a reaction against the fixation of positivism and empiricism on having absolute and all-explaining knowledge. Phenomenology has attempted to say "what is not" or to argue against what is already explained by scientific-positivistic approach. However, since its early proponents, it has wanted to have their own scientific tradition with their own criteria of objectivity to investigate and describe phenomenal knowing as it progress toward knowledge of the Absolute.[390] It was a new way of looking at things by calling and returning to immediate data that is incontestably evident.

With this phenomenological outlook, Nurcholish treats the formula *Lā ilāha illā Allāh* (No god but God). He simply looks at the formula and divides it into two parts, *Lā ilāha illā Allāh* which fits with Husserl's method. The first is through a kind of *epoche* or bracketing natural beliefs about objects of experience in order to strip away perceived foreign appearances from the profession of faith; it is represented by *Lā ilāha*. The second part of the profession of faith is allowing the essence, the truth to be found – which is represented by *illā Allāh*. The first part is called a negation of false beliefs, and the second one is an affirmation of the truth. Nurcholish believed through desacralization of everything other than that which truly possesses divine attributes, he would find the true essence of the world and the Absolute God as well.

It seems that Nurchlolish overlooked the understanding of the formula of the profession of faith that actually contains two negative statements. They are "There is no god" and "But God." He considered that the "*Lā*" (no) as in *Lā ilāha* (there is no god) as the first negation; but

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[390] Olson, *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion,* 102.

he forgot that the second "*lā*" (no) as in *illā* (but or if not) is also a negative statement. Therefore, the *Lā ilāha illā Allāh* contains two negative statements. The first is a simple negation but the second is an affirmative negation. If the formula is rendered as "there is no god but God," it expresses a meaning that "there is no god" is "God." More important is that the "God" in the second negation function as the *differance*, something that makes anything difference and differentiated. God is not something other than the others; but rather God is the One who is undifferentiated differing, which is immanent in every differentiation. This might explain that every creation has its own unique and different characteristics. Hence, by saying *Lā ilāha illā Allāh* one does not necessarily refer to knowing the true God, but merely the god that is different from the already determined. That might be the reason that the formula must be invoked and embedded into consciousness at all times in order to defer whatever already conceived it from God. By simply understanding the profession of faith as a negative and affirmative statement, someone could easily put themselves in affirmative position which is transcendent and, in turn, assume that they know the transcendent and universal realm and act as if the know the universal criteria and have the roght to determine what is right and wrong. When reason is obsessed with unity and universality, as Mark C. Taylor argues, it tends to become hegemonic in order to regulate whatever does not fit into with governing structures. The transcendental and universal claim hid its roots and denied to historical genesis. It is the one ideology whose partisans--who hide behind the protective shield of the claim objective-science--resisted seeing the moral and historical component of their worldview.

Nurcholish also understood and looked at the word Allah in a simple way compared to the Islamic traditions. He simply understands that Allah is God. It is an Arabic name of God but it also has a meaningother than simply the Arabic God. If it was just an Arabic God, the Arab

would accept easily the message of the Prophet. It was not the meaning of Allah that served as the *kalīma sawā'* (common word or platform) between the Prophet and the pagan Arabs--in which they agreed upon whenever they made an agreement--but it was the form of the word Allah. It does not mean the word Allah cannot be translated into other languages; it is a must to translate into many different languages with all its descriptions as He already revealed by Himself.

Nurcholish did not mention whose authority he based his idea on in order to understand the profession of faith; maybe because the "nature" of the profession fits to the phenomenological method, and then he applied it. In addition, the profession of faith is barely written independently throughout the Qur'anic passages. It is interrelated and interconnected to the Qur'anic textuality. Almost all verses that mention *kalīma shahāda* are preceded by Allah, He (pronoun for third person), your God; for example in "*Allāh lā ilāha illā huwa al-hayy al-qayy m,*" (3:2) (Allah, there is no god but He,-the Living, the Self-Subsisting, the Eternal.), "*Huwa al-hayy lā ilāha illā huw fa-d'ūhu mukhlisīn lah al-dīn al- amd lillāh rabb al-'ālamīn,*" (40:65) (He is the Living (One), there is no god but He: Call upon Him, giving Him sincere devotion. Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds!, "*Wa ilāhukum ilāh wāhid lā ilāha illā huw al-ra mān al-ra īm*"(2:163) (And your God is One God, there is no god but He, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful). There is only one verse mentions *kalīma shahāda* without beginning with Allah, He, your God; this verse is "*Lā ilāha illā huw yuhyī wa yumīt rabbukum wa rabb abāikum al-awwālīn,*" (44:8) (There is no god but He: It is He Who gives life and gives death,- The Lord and Cherisher to you and your earliest ancestors). The verse that precedes it is "*Rabbi al-samāwāt wa-al-'ard wa-mā bayna humā in kuntum mūqinīn,*" (The Lord of the heavens and the earth and all between them, if ye (but) have an assured faith.) (The translation

based on the authority of Abdullah Yusuf Ali). Moreover, some verses also mention *kalimat shahadat* in two affirmative ways, *"Huwa al-ladhy fi al-samā' ilāh wa fi al-'ard ilāh wa huwa al- akīm al-'alīm,"* (43:84) (And He it is Who in the heaven is God, and in the earth God. He is the Wise, the Knower).

Let us examine "*kalīma shahāda"* in its intertextuality within the Qur'an or examine it back in its habitat before it is abstracted phenomenologically. The meaning of it will not be easy to catch and to tame. For instance in the chapter 2 verse 163, it was Al- Qur ubī who said that the first part of the verse, "And your God is One God" is a Qur'anic response to the Quraysh – at that time they had 360 idols - who asked the Prophet to describe his God. Then this part together with the chapter *Al-Ikhlās* (112) came down .[391]

This explanation itself is an affirmative statement. The second part which is "There is no god but He," according to Al- Qur ubī, has *nafy* and *ithbāt* (negative and affirmative); it means that there is no object of worship but Allah. With his understanding, Al-Qur ubī looked at Al-Shiblī, a mystic teacher, scornfully because he only mentioned the word "Allah" without beginning with "There is no god." Further Al-Qur ubī commented on the practice of Al-Shibī's as *al-daqīqa* (practice of subtlety) that does not have *al-haqīqa* (fact or truth).[392] Al-Zamakhsaharī said in his Qur'anic commentary *Al-Kashshāf* that "There is no god but He" is a pronouncement of the oneness of God that negates the others and affirms itself.[393]Al-Baydhawī in his *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa-Asrār al-Ta'wīl* comments on "And your God is One God" as a

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[391] Al-Qutubī, *Al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an*, in http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=5&tSoraNo=2&tAyahNo=163&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0 (accessed October 17th , 2006)

[392] Al-Qurtubī

[393] Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashsh f* in http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=2&tSoraNo=2&tAyahNo=163&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0 (accessed October 17th , 2006)

general statement for the oneness of worship and "There is no god but He" is a pronouncement of the oneness of God, that He is the right object of worship.[394]

It is Al-Razi in his *Mafātīh al-Ghayb: Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, who comments on this verse with more details. He comments on the word "One" as in "And your God is One God" as a name in one occasion or an attribute in another: it might means the inherent attribute of the essence of God or the additional attribute of His essence; it is the undivided unit that could not be deciphered into parts; it is not constituted from anything. He does not differentiate the meaning of "And your God is One God" and "There is no god but He"; it is a pure repetition which means the first affirmative statement has almost same meaning with the second negative form. He explains that the latter functions as a prevention as people would say "my God is one, is not He? Further he comments on "There is no god but He" from epistemological point of view. He says that human beings can not describe and accept some idea based on nothing, *'adam;'* there must be something, *wujūd*, to base and support a human being's belief. Human beings cannot support their description from nothing. On the other hand, the description of *wujūd* does not need and always precedes the description of *'adam'*; Why then in the statement of "There is no God," does the negative meaning precedes the affirmative statement "but He?" He explains that the reversal gives benefit to affirm the oneness of God that is free from any association.[395] Al-Tabarsi in *Mujma' al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, from a linguistic point of view gives commentary on "There is no god but He" as an independent statement. The first part functions as a *mubtada'* (subject) and the second as a *khabar* (predicate). In this case semantically the "He" is the

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[394] Al-Baydhawi in Anwar *al-Tanzil wa Asrar al-Ta'wil*, in http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=6&tSoraNo=2&tAyahNo=163&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0 (accessed October, 17th, 2006)

[395] Al- Razi, *Mafatih al-Ghayb: Al-Tafsir al-Kabir* in http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=4&tSoraNo=2&tAyahNo=163&tDisplay=yes&Page=7&Size=1 (accessed October 17th, 2006)

substitute of the subject "*Lā ilāha*" and the sentence "There is no god but He" could be rendered to He is the God (*Allah al-ilāh wahdah*).[396]

From the three above Qur'anic commentators, it was only Al-Qurtubī who clearly divides the profession of faith into negative and affirmative statements. However, all of them did not understand and put it in a linear way; they understood it in rhetorical way in which the reversal structure from the negative to affirmative is to put more emphasis on the last statement. Al-Rāzī even gave an epistemological explanation that the negation will not take place from nothing; rather, it is the affirmation that negates the false beliefs of God and every belief in god based on the existence of the God. Moreover, our understanding of God might fall into parts or ones of the negated and differentiated gods. What Nurcholish did, by considering that most of religious understandings are immanent and therefore temporal, made him gain a higher position, a transcendent position than any historical Islam. It is the position that liberal enlightenment subjects have dreamed.

Nurcholish's secularization became a discourse of "othering," and authorizing self. He used the formula of the profession of faith that comprises, from the perspective of phenomenology, two meanings, negation and affirmation, to negate others and affirm selfhood. He treated knowledge of others as a perception of phenomena or mere opinion while his own understanding as a doxa, a real knowledge. This is the blind spot of Nurcholish. He did not recognize that his knowledge was also another form of opinion or perception. The coming question now is what makes one opinion considered knowledge and the other interpretation is a power. Nurcholish's opinion was supported, at least went together with the government agenda

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[396] Al-Razi.

of modernization, by the regime of Soeharto. Foucault's argument that those who have power, have the right to say what knowledge is might explain the answer.

Nurcholish's logocentric inclination could be traced to his first treatise "*Al-Qur'an, 'Arabiyun Lughatan wa 'Alamiyyun Ma'nan*" (The Qur'an: Arabic in Wording, Universal in Meaning).[397] This thesis assumes that meaning is independent from its literal form; the form is treated as simply representation of something while it meaning came a way before and therefore free. On the contrary, it is the meaning of the revelation that is always plural and local but its Arabicity is the universal. Therefore the translatability of the Qur'an into any other languages has become issue among Muslims scholars.[398] Even if it is translated, the translation will be considered as simply an explanation, interpretation, and paraphrase. It does not mean the Qur'an cannot be, as to forbidden, translated; or Arabic language holds superior status over any other language. But it is a representation of a genuine revelation; it is a "fact" of revelation. Since it is a fact, then no one can replace and change it. No one, not even modern innocent and objective eyes can acquire the authentic meaning of the Qur'an, because the revelation had already finished right after the Prophet as a logos died.

This explains the reason why the closer communities to the Prophet are the better, because they witnessed the revelation of the Qur'an by their own eyes supported by the Prophet's help to explain the meaning of the Qur'an to them through his actions and sayings. They lived in same time as the revelation came down; they knew the meanings of the Qur'an

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[397] Kull, *Piety and Politics*, 48.

[398] Hassan Mustapha, "Qur'an (Koran) Translation," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. Kirsten Malmkjaer and Mona Baker (New York: Routledge, 1998), 201. Imam Abu Hanifa, the Iraqi scholar and theologian (c. 700-67), believes that it is legitimate to translate all the verses of the Qur'an into a foreign tounge but it is not lawfull to put the whole together in one volume unless the Arabic text was placed opposite the translation throughout. On the contrary, Imam Shatiby (c. 1133-93), the Andalusian born, argues that the Qur'an is untranslatable on the premise that the book has "sense" that are exclusive to Qur'anic Arabic, so that even attempting to render such senses in non Qur'anic Arabic is doomed to failure.

better than any other communities because they are direct and local interlocutor of revelation. However, the idea to return directly to the first Muslims generation experience, *salafi's* approach to get the authentic and universal meaning of the Qur'an and *hadith* will not help much, because meaning is local and temporal.

It is the verbatim transmission of the Qur'an and *hadith* that holds the idea of universal, whereas the meaning and idea changes from time to time. The concentration on linguistic verbatim aspect of revelation must be emphasized more than that of their meaning. Is not the verbatim transmitted *hadith*, hold higher status than the meaning transmitted one? [399] The diversity and vastness of Qur'anic commentaries that have been written are based more on the idea of universal linguistic of the Qur'an rather than on universal meaning of it; no one knows its universal meaning since they are particular, bounded in local and temporal time. The meaning of any text is differed and deferred by its relation to the readers[400] and its interrelation with time and place. The Qur'an is *mabny*,[401] divinely constructed, therefore no one can morphologically deconstruct it, but its meaning is *mu'rab*,[402] changing in accord to its position. Hence, the meaning of the Qur'an must be celebrated. If the Qur'an is believed as a universal revelation, let universal human beings from different particularities read it with their particular eyes. The Qur'an is *al-dhikr*, a reminder for humanity that human beings has a covenant with Allah as it was revealed in the seventh century in the Arabian peninsula to remind the Arab people. Islam as

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[399] Linguistically, *ad th* has two different ways of transmission, verbatim and thematic. The former, since it is transmitted multiply by many transmitters, has higher status than the latter that may run the risk of changes in wording, and thus original intent. See Wael B. Hallaq, *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law: Themes in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 136.

[400] Jacques Derrida and Peggy Kamuf, *A Derrida Reader: Between the blinds* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 242.

[401] *Mabny* is an Arabic grammatical concept for words that does change in its final form because it is already constructed like that.

[402] *Mu'rab* is the opposite of *mabny*. Its final ending changes in accord to its position within a sentence.

al-dīn, is the act of fulfilling that human-divine covenant with personal and social responsibility, so it is not only as submission and surrender that is commonly and easily diverted to make others submit and surrender to the human power in the name and with the banner of Islam.

B. Masyarakat Madani and the Loss of Authority

Nurcholish appropriated the concept of civil society to *masyarakat madani*. This appropriation has a strong Islamic connotation. *Madani* is derived from both Madina, a city where the Prophet Muhammad established the first political community and *madanīya* (civility) and *tammadun* (civilization, civilized order). The question to be addressed is why Nurcholish needed to appropriate the social term "civil society" into religious discourse. It reminds us to the previous attempt of the modernists who appropriated the concept nation-state to Islamic state.

Nurcholish seems very suspicious of the concept of civil society, in contrast with his confident attitude towards democracy. Nurcholish seems to have an idea that democracy is the "end of history." He represented the statist discourse on civil society, which is in fear of too much democracy, as the civil society wants to develop their own autonomy. Nurcholish was against the notion of civil society *vis-à-vis* the state. He saw civil society as a society of citizens who need the sanction of the state. Nurcholish Wanted to restrict freedom of civil society as it has been shown through Eastern European tradition by religion. He invokes the persistent nostalgia of Medinan religious community for long-lost state of communal grace especially from the cities. Medinan society was a society in which class divisions, such as *al-Anṣar* (the Helpers)

and *al-Muhajir n* (the Emigrants), the Muslims and the Jews, or the existence of various tribes might exist but not in any conscious, articulate and threatening form. He sought the need for disciplined acceptance of authority as the means to preserve social order and used them in order to stabilize the social and political status quo.

The way Nurcholish used religion as a restriction of civil society did not show his respectful manner towards modern society. He treats the modern society as a "Bedouin" society that only religion can subordinate. The Bedouins, according to Ibn Khaldun, can acquire authority only by making use or religion.[403] Further, he says that the Bedouins are the least willing society to subordinate themselves to each other, as they are rude, proud, ambitious, and eager to be the leaders. Their individual aspirations rarely coincide. However, when there is religion among them through prophethood or sainthood, then they have some something restraining influence in themselves.[404] Nurcholish censured the savagery of the Bedouin society, however the savagery also found in civilized society disguised in different forms.

The civilized society, preoccupied with acquiring luxury, tends to corrupt its good character. They compete not to gain basic needs but greater luxury and political power influence. The savagery and aggression that are usually attributed to a barbarian society are also the natural traits for civilized society. No wonder then that in the light of enlightened civilization atrocities and genocide still happen and are even worse because it has been done by those who call themselves as the "civilized" people. In addition, the Meccan people who were considered more urban and "civilized" than the Medinan tribes did not welcome the teaching of Islam. It was from Medina, the rural area that Islam spread very fast from the rest or Arabian Peninsula. The reason for this is, as Ibn Khaldun argues, that they were closer to the first natural state and more remote

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[403] Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah,* 120.
[404] Ibn Khaldun, 120.

from the luxuries or anything causing for desires and pleasures.[405] It does not mean that Islam is more suitable with the rural life than the urban life because this notion will contradict the claim of universal Islam made by Muslims. It is right that Islam, as Nurcholish argues was an urban phenomenon, but the urban people in Mecca did not accept it because Islam emerged as a challenge to the authority and monopolistic practices among the great merchants in the urban Mecca area.

The civil society discourse comes up not only to challenge the totalitarianism as it happened in Eastern European countries but also to question the authority of the state that carries out the democracy system. It is the authorship of the state, a class system that claims to represent the voice of society that has been challenged. Nurcholish's rejection to the idea of Islamic state makes him preoccupied with, and advocates the system of democracy. What is a good civil society, according to him, is a good citizenship. What is required of the good citizen is that he should come into maturity through an exercise of system that has taught him to acknowledge the state as the logos of law. This statist understanding of civil society puts the state, with its joint possession, shared among the members of proper, legitimate family or community of "rational" citizens, in a position that its self-authorized power never be threatened. Nurcholish's reference to the Prophet's Medinan society with their obedient community makes the statist approach of civil society even stronger and tries to end the discourse of civil society. In this fear of "being too much" democracy from society forces Nurcholish to go back to the autority of religion. The idealization of Medinan society that he draws from functions as a nostalgic imagination, which supports any adequate conceptualization in social and political terms. Such idealization may

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[405] Ibn Khaldun, 94.

promote "a more efficient civil order," enabling the mechanisms of representation to produce certain genuine benefits.

Is this idealization of Medinan community system as a paradigm of socio-political system something new? Many different Muslims seem to have attempted to emulate the Prophet communal system in Medina throughout history because the tradition of the Prophet constitutes the epistemological foundation of Islamic belief. From this point of view, what Nurcholish attempted by taking the history Medinan society as a paradigm for socio-political life has an epistemological foundation. However, history is just a document, a trace of existential event that many different people can interpret it according their aims and their cultural background. Therefore, the various member of early Muslim community had differed about the conception of societal system that they should have. The conception of the Sunnis who stresses on the unity of the Umma with their caliphate system differs from the Kharijites who focuses on the egalitarian Umma with their notion that anyone could be leader as long as they are obedient to the Qur'an and Sunna. The Shi'is has different paradigm too. They want to keep the divinity, spirituality or charisma of the leader of *Umma* with their *imāma's* system. Modernist Muslims also take the Medinan socio-political system as their paradigm to justify the establishment of an Islamic state.

The dissention and conflict within Medinan society already happened not only after the death of the Prophet but also during his time.[406] Some of the results of the conflict were the exile of Banu Qaynuqa and Na   r from Medina,[407] and the massacre of Banu Quray a because they broke their pact with the Prophet.[408] All of them were Jewish tribes. There was also a group or

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[406] W. Montgomery Watt, *Islam and the Integration of Society* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), 94.

[407] Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (Vermont: Inner Traditions International, 1983), 204.

[408] Lings, 227.

party called hypocrite, who attempted to secede from the main body of the *Umma* at the time of Muhammad's death and Abu Bakr as the successor of the Prophet managed to defeat them.[409] The Muslim's opponents in the war of apostasy (Ar. *Ridda*) included not only apostates, but also the tribal groups, which in the lifetime of the Prophet had remained completely independent of the political entity.[410]   Within the Muslim community itself, there were friction between the Emigrants and the Helpers, no wonder if sometime the Prophet need a renewal of pledge of allegiance or *bay'a* to keep the *Umma* united.[411] What made the Medinan society united was obedience to the Prophet; his was the better position to guarantee security to his followers than any other leader in that part of Arabia and to maintain of high degree of justice and fair-play between the various sections of his community. The Prophet often censured the group feeling of their genealogy of tribe shown by the Medinan society for achieving their superiority above others.[412]

After the death of the Prophet, the dissention, friction and fraction came up within the Medinan society. The companions from Mecca used the authority of the Prophet who allegedly said "*al-'aimmat min Quraish*"[413] (The imams [leaders] are from among Quraysh, the tribe where the Prophet came from). The Quraysh used this   *adīth* to respond to an oath of allegiance made by the *Ansar,* a group of companion from Medina. The oath was declared by Sa'd ibn 'Ubāda saying: "One *amīr* (leader) from us, and another from among you." All this happened in

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[409] Karen Amstrong, *Muhammad: A biography of the Prophet* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 189.

[410] Albert Noth, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study* (New Jersey: The Darwin Press, 1994), 28.

[411] Lings, *Muhammad*, 252.

[412] Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 161.

[413] Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad Ahmad*, in http://hadith.al-islam.com/Display/Display.asp?Doc=6&ID=31674&SearchText=%C7%E1%C3%C6%E3%C9%20%E3%E4%20%DE%D1%ED%D4&SearchType=exact&Scope=0,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8&Offset=0&SearchLevel=Allword, (accessed on October 17th 2006).

the hall (*saqīfa*) of Banu Sa' da and finally the general consensus led to the Abu Bakr's elevation to the caliphate.[414]

The attitude of the now Muslim society towards the authority of a state cannot be paralled to as that of Medinan society towards the Prophet. It was the communal belief of the infallibility of the Prophet –event though the community was already aware that his infallibility was confined only to the duty of conveying divine messages -- and powerful political influence that won the heart the people and bound them in one community. This condition had never been fully present even right after the Prophet died. It does not mean that the history of the Prophet and Medinan society cannot be a model or paradigm for ideal society. Making their history a paradigm without addressing critical issues of the history itself would be considered unwise, because it will only make a society have to conform and be obedient to the state that might not be able to emulate the modesty and justice of the Prophet. In the current global competing civilization where every state, kingdom and civilization wants to show its superiority, the many different weak subcultures were forgotten and even conceived it as a burden and, therefore, blamed for their inability to keep pace with the progress. The teaching of the Prophet, as the Medinan leader, who urged the authority "follow the peace of the weakest among you"[415] would be easily neglected in the name of pursuing civilization because it concentrates on the urban conveniences and luxuries as a symbol or parameter of a power.

If the case was like this, why did not Nurcholish broaden the concept of *Masyarakat Madani* into the first subsequent seven centuries of Islamic history? Moreover, why, with his belief on the idea of progress, did not Nurcholish accept the relapse of the ideal caliphate in

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[414] Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah ibn Khaldun,* in http://www.alwaraq.net/index2.htm?i=98&page=1 accessed on October 17th 2006. Or see in Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah ibn Khaldun,*(*Ibn Khaldun: The Muqaddimah, an Introduction to History,* trans. Franz Rosenthal (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), 396.
[415] Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, 153.

Medina as a failure system? It failed because it did not live up to principle of the survival of the fittest and the next system of dynasty (*dawlah*) as the living longer system was evidence and proof that was compatible to the demands of its time. Ibn Khaldun saw that Mu'awiyah's appointment to his son Yazid as his successor in a positive way as the demand of its time, otherwise the dissolution of the Muslim community would happen because everyone recognized their own freedom to make an independent judgment.[416] The only reason that Mu'awiya had to appoint his son was '*a abīya*, a strong group feeling from a community. According to Ibn Khaldun, leadership exists only through superiority, and it comes only through group feeling.[417] Further, he says that while the restraining influence of religion has weakened, the restraining influence of government and group was needed. If someone did not get acceptability from the group but still had been appointed as a ruler, he would have been quickly demolished and the community would have been split and torn by dissention.[418] Ibn Khaldun describes what happened with the end of caliphate system and concerning the eradication of religion from the Muslim community,

> Someone asked 'Ali: 'Why do the people disagree concerning you, and why did they not disagree concerning Abu Bakr and 'Umar?' 'Ali replied: 'Because Abu Bakr and 'Umar were in Charge of men like me, and I today am in charge of men like you.' He referred to the restraining influence of Islam.[419]

The end of the caliphate in Medina could not be considered the end of "Islamic civil society," otherwise, the society under those Muslim dynasties, where the differentiation of religion and state occurred, will be discounted. That society also provides invaluable idea for

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[416] Ibn Khaldun, 164.

[417] Ibn Khaldun, 100.

[418] Ibn Khaldun, 168.

[419] Ibn Khaldun, 169.

society in the modern civilization. The Muslims' attitude towards dynastic system as being both supportive and oppositional was also genuine at that time and might be better than the "democratic" aspiration as it was shown and struggled by the Kharijites. Were not they the early liberal Muslims who rose up in opposition to the dynastic system? In the name of *khilafa* and Medinan political and social system, they stood up against the Umayyad dynasty. They advocated "democratic" views that anyone is born free and therefore he could become a ruler of the *Umma*, as long as they observe the religious laws, regardless of social position.[420]

Shi'ah also gave almost the same oppositional response to the Umayyad based on the authority of *adīth* "I left for what if you hold up to, you will never be misguided, the book of God and my Family";[421] and the so called Ghadir Khumm story as 'Ali's investiture to be an *imam* or leader after the Prophet.[422]

The Sunni who accepted the authority of Umayyad dynasty on the condition that they would rule according to the Qur'an and *adīth* gave another different response. The memory of the successful attempt by the Prophet to unite many different tribes provides and generates different paradigms of socio-religious system of life. Which one among those different paradigms is true? Is the current paradigm is better than the older ones? The answer would be not necessary.

Masyarakat Madani, as the current paradigm of Medinan society, is not an objective description of the society. It is not also part of discovering or revealing the "true" Medinan

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[420] Huseyin Abiva, *A History of Muslim Civilization form Late Antiquity to the Fall of the Umayyads , Vol.I*, (Illinois: IQRA International Educatio, 2003), 256.

[421] Al-Tirmizi, *Sunan al-Tirmizi,* in http://hadith.al-islam.com/Display/Display.asp?Doc=2&ID=61468&SearchText=%CA%D1%DF%CA%20%DD%ED%DF%E3&SearchType=exact&Scope=0,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8&Offset=0&SearchLevel=Allword, accessed on November 17th 2006

[422] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring values for Humanity* (San Fransisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 66.

society as a self-evident reality. It is just another reflection or reconstruction through modern looking "glass," to make the old story in harmony with current situations based on their convenience and condition. To answer the previous question, Goodman provides a perspective of art to adjudicate the process of defining knowledge by distinguishing the works of art into allographic and autographic. Instead of judging the works as right or wrong, he uses the term forgeries and fake to keep the autonomy of the object of knowledge. He argues that the allographic works have no original but all copies. Works of music for example, exist in all performance and all manuscript copies. Further, he says that the performance of Mozart is not a fake if the manuscript is not original, nor is it a forgery if the performance is very poor. Due to wrong notes and skipped passages, he explains, the performance can cease, at some point, to be "Mozart." On the contrary, paintings are autographic because they are unique, unrepeatable objects. All copies of painting are forgeries because there is only one authentic original.[423]

The distinction between allographic and autographic perspective might help to treat the history of the Prophet. It has both characteristics. Every Muslims have a right to emulate and make the history of the Prophet as their paradigm, but they cannot have a claim that their paradigm is the original and superior one and condemn the other as having deviated or making religious innovation (*bid'a*). Anyone who has a claim of their authenticity and originality must be questioned because the revelation and history of the Prophet is also an autographic object that is unique, unrepeatable. Sunna has a dimension of allographic; everyone is eligible to perform Sunna differently from others as long as following the prophetic notation. On the contrary, *adīth* represents the authographic dimension of the Prophet; no one is allowed to make it and

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[423] D'Amico, *Historicism and Knowledge*, 110.

ascribe it to the Prophet. If they do it, they will be charged of making forgery and religious innovation.

Ibn Khaldun noted the unrepeatability or autographic of the obedience of Medinan society. He said that Islam had won the heart of the people and caused them to obedient. That happened because people observed with their own eyes the presence of angels to help them, the repeated appearance of heavenly messages among them, and the constant recitation of the divine word to them in connection with every occasion. However, these extraordinary happenings passed with the disappearance of miracles and the death of the generations that had witnessed them with their own eyes.[424] Nurcholish's harking back to the value of traditional institution, which is religion, indicated his fear of change resulting from the growing of liberal civil society. Nurcholish used religious doctrine to subordinate others, in this sense is the civil society to the state and to anchor his thought to both eternal revelation and objective history. It does not mean that using religion or any idealization to mold others in certain way is not acceptable, as Talal Asad indicates, the proper ethical question is about the exercise of power and the means which are used in developing or manipulating relation with the other.[425]

In his secularization, Nurcholish already located Islam in a transcendental and private sphere because of the defeat of his senior modernists' struggle to establish Islamic state. However, in his *Masyarakat Madani*, he called the religion back into a public life. He used it as social solidarity (*'a abīya*) among competing discourses of civil society. With his concept, Nurcholish tried to differentiate himself not only from the rest of the Muslim community but also from the other different religious community because religion. Since religion in modern views

[424] Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah,* 170.

[425] Talal Asad, *Genealogy of Religion* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 12.

has been considered a part of many different subcultures, no wonder that Nurcholish sometimes was described as sectarian scholar because of his involvement in ICMI despite his eloquence to speak about pluralism.

C. Pluralism and Exclusivism

Nurcholish does not identify clearly the particular form of Islam in the generic sense, except that it is a teaching of total genuine submission and surrender to the One God, without doing the same for any other purpose, object, or person except Him.[426] It is the generic Islam that teaches *al- anifīya al-sam a*, a spirit to seek the truth, with purely and openly in accord with the natural uprightness of humans. This is the right religious spirit that was ever exercised by Ibrahim, the first patriarch and the father of monotheist, and the prophet Muhammad as the last prophet who taught his follower to pursue *al- anifīya al-sam a*.[427] However, on certain occasion he mentions that Muslims, with their Islam *par excellence*, are supposed to be the mediators among many different groups of people.[428] His claim is also supported by the accounts of Muslim religious practices that lived in peace with other religious communities during the Golden Age.

Nurcholish's view on the equality of religions as he advocated in his notion of secularization ironically disappeared when he started discussing on pluralism. It is true that he

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[426] Madjid, 493.

[427] Nurcholish Madjid, "Beberapa Renungan tentang Kehidupan Keagamaan di Indonesia untuk Generasi Mendatang," in *Menggugat Gerakan Pembaharuan Keagamaan Debat Besar Pembaruan Islam*, ed. H. Lukman Hakiem (Jakarta: Lembaga Studi Informasi Pembangunan, 1995), 71.

[428] Madjid, "Islamic Faith," 496.

recognized the truth and values presents in other religion. With this recognition, Nurcholish challenged the modernist Muslims' claim of exclusivity of their religion, that Islam is the only true religion. This Muslim belief could also be rendered to the Christian exclusive axiom, *Extra Ecclesia Nulla Salus*. Nurcholish also wanted to go beyond the inclusive idea of religious tolerance as it has been shown by the traditionalist Muslims. He said that pluralism was not a matter of tolerance and the recognition of equivalency of different religion and equally effective soteriologically but it was an attitude and acceptance of the relativity all religious understandings. Here again, Nurcholish saw others' belief or faith as a mere understanding whereas he himself had both understanding or opinion and knowledge or doxa. The awareness of the relativity of all religions (its understanding), that Nucholish advocates, is supposed to invalidate the truth claim and superiority from religious community. However, the matter is not as simple like that, because another specter of truth claim comes up again in the discourse of pluralism.

As a good theologian, Nurcholish knew how to formulate universal claims for his religion. Since Islam itself was already differentiated into many different schools of thought and different orders throughout the history just like any other religions, then which Islam and Muslims did Nurcholish take as an ideal Islam? Is it a historical Islam with it differentiation or transcendental and generic Islam that is not fully present in history? If what he meant was the Islam that was practiced by the Prophet and the first *salafis,* how could he know, as Baso charged, the way they practiced it because he did not count directly on the early Islamic traditions in favor to the reconstruction reading of modern Western authorities; Nurcholish allowed religious communities to have a truth claim of their religion for their own internal

community. However, the way he elaborated pluralism showed that he himself enthusiastically

disclosed his universal and pluralist belief of Islam to the other different religious community.

In regard to the idea of singularity of the authentic revelation and the plurality of

religions, Nurcholish quotes Muhammad Rashid Ridha', a famous Islamic reformer from Egypt;

he quotes Ridha' from 'Abdul Hamid Hakim, a figure of Sumatran Thawalib from Padang

Panjang. Hakim argues that:

> Essentially, the difference between us (Muslim) and the People of the Book is like to the
> difference between the monotheists who are pure in their religious attitude toward God
> and act in accordance with the Qur'an and the Sunnah on the one side and those who
> make unlawful innovation (*bid'ah*) on the other, straying from both (the Qur'an and the
> Sunnah), which were left to us by the Prophet Muhammad.[429]

Ironically, even though Nurcholish is regarded as the champion of pluralism, he still quotes from

someone who employs exclusivist religious language, such as distinction between "We and

They" instead of choosing "I and Thou." This ambivalent attitude seems to be reminiscence of

Orientalism, the tendency, as Said put it, to project unexamined Western stereotypes on to what

is properly other.[430]

It will not be fair to judge people merely based on their thought without considering their

historicity. The next passage will focus on the historical account of how Nurcholish put his

inclusive ideal and pluralism thought into history. In October 1990, the mass tabloid *Monitor*

published the results of a readers' poll in which president Soeharto was ranked the most admired

figure among the paper's readership and the Prophet Muhammad the eleventh. This poll outraged

the conservative-modernists and organized fierce demonstrations.[431] Concerning this so-called

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[429] Madijd, 496.

[430] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Book, 1979), 5.

[431] Hefner, *Civil Islam,* 161.

"*Monitor Affair,*" Nurcholish criticized the tabloid and its non-Muslim editor, Arswendo Atmowiloto, by saying that publication of the poll constituted "SARA" (It is Indonesian acronym for the forbidden set of highly emotive issues involving ethnicity as in *Suku*, religion as in *Agama*, race, as in *Ras,* and class or group sentiment as in *Antar-golongan*). Nurcholish urged that *Monitor* should be permanently banned. The resolution of the issue included the permanent withdrawal of *Monitor's* publishing license and the arrest, trial and conviction of Arswendo on charge of insulting Islam. Eventually Arswendo was put in prison four years of a five-year sentence and was released in 1994.[432] It was Abdurrahman Wahid, the only major Muslim leader who argued for calm in that affair. He said that in spite of whatever one might feel concerning how the Prophet was depicted in Monitor's poll, the right to publish cannot be infringed upon. His solution was that if Muslims are insulted, they simply need to boycott the tabloid. Under no circumstances, Gus Dur declared, could he accept the banning and revocation of the fundamental right to free and publication of anyone, by anyone, in any place.[433]

Is that endorsement of the banning of *Monitor* by Nurcholish the actualization of the ideal and generic Islam? As an intellectual, he could have falsified the poll by making different poll with a different respondents or questioning the validity and objectivity of the poll instead of using theological approach and getting furious and endorsing the banning of media by the government. Just like in secularization in which Nurcholish put himself in the transcendent realm as hierarchically superior to the immanent realm, in the case of pluralism he put himself in the superior position which is the generic Islam rather than the par excellence one. A generic Islam

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[432] Douglas E. Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam, and the Ideology of Tolerance* (London: Routledge, 1995), 88.

[433] Ramage, 88.

is transcendental Islam, and therefore free from any deviation. On the contrary, par excellent Islam is historical Islam that is easily impured by human intervention.

Being too faithful to his pluralism and logocentric idea, Nurcholish sees all religions simply as different human responses to the One divine reality; he neglects the "reality" that it is God through the angels, who reveals different messages to different people or community with different forms and languages. Therefore, the differences do not come from mere human responses, but from God who gave different responses to the different communities in different ways.

Pluralism, Nurcholish argues, could not be conceived merely as synonymous with tolerance towards a plurality and diversity of religions, but it is an attitude to acknowledge the relativity of any understanding of divine messages. However, his universal claim of pluralism would be a contradiction in itself because the universal claim often excludes particularity and set itself as a transcendental judgment.[434] On the contrary, Panikkar, one advocate of global pluralism holds that a pluralist, must reject the notion that there is one type of rationality or an underlying core to human reason that fits all philosophical system and cultural type.[435] Another, similar, view rejecting the universal claim of pluralism comes from Gavin D'Costa who goes further to declare that there is no such thing as pluralism. He says:

> I want to suggest that there is no such a thing as pluralism because all pluralists are committed to holding some form of truth criteria and by virtue of this, anything that falls foul of such criteria is excluded from counting as truth (in doctrine and practice). Thus, pluralism operates within the same logical structure as exclusivism.[436]

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[434] Raimundo Panikkar, *A Dwelling for Wisdom* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publ, 1995), 147.

[435] Stephen Kaplan, *Different Paths, Different Summits: A Model for Religious Pluralism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, 2002), 48.

[436] Kaplan, 44.

Based on the above excerpt, what Nurcholish, as it was mention above, advocated pluralism to invalidate and devaluate a truth claim could be considered another form of exclusivity. The theological foundation at work here, as Michael Bannes put it the "Religious Pluralism"[437] is a retrieval of the modernist apologists' sense of the continuity between God's presence within the created order and God's self-revelation to Muhammad. With his pluralism Nurcholish seems to show that Islam has always taken broader view of the action of God in the world because it was the final and peak of all revelation. His own view of the continuity of history and the idea of progress --assuming that the people of the world might be arrayed along a spectrum of development from the most primitive tribes to the civilized nations in which the last is the superior-- also supports his exclusivity.

Nurcholsih's pluralism also falls into a reductionist universalim ignoring the particularity and of distinct historical and cultural forms. He seems to inherit the Enlightenment universalist mindset that has desire, borrowing Barnes' expression, to "stand above the action," the drive to replace the diffuseness of local diversity with the neatness of comprehensive system.[438] This universalist mindset of pluralism needs to be ruled out because it generates hegemonic discourse and system. Concerning this hegemony, Taylor argues that when reason is obsessed with unity, it tends to become hegemonic as political and economic orders constructed to regulate whatever does not fit into governing structure. The first victim of totalizing power is always the "other" and the weakest because they are discounted in the meta-narrative in the name of pursuing stability and unity. The claim of universality of pluralism should not be taken as an explanation or metaphysical truth, let alone the objective representation of self evident reality. Instead, it should be understood as a cultural construction because it is only dimension of historical

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[437] Barnes, "Religious Pluralism," 416.
[438] Barnes, 412.

attempts of the elite to look for the sameness from different competing belief and put it in harmony with predominant powers.

D. Conclusion

Nurcholish was an influential advocate for a new understanding of religion and its reform in Indonesia. He counted as one of the most authoritative scholars in both religious and political issues. The richness of the socio-historical setting in which he was brought up provided invaluable sources for his intellectual career. His early familial and educational background supplied him basic values of Islam and fundamental Islamic doctrines from a traditional outlook. His father's involvement in Masyumi, the modernist party, brought him in to the circle of the modern Muslim middle-class with their discourse of modernization and religious reforms. These two different religious backgrounds made Nurcholish hold a broader horizon in looking at Islam than his modernist colleagues who advocated the *ijtihād* and call back to the Qura'an and *Sunna*. Together with some other thinkers who had the same double educational background from religious and secular institution, Nurcholish managed to generate a new Islamic discourse called neomodernism. It was a synthetic discourse resulting from mainly competing and dominant groups, the tradionalists NU, which his family had its religious and cultural affiliation with, and the modernists whom his family had its political relationship.

It was through the modernist circle that Nurcholish became acquainted with the Islamic reformation, liberal and secular nationalism. Despite his traditional background, Nurcholish was elected to lead the young modern Muslim association, HMI. It indicated that Nurcholish, raised in the traditionalist milieu, managed to win the heart of modernists. He was even touted as a Young Natsir, the front guard of Islamic modernism. The modernist party put their expectations

on his shoulder to continue their agenda to establish Islamic state in Indonesia after their political defeat. However, after several attempts were made to rehabilitate the name of the party and its founder failed, Nurcholish took a radical swerve to another direction to support the government policy to employ liberal democracy as their system. The reason behind this orientation was that Nurcholish with HMI wanted to save their constituents who already took part in the government bureaucracy from being banned as their senior modernist. Furthermore, Nurcholish criticized the idea of Islamic state as an ideology of the modernist.

Nurcholish argued that the emergence of the idea of the Islamic state represented a kind of apologetic tendency. It was a distortion of the properly proportioned relationship between state and religion. Nurcholish promoted a new discourse, secularization within pious Muslims. Nurcholish denied the ideological content of secularization. He affirmed that it was a form of liberating process of the *Umma.* He saw that they were no longer capable of distinguishing the real Islam, which was transcendental and sacred, from the traditional Islam, which was temporal and profane. Apparently, this influence of Western enlightenment that Nurcholish got from his senior modernists, brought the logocentrism into his thought. He could not recognize himself as a part of historical products whose thought could not be separated from their historical causes. He managed to discern the ideology of others but failed to recognize his own. He forgot that secularization first came up to rule out the authority of any tradition and religion. Instead of looking at secularization critically, he even went on to anchor it to the eternal principles of revelation and history. Among of the factors supporting his successful secularization were the emergence of the middle class in urban areas and the policy of the government who chose to use liberal democracy system and the regime's aversion to political Islam.

Nurcholish used religious doctrine *Lā ilāha illā Allāh* to implement his secularization. He understood that profession of faith from phenomenological perspective. The first part of the formula functions as the tool of negation of any opinions about religions that come from others, and the second serves as the affirmation of his own belief as the original understanding. Nurcholish treated the opinion of the other as immanent and temporal while his own as universal and transcendent thought. His rejection of the idea of the Islamic state brought him to construct the Medinan social system as an Islamic society and he rendered to *Masyarakat Madani*. Ironically, this Islamic civil society was based on the same theological foundation of Islamic state. It was another form of apologetic outlook on the idea of liberal civil society. Furthermore, *Masyarkat Madani* was meant to subordinate, tame, and end the discourse of civil society. His harking back to religion that he already tossed it up in the transcendental realm indicates his fear of the liberal, freedom of the emergence of a new society.

Nurcholish's advocation of religious pluralism was not much different from the tendency of subordinating the other. He planned to set up a universal theology based on Islamic doctrine to set up an all-embracing and overarching religion. One of the deliberations of promoting religious pluralism is to relativize the belief of the other and urge them to put it in private sphere, whereas his own belief was disseminated neatly. His pluralism also indicates the other form of truth claim and Islam's superiority above previous religions. It seems that Nurcholish's belief in the idea of Enlightenment and the idea of progress caused him to conclude that Islam the final and the peak of all religions. He did not see that all religions, at the same level that they have been left by their messengers are the story or copy of different religions.

This thesis is not meant to end the discourse established by Nurcholish; rather it is intended to build a new discourse based on Nurcholish's works. I would like to thank Nurcholish

who have opened a chance and provide a good environment to discuss religious matters.

However, it is a time for the others to open a new chapter to write their own history and move on

to get involved, reach out, and play within society without being threatened by any universal

and transcendental claim of truth and modern meta-narratives.

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