

On Freud's Origin of Religion: A Kalam Jadid Perspective

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Abstract

Sigmund Freud was a figure who had a wide influence. He explained that religion originates from human thoughts. This article aims to further explain Freud's theory of the origin of religion and analyze it through the perspective of Kalam Jadid. This research is qualitative research with a literature study type. The data obtained are then analyzed interpretively, comparatively, and historically. Following the assessment process, it was discovered that the following points encapsulate Freud's idea of the genesis of religion. First, totemism is a sort of religion that dates to early tribes. Second, monotheism is one of the faiths that have evolved from earlier ones. Third, people invented religion to get over emotions of helplessness and terror when confronted with difficult life circumstances. Therefore, religion is a type of neurosis as well. According to Kalam Jadid, there are several flaws in Freud's thesis. There is no hard evidence to back up Freud's claim that totemism was the first religion. Freud's premise that God does not exist is also the foundation of his theory. It is implied that Freud disregarded the idea that revelation is a source of knowledge, and that people are inherently religious and have a spiritual side.

Keywords: *Sigmund Freud, The Origins of Religion, Kalam Jadid.*

Abstrak

Sigmund Freud merupakan tokoh yang memiliki pengaruh yang luas. Ia menjelaskan bahwa agama bersumber dari pikiran manusia. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan lebih lanjut teori Freud tentang asal-usul agama dan menganalisisnya melalui perspektif Kalam

Jadid. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif dengan jenis studi pustaka. Data yang diperoleh kemudian dianalisis secara interpretatif, komparatif, dan historis. Setelah melalui proses pengkajian, ditemukan beberapa hal berikut yang merangkum gagasan Freud tentang asal-usul agama. Pertama, totemisme merupakan salah satu jenis agama yang berasal dari suku-suku terdahulu. Kedua, monoteisme merupakan salah satu kepercayaan yang berkembang dari kepercayaan sebelumnya. Ketiga, manusia menciptakan agama untuk mengatasi emosi ketidak-berdayaan dan ketakutan ketika dihadapkan pada keadaan hidup yang sulit. Oleh karena itu, agama juga merupakan salah satu jenis neurosis. Menurut Kalam Jadid, terdapat beberapa kelemahan dalam tesis Freud. Tidak ada bukti kuat yang mendukung klaim Freud bahwa totemisme merupakan agama pertama. Premis Freud bahwa Tuhan tidak ada juga menjadi dasar teorinya. Tersirat bahwa Freud mengabaikan gagasan bahwa wahyu merupakan sumber pengetahuan, dan bahwa manusia pada hakikatnya religius dan memiliki sisi spiritual.

Kata Kunci: Sigmund Freud, Teori Asal-Usul Agama, Kalam Jadid.

Introduction

The field of religious studies is always interesting to discuss, including the theme of religious origins. Scholars classify religions based on their origins into two: revealed religions and natural religions.¹ Generally, religious scholars hold the view that religion is rooted in revelation. According to Nasr (1933-now), the world's great religions are rooted in an eternal divine reality.² Earlier, Karl Barth (1886-1968) had also stated that it is impossible to find God outside of revelation.³ Meanwhile, C.S. Lewis (1899-1963) proposed a moral argument, in which humans basically have a need to obey the law. This obedience is reflected in what he called the law of human nature. Lewis emphasized that the human need to be a moral being is rooted in the longing for God.⁴ This view corroborates the opinion of Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) who said that human religious experiences arise from outside themselves, from something transcendent and

¹ David Alvargonzales, "Classification of Theories about the Origin of Religions," *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion*, Vol. 33, No. 4, (2021).

² Syarif Hidayatullah, et.al., "Seyyed Hossein Nasr's Perennialism Perspective for the Development of Religious Studies in Indonesia," *Jurnal Filsafat*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (2023), pp. 357-376. See also Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Filsafat Perennial: Perspektif Alternatif untuk Studi Agama," *Ulumul Quran*, Vol. 3, No. 3, (1992), pp. 86-95.

³ Joshua Ralston, *Barth, Religion, and the Religions*, in Paul D. Jones (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Karl Barth*, (Oxford Handbook online edn, 2020), pp. 637-653, doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199689781.013.41

⁴ Michael Ward, "Science and Religion in the Writings of C.S. Lewis," *Science and Christian Belief*, Vol. 25, No. 1, (2013), pp. 3-16.

completely different.⁵

Secular scholars, on the other hand, view religion as a cultural product that is embedded in people's lives and maintained for generations. Through an interpretive anthropological approach, Clifford Geertz (1926-2006) found that in order to form a system of meanings, symbols and motivations, people then form a religion.⁶ Previously, James G. Frazer (1854-1941) also stated more or less the same thing, namely that religion emerged as one of the stages of human evolution.⁷ Meanwhile, according to anthropologist Edward B. Tylor (1832-1917), religion is a projection of humans since primitive times about spiritual forces that are beyond themselves. In the earliest period of human civilization, religion appeared in the form of animism.⁸ This view was questioned by Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) who said that Tylor's assumption about animism presupposes a long journey back to being able to imagine the ideas of primitive society. However, Durkheim also embraced the view that religion is a product of the history of society.⁹

Apart from the anthropological approach, arguments about the origins of religion are also put forward with a psychological approach. This was done by Sigmund Freud with his psychoanalysis. He considered that religion is not the result of logical conclusions from the mind, but an illusion of human fulfillment.¹⁰ Furthermore, Freud's psychoanalytic approach does provide a significant contribution to understanding one's psyche, especially in relation to religious life. However, quite a lot of critical notes have been delivered against Freud's thinking. Daniel L. Pals, for example, in one of the chapters of his book, has pointed out what aspects Freud did not cover in his

⁵ Farid, "The Concept of Religious Experience by Rudolf Otto: A Phenomenological Approach," *Jurnal Filsafat*, Vol. 34, No. 2, (2024), pp. 235-253.

⁶ Nurus Syarifah, Zidna Z. Musthofa, "Antropologi Interpretatif Clifford Geertz: Studi Kasus Keagamaan Masyarakat Bali dan Maroko," *Humanis*, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 65-75. See also Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 87.

⁷ Muhammad Rikza Muqtada, "Menyoal Kembali Teori Evolusi Agama J.G. Frazer dalam Keberagamaan Masyarakat Jawa," *Millati Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (Juni 2016), pp. 41-60. See also J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion*, (New York: MacMillan, 1894),

⁸ Timothy Larsen, "E.B. Tylor, Religion, and Anthropology," *The British Journal for the History of Science*, Vol. 46, No. 3, (September 2013), pp. 467-485.

⁹ Rijal Mahmud, "Social as Sacred: Dalam Perspektif Emile Durkheim," *Tasamuh* Vol. 16, No. 02, (Juni 2018), pp. 101-117.

¹⁰ Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton Company, 1961), 54.

theory.¹¹ In a more specific form, Dianna T. Kenny also highlighted Freud's thoughts on religion in its various aspects.¹² A number of publications have also pointed out academic objections to Freud's views on religion, for example by Ulrike Kistner,¹³ Vyacheslav N. Zhukov,¹⁴ dan Abdul R. Barakatu.¹⁵

In addition to these criticisms, Kalam Jadid, which is the development of Islamic theology, also presents notes that should not be ignored. With a dialectical model, rational and scientific approach, which is based on religious texts and classical literature.¹⁶ A number of academic publications have released studies and research that use Kalam Jadid as their approach. Among them are those conducted by Hasan Yusufian, Wahiduddin Khan, Jamaluddin al-Afghani, and Said Nursi. In the form of thematic journals, similar topics are also found, such as those conducted by Muhammad K. Muslih, et al.,¹⁷ also Nur H. Ihsan dan M. Isom Udin.¹⁸ As seen in these publications, Kalam Jadid has the basic provisions to analyze Freud's thoughts on the origins of religion. So far, there have not been many publications that raise this issue, especially those that use Kalam Jadid as their perspective. This study aims to critically analyze Freud's theory of the origin of religion from the perspective of Kalam Jadid.

Freud's Genealogy of Thought

Sigmund Freud was born a Jew. He was the first child of his father's second wife, Jacob Freud. He was born in Moravia in 1856

¹¹ Daniel L. Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 70.

¹² Dianna T. Kenny, *Freud, and Religion: The Origin of Faith, Fear, and Fundamentalism* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

¹³ Ulrike Kistner, "Religion as Universal Obsessional Neurosis of Humanity? Re-Reading Freud on Religion," *HTS Theologiese Studies* 7, no. 22 (August 2021).

¹⁴ Vyacheslav N. Zhukov, "Freud: Culture, Power, Law," *Gosudarstvo i Parvo* 7 (August 2021).

¹⁵ Abdul Rahman Barakatu, "Kritik Terhadap Pandangan Sigmund Freud: Agama Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Pendidikan," *Lentera Pendidikan* 10, no. 2 (December 2007).

¹⁶ Wahiduddin Khan, *al-Islam Yatahadda: Madkhal al-'Ilmi ila al-Iman* (New Delhi: Goodword Book, 1992), 49–52.

¹⁷ M. Kholid Muslih, Amal Fathullah Zarkasyi, and M. Sofyan Hidayat, "The Western Pragmatism Philosophy Based on Kalam Jadid Perspective," *ULUL ALBAB Jurnal Studi Islam* 24, no. 2 (n.d.): 256–82.

¹⁸ Nur Hadi Ihsan and Moh. Isom Mudin, "Paradigma Kalam Dalam Konservasi Lingkungan Menurut Said Nursi," *Tasfiyah Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 4, no. 1 (February 2020): 27–46.

and then moved and settled in Vienna. As a child, Freud lived in a Catholic society as a Jew. This made Freud not too prominent in his religious side. However, his parents were people who were aware of Jewish teachings and educated their children with the values of the Synagogue. However, in their daily lives they adapted to Catholic traditions.¹⁹

Freud was known as an individual with high curiosity. Quoting Joachim Scharfenberg's explanation, Freud was very aware that his interest in his youth was only in philosophy. He was fond of the thoughts of many Western philosophers and thinkers. Their thoughts also supported the formation of Freud's psychoanalytic theory later on. Among them was Charles Darwin (1809-1882), a person whose teachings were very interesting to Freud at that time. Then, Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck (1744-1829), whose ideas about mental development he wanted to continue with psychoanalytic logic, Gustav Theodor Fechner (1801-1887), Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841) with his mechanistic psychology, Theodor Lipps (1851-1914), and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860).²⁰ Then from Burckhardt's *Griechische Kulturgeschichte* he got things related to prehistoric human forms. So, Heinrich Schliemann's *Illias* made him aware of his love for antique things such as the unfulfilled desires of childhood, then Ludwif Laistner (1845-1896) because of which he had direct empathy for the parallelism of dreams and myths, and the last was James Mark Baldwin (1861-1934) who brought the correspondence theory of ontogeny and phylogeny to Freud.²¹

In 1873 he entered the University of Vienna to study medicine including anatomy and psychology. At the university, he met Ernst Wilhelm von Brucke (1819-1892) whom he considered the father of both disciplines. He also met the main students of the great physiologist Johannes Muller (1801-1858) such as Hermann von Helmholtz (1821-1894) whom he idolized, Emil Du Bois-Reymond (1818-1896), and Carl Ludwig (1816-1895). After graduating as a doctor in 1881, he worked at the Vienna General Hospital.

Early in his medical career, Freud met Josef Breuer (1842-1925), a man who had already done extensive research on mental illness who

¹⁹ Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion*, 50.

²⁰ Joachim Scharfenberg, *Sigmund Freud and His Critique of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988), 60-61.

²¹ Scharfenberg, 70-71.

would later become Freud's close friend. With him, Freud did much psychological research. Freud also studied the science of nervous diseases in Paris with Martin Charcot (1825-1893), a famous French psychologist at that time. Freud's meeting with Charcot greatly influenced Freud's later views. This is as Scharfenberg said that no one person had ever had such a strong influence on him, so that he easily changed what was then his views and goals.²²

In Vienna he continued to research mental illness. He handled many cases of mental and nervous disorders of his patients until he developed a method for the investigation and treatment of the human mind which he made the core of all his work called psychoanalysis. The results of his research were later included in one of his important works *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900).²³ Since the beginning of the 20th century Freud wrote many works concerning his psychoanalysis which continued to develop.

With his theory of dream interpretation, psychoanalysis expanded widely across various fields. Quoting Hans Kung's explanation, Freud himself made psychoanalysis his entire life's concern and examined how far its application could be extended in various fields of work, both larger and smaller. Finally, psychoanalysis was also applied in literature and aesthetics, mythology, folklore and educational theory, pre-history to the history of religion.²⁴ Specifically on the discussion of religion, Freud wrote his views in a number of works: *Totem and Taboo* (1913), *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), and *Moses and Monotheism* (1938). In these three books, Freud discusses the origins of religion, which is full of his psychoanalytic approach. This is because for him religion is a psychological problem.

Freud's Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is a method of treating mental disorders that emphasizes the investigation of mental processes in the unconscious.²⁵ Psychoanalysis was originally designed and developed by Sigmund Freud in Vienna in the late 19th century to the early 20th century.

²² Scharfenberg, 63.

²³ Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion*, 51.

²⁴ Hans Kung, *Freud and the Problem of God*, trans. Edward Quinn (London: Yale University Press, 1990), 40.

²⁵ "Psychoanalysis Summary | Britannica," diakses 30 Agustus 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/summary/psychoanalysis>.

Quoting Juliet Mitchell, Freud identified the basis of his psychoanalysis as consisting of the assumption of mental processes in the unconscious, recognition of the theory of repression and resistance, appreciation of the importance of sexuality and the Oedipus Complex.²⁶

Freud's psychoanalysis divides human consciousness into three categories, namely the conscious, preconscious and unconscious.²⁷ Consciousness is where all thoughts, feelings, activities and perceptions that humans are aware of. While the preconscious is where ideas, memories and also desires are not in human consciousness but can be brought up at any time when needed. *Third*, the unconscious is the deepest part of the human self which although not realized but its role is very important. All human behavior, whether awake or not, is influenced by the subconscious. Freud said that everything that is mental in our view is unconscious.²⁸

In the unconscious, there is a dynamic of drive based on a conflict in which human physical desires arise, then on the other hand there is an attempt to suppress those desires consciously. It eventually becomes a thought or emotion that is buried in the subconscious. In the conscious mind, the thought or emotion may have been forgotten, but in reality it has not completely disappeared from the human soul and tries to react again. At a certain stage, these suppressed emotions or thoughts can turn into irrational and strange behaviors that appear in humans. This is a nervous disorder termed neurosis. According to Freud, this disease can only be treated with psychoanalysis by an expert.²⁹

The conflict in the unconscious is related to Freud's theory that divides human personality into three, namely id, super-ego and ego. Id is the first and most basic part. It is rooted in the early stages, namely the animal phase of human evolution. This is where the basic human physical desires such as the desire to eat, drink, and have sex. While the super-ego is its opposite where it is the top part. It represents the influences that since birth have been inserted into a person's personality by the outside world in the form of values, norms or rules

²⁶ Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (New York: Penguin Books, 1975), 343.

²⁷ Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, ed. Ernest Jones (London: Leonard and Virginia Woolf, 1927), 9–13.

²⁸ Sigmund Freud, *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press Ltd., 1959), 13.

²⁹ Sigmund Freud and A.A. Brill, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1913).

in society. The ego is the center of determining human personality choices. It is between the id and the super-ego which is tasked with balancing conditions due to the conflict between the desires of the id and the difficult reality of the physical world or social norms ordered by the super-ego.³⁰

Freud's Theory of the Origin of Religion

In *Totem & Taboo* (1913) Freud linked the origins of religion to the culture of primitive society which he thought was the earliest and could be traced to modern times, namely totemism and taboo. Freud was a thinker who adhered to the theory that totemism was the earliest religion. A totem is a symbol or protective animal of a community. It is protected and not killed because it has a special meaning and sacredness.³¹ While taboos are prohibitions that are mainly related to religion (belief).³² He took this idea from the thoughts of William R. Smith (1846-1894).³³ Freud took the Aboriginal tribe in Australia as the most primitive tribe as a sample. According to him, the Aboriginal tribe is a tribe that is still pure from various influences of external cultures.³⁴

The purity of this tribe's culture reflects an early human culture including totemism embraced by Aboriginal people. As quoted from Pals, Freud's thoughts in the book were influenced by evolutionist thinking which was not only Darwin's theory of biological evolution, but also ideas of social and intellectual evolution.³⁵ So, religion in this case is also an evolutionary process. Totemism evolved into the religions we know today.

According to Freud, the totem and taboo beliefs of primitive societies are irrational, but strangely they still adhere to them. In this case, Freud found the answer through psychoanalysis with his theory of the subconscious.³⁶ Primitive people experienced ambivalence based

³⁰ Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion*, 55–56.

³¹ Robert S. Ellwood and Gregory D. Alles, eds., "Taboo," in *The Encyclopedia of World Religions* (New York: Facts On File, Inc., 2007), 20.

³² Ellwood and Alles, 19.

³³ Robert S. Ellwood and Gregory D. Alles, eds., "Animals and Religion," in *The Encyclopedia of World Religions* (New York: Facts On File, Inc., 2007), 437.

³⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, trans. James Strachey (London: Routledge, 2001), 2.

³⁵ Freud, 2.

³⁶ Daniel L. Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 61.

on an event in history that eventually gave rise to totemism. Freud explained that if we acknowledge the truth of Darwinian evolution that human ancestors were apes, then we can imagine that primitive humans lived in *primal hordes*.³⁷ In primitive societies, boys have a sense of rivalry towards their fathers. They also have sexual attraction and desire for their mothers.³⁸ In this case, the child is jealous of his father, but on the other hand, they remain submissive and respect their father. Here they experience a kind of frustration due to these two conflicting feelings. Finally, one day they decide to kill their father and eat him and then destroy the group controlled by their father.³⁹ This phenomenon is called the *Oedipus Complex*. Freud admitted that this term was inspired by the Greek myth that tells the story of Oedipus who killed his father and married his mother.⁴⁰

After the incident, the children felt trapped in a mistake. They were filled with regret until they finally wanted their deceased father to be brought back and pay their respects. With his psychoanalysis, Freud explained that totem animals were actually substitutes for fathers.⁴¹ Then Freud said that from that feeling of guilt, two basic taboos in totemism were also born, namely the prohibition of killing totems and the prohibition of incest.⁴²

Although the life of the totem is usually sacred, at certain times they hunt it and eat it a masse in a ritual. From a psychoanalytic perspective, this is considered very important. The totem sacrifice seems to be only a very solemn emotional ceremony, where the community re-commits to the first murder of the father, and his death becomes the god of the tribe. In this ceremony, the child again acknowledges and declares their love for the father while unconsciously eliminating their hatred caused by the sexual rejection they suffered.⁴³ After a while, this spread to various tribes and became a well-known rule. From here we can see that according to Freud, totemism and taboo are the foundations of subsequent religions that originate from the psychological problems of primitive society due to murder events in their history.

³⁷ Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion*, 61.

³⁸ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 66.

³⁹ Freud, 183.

⁴⁰ Freud, *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, 55.

⁴¹ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 151.

⁴² Freud, 183.

⁴³ Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion*, 62.

In *Moses and Monotheism* (1938), Freud discusses the Jews and Moses as a case study for his psychoanalytic theory. Moses is depicted as the one who taught monotheism to the Jews. However, Freud stated that Moses was not a Jew as is known but a native Egyptian with various arguments that he wrote in the beginning of his book.⁴⁴ Regarding Moses' monotheism, Freud explained that he actually continued the monotheistic religion of Pharaoh Akhenaten.⁴⁵ Moses managed to free the Jews from slavery in Egypt and unite them under his leadership. However, Moses met a tragic end in the rebellion of his people. The religion he founded at the same time was also abandoned.⁴⁶

Moses' monotheism was then covered up by them by forming a new worship of a figure called *Yahweh* and all his new teachings.⁴⁷ They also wrote their holy book and called Moses the founder, even though this was just a trick to cover up their mistakes and regrets. However, in the following period many people emerged from their group who wanted to revive Moses' teachings.⁴⁸ New prophets emerged and called for a return to the religion of Moses, including Jesus who was finally considered to have brought the Christian teachings. This shows an important turning point. Moses' monotheism rose again and was embodied in today's heavenly religions. Here Freud thinks that the best way to explain this is with psychoanalysis. He considers this history to have similarities with the neurosis experienced by someone where there is a period of suppression and finally what is suppressed reappears.⁴⁹ The murder of Moses was also a repetition of the murder of the first father of primitive society with collective human repression.

Through the same emphasis on analogy that he had applied to his earlier work, Freud argued that the rise of the two religions (Judaism and Christianity) did not lie in the truth of their claims about God or a Savior and their claims about miracles, saints, or the hope of an afterlife. All these doctrines were nonsense, since they could not be proven. In contrast, the concept of psychoanalysis would show

⁴⁴ Sigmund Freud and Katherine Jones, *Moses and Monotheism* (Richmond: Hogarth Press, 1939), 15.

⁴⁵ Freud and Jones, 26.

⁴⁶ Freud and Jones, 43.

⁴⁷ In Judaism, this word is actually Hebrew, and if Latinized it becomes YHWH where there are no vowels there so this word cannot be read perfectly. Jews do not pronounce this word because they are afraid of mispronouncing it considering that this is a term for God. They read the word YHWH as Adonai.

⁴⁸ Freud and Jones, *Moses and Monotheism*, 148.

⁴⁹ Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion*, 68–69.

clearly that the real power of religions was to be found behind their doctrines, the psychological needs they served their adherents, and the unconscious emotions they expressed.⁵⁰

Freud in *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) explains that in essence religion is just an illusion. In his book Freud said that illusion is not the same as error and illusion is not necessarily an error.⁵¹ The characteristic of illusion is that it is produced from human expectations. Illusion is different from a delusion where we emphasize the importance of it contradicting reality.⁵² Delusion is the same as illusion where we want something to be real, but the difference is that delusion is a common thing that is known to be impossible.

Freud's way of writing in this religious field seems very interesting and easy to understand. He begins by stating the undeniable fact that life is very difficult for humans to suffer. Humans certainly feel suffering caused by many things. In such a difficult situation, humans want to find a solution. Humans in their suffering want to get peace of mind. The first step to solving this very difficult problem is to assume that nature is like humans (humanization of nature). In nature there are forces which are a person and we can give them these forces so that they will be gentle towards us. With this, humans can avoid natural disasters and besides this, humans create a substance that will be a judge and provide justice. With this, humans can avoid human cruelty towards other humans.⁵³ Humans' anxiety because of their weakness in facing life phenomena that are beyond their control leads to an illusion about God who can protect them, as in childhood they found a father figure who always protected them.⁵⁴

Freud equate religion with neurosis. He viewed religion as an illusion created by humans to provide comfort from the anxieties and uncertainties of life. Just as individuals suffering from neurosis create fantasies or rituals to relieve anxiety, people create religion to cope with fears of things they cannot control, especially death and natural phenomena. Freud compared religious rituals to the compulsive symptoms often found in individuals with neurosis. For example, in obsessive-compulsive neurosis, a person may feel compelled to

⁵⁰ Pals, 70.

⁵¹ Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, 47.

⁵² Freud, 48–49.

⁵³ Muhammad Rasjidi, *Filsafat Agama* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1978), 136.

⁵⁴ Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, 45.

perform repetitive actions to relieve their anxiety. Likewise, in religion, rituals such as prayer, worship, or sacrifice are often interpreted as ways to appease feelings of guilt or fear of divine punishment.

For Freud, all of this was clearly false, especially since there was no strong scientific evidence related to religious beliefs. However, he was disappointed because people in modern times still believed in religion.⁵⁵ However, Freud did not deny that religion in the past had clearly provided great services to human civilization. But that was not enough.⁵⁶ In modern times, humans could bring a special attitude towards worldly problems with a scientific spirit and build a mature civilization without religious superstition or God.

In line with Feurbach (1804-1872) and Marx (1818-1883), Freud wanted humans to return to their true selves, namely by abandoning illusions and dependence on God.⁵⁷ According to him, religion is only an illusion that comes from human psychological problems and God is a fantasy that is a projection of human anxiety. Adult human civilization should move from illusion to science that will be able to answer human problems. According to Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), science can help us overcome this fear that has been experienced by humans for many generations and *'direct our eyes to the earth instead of the sky.'*⁵⁸

In the ancient history of mankind or the period of ignorance and intellectual weakness, religion became something that could not be avoided as the neurotic stage in human childhood. When there were mistakes and failures in overcoming all trauma and repression during childhood and the neurotic disorder continued into adulthood, psychoanalysis considered that the person's personality was chaotic. The same thing also applies in the development of human civilization. Religion in the early history of mankind was a sign of a disease, and the desire to abandon religion became the only indication that showed the health of human civilization.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Masa Depan Sebuah Illusi*, trans. Cep Subhan KM, Cetakan II (Yogyakarta: CIRCA, 2019), 46.

⁵⁶ Sigmund Freud, 59.

⁵⁷ Amsal Bakhtiar, *Filsafat Agama* (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 2007), 132.

⁵⁸ Bertrand Russel, *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*, ed. Paul Edward (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1965), 22.

⁵⁹ Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, 70.

Critical Analysis of Freud's Theory of the Origin of Religion from the Kalam Jadid Perspective

The term *Kalam Jadid* was first echoed by Syibli an-Nu'mani (1857-1914), an Indian thinker in his book, *Ilmu al-Kalam al-Jadid*.⁶⁰ Zuhair bin Kitfi added that *Kalam Jadid* was also echoed first by a Turkish thinker Ismail Hakki al-Izmirli (1868-1946). It's just that his book was not widely circulated and widely translated.⁶¹ *Kalam Jadid* literally means New *Kalam*. However, the addition of new characteristics in this term does not mean reconstructing the principles of *Kalam* thought so that *Kalam Jadid* is separate from *Kalam* that has been established by previous scholars (read: *Kalam Qadim*). This is as stated by Syibli, "It is important for us not to deviate from what has been established by previous prominent scholars regarding the foundations and special rules related to it (*Kalam*)."⁶² According to Abdul Jabar ar-Rifai, the renewal (*tajdid*) in question is a shift from classical mutakallim language to contemporary language that covers all fields, both art and civilization.⁶³

In concrete terms, Freud used a scientific approach in formulating his theory of the origins of religion. However, in building his argument, Freud showed a number of methodological flaws. Among the forms is hasty generalization. Freud's psychoanalysis assumes that all individuals in the world are the same, even though Freud only took samples from his patients who were Europeans. Grunbaum even considered that the evidence-gathering technique by Psychoanalysis was not at all solid.⁶⁴ Some other critics said that the principles of psychoanalysis were built on unclear comparisons and dubious conclusions that could not be proven or refuted for the most part because there was no scientific way to test them.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Hasan Yusufian, *Kalam Jadid: Pendekatan Baru Dalam Isu-Isu Agama*, trans. Ali Passolowangi (Jakarta: Sadra International Institute, 2014), 14.

⁶¹ Zuhair Ibn Kitfi, "Ilm al-Kalam Min Masar al-Taqlid Ila Isti'naf al-Tajdid: Al-'Allamah Syibli al-Nu'mani Mitsalan," *Majallah Al-Mi'yar* 25 (2021): 183-205.

⁶² Syibli al-Nu'mani, *Ilm al-Kalam al-Jadid*, ed. Muhammad al-Siba'i (Cairo: al-Markaz al-Qawmi li al-Tarjamah, 2012), 16.

⁶³ Abdul Jabbar Rifa'i, *Ilm al-Kalam al-Jadid: Al-Madkhal Ila Dirasat al-Lahut al-Jadid Wa Jadal al-'Ilm Wa al-Din* (Beirut: Dar al-Tanwir li al-Thiba'ah wa al-Nasyr, 2016), 43.

⁶⁴ Adolf Grunbaum, *The Foundations of Psychoanalysis: A Philosophical Critique* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

⁶⁵ Pals, *Nine Theories of Religion*, 75.

First of all, Freud's argument shows a serious logical error. With the psychoanalytic approach he built, Freud suggested that God, religion, and the existence of the last day are personal projections, instincts, and natural desires of humans. Unfortunately, from this postulate no argumentation point was found that could invalidate religious beliefs. Like modern thought in general, Freud is indicated to have deductively concluded an extraordinary event from an ordinary event. For example, if someone walks around rambling with strange utterances due to thoughts buried in his mind, can such an event be equated with the words of the Prophets, namely revelations that have solved the secrets of the universe?⁶⁶

The confusion of Freud's postulate can also be illustrated through the following analogy. If a group of aliens from another planet come to earth. They have the ability to hear but do not have the ability to speak. Therefore, they come to earth to find out why humans can speak. On the way, suddenly the wind blows so hard that the branches rub against each other, making a sound. Then, their leader says, "Now we know the secret of human speech. Their mouths have two rows of teeth. When the upper row of teeth rubs against the lower row, the human voice is produced." This conclusion is true from the perspective that two objects that collide with each other can make a sound. But this fact still cannot reveal the secret of human speech. Likewise, it is wrong to equate the ravings of a madman with the words of the prophets which are revelations and have provided an explanation of the secret of life.⁶⁷

The case of the primitive human Oedipus Complex (the story of the murder of the first father) which gave birth to totemism has no strong basis. Freud did not provide scientific proof of the truth of this story, instead he linked it to Greek myth as in chapter four. Freud believed that some of these stories – even though they were assumed to be untrue – could be said to be the best evidence of the existence of the Oedipus Complex. The history of this event is highly doubted by scientists. The origin of this story is also nothing more than guesswork and assumptions, so some people call it imaginative statements and fairy tales.⁶⁸ A German ethnologist, Wilhelm Schmidt (1868-1954) asserted that Freud's depiction of the story of primitive society with the Oedipus

⁶⁶ Khan, *al-Islam Yatahadda: Madkhal al-'Ilmi ila al-Iman*, 24.

⁶⁷ Khan, 25.

⁶⁸ Yusufian, *Kalam Jadid: Pendekatan Baru Dalam Isu-Isu Agama*, 42.

Complex was completely untrue.⁶⁹ The psychological phenomenon of the Oedipus Complex was also doubted due to the lack of empirical evidence and even contradicted contemporary empirical research.⁷⁰

Freud's claim that totemism was the earliest manifestation of human religion is also questionable. Apparently, totemism is not the beginning of human culture. In fact, pygmoid societies in Asia, Africa, and Australia do not have a tradition of totem sacrifice. Indeed, in the tradition of pre-totemic societies, a kind of sacrificial ritual was found, but the sacrifice was not in the form of cannibalism or patricide. They called the ritual "first fruit sacrifice," where they offered the results of their collection of plants to God Almighty as the creator and ruler of life. So, it can be said that the origin of religion is not totemism as Freud imagined. In fact, it appears that before there was a totemic tradition, there were already beliefs in society that were monotheistic in nature.⁷¹

From the perspective of *Kalam Jadid*, Freud's view that religion is an illusion and illogical is a rejected view. What must be understood is that in religion there is a fundamental thing on which the validity of other teachings in the religion depends. This means that if the fundamental thing is valid, then the other teachings are valid. The fundamental thing is the existence of Almighty God who revealed religion to humans. And the proof of God's existence can be proven with rational arguments. Likewise with the proof of the existence of a religion that truly comes from God. This also refutes Freud's claim that God is merely a human illusion. He ignored the logical arguments put forward by theists.

If both of the above can be proven rationally and accepted, then the claim that religion is an illusion or projection of human psychological problems is also invalid. Likewise with his equating religion with neurosis. This is because he sees religious teachings as irrational as neurosis sufferers do abnormal and irrational things. For religious people who practice their teachings, it is normal. Because they are aware, and their motives are clear. Especially if their religious teachings are proven to be valid. Unlike neurosis sufferers who are caused by the influence of their subconscious.

⁶⁹ Wilhelm Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion: Facts and Theories*, trans. Herbert J. Rose (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1935), 115.

⁷⁰ Renee Spencer, "Freud's Oedipus Complex in the #MeToo Era: A Discussion of the Validity of Psychoanalysis in Light of Contemporary Research" 5, no. 4 (October 2020).

⁷¹ Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion: Facts and Theories*, 113–14.

Furthermore, Freud views religion as being born because of human psychic anxiety in facing the uncertainty of life and natural phenomena beyond their control. Humans who are full of anxiety eventually run to religion which brings peace. Religion does provide peace for humans. However, this does not logically necessitate that religion is born from the human search for peace (made by humans). In fact, in religion there is a teaching that demands struggle and effort. In Islam, for example, it can be seen in the history of the struggle of the Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims who were with him in upholding religion. What happened was the opposite, religion does not merely provide worldly satisfaction and peace. If religion were only an outlet for humans, then there would be no need for religious people (especially Muslims) to struggle to uphold religion. This motive can be easily understood that religion is not born from a response to human fear.

Like most atheists, Freud considered religion to be a mistake that could hinder development. As a positivist, in this era, science should be the benchmark for humans in building civilization after turning away from religion, which is a legacy where human intellect is still low. This is too simplistic a reality. So many scientists and intellectuals are religious until now. The intellectual legacy of religious society civilization also continues until now. This shows that religion is not as Freud thought. Here Freud seems to neglect the history of religious society.

Freud was trapped in the understanding of a religion that did not educate humans. Unfortunately, Freud generalized his theory based on his limited experience and insight. The conclusion that human behavior is determined by sexuality and the will to pleasure is nothing more than the filthy habits of the puritanical Viennese bourgeoisie. Freud found an opportunity to base his assumptions on his experience in treating such patients.⁷² He ignored many things and reduced religious understanding to a narrow one (psychic problems). He also missed the role of religious experience that can answer the basic needs of the human soul, namely a higher meaning and purpose in life.

In this era, global society is facing a serious psychological crisis caused by the abandonment of religion as the most basic human instinct. Erich Fromm (1900-1980) said that humans today do not

⁷² Yasin Mohamed, *Fitra: The Islamic Concept of Human Nature* (London: Ta-Ha Publisher, 1996), 173.

feel calm and are more confused. Working and trying but feeling in vain with their various activities.⁷³ These words represent the crisis experienced by modern humans in the form of the emptiness of life. This is where the role of religion should provide better direction and make life more meaningful. In a study published by the Iranian Journal of Psychiatry, it was also concluded that religion can help people in solving life challenges and their identity crises.⁷⁴ A psychologist from the University of British Columbia, Norenzayan conclude in his research that Religion is one of the great ways used by human society as a solution to encourage individuals who do not have relationships to be kind to each other.⁷⁵ A research article published by the American Psychological Association (APA) also states that having spiritual beliefs can also lead to a longer and healthier life.⁷⁶

In Islamic theology, the foundation of faith must be based on certain knowledge, in accordance with reality, and based on justifiable evidence.⁷⁷ As explained, proof of God's existence is one of the fundamental things in religion. Thus, there are several rational arguments to prove it. Of the many rational postulates, the typical postulate of *mutakallim* is *burhanul huduts*⁷⁸ which is concluded in a syllogism with (i) a minor premise: the universe consisting of accidents and substance is new (it exists from nothing and is dynamic); and (ii) the major premise: every new thing has to be done by someone. So, (iii) the conclusion is: there is something in this universe.

In the first premise, the novelty of accidents can be seen and understood axiomatically. Meanwhile, accidents always attach to the substance. And if something is attached to something else that is new, then it is also new. Thus, the substance is also new. A universe consisting of both is also new. Something new must be done by someone because it is impossible for him to do it himself. With the impossibility of endless regression (*tasalsul*) and interdependent circularity (*daur*), the one who created it must be a figure who is not

⁷³ Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself: An Enquiry into the Psychology of Ethics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1950), 184.

⁷⁴ Gholamreza Khoyneshad, Ali R. Rajaei, and Sarvarazemy, "Basic Religious Beliefs and Personality Traits," *Iran J Psychiatry* 7, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 82–86.

⁷⁵ Beth Azar, "A Reason to Believe," *Monitor on Psychology*, December 2010.

⁷⁶ Azar.

⁷⁷ Said Nursi, *Epitomes of Light: The Essential of the Risale-l Nur* (Izmir: Kaynak, 1999), xx.

⁷⁸ Argumen Kebaruan atau *Kalam Cosmological Argument*

new and outside the universe. Its form is mandatory and exists by itself. That is what in Islamic theology is called God.⁷⁹

In the 20th century, the fact of the novelty of the universe was supported by Western scientists themselves with Einstein's theory of relativity. When applying his theory of relativity to predict the behavior of the universe, Albert Einstein (1879-1955) discovered that if his theory of relativity was accurate, then the universe could not be static. The universe must be expanding or contracting.⁸⁰ Albert Einstein changed his view of the universe (which he considered static).⁸¹ The novelty of the universe was also further supported by the discovery of the doppler redshift by Vesto Slipher (1875-1969). The slipper's observations indicated that all the galaxies around us were moving away from us. Several years later, this conclusion was confirmed by Edwin Hubble's experiments.⁸²

Quoting Basil Altaie's explanation, at the end of the second decade of the 20th century Hubble announced that the universe as a whole is expanding. This opened a new era in the history of cosmology. His discovery drastically changed the picture of the universe from what was originally considered static to dynamic.⁸³ A physicist Georges Lemaitre (1894-1966) formulated a hypothesis that if the universe is expanding, if we pull back time, then there will be a time when all the mass that makes up the universe is concentrated in one very small point where all space-time began. This hypothesis led to the Big Bang theory which was strengthened by subsequent discoveries.⁸⁴ However, the novelty of nature will still lead us to the figure who made it.

Unlike Freud who said that religion emerged because of fear, Islamic theology views that humans already have an instinct for religion. Humans have a tendency to seek and worship God according to their nature (*fitrah*). In fact, this tendency is also recognized by some atheist scientists.⁸⁵ According to some thinkers, one proof of this nature

⁷⁹ Mahmud Abu Daqiqah, *Al-Qawl al-Sadid Fi 'Ilm al-Tawhid* (Cairo: Al-Azhar University, n.d.).

⁸⁰ Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Sanusi and Umar ibn Ibrahim al-Mallali, *Umm Al-Barahin: Wa Yaliha Syarh Umm al-Barahin* (Lebanon: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, 2009), 119.

⁸¹ Basil Altaie and Dedi A. Riyadi, *Kalam Allah Dan Alam Semesta: Memahami al-Quran Dalam Terang Sains Modern* (Jakarta: Qaf Media, 2022), 186.

⁸² al-Sanusi and al-Mallali, *Umm Al-Barahin: Wa Yaliha Syarh Umm al-Barahin*, 120.

⁸³ Altaie and Riyadi, *Kalam Allah Dan Alam Semesta: Memahami al-Quran Dalam Terang Sains Modern*, 186.

⁸⁴ al-Sanusi and al-Mallali, *Umm Al-Barahin: Wa Yaliha Syarh Umm al-Barahin*, 120-121.

⁸⁵ Murtadha Muthahhari, *Majmu' Atsar Ustadz Syahid Muthahhari*, vol. 6 (Teheran:

is that no group of people can be found who do not try to seek God and do not obey in the face of something they consider God.⁸⁶ Quoting an APA article, a neuroscientist Jordan Grafman stated that neuroscience research supports the idea that the brain is prepared for faith. This tendency, spreads throughout the brain, and may arise from neural circuits that are developed for other uses.⁸⁷ This is in line with one of the results of a study by Oxford University which stated that humans have a tendency to believe in God and life after death.⁸⁸

A psychologist and director of The Cognition, Religion and Theology Project at The Centre for Anthropology and Mind, University of Oxford, Justin Barrett also stated that people have a tendency to believe in supernatural things. In his work, he found that children as young as three years old naturally attribute supernatural abilities and immortality to God, even though they have never been taught about God, and they tell elaborate stories about their lives before they were born, which Barrett calls pre-life.⁸⁹

Quoting the explanation of Syed Naquib al-Attas, humans are essentially not only limited to bodies but also consist of souls. The soul and body transform into another entity called the human itself or *insan*. So, the substance of humans cannot be separated from the soul (*ruh*).⁹⁰ The soul itself refers to the articulate soul (*al-Nafs al-Natiqah*) which has a tendency towards transcendental things. This tendency is natural or innate since the beginning of its creation by God, so that the soul is always connected to divine things. This tendency is also because in reality the soul has recognized and witnessed the existence of God with all His attributes (QS. 7: 172). So, this kind of tendency is a natural thing that already exists in humans.

It's just that when he transformed into a human he had the characteristic of being forgetful or forgetful (*nisyān*). This is where humans are called human beings in the language of the Qur'an because

Dar al-Funun, n.d.), 101.

⁸⁶ Yusufian, *Kalam Jadid: Pendekatan Baru Dalam Isu-Isu Agama*, 101.

⁸⁷ Azar, "A Reason to Believe."

⁸⁸ "Humans 'predisposed' to Believe in Gods and the Afterlife," ScienceDaily, accessed September 29, 2024, <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/07/110714103828.htm>.

⁸⁹ "A Reason to Believe," <https://www.apa.org>, accessed September 22, 2024, <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2010/12/believe>.

⁹⁰ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *On Justice and the Nature of Man: A Commentary on Surah al-Nisa (4):58 and Surah al-Mu'minin (23):12-14* (Kuala Lumpur: IBFIM, 2015), 35.

after testifying to the truth of the agreement which requires them to obey Allah's commands and prohibitions, they forget to fulfill their obligations and goals in life (Q.S. 20: 115).⁹¹ However, when a human is born into this world, if he is properly guided, he will remember that agreement and behave in accordance with it. He solely worships, acts, lives and dies for Allah.⁹² Shalih al-Fauzan explained that if a human being were isolated and left to his natural nature, he would definitely lead to monotheism and accept the preaching brought by the apostles as mentioned in the holy books and shown by nature.⁹³ However, the environment can influence the state of nature.

This natural tendency is not apparent in Freud's attention. Instead, he only focused on the physical desires of humans that exist in the subconscious (id personality). He actually stated that humans basically must be in accordance with these desires. And if it is suppressed, it will cause psychological problems that lead to neurosis. In Islam, this tendency towards physical desires is called *al-Nafs al-Hayawaniyyah* (animal soul) which needs to be controlled so that it does not go wild. So, it is not surprising that Freud also concluded that religion is motivated by sexual libido.⁹⁴

Conclusion

Through a psychoanalytic approach, Sigmund Freud proved that religion originated from, or was created by, humans. In primitive societies, religion in its earliest form appeared in the form of totemism. A totem is an animal figure (usually a bird) that is a protective symbol for a community. According to Freud, this totemism phenomenon is related to what he called the Oedipus complex. A boy always felt that his father was a rival in loving his mother. So, the boy killed his father and destroyed his authority. But after the murder, the boy felt guilty and regretful. He then replaced the father figure with a worshiped animal or totem. Over time, totemism evolved into more modern religions.

⁹¹ Syed M. Naquib al-Attas, *Islam Dan Sekularisme* (Kuala Lumpur: RZS-CASIS, 2021), 86.

⁹² Syed M. Naquib al-Attas, *On Justice and the Nature of Man* (Kuala Lumpur: IBFIM, 2015), 85.

⁹³ Wisnu Tanggap Prabowo, *Sejarah Berhala Dan Jejak Risalah: Penyimpangan Agama Dan Kepercayaan Kuno Dari Monoteisme Ke Politeisme* (Jakarta: Pustaka al-Kautsar, 2022), 305.

⁹⁴ Barakatu, "Kritik Terhadap Pandangan Sigmund Freud: Agama Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Pendidikan."

Referring to this observation, Freud then concluded that religion is basically an illusion. Freud assumed that humans were weak creatures. Humans feel helpless in the face of harsh life phenomena. To overcome this, humans then imagine a figure of God who can protect them like their father who was always there for them in childhood. To be able to achieve this protection, a person must perform worship that can please God's feelings. For Freud, this phenomenon is similar to the symptoms of obsessive-compulsive neurosis.

From the perspective of Islamic theology, Freud's view is certainly a challenge. However, Freud's theory of the origins of religion is actually not new in theological debate. What is new about Freud's theory is his method, in which he uses scientific arguments based on modern philosophy. Therefore, a new approach is needed in theology that is able to answer this challenge with a scientific and philosophical approach. This approach is what a number of contemporary Muslim theologians then call *Kalam Jadid*.

From the perspective of *Kalam Jadid*, Freud's theory seems to have many gaps. *First*, there is no concrete evidence to show that totemism is the most primitive belief in society. Some studies actually show that the practice of monotheism existed before totemism. *Second*, Freud did not consider rational proof that God exists. This seems to be because Freud already had the assumption that God does not exist. *Third*, as a result of his assumption, Freud did not accept revelation as a valid source of knowledge. *Fourth*, Freud only saw the sexual dimension of humans and did not consider the spiritual dimension of humans in which there is a divine instinct (*fitrah*).

Furthermore, for the sake of further research, this article is expected to be a foothold. The next researchers can use and or develop *Kalam Jadid* as an approach to issues related to religious challenges or religious philosophy.

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