

H.M. Rasjidi's View on The Modern Western Civilization

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Abstract

This study aims to discuss the development of Western thought and civilization according to H. M. Rasjidi by revealing its characteristics. This research is qualitative, with descriptive and analytic methods. The results found that modern Western civilization cannot be separated from the thoughts and reflections of their philosophers about the nature of life and the universe as well as their experiences in viewing the history of religion in the West. The system of theocracy of the church has triggered the emergence of secularism which moves freely from the domination of church doctrine. This understanding was formed from rationalism, the Protestant movement, and humanism. It was from those processes of thought that the West can develop. So today they reject the spiritual values of religion. In the end, religion is undermined and only becomes a private matter. Religion is separated from state affairs, science, morality and serves only as ceremonial matters, such as; a ritual of birth, marriage, and death. In addition, Rasjidi argues that the West rejects absolute truth even though it comes from God. This Western view of life has become one of Rasjidi's special concerns because it has a direct or indirect effect on the lives of Muslims, especially in Indonesia.

Keywords: H.M. Rasjidi, Modern, Western Civilization, Secularization.

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas perkembangan pemikiran dan peradaban Barat menurut H. M. Rasjidi dengan menyingkap ciri-ciri yang membentuknya. Penelitian ini bersifat kualitatif, dengan metode deskriptif dan analisis. Hasil penelitian menemukan bahwa peradaban Barat modern tidak bisa terlepas dari pemikiran serta refleksi para filosofinya tentang hakikat kehidupan dan alam semesta juga pengalaman mereka dalam melihat sejarah agama di Barat. Dimana sistem teokrasi gereja telah memicu munculnya paham sekularisme yang bergerak bebas dari dominasi doktrin gereja. Paham ini terbentuk dari rasionalisme, gerakan protestanisme dan paham humanisme. Dari paham-paham inilah Barat berkembang sehingga di zaman ini mereka menolak nilai-nilai spiritual agama. Pada akhirnya agama tersudutkan dan hanya menjadi urusan pribadi (*private*). Agama terpisah dengan urusan negara, sains, moralitas dan hanya menjadi upacara saja seperti; ritual kelahiran, pernikahan dan proses kematian. Selain itu, Rasjidi juga berpendapat bahwa Barat menolak kebenaran mutlak sekalipun itu bersumber dari Tuhan. Pandangan hidup Barat tersebut menjadi salah satu perhatian khusus Rasjidi karena berpengaruh secara langsung maupun tidak langsung terhadap kehidupan Muslim khususnya di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: H.M. Rasjidi, Moderen, Peradaban Barat, Sekularisasi.

Introduction

This is part of an attempt to identify Western culture and its thought that emerged from the womb of the history of Western civilization. This discussion is quite important because the Western secular worldview that is contrary to the Islamic worldview is still conceived by some Muslims to be like a normal thing. This is also realized by the national education thinker, Tilaar, as stated in his statement that “scientific writings, as well as educational praxis in Indonesia, which are based on Western ideas, have, without being modified, replaced ideas and educational concepts that are compatible with Indonesian people.”¹

The above condition is actually the result of ignorance in recognizing the nature of the characteristics that arise from Western thought and civilization. Therefore, some Muslim scholars and academicians have tried to explain the essence of Western civilization

¹ H.A.R. Tilaar, *Perubahan Sosial dan Pendidikan* (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2012), 3.

and the dangers of its thinking for Muslims. Among those Muslim scholars and academicians who have those concerns are Rashid Rida (1865-1935),² M. Natsir (1908-1993),³ Hamka (1908-1981),⁴ Al-Attas (1931-now),⁵ and also including H. M. Rasjidi (1915-2001). In the history of Islamic thought in 20th century, aspects of Western framework have a very strong impact in confusing some Muslims to understand their own religion.⁶

This study only focuses on Rasjidi's view and his attempts to understand the nature of Western thought and its civilization. Meanwhile, Rasjidi's criticism of Western thought and the consequences arising of Western framework for Islamic studies in Indonesia are not described here. So that this study is focused on Rasjidi's views on a brief history of the modern Western civilization.⁷

Indeed, Rasjidi's efforts to understand the development of thought and religion in the West cannot be separated from his personal educational background, starting from studying Islamic intellectual traditions. He was also following the development of Western philosophy through personal reading from the *al-Manâr* journal and also studying with Western philosophers when he was a student at Dar al-Ulum (Cairo University). In addition, he has also been directly involved in several scientific religious discourses in the West when he taught and lived in Canada and Washington DC.⁸

From his intellectual journey and educational background, Rasjidi observed that the advancement of science in the 20th century

² Emad Eldin Shahin, "Muhammad Rashid Rida's Perspective on the West as Reflected in *Al-Manar*," *The Muslim World* LXXIX (1989), no. 2: 113-132.

³ M.Natsir, *Capita Selecta*, (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1973).

⁴ Hamka, *Umat Islam Menghadapi Tentangan Kristenisasi dan Sekularisasi*, ed. Rusydi Hamka (Shah Alam: Pustaka Dini, 2009)

⁵ Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1993).

⁶ Yon Machmudi, Frial Ramadhan Supratman and Mehmet Ozay, "Turkish Laicism in Indonesia's Newspapers (1920-1940) and Its Influence on Indonesian Secularists and Muslim thoughts," *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, vol, 15, No 01, June 2021: 1-20.

⁷ For more detailed exposition on Rasjidi's view and his critics on the characteristics of Western thought and its civilization, refer Mohammad Zakki Azani, "Pemikiran Mohamad Rasjidi (1915-2001) Tentang Islam, Modernisme dan Kristianisasi di Indonesia," (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Raja Zarith Sofiah Centre For Advanced Studies on Islam, Science and Civilisation, Univeristi Teknologi Malaysia, 2020).

⁸ For more detailed explanation on Rasjidi's biography, his works, some contributions of his thought in Indonesia, refer to my article, Mohammad Zakki Azani dan Khalif Muammar A. Harris "Islam dan Modernisme di Indonesia: Tinjauan atas Pemikiran Mohamad Rasjidi (1915-2001)," *Tsaqafah* 15, no 1. (2019).

made the ideological encounter between religion and the philosophy of various civilizations was inevitable. One of the things that Rasjidi worried about due to the rapid penetration of Western ideology and civilization into Muslims could lead to an understanding of “skepticism” which he thought was quite dangerous. Perhaps for this reason Rasjidi always tries to expound a brief history of Western thought in his works, before discussing the issues of thought that he faces. One of his statements that he really concerned about the dangers of Western thought, he stated as follows:

The world in the 20th century has become so small that every day we see the interaction between nations and religions. People say that today’s world is a pluralist society, meaning that all religions meet, confront, ...it should be noted that the scientific revolution, historical revolution, and industrial revolution have shocked the Western religious world, but with those have brought the jeopardy of skepticism to the Islamic world, which until now we are still fighting to eradicate it...⁹

From the above statement, we can also understand how Rasjidi tries to understand the nature of modern Western thought. From his views, it can be observed the important elements of Western civilization which are most of them indeed contrary to Islamic epistemological framework and civilization.¹⁰ So that Muslims can eliminate what should be rejected from Western thought.¹¹ This is because the historical process and development of modern Western thought contain a framework of thinking about religious understanding, and the nature of this universe.

Theocracy and the Emergence of Secularism

Understanding the history of Western thought in its journey to the modern era, Rasjidi believes that it cannot be understood without knowing of the Church in the context of Western civilization.¹² In this

⁹ H.M. Rasjidi, “Prasaran Tentang Perbaikan IAIN,” in *Prof. Dr. H. Rasjidi Versus Drs. Zahri*

Hamid, ed. Zahri Hamid (Jogjakarta: Alumnus Fakultas Syari’ah IAIN Sunan Kalijaga, 1970), 10,13.

¹⁰ Read this also for more detailed explanation, Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *Islamization of Contemporary Knowledge and the Role of The University In The Context of De-Westernization and Decolonization* (Johor: UTM Press, 2013).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹² H. M. Rasjidi, *Koreksi Terhadap Drs. Nurcholish Madjid Tentang Sekularisasi*, (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1972), 18-19-20, 22-23.

case, al-Attas also has the view that Christianity is a religion that has an important role in shaping Western civilization.¹³

Rasjidi explains the sequence of events in Christian history in the 4th century AD where the Roman Empire declared that Christians were given the right to live.¹⁴ Prior to that, the followers of Christianity were considered rebels by the Roman Empire and many had been killed for trying to fight back.¹⁵ When Roman political power began to decline, Roman leaders wanted to study Christianity and its thoughts. However, not long after, Christian doctrines were accepted by the Roman Empire and made the official religion of the Kingdom.¹⁶

Since that time, Christianity has only become a "tool" for the King and its doctrines are forced to submit to the King.¹⁷ In addition, the impact of power that rides on religion makes religion a tool that Hofmann describes as "*extra ecclesia nullum salus*".¹⁸ This means that there is no salvation, but through the Church (no salvation outside the church), and indirectly also means that under the government of the Christian theocracy no one can embrace any other religion, except Christianity.

Rasjidi made a deeper study and found that the principle of intolerance in Western Christian history was rooted in the word of Saint Augustine (354-430 AD). The root of this thought is as quoted by Rasjidi as follows;

If error (which is not Christianity) prevails then Christians should proclaim religious freedom. However, if on the contrary, if it is true that (Christianity) is in power, then it is appropriate to apply a system of coercion.¹⁹

¹³ Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, 1-13; Idem, *Risalah Untuk Kaum Muslimin* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 2001), 10.

¹⁴ Rasjidi, *Kebebasan Beragama*, (Jakarta: Media Da'wah. 1979), 7. H. M. Rasjidi, *Koreksi Terhadap Dr. Harun Nasution Tentang 'Islam Ditinjau dari Berbagai Aspeknya'* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1977), 3.; Idem, *Koreksi Terhadap Drs....*, 22.

¹⁵ H. M. Rasjidi, *Empat Kuliah Agama Islam Pada Pendidikan Tinggi* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1974; reprint., 1984) 88.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 88-89.

¹⁷ H. M. Rasjidi, *Mengapa Aku Tetap Memeluk Agama Islam*, (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1968; reprint, 1980), 22.

¹⁸ Murad Wilfried Hofmann, "Muslims as Co-Citizens in the West: Rights, Duties, Limits, Prospects," *Encounters: Journal of Inter-Cultural Perspectives* 3, No. 2 (1997):165.

¹⁹ H. M. Rasjidi, *Kebebasan...MD.*, 8. Augustine also states "*how much more must God, ruler of all creation, be obeyed without hesitation in whatever he imposes upon it.*" Mary T. Clark RSCJ, *Augustine* (London: Continuum, 1994), 55. Refer also Ora Limor's on Augustine's impact in Middle Ages in facing religious diversity in the context of Christian religion at that time. "*As a rule, Jews were the only minority whose existence was permitted in Christian*

This means that attempts to coerce adherents of other religions by using power have existed in the history of Christianity.²⁰ Although the doctrine was opposed by some priests, it was later accepted and believed by most of the Christian religious leaders in the Middle Ages.²¹ In 1184 Pope Lucius III made an agreement with Frederick [I] Barbarossa which paid attention to “religious unity (only Catholicism) must be enforced by all forceful means.”²²

Rasjidi added that because there was no scientist who objected to this principle, in the end the agreement was carried out without any opposition. The implementation of the treaty was in “the days of Popes Innocent III,²³ Gregory IX,²⁴ and Innocent IV.²⁵” Such an agreement actually aims to ensure that the doctrines of the Church and its powers can be well preserved.²⁶ However, due to the existence of doctrines or methods of coercion in the religion, it is very possible that followers

society. Jews lived throughout the Christian West in a state of relative tolerance inspired both by a fundamental Christian theological precept (as formulated by St Augustine) and the understandable desire of the authorities to maintain law and order. This state of tolerance and stability was disrupted by sporadic outbreaks of intolerance, which in extreme cases took the form of violent attacks, in a sort of perpetual pendulum that increasingly swung towards intolerance.” Ora Limor, “Christians and Jews.” in *The Cambridge History, Christianity in Western Europe c.1000-c. 1500*, ed. Miri Rubin dan Walter Simons (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 136.

²⁰ Read also the following statement; “The traditional formulation of St Augustine, about the value of Jews as witnesses to Christian truth, as a crucial part of the unfolding Christian story unto its ends, was challenged in medieval Europe in towns and cities where Jews were constant reminders of the possibility of doubt. A vast literature of polemic, whose arguments were sometimes rehearsed by preachers from the pulpit, or in staged public disputations (Paris 1240, Barcelona 1263, Tortosa 1410), assisted the birth of elaborate narratives that cast Jews as enemies. Enemies of Christ at the birth of Christianity, they were now imagined as enemies of Europeans too: of their hallowed spaces, their cherished beliefs, and of their innocent children. This period saw the birth of the accusations of ritual murder, the blood libel and the host-desecration narrative too.” Refer also Miri Rubin dan Walter Simons (ed), “Introduction,” in *The Cambridge History, Christianity in Western Europe c.1000-c. 1500*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 6.

²¹ Ibid. For a more detailed description that the doctrine is still held by Church leaders, see, Mahmoud M. Ayoub, “Roots of Muslim-Christian Conflict,” *The Muslim World* LXXIX, no. 1, January (1989); 25-45; 27.

²² Idem, *Kebebasan...MD.*, 8. Rujuk juga T. E. Carson, “Frederik I Barbarossa, Roman Emperor,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, edisi kedua, 16 vols (The United States of America: Gale, 2003) 5; 924-6.

²³ Innocent III dilantik menjadi Paus pada tahun 1198. Rujuk J. M. Powell, “Innocent III, Pope,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, edisi kedua, 16 vols (The United States of America: Gale, 2003) 7: 471-3

²⁴ J. M. Powell, “Gregory IV, Pope,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, edisi kedua, 16 vols (The United States of America: Gale, 2003) 6: 496-8.

²⁵ K. Pennington, “Innocent IV, Pope,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, edisi kedua, 16 vols (The United States of America: Gale, 2003) 7; 473-6.

²⁶ H. M. Rasjidi, *Keutamaan Hukum Islam*, (Jakarta. Bulan Bintang, 1971), 7.

of the Christian religion do not get the impression and self-awareness in carrying out their religious rituals and belief.

Rasjidi shows us that in the Middle Ages, the power of the Church was greatly influenced by theologians from the priests and bishops circles. Historically, leaders in Church organizations have succeeded in convincing adherents of other religions to the truth of Christian doctrine regardless of how it was propagated.²⁷ Rasjidi explained that "the belief exists because the priests believe that the Church is sacred" and its existence holds two powers; "spiritual and worldly sovereignty."²⁸ If a holy Church whose holiness depends on a priest, who is the leader of the Church, then a priest is like acting as a representative of Jesus in this world.

In addition to the dominance over science, Rasjidi added, the domination of the Church in the political field over the people was also quite massive in the Middle Ages. However, the spirit of the religious teachings did not sink into the hearts of Western people.²⁹ Church doctrine throughout Christian-Western history in the Middle Ages has proven the difficulties and burdens of history in accepting the diversity and differences of religion or belief in society.³⁰

On the other hand, in response to these conditions, the Church finally tries to act more tolerant and lenient in dealing with worldly affairs.³¹ Therefore, it is from here that Rasjidi argues that secular worldview has started to emerge since the Middle Ages. Thus, Rasjidi tries to define secularization in accordance with the context of the Western worldview which tries to liberate it from the confines of the Church's authority, namely "free your mind [freedom of mind] from the shackles of the Church's power in dealing with problems."³² Understand the history of the theocratic system and its effect on Western Christian society in the Middle Ages.

²⁷ H. M. Rasjidi, *Strategi Kebudayaan dan Pembaharuan Pendidikan Nasional*, (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1980), 18. Gilson also argues that most philosophers in the Middle Ages were from among the priests. See also, Etienne Gilson, *God and Philosophy* (Yale & London: New Haven & London-Yale Univeristy Press, 1948; reprint.,1968), 43.

²⁸ Rasjidi, *Keutamaan ...*, 7-8; Idem, *Kebebasan... MD*, 8.

²⁹ H. M. Rasjidi, *Koreksi Terhadap Dr. Harun...*, 61; H.M. Rasjidi, *Islam dan Socialisme*, (Jakarta: Yayasan Islam Studi Club Indonesia, nd), 8. See also, Idem, *Strategi....*, 81-82.

³⁰ Rasjidi, *Kebebasan...MD*, 7.

³¹ Idem, *Koreksi Terhadap Drs...*, 16.

³² *Ibid.*, 23.

The Conditions of the West before the Age of Enlightenment

According to Rasjidi, the implementation of a theocratic system that is too binding and restrictive as mentioned above has had a fairly real impact and has gradually brought Western people's view of life to separate worldly affairs from the religious field which indirectly led to the practice of Western secularism in the Middle Ages.³³ The word secular as mentioned by Rasjidi comes from the word "*saeculum*" which means an age, one century.³⁴ Because the meaning of "*sacularis*" relates to a certain time, he explains again that secular means anything related to the present time or worldly things.³⁵ The following is Rasjidi's statement:

It was not until the middle Ages that the first steps took to separate the secular from the religious... little by little worldly affairs in the West (which was Catholic, because Protestantism had not yet emerged) gained independence from the control of the Church.³⁶

Al-Attas describes one of the characteristics of secularization, namely, "disenchantment of nature".³⁷ It is a system belief that does not depend on the principles of religious belief, but it may emerge as a societal belief resulting from strict Church doctrines. This is because the general public is not allowed to read and even understand the Bible, except through the Church.³⁸

In addition, Rasjidi also tries to understand secularization in the context of the Church's history in medieval times, namely when the Church declared itself as the only one who could interpret human destiny for centuries. Rasjidi said that there was a great movement that had given birth to a momentum in Western history called the "revolution of thought" or "enlightenment" which was marked by the emergence of a new sect, namely Protestantism, led by Martin Luther (1483-1546). This school is also called reformation, which differs from Catholic Christian doctrine.³⁹ This revolutionary movement of thought has brought the seeds of thought towards the modern era in the West.⁴⁰

³³ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁴ *Idem, Koreksi Terhadap Drs.*, 15.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, 18.

³⁸ Rasjidi, *Mengapa Aku Tetap...*, 22.

³⁹ Rasjidi, *Koreksi Terhadap Drs.*, 16.

⁴⁰ Rasjidi, *Mengapa Aku Tetap...*, 50-51.

It should be borne in mind that prior to the Enlightenment, to borrow Davis's statement, "no intellectual movement is free from imprints of the past."⁴¹ There are several reasons that show the emergence of the enlightenment movement (renaissance) which is emphasized by Rasjidi in his works, namely; 1. The contribution of science from Islamic civilization, 2. Paying more attention to the classical texts of the Church and monasteries, 3. There is a development of skepticism and the movement of criticism, 4. The emergence of a movement to reject things that are spiritual (ascetic) and the hereafter vision.

The first characteristic of the enlightenment movement is the scientific contribution of Islamic civilization. Although Rasjidi mentions the political impact of the Crusades, economic and social progress in the Middle Ages which contributed to the enlightenment, he is also aware of the influence of Islamic civilization and Byzantine culture on the Western intellectual tradition.⁴² In addition, the interaction of Western scientists-who were then mostly medieval Christian theologians-with the works of Muslim thinkers, especially those of Ibn Sina (d. 1037 AD) and Ibn Rushd (d. 1198 AD) in the early 12th century has led to Westerners became more open to intellectual activity which was marked by the idea of establishing a University funded by the Church.⁴³ It was from this seed of knowledge that scientific activity and serious study grew from within the Church in the Middle Ages.

In addition, the results of serious study and scientific activities at universities in the West at that time finally resulted in a new approach, namely the scientific and logical interests of Aristotle's philosophical thought put forward by scholastic philosophers which they understood from the work of Muslim theologians.⁴⁴ Therefore, Rasjidi agrees with the opinion of a philosopher from France, Roger Garaudy, that before the advent of modern Western philosophy,

⁴¹ David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1966, reprint., 1969), 391.

⁴² Rasjidi, *Keutamaan...*, 8; Idem, *Koreksi Terhadap Dr. Harun...*, 3; Idem, *Kebebasan.. MD*, 12-14.

⁴³ George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), 224-280; Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of The Western Mind* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991), 173, 175-177; Alparslan Açikgenc "Aristotelian and Islamic Moral Philosophy: A Comparative Ethics." *al-Shajarah*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2008), 125-146.

⁴⁴ Etienne Gilson, *God and Philosophy*, (Michigan: Yale University Press, 1949; repr. 1962), 62. Read also, *Islam and Secularism*, 101-103.

Islamic civilization and the intellectual tradition of the Muslim scholars of *kalâm* (Islamic philosophy) became the bridge of Western civilization in understanding Greek philosophy.⁴⁵ Through the contribution of thoughts from Muslim philosophers, there was a wind of thought in the Middle Ages and had a deep impact and meaning in Western civilization until then.

The second feature that prompted the emergence of the Age of Enlightenment in Western history was the attention paid to the classical texts of the Church and monasteries.⁴⁶ Rasjidi mentions that there is a famous medieval European slogan of Saint Augustine (c. 430 AD) by among the first Christian theologians, namely "*credo ut intelligam*" (unless you believe, you shall not understand).⁴⁷ In fact, the Augustine doctrine has been held by several theologians who have the same school of thought as Saint Anselm in the eleventh century, Saint Bonaventure in the thirteenth century, Malebranche in the seventeenth century, and Gioberti in the nineteenth century.⁴⁸

On the other hand, the increasing number of medieval scholars that educated from Church-funded Universities could stimulate thoughts about the origin of man and the nature of the creation of the universe in accordance with Aristotle's philosophy. In fact, this is intended to strengthen the doctrine of Christian theology in the process of maintaining its tradition through Biblical studies while at the same time prohibiting the work of philosophers related to philosophical and metaphysical studies. Through the intellectual movements of these scholars, Aristotle's thought about the universe gradually evolved it until it finally dominated the flow of medieval thought. This caused the power of the church and its dogma to gradually lose its authority in the eyes of philosophers.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, adherents of the Aristotelian school such as Albertus Magnus (d. 1280 AD) and Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) no doubt that they are also devoted to Christianity.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, doubts arose among other church theologians due to the great influence of

⁴⁵ See Rasjidi's foreword in his book translation of Marcel A. Boisard, *Humanisme dalam Islam*, 9.

⁴⁶ Rasjidi, *Keutamaan Hukum Islam*, 8.

⁴⁷ Idem, *Koreksi Tentang Sekularisasi*, 28, 84. Etienne Gilson, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938; reprint., 1966), 17.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, *Reason and Revelation*.

⁴⁹ Tarnas, *The Passion...*, 192.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 178.

Aristotle's philosophy on Christian theologians. So the Church began to use its power by severing the relationship between philosophers and traditional theologians at that time.⁵¹

The third characteristic regarding the seeds of the emergence of enlightenment (renaissance) is that there is a development of skepticism and the movement of criticism.⁵² Although Augustinian school of thought stands behind Christian spirituality which is held by the Church in a rigid way, the development of a fairly strong thought under the auspices of scholastic philosophers is still ongoing in Universities and still has the support of the Church.⁵³ As a result, the brilliant thoughts of the scholastic philosophers in suggesting alternative solutions to problems that occur in the Church are gradually accepted by the Church and are even considered to have illumined their thinking.

The last factor that drives the age of enlightenment is the emergence of rejection of things that are spiritual (ascetic) and the hereafter vision.⁵⁴ Church teachings regarding the afterlife concept and spirituality are heavily influenced by the Neo-platonic school brought by Saint Augustine which emphasizes the concept of the soul (*nous*) or *intellectus*. The concept of the soul in Neoplatonic is stated to be always connected with human science which is manifested in the concepts of wisdom, faith, death and the afterlife.⁵⁵ On the other hand, Aquinas's considerable influence, especially on the idea of a real universe (which has reality) has influenced many theologians and was also culturally accepted by Western society at that time. As a result, the influence of Aquinas' philosophy has changed the direction of emphasis; which previously was a metaphysical element as a basis for emphasizing elements of facts or reality such as the universe.⁵⁶

Regarding the last factor mentioned above, al-Attas also explains that "Christian theology suppressed the sapiential role of the intellect and stressed the scientific role of the purely rational, which can only operate on nature devoid of spiritual significance and follow its own

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁵² Rasjidi, *Keutamaan ...*, 8.

⁵³ Tarnas, *The Passion...*, 200; Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges...*, 224-225.

⁵⁴ *Idem*, *Keutamaan ...*, 8.

⁵⁵ Tarnas, *The Passion...*, 140; Etienne Gilson, *Reason and Revelation...*, 17, 20-21; read also Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, 35.

⁵⁶ Diogenes Allen, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 57; Tarnas, *The Passion*, 176, 188.

naturalistic logic to its final conclusion.⁵⁷ The mind which is spiritual in nature and is regarded as the light of the supreme knowledge of God has fallen into darkness due to its rejection of it. Therefore, they then focused their attention on the empirical and rational sciences and began to leave the discussion of the principles of their beliefs. Rasjidi also emphasized that “for Westerners, secularization which has started since the middle Ages is seen as an inevitable historical development.”⁵⁸

Characteristics of the Reformation and Western Modernism

Heresy and slavery were unstoppable in medieval Christianity. However, in the 15th century AD, as Rasjidi has mentioned, there was a momentum that brought intellectual change as a trigger for transformation into the Modern era in the West which formed a new framework of life on the principles of life: human, world, and religion.⁵⁹ The peak of the reaction against the authority of the Church in the 15th century until the 18th century AD is also known as the “Renaissance or Enlightenment” or ‘reformation’.⁶⁰ According to Rasjidi, this event has illuminated intellectual property that has inspired the West to move to the next phase of history, namely “a modern West, a secular West.”⁶¹

The terms modern and reformation grew out of the same principle in Western civilization. Both words come from Latin words. The term modern comes from *modernus*. It comes from *modo* which means *nunc* (now).⁶² In the context of medieval Europe, the word modern is used to distinguish the old (*antique*) from the present, the present (*modernus*).⁶³ While the word reform from the Latin *reformare* which means to reshape and it also “signifies improving a situation or developing a situation that previously existed.”⁶⁴

⁵⁷ Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, 35.

⁵⁸ Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, 35.

⁵⁹ Rasjidi *Koreksi Terhadap Drs...*, 16, 22-23; Idem, *Mengapa Aku Tetap...* 23. Rasjidi, *Agama dan Etik* (Surabaya: Sinar Hudaya, 1972), 36-37.

⁶⁰ H. M. Rasjidi, *Sekularisme Dalam Persoalan Lagi* (Jakarta: Yayasan Bangkit, 1972), 51. Idem, *Mengapa Aku Tetap...*, 23. Idem, *Kebebasan...* MD, 11. Idem, *Koreksi Terhadap Drs...*, 16.

⁶¹ Ibid, *Sekularisme Dalam...*; Idem, *Agama dan Etik*, 36-37.

⁶² Sir William Smith dan Sir John Lockwood, *Chambers Murray Latin-English Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1933; reprint, 2000), 472; Gustavo Benavides, “Modernity and Buddhism,” in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, vol 2. ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr (New York: MacMillan, 2004), 544.

⁶³ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th. ed., s.v, “Modernism,” 99 vols. (USA: Encyclopaedia Britannica. Inc, 1768; 1998), 8: 215.

⁶⁴ Charles Kurzman, “Reform,” in Maryanne Cline Horowitz (eds), *New Dictionary*

In the process of its development, modernism is based on the use of the sovereignty of rational thinking rooted in philosophy and religion.⁶⁵ Although in the process he still maintains the old church and cultural doctrines (relics of the Greeks and Romans), but these doctrines and cultures have been described in accordance with the framework of contemporary philosophy. So that the truth of religious dogma is not necessarily to be right one.⁶⁶ Therefore, the sovereignty of rational thinking is also called a symbol of the modernization of Western civilization.

Rasjidi explained that modernization in the West has the main characteristic, namely believing in the sovereignty of reason and rejecting any authority or authority that is contrary to rationalism.⁶⁷ Since the Church supported the growth of higher education (university) in the West in the 12th century, the discourse of freedom of thought has finally emerged little by little. This then awakened the minds of the people to oppose the feudal theocracy from the Church.⁶⁸ But at the same time, the issue of authenticity began to become a critical study of the Bible. Such circumstances support the rise of doubt among the Christian elite.⁶⁹

The beginning of this movement was marked by the emergence of Protestantism led by Martin Luther in 1517.⁷⁰ Indeed, this was a movement to oppose old traditions of Church beliefs. Rasjidi asserted that the revival of the Protestant reformation was basically to answer

of the History of Ideas, vol 5 (USA: Thomson Gale, 2005), 2025; Robert M. Kingdom, "Reformation," in *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, vol 5, ed. Maryanne Cline Horowitz (USA: Thomson Gale, 2005), 2029; Marcel A. Boisard, *Humanisme dalam Islam*, Trans. H. M. Rasjidi (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1980), 325; H. M. Rasjidi, *Hendak Dibawa Ke Mana Ummat ini?* (Jakarta Pusat: Media Da'wah, 1988), 17-18.

⁶⁵ H.M. Rasjidi, *Sekularisme Dalam...*, 55-56.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 52-53; rujuk juga, Frederick J. Dockstader, "Modernism," *The Encyclopedia Americana* (Canada: Grolier Limited & Americana Corporation, 1928; 1978), 311.

⁶⁷ Rasjidi, *Sekularisme Dalam...*, 55-56; Mukti Ali, *Beberapa Persoalan Agama Dewasa ini* (Jakarta: Rajawali Pers, 1987), 235.

⁶⁸ William E. Hordern, *A Layman Guide to the Protestant theology* (New York: Macmillan Publishing. Co., Inc, 1962; repr., 1978), 39-42; Vivian Green, *A New History of Christianity*, (United Kingdom: Sutton Publishing, 1996), 2; S. Neilland and T. Wright, *The Interpretation of The New Testament 1861-1986* (Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 1989), 63; E. C. Colwell, *What is the Best New Testament?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 52; E. J. Epp, *Perspectives on New Testament Textual Criticism, Collected Essays, 1962-2004* (Netherlands : Brill, 2005), xxviii.

⁶⁹ H.M. Rasjidi, *Sidang Raya Dewan Gereja Sedunia di Jakarta 1975 Merupakan Tantangan Terhadap Dunia Islam*. (Jakarta: Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia, 1974), 14.

⁷⁰ Rasjidi, *Empat Kuliah Agama Islam*, 98; see also, Idem, *Koreksi Terhadap Drs...*, 16.

the usual practice of “unscrupulous priests (Church leaders) who sell a letter of pardons.”⁷¹

In addition, original sin which was previously one of the basic principles in Catholic Christianity has been abolished in the Protestant faith because they argue that human, according to Protestantism, “there is no more original sin for humans who are not evil.”⁷² It is also known as one of the “popular heresies” in Christian history and ‘a part of the emergence of European civilization’ which is known as the movement towards the modern era and the advancement of science in the West.⁷³

Rasjidi also emphasized that the era of enlightenment which became the milestone of modernization had changed the way of thinking of Western society from being under the control of certain religious authorities (Roman Christians) to a way of thinking free from metaphysical control in every basic discourse in life.⁷⁴

At that time, as mentioned by Rasjidi, the era of enlightenment reflected several characteristics, namely as follows; First, a period in which humans really focus on scientific activities, namely carrying out rational thinking processes as a method that cannot be manipulated. And it is the only legitimate source of knowledge. So there is nothing wrong as long as is rational.⁷⁵ According to Rasjidi it has built a framework that “the truth is not given by God in the form of perfect teachings, but must try to find it [must be sought] by conducting an investigation through trials and errors.”⁷⁶ In other words, norms of right or wrong should be sought outside the authority of the Church. This can be sought by focusing on methods related to experience, trials and errors.

Moreover, Rasjidi explained that such thinking at that time was represented by Western philosophers, such as Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), Rene Descartes (1596-1650), Benedict Spinoza (1632-1677), John Locke (1632-1704) and Hegel (1770-1831). Rasjidi quotes many philosophers as an attempt to describe the influence of their thinking

⁷¹ Rasjidi, *Keutamaan...*, 8.

⁷² Rasjidi, *Mengapa Aku...*, 23, 24.

⁷³ R.I. Moore, *The Birth of Popular Heresy* (Canada: University of Toronto Press and Medieval Academy of America, 1995), 7. Rasjidi, *Koreksi Terhadap Drs...*, 16; Rasjidi, *Sekularisme Dalam...*, 53.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 22; Idem, *Keutamaan...*, 9.

⁷⁵ Rasjidi, *Mengapa Aku ..*, 23; Idem, *Keutamaan...* 9.

⁷⁶ Rasjidi, *Sekularisme Dalam...*, 53.

as the driving force of modern Western civilization at that time.⁷⁷ According to Hobbes, an empiricist said that "knowledge must be based on the five senses,"⁷⁸ while Locke also said that "the human mind is a *Tabula Rasa*. All the knowledge that fills it is derived from the impressions obtained through the five senses perception"⁷⁹ Rationalist philosophical thought also gave rise to the emergence of empiricism which was popularized by David Hume (1711-1776) who believed that "that causes and effects are discoverable, not by reason but by experience,"⁸⁰ Perhaps what is meant is beyond what the five senses can perceive is nothing.

Because all sciences are measured by empirical facts as valid evidence, while the five senses are useful as a tool to prove the existence of the universe, through these three channels (ratio, senses, empirical facts) can be a determinant of a new understanding of the universe.

⁷⁷ To find out more about the influence and contribution of Western philosophers in shaping Western civilization, please read, Richard Mckeon, "Philosophy as an Agent of Civilization," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 41, no 4 (1981): 419-436.

⁷⁸ "Originally, all conceptions proceed from the action of the thing itself, whereof it is the conception: now when the action is present, the conception it produces is also called sense; and the thing by whose action the same is produced, is called the object of the sense." Read, Sir William Molesworth (ed.), *The Collected Works of Thomas Hobbes*, vol IV, foreword by Dr G.A.J. Rogers (London: Routledge Thoemmes Press, 1994), 3. The above statement also can found in Ross' works as follows; "...the opinion can only be maintained on the assumption that there are visible and intelligible species..." and also the following statement; "Hobbes held that nothing exists except matter in motion, and the only way that one body can act upon another is by pushing against it, whether directly, or indirectly through a medium.." read, George Macdonald Ross, *Starting With Hobbes* (London: MPG Books Group, 2009), 22; Rasjidi, *Empat Kuliah Agama Islam*, 7.

⁷⁹ "Since in fact nothing is known to man without the principle of that knowledge being either through the senses, it appears worth our labour to investigate the first beginning of this knowledge and to inquire whether the souls of the newly-born are just empty tablets afterwards to be filled in by observation and reasoning, or whether they have the laws of nature as signs of their duty inscribed on the at birth." John Locke, *Essays On The Law of Nature*, ed. W. Von Leyden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954; reprint; 1988), 137; Erling Eng, "Locke's Tabula Rasa and Freud's "Mystic Writing Pad", " *Journal of the History of Ideas* 41, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar., 1980): 133-140; Rasjidi, *Mengapa Aku...*, 24; Ibid, *Empat Kuliah Agama Islam*, 8.

⁸⁰ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing, 1900), 26. Locke also said that "Since in fact nothing is known to man without the principle of that knowledge being either through the senses, it appears worth our labour to investigate the first beginning of this knowledge and to inquire whether the souls of the newly-born are just empty tablets afterwards to be filled in by observation and reasoning, or whether they have the laws of nature as signs of their duty inscribed on the at birth." John Locke, *Essays On The Law of Nature*, ed. W. Von Leyden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954; reprint; 1988), 137; Erling Eng, "Locke's Tabula Rasa and Freud's "Mystic Writing Pad", " *Journal of the History of Ideas* 41, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar., 1980): 133-140; Rasjidi, *Mengapa Aku...*, 24; Ibid, *Empat Kuliah Agama Islam*, 8.

Because they limit the sources of epistemology to that stage, they get basic ideas in science as what Hobbes has stated as “mechanistic materialism” which is “universe is matter and a way of combining and its separation is mechanical, it does not require the existence of a Supreme Being, which is not this world.”⁸¹

With the development of science that is formed from outside dogmatic thinking, it affects the perspective and purpose of human life, namely that loyalty to the state is the main purpose. This is as described by Rasjidi that Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) developed the theory that “the state is above all.”⁸² Since such a way of thinking may be very widespread in the West, Rasjidi asserts that it is clear that there is “a principle of separation between Church and state” in the history of modern Western Christianity.⁸³

However, the notion of separation and contradiction -such as separation of the understanding metaphysics from the physical sciences- is regarded as an absolute belief. This understanding has become a principle that cannot be dammed and thrives in modern Western times.⁸⁴ In addition, regarding the notion of dichotomy as one of the characteristics of Western culture, this is also shared by one of Rasjidi’s friends who had worked together at McGill University, Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1916-2000). He is a Professor and Pastor of Christianity and also the founder (first director) of Institute for Islamic Studies, McGill University, in Montreal, Canada. Smith stated that;

⁸¹ Rasjidi, *Empat Kuliaah Agama Islam*, 8; “The doctrine of God’s worship is excluded from philosophy, as being not to be known by natural reason, but by the authority of the church; and as being the object of faith, and not of knowledge.” Refer also, Sir William Molesworth (ed.), *The Collected Works of Thomas Hobbes*, vol 1, foreword by, Dr G.A.J. Rogers (London: Routledge Thoemmes Press, 1994); 11; Ross, *Starting With Hobbes*, 107.

⁸² “The principal parts of philosophy are two. For two chief kinds of bodies, and very different from one another, offer themselves to such as search after their generation and properties; one whereof being the work of nature, is called a natural body, the other is called as commonwealth, and is made by the wills and agreement of men. And from these spring the two parts of philosophy, called natural and civil. But seeing that, for the knowledge of the properties of a commonwealth, it is necessary first to know the dispositions, affections, and manners of men, civil philosophy is again commonly divided into two parts, whereof one, which treats of men’s dispositions and manners, is called ethics; and the other, which takes cognizance of their civil duties, is called politics, or simple civil philosophy.” Idem, *The Collected Works of Thomas Hobbes*, 11. In addition, Ross also said that “...the sovereign was the sole authority on civil matters, similarly the sovereign was the sole authority on religious matters, and in particular on the interpretation of the Bible.” Ross, *Starting With Hobbes*, 136; Rasjidi, *Strategi...*, 18.

⁸³ Rasjidi, *Sekularisme Dalam...*, 52.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 56; H. M. Rasjidi, *Falsafah Agama* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1965; reprint., 1970), 17-20; Rasjidi, *Keutamaan Hukum Islam*, 18; Rasjidi, *Koreksi Terhadap Drs*, 22, 75.

"Modern Western civilization (alone among the great culture of man) is dual. It is explicitly a civilization composed of two traditions, which it has never integrated, one from Greece and Rome, one from Palestine. Throughout, these two have existed and developed side by side: sometimes in conflict, sometimes in uneasy tension, sometimes in harmony, but never fused."⁸⁵

One the reactions of the reform or renaissance as well as an important element of modernization in the West is the growth of humanism.⁸⁶ Once again, this term appears in the historical context of Western civilization as a response to Christian history and philosophy in Europe. Rasjidi explained that humanism in the Western worldview discusses the superiority of human potential as a belief that "human the one who forms the truth."⁸⁷ In relation with this way of thinking, humans understand the nature of this universe is the only place where humans are responsible.

One of the goals of humanism is to improve the quality of humanity in terms of thought without fear of anything. A human being is regarded to be truly human if he or she does not feel guilty and is free from any form of oppression. This Conception of life believes that it is human who absolutely determines the truth and not God. So that human begins to understand the nature of universe and believe that the life of this world is the only place where human is responsible for his actions without fear of any substance.

The Impacts on Contemporary Muslim Thought in Indonesia

The study of Islam with the framework and experience of Western civilization in understanding the religion of Islam is still considered to been taught systematically in Islamic higher education in Indonesia since the 1970s.⁸⁸ This may still work with a submissive and

⁸⁵ Refer, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), 30.

⁸⁶ Rasjidi, *Strategi...*, 63.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 64; Rasjidi, *Sekularisme Dalam...*, 55; Read also Rasjid's foreword in his translation of Marcel A. Boisard, *Humanisme dalam Islam* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1985), 11. For more detailed exposition on Rasjidi's view in response to humanism in the West based on Islamic perspective, refer to, Mohammad Zakki Azani, "*Pemikiran Mohamad Rasjidi (1915-2001)...*"

⁸⁸ Fuad Jabali dan Jamari (ed.), *IAIN Modernisasi Islam di Indonesia* (Ciputat: Logos Wacana Ilmu, 2002). See also, <https://www.mcgill.ca/indonesia-project/about/history>. Accessed on 23 January 2022.

permissive approach.⁸⁹ If this is not studied with a critical, constructive and evaluative study based on the framework and worldview of Islam in a scientific and right manner, then the problems that arise from the womb of Western civilization and its framework are still one of the biggest problems in the study of Islamic thought and will certainly have a negative impact on Muslim behaviour.

Among the most obvious are the facts and the current reality with its value can be a benchmark for the truth and value of life. So that secular worldview and its experience in the Western world can be used as a guidance of life. For instance, LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer or Questioning) in the context of the Western world is perhaps something to normally happen. Meanwhile recently in 2020, we heard that the Vatican announced that being gay was something that the family and the law needed to protect.⁹⁰ Unfortunately, we also find that what is happening in the West is also being tried by some groups of Muslims, namely efforts to legalize same-sex marriage (homosexuality). This is in an effort to change the interpretation of the texts of the holy verses of the Qur'an as long as it is in accordance with their agenda.⁹¹ So that the truth (*muḥkamât*) that comes from religious teachings can be changed, challenged or even adapted to the secular framework and worldview.

Such a condition can happen because a Muslim is negligent or ignorant of the nature of man and the purpose of life in the world; as a servant of Allah as well as His caliph (*khalîfah Allâh*) on earth. If a Muslim is not negligent or ignorant about this, perhaps he or she is in a state of error and confusion in understanding his identity and purpose of being in this world based on the Islamic perspective. This error can occur because of the dominance of the Western worldview in the Muslim mind which allows redefining the nature of man based on the criteria of the Western worldview, so that it is possible to deconstruct human concepts outside of autonomy and the teachings of Islam. Because secular-minded considers that the religious teachings are a form of oppression to themselves.⁹²

⁸⁹ Mohammad Zakki Azani dan Harris, Khalif Muammar A. "Islam dan Modernisme di Indonesia: Tinjauan atas Pemikiran Mohamad Rasjidi (1915-2001)," *Tsaqafah* 15, no 1. (2019): 147-164.

⁹⁰ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-vatican-lgbt-unions-idUSKBN2B82MN>. Accessed on 23 January 2022.

⁹¹ <https://lakilakibaru.or.id/liberalisme-dan-konsolidasi-gerakan-legalisasi-perkawinan-homoseksual-di-indonesia/>. Accessed on 20 January 2022.

⁹² *Ibid.*

One of the consequences of constructing the definition of man according to the spirit of Western civilization, the teachings of Islam is only utilized as a justification for one's action or agenda which potentially can be contrary to the teachings of Islam. It is clear that in Islam, one's experience in accepting values or looking at the facts or reality (empirical data) can be used as a source of truth, but that is not the only source of truth. On the contrary, in Western thought, fact and reality can be used as a source of truth as it is represented by empiricist that has been explained above.

Conclusion

Rasjidi observes the characteristics of the historical development of Western thought that have emanated from the Western Christian theocratic system giving rise to the seeds of secularism and the secularization movement in Western religion and culture. These characteristics are the seeds for the modern era in the West. According to Rasjidi, there are three important elements of modern Western philosophy, namely Protestantism, rationalism and humanism, all of which lead to secularism. It is on those views of life that the West feels that it can progress and develop, all of which are focused systemically on rejecting the spiritual meaning of religion at the individual level as well as in society.⁹³

In addition, secularization that has taken root in modern Western philosophy has resulted in an absolute separation of the religious element from the concepts of the state, science and morality.⁹⁴ Furthermore, Rasjidi is of the view that there is no absolute truth according to the Western secular worldview, even if it is from God. Therefore, perhaps it is with this premise that the West continues to seek and fail and then keep on searching again and so on (trials and errors) without having any final purpose. It is just like a person who drinks seawater so that he is always thirsty.

From the description above, it is found that the modern Western secular framework according to Rasjidi's view cannot be separated from the domination of Western philosophers who consider religious

⁹³ Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, 18; Rasjidi, *Agama dan Etika*, 25.

⁹⁴ For more detailed on Rasjidi's view on morality can refer to Mohammad Zakki Azani, "Rasjidi on Morality and Its Relevance to Contemporary Discourse," *Iseedu: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices*, Vol 3, No 1 (2019): 27-40.

doctrine to be no longer relevant in the modern era. Even if religion is still considered to have a role, it has been narrowed down to certain rituals such as birth, marriage and death processions. This can be seen about how rationalism and humanism are emphasized by modern Western philosophers to epistemology and interpretations of the nature of this universe and religion in the West.[]

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