

DEFENDING THE WEAK: EXPLORING LIBERATION THEOLOGY FROM THEOLOGIANS AND THINKERS IN INDONESIA

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Abstrak

Paper ini mencoba menelusuri para teolog pembebasan di Indonesia yang telah terlibat dalam memperjuangkan hak-hak masyarakat yang tertindas demi kemanusiaan dan keadilan. Dalam memahami topik ini, gambaran besar teologi pembebasan dari sisi historis perlu digali untuk memetakan dan menjelaskan orientasi keagamaan dan peran nilai-nilai agama seperti apa yang mendasari dan melatar belakangi pemikiran dan gerakan mereka dalam menyikapi dan menghadapi permasalahan sosial. Gerakan yang dipelopori oleh para teolog dan para pemikir teolog tersebut memiliki keterkaitan dengan dengan apa yang dilakukan oleh para teolog pembebasan baik itu di kawasan Amerika Latin maupun di Asia. Semangat pembebasan yang diusung oleh figur terkemuka seperti Gustavo Guterrez, Ali Shariati, Ashgar Ali maupun Hassan Hanafi membawa warna tersendiri bagi dalam mengeksplorasi teolog lokal. Dalam paper ini, penulis mencoba mengungkap empat tokoh teologi pembebasan maupun pemikir Indonesia; Abdurrahman Wahid, Francis Wahono, Mansour Fakhri dan Moeslim Abdurrahman. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan sosiologi pengetahuan milik Karl Mannheim, paper ini mencoba mengungkapkan hal-hal berikut; 1) tokoh-tokoh yang dikaji dalam paper ini memiliki peran penting dalam membentuk dan menandai pentingnya orientasi keagamaan dalam menyikapi isu-isu sosial terkait dengan masyarakat yang tertindas dan termarginalisasikan, 2) dalam upaya mendekolonisasi ilmu pengetahuan, para pemikir ini membawa arah pendidikan transformatif dan kritis yang dapat membebaskan orang dari keterbelakangan dan ketergantungan. Kajian ini menyimpulkan, pelibatan figur-figur diatas memiliki peran yang signifikan untuk merumuskan pola pikir alternatif yang dapat merespon upaya ketidakadilan dan membebaskan masyarakat yang terpinggirkan.

Kata Kunci: Teologi Pembebasan; Indonesia; Tertindas; Lemah; Masalah Sosial

Abstract

This paper explores the liberation theologians in Indonesia that have been involved in various occasions, fighting for the oppressed and making their voices heard and defending their rights to justice. In understanding this topic, the big picture of historical liberation theology needs to be explained and the

role of religious orientation and religious values that are derived from the thought of Indonesian theologians and thinkers and their practical actions when dealing with social problems need to be examined. Such movements were similar with or can be referred to those in Latin America or Asia such as those exemplified by Gustavo Gutierrez, Ali Shariati, Asghar Ali, and Hassan Hanafi that can be used as a proper cornerstone when exploring local theologians. Although there have been numerous Indonesian theologians and thinkers, only four among prominent individuals will be discussed; Abdurrahman Wahid as a theologian, Francis Wahono, Mansour Fakhri and Moeslim Abdurrahman as thinkers and scholars. Using Karl Manheim's Sociology of Knowledge, this paper found among other things; These religious-liberative profiles have been crucial in shaping and marking the important of religious orientation in fighting for social issues including those who were oppressed and marginalized within society. In term of decolonizing knowledge, critical education has been proposed by the theologians to liberate people from being restricted in thinking such backwardness and ignorance. The study concludes, these prominent persons engagement have significant influences in the formulation of an alternative way of thinking that can liberate the marginalized people and fight against.

Keywords: Liberation Theology; Indonesia; The Oppressed; The Weak; Social Problem

Introduction

The term of liberation theology may not be originally from Indonesia. However, the spirit and practice of it have been embraced by Indonesians throughout different period of time. As a term, liberation theology is compound words consisting of theology and liberation. Theology can be derived from *theos* which means God and *logos* which means science. In short, it means a study about the God. Amin Abdullah¹ defines it as a study that discusses beliefs in religious life. In Western literatures, the term theology is widely used for Christianity, which is defined as a belief or dogma on which a belief is based. But in Islam, the term theology is more widely known as *tauhid*. Although both are different terms, both talk about God or the oneness of God. Meanwhile, liberation refers to a process towards independence, free from oppressive systems and free to realize oneself as human beings.² So, the theology of liberation is a critical reflection on the historical processes of liberation in term of faith that arises from action. Basically, it is a critical reflection of faith.

Generally, it can be said that liberation theology examines the study of God and religion, and its relationship with human, nature, and the universe. Furthermore, the liberation theology discusses a relationship between religious values that emerged as a reaction or critics to development activities run by states on society, that is more common issues in developing countries during mid-20th century.³ Liberation theology was also used to fight against colonialism and capitalism by the scholar-activists who found in it a tool to fight for rights of the oppressed people, such as those of gender minorities. Through liberation theology, religion is used to lead people towards creativity, prosperity and productivity, and especially in upholding justice against an oppressor who continued to oppress minorities.

Paul E Sigmund⁴ defines liberation theology as an understanding of the role of religion in the social sphere. In other words, liberation theology is an attempt to contextualize religious teachings and values on the concrete problems around them. Liberation theology is a contextual theological effort attempting to contextualize theology and to make the activities of churches relevant to social life. Liberation theology was born in response to the economic and political situation that was bringing about suffering to the people. These sufferings are seen in the forms of oppression, racism,

¹ Amin Abdullah, 2002, *Normativitas dan Historisitas*, Pustaka Pelajar: Yogyakarta.

² Francis Wahono Nitiprawiro, 2008, *Teologi Pembebasan, Sejarah, Metode, Praksis dan Isinya*, Yogyakarta: LKiS.

³ Francis Wahono Nitiprawiro, 2008, *Teologi Pembebasan, Sejarah, Metode, Praksis dan Isinya*, Yogyakarta: LKiS.

⁴ Paul E. Sigmund, 1990, *Liberation Theology and The Crossroad* New York: Oxford University Press.

poverty, colonialism, ideological biases and so on. Liberation theology is a shared reflection among communities on their social problems. Because of the problems, people are involved in religious contemplations. They questioned where religious responsibilities are and what religion should do in dealing with structural poverty.

Basically, liberation theology carries the liberation paradigm that offers the rescue paradigm, namely rescuing people from practices of dehumanization. It points out that certain dominating power tend to be abusive or exploitative, therefore, responses to fight against it are needed. There are four important pillars in the liberation paradigm: first, independence, not only in terms of territory but also human beings. Second, solidarity based on respect for the uniqueness and advancement of each person. Third, social justice, namely the fulfillment of the basic means of human life justly and fourth, populist, means not only love that of based on nationhood but also humanity, especially the oppressed.

This study on liberation theology seeks to dig up ideas that are being promoted the liberative theologians in Indonesia based on their respective approaches. As Karl Manheim's the sociology of knowledge suggested, ideas, beliefs, and values within society are never coincidental or arbitrary nor do they emerge in abstract. There has been a certain interaction between figures and circumstances. It also examines ideas as conditioned by background of social groups within a given social structure and historical context. As Mannheim⁵ explicates "...there are modes of thought which cannot be adequately understood as long as their social origins are obscured.

The Root of Liberation Theology in Christianity-Catholic

Christianity as religion has powerful role within society throughout history of the world, especially when it comes to European continent that later shaped the Europe, the age of colonialism, secularism, modernization. Theology, at the beginning, was an unpopular term in Islamic disciplines. It is more popular in Christian world. Theology in both Islam and Christianity has the same object of study which concerns the problem of God or worshipping. The term liberation theology originally appeared in the Western/Christian regions initiated by various Christian or Catholic theologians.⁶ In term of saviour, Jesus can be interpreted as a messianic figure. Jesus was born to preach the good news to the poor, and to proclaim

⁵ Karl Mannheim, 1949, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to Sociology of Knowledge*, London: Routledge & Keagan Paul.

⁶ Nuhamara, Daniel, 2004, *Kritik, Utopia dan Praksis Pembebasan: Unsur-unsur dalam Berteologi Sosial Transformatif*, UKSW: PPs.SP.

liberation for those in chains who had bravely faced the attacks of Roman rulers who oppressed the Jews. The transcendental and rational understanding of Western (European) Theology, which merely concerned with understanding of God and faith rationally, according to the Latin American bishops created stagnation in thinking, acting, and kept the churches away from concrete problems.⁷ Western theology, was viewed as only busy with preaching the teachings of Jesus on personal life, with urging people to persevere and endure suffering, and with comforting the poor and oppressed by promising heaven after death.

Obviously, there were the roots in Christianity-Catholic that enable us to grasp about liberation theology. In 1960s, in Latin America, a famous form of liberation theology emerged within Catholic Churches in responses to the social problems such as poverty and other forms of injustices and discriminatory practices committed by the authorities. Gustavo Gutiérrez Merino was one of the leaders. He was a priest, a theologian and philosopher from Peru who was popular with his book, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* (1972). According to him, theology of liberation examines the classic question of the relation between faith and social reality in a new context which demands the abolition of exploitation and the fulfillment of freedom.⁸ Gutiérrez's theology is a reaction against the traditional method of understanding God. Gutiérrez said that the church would not have an authentic theology of liberation until those who were oppressed could express themselves independently and creatively in society as human beings created by God. To him, God prefers people who are "insignificant", "marginalized", "unimportant", "needy", "despised", and "defenseless".⁹ He also considered representative doctrines from this perspective. For instance, in addressing the term of *sin*, he maintained that it has social and historical elements that lies within men and God relationship.

Gutierrez described theology in three realms; theology as a wisdom, theology as a rational knowledge, and theology as a critical reflective on praxis. In his explanation on critical reflection on praxis, "in the light of God" word can be interpreted into three aspects. *First*, freedom from the shackles of economic, social, and political oppression or cultural alienation as well as poverty and injustice. *Second*, liberation from institutional violence. *Third*, freedom from sin which enables man to enter fellowship with God and all

⁷ Francis Wahono Nitiprawiro, 2008, *Teologi Pembebasan, Sejarah, Metode, Praksis dan Isinya*, Yogyakarta: LKiS.

⁸ Francis Wahono Nitiprawiro, 2008, *Teologi Pembebasan, Sejarah, Metode, Praksis dan Isinya*, Yogyakarta: LKiS.

⁹ Gutierrez Gustavo, 1991, *A Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll: Orbis Book.

humans. These three elements are critical reflections on faith that lived in the context of the concrete history of Latin America, a faith that is guided by God's Revelation in both verbal form and historical signs. Guitierrez added that "This is a theology which does not stop with reflecting on the world, but rather tries to be part of the processes through which the world is transformed. It is theology which is open in the protest against trampled human dignity, in the struggle against the plunder of most of the humankind, in liberating love, and in the building of a new, just, and comradely society—to the gift of the Kingdom of God".¹⁰

According to Bevans, theology must be contextual because of two reasons; internal and external. Externally, there are four factors that require theology to be more contextualized. *First*, the dissatisfaction experienced by the first and third worlds with the old models of classical approaches in theology.¹¹ *Second*, the old theological approach that is oppressive. For black theology, for example, theology has no place for them. *Third*, the contribution of local identity in developing contextual theology. *Fourth*, better understanding of culture. Meanwhile, internally, contextual theology has relevance because there are three backgrounds. *First*, the nature of the incarnation in Christianity. Revelation is understood by humans as only of a special nature. That is why Allah incarnated in Jesus as a human, so that he could be understood by humans. *Second*, the sacramental state of reality. The incarnation of Allah took place in a concrete reality, not an idea. *Third*, understanding about divine revelation. There is a change in attitude in this understanding from truthful ideas to interpersonal truths. Seeing the background definition of theology above, theology only becomes theology when it becomes the praxis of an idea that is in accordance with the context in which it develops. Theology that "does not speak" is only a matter of faith. It does not contribute anything to the dynamics of community life.

Liberation Theology emerged amid the concerns of the Churches in Latin America to the real conditions of society that were longing for a better life. One of the reasons is because these efforts have not touched the root causes of poverty.¹² The cause is not only due to economic factors, but also related to the existing social structure, where the socio-economic life of the community is controlled by the elites. They are trying to preserve the existing situation because it is very beneficial to them. They also developed relationships with the leadership of the Church by making large donations,

¹⁰ Gutierrez, Gustavo, 1991, *A Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll: Orbis Book.

¹¹ Bevans. B. Stephen, 1996, *Models of Contextual Theology*. Faith and Cultures Series, Maryknoll-New York: Orbis Books.

¹² Francis Wahono Nitiprawiro, 2008, *Teologi Pembebasan, Sejarah, Metode, Praksis dan Isinya*, Yogyakarta: LKiS.

which made the Church then continued to serve as a caritative service to the suffering people (people). The absence of changes in this social structure keeps people living in poverty.

The Root of Liberation Theology in Islam

Islam comes down with the dimension of liberation, upholds the human values of justice and equality as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad. This religion carries a mission of change, moving away from various symbols and human conditions that are ignorant, imprisoned, oppressed, hegemony, and injustice to become more humanized and free people. In studying liberation theology in Islam, there have been a lot of literary works that cover the story and struggle of Muslim community. For example, the work of Asghar Ali Engineer, an Indian intellectual. He wrote a book entitled *Islam and Liberation Theology* (1990). In his book, Asghar discusses more on social liberation issues, like social justice and gender equality as he encountered these problems in his daily life in India. Second example came from Ali Shariati, an Iranian modern Muslim thinker who wrote *On the Sociology of Islam* (1979).¹³ In this book, he addressed social justice as symbolised by Qabil and Habil cases. The former is a descent of powerful man and an oppressor that prolonged injustice within society while the latter is a lower class within society that was oppressed and exploited. Protecting Habil from Qabil is a must to defend for the weak and to eradicate any kinds of discrimination. Shariati believes that social justice is about equality, equal rights-based morality. Its fulfilment requires a fundamental change over the structure of society.¹⁴ The third scholarly work example can be seen from an Iranian author of *Islamic Liberation Theology: Resisting the Empire*.¹⁵ He concerned on the relation of politics and power as he saw on what happened after 9/11 in United States of America. The 9/11 incident made US the only superpower and became one of the strong foundations for an imperial globalized capital to confront the rise of new Islamic theodicy.

Alexandra Van Den Heever¹⁶ said that Islamic liberation theology gained more traction in non-Muslim majority countries that supported struggling for an equality. The Idea of liberation theology are more visible in non-Muslim majorities, non-Middle East or Arab countries that have cared of marginalized people, of those exposed to discrimination and injustice

¹³ Ridwan, A. H, 1998, *Reformasi Intelektual Islam*, Yogyakarta: Ittaqa Press.

¹⁴ Ridwan, A. H, 1998, *Reformasi Intelektual Islam*, Yogyakarta: Ittaqa Press.

¹⁵ Dabashi, Hamid, 2008, *Islamic Liberation Theology: Resisting the Empire*, USA: Routledge.

¹⁶ Van den Heever, 2014, Alexandra van den Heever. *Islamic Liberation Theology*. Wheaton College Norton, Mass.

because of their minority status and religious difference. Discourses on the liberation theology can be seen at Farid Esack and Asghar Ali Engineer scholarly works who took into consideration different experiences arising from different context, place, and struggle.

Another scholar that must be highlighted in this liberation theology is Hassan Hanafi, an Egyptian who is famous with ideas of liberation for the Palestine. He criticized the way neo-imperialism conquered middle east from cultural and knowledge through the presence of multinational corporations, and the military imperialism that occupied some areas as military base.¹⁷ The most important threat was Zionism that intends to wipe out Palestine and its people from their land. Therefore, Hanafi was vocal in promoting social justice and viewing as an obligation to oppose Zionism and capitalism that lead to the growth of destructive values.

In Indonesian context, there are prominent Indonesian scholars, that can be categorised as fighters for social justice. They applied liberation theology to amplify voices of minorities, marginalised people and the opposition against ignorance. Fighting for the weak became a common concern among these scholars, who were genuinely motivated to help the needy without any hidden interest like current politicians. The following four Indonesian scholars would be picked up representations of different personalities and approaches in responding to social problem and phenomena. Gus Dur represented an individual that strongly stood ready to defend poor people. He used his strong Islamic theological background and his broad knowledge on the issue to break ambiguities and uphold justices. It can be seen from what he had done to those oppressed such as those associated with Indonesian communist party families by the new order regime. He criticize the new order actions against them and portrayed the actions as violation to their self-development rights. Francis Wahono, is another scholar that started addressing liberation theology in his book from historical and social perspective. Besides that, he also interacted with the peasants, advocated their rights in various cases. Moeslim Abdurrahman is an anthropologist, scholars who was fighting for education revolutionary movement through his concept on transformative pedagogy. Mansour Fakhir is another scholar who also emphasized the important of learning processes in Indonesia that enable to liberate students and to respond to social problem around them. Educational reform served as crucial tool to liberate people from being silenced by authoritarian regime. To speak and to fight for the weak can be initiated by reforming the way people think.

¹⁷ Muhidin M. Dahlan, 2001, *Postkolonialisme, Sikap Kita terhadap Imperialisme*. Yogyakarta: Jendela.

In my opinion, the most appropriate way to build a theology of Islamic liberation that is uniquely Indonesian must be started by looking at the basic needs of Indonesian Muslims. It needs to be underlined that being part of plural Indonesian nation, muslim is required to revise Islamic doctrines that are not friendly to the others (non muslim). The social problems in Indonesia to some extent are different from those in Iran, Palestine, Yemen, India etc. Therefore, in bringing global context to the local, those who are interested to work on theology must be independent. Therefore, in addressing theology, two things need to be considered: Islam and Indonesia. These two elements demand an elaboration to religious values that can guide the way Muslim should react when encountering injustices and that enable cultural values of Indonesia to be combined with religious values in responding any threats to society. It means both must work together as vital pillars. In the next few chapters, there are four theologians and scholars that were known to uphold the spirit and idea of liberation theology. As a theologian, Abdurrahman Wahid is a prominent figure that is widely known to promote the value of Islam that can be used to help the marginalised people. The other three figures are thinker and scholars who come up with the discourse of liberation theology in various fields that have an influence towards people orientation.

Abdurrahman Wahid on Liberation Theology

When it comes to a discussion on Islamic liberation theology, Abdurrahman Wahid, also affectionately known as Gus Dur would be the number one person on the list. He was born in 1940, whose father was one of the prominent ministers during Soekarno Era and whose grandfather is the founder of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the biggest Islamic organization in Indonesia. His family and educational backgrounds directly or indirectly have shaped his ideas and values on the essence of Islam and on Islamic response to problems in societies. For him, having good relationship with God must be in line with having good relationship with people.¹⁸ Due to this principle, Gus Dur activism and his theology of liberation are based on the principles of *Maqasid Asyariah*, purposes of an Islamic legal doctrine. Rooted from the *pesantren* (the Islamic boarding school) traditions, he saw a *Kyai (an ulama) has been able* to provide solutions to problems in the communities. This practice made him believe that religion should be an inspiration that can lead to a better change.¹⁹ Islam gives every human the right to be a substitute of Allah (Khalifah) on earth, a social function that requires Muslims to always fight for and to realize the ideals for a

¹⁸ Abdurrahman Wahid, 1999, *Tuhan Tidak Perlu Dibela*, LKIS: Yogyakarta.

¹⁹ Azyumardi Azra, 2004, *Jaringan Ulama*, Mizan: Bandung.

community that is able to prosper as a whole and completely. Thus, the Muslims are required to oppose any social life situation that is exploitative, inhuman and not based on justice in its absolute sense.²⁰

Through his theology of liberation, Gus Dur has mapped the problems in Indonesia which includes problems of poverty, ignorance, and corruption in the government's practices. For him, religion must be able to communicate with power. During the new order era, he was very vocal to speak up against government incompetence, was openly defending those pressurized and oppressed violently. He criticized the state that should have worked to improve the people's welfare, but in fact had marginalized the weak. This point of view has similarity to the analysis of Marx who saw the state to have cooperated with capitalism to oppress the weak. As an intellectual, Gus Dur has also made his own position when commenting on and criticising Karl Marx and Gramsci. While criticising capitalism because he read Marxism's book, he also criticize Marxism for not paying attention to the potential roles of culture in society in influencing social change because they were too busy with economic side of capitalism. On Gramsci, his critics was on Gramsci's view that neglects the role of religion in social life as an important elements in social movement.²¹

Reconciliation, Forgiveness and Help

According to Greg Barton, Gus Dur's thoughts often carry ideas concerning pluralism, humanism, and liberalism. Pluralism emphasizes people's ability to accept the diversity in society so that they could be more open, more inclusive.²² When someone has the values of humanism, they would grow the willingness to help other people regardless of their race, religion, class or social status. The term liberalism can be described as an act of respect the fellow humankind's freedom in choosing religion. The way Gus Dur thinks can be categorized as normativity and historicity.²³ Normative Islam is ideals based on normative teachings of holy texts and religious orders, so the reality of religious doctrines must always be right. But, historical Islam is about the way people perceive values and ideas throughout histories that shape people perspective.

The concrete form of Gus Dur's liberation theology can be seen through his efforts to defend those who are marginalized. For example, Gus

²⁰ Abdurrahman Wahid, 2010, *Prisma Pemikiran Gus Dur*, Yogyakarta: LKiS.

²¹ Suseno, Franz Magnis, Karl Marx, 1999, *Pemikiran Karl Marx: dari Sosialisme Utopis ke Perselisihan Revisionism*. Jakarta: Gramedia.

²² Greg Barton, 1999, *Gagasan Islam Liberal: Nurcholis Madjid, Abdurahman Wahid, Ahmad Wahib dan Djohan Effendi*, Pustaka Antara.

²³ Amin Abdullah, 2002, *Normativitas dan Historisitas*, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.

Dur defended Chinese ethnic group and gave them equal status as Indonesian citizens. Previously, the cultural events conducted by ethnic Chinese to express their own religion or culture were banned by the New Order Government.²⁴ Then when Gus Dur became President, he restored freedom for every Chinese Indonesian to carry out their religious services and to conduct celebration of the Chinese New Year, and formally recognized the existence of Confucianism by making it one of the official national religions, as well as declared Chinese New Year as a national holiday.

Gus Dur also restored protection for those associated as family members of the banned PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) who have long been prosecuted and oppressed. Until the end of the New Order, these people still get exposed to discrimination from the state. Those people were politically victimized, following the banning of the PKI party. They were portrayed negatively, and exposed to massive discrimination. The state sponsored operation against these people caused violation of their rights to serve the country such as not allowed to become a civil servant, always being put under surveillance, prohibited from getting involved in politics and be made difficult to access public service and administration.²⁵ For Gus Dur, any errors that had happened in the past should have been forgiven, then human rights values must be upheld by eliminating regulations that discriminate against families who were allegedly involved in the PKI. Based on humanities principles, Gus Dur also sought national reconciliation by bringing together PKI victims and the families who were allegedly part of the PKI. This effort was an attempt to reconcile history and to treat trauma resulted from the past violence.

As a peace activist, Gus Dur showed his strong attitude on tolerance to all religions. He himself even came down to defend right to an existence for Ahmadiyah followers who are considered heretical by some Muslims. For Gus Dur, although the viewpoints of the Ahmadiyya congregation is deemed deviant by majority of muslim, it does not mean that anyone is allowed to commit acts of violence against them.²⁶ There is truth. Thus, Gus Dur also defended through Inter Dialogue Faith. His defense of Minority Religions as an endeavour for manifest tolerance in a concrete manner. Gus Dur also formed a research institute known as Wahid Institute which engaged in the

²⁴ Abdurrahman Wahid, 2006, *Islamku Islam Anda Islam Kita*, Jakarta: The Wahid Institute.

²⁵ Abdurrahman Wahid, 2006, *Islamku Islam Anda Islam Kita*, Jakarta: The Wahid Institute.

²⁶ Abdurrahman Wahid, 2006, *Islamku Islam Anda Islam Kita*, Jakarta: The Wahid Institute.

study of tolerance and religious freedom. This institution is intended as a manifestation of Gus Dur's thought who was consistently supportive to religious pluralism and democratic atmosphere in Indonesia. In his dialogue with other religious communities, he also showed his inclusiveness attitudes.²⁷

Gus Dur's liberation theology thought has a tendency to defend people who are oppressed socially or politically. For Gus Dur, defending the oppressed was a manifestation of the functionality of religion as a problem solver. This research found that the link between democracy and Islamic liberation theology is met in the concept of freedom as the basis for achieving better life. Indonesian Muslims accept democracy because democracy is not in conflict With Islam. Of course western democracy has differences with Islamic teachings on the basis of the values developed, namely Muslims cannot applying religious values in life, then democracy too interpreted as freedom based on manifested divine values in an effort to maintain the dignity of humanity.²⁸

Liberation Theology in Francis Wahono's Perspective

Francis Wahono Nitiprawira, widely known as Francis Wahono. Apart from being a scholar, Wahono was also the Director of the Cindelaras Paritrana Foundation of Yogyakarta. Wahono and Cindelaras devoted themselves to the work of assisting farmers, such as organizing organic-collective agriculture and encouraging the development of farmer cooperatives. Wahono was notorious with his literary works, through reading and writing a book, he explored deeply various ideologies and also disseminated his ideas to communities. The rise of liberation theology, to him, should be responded as counter ideas towards destructive orders. Powerful states and capitalism hegemony for instance that grow up in third world just benefit state's elites. On the contrary, poor people at grass root levels continue to suffer from conflict and poverty.²⁹

He admired local theologians like Abdurrahman Wahid and Romo Mangunwijaya, viewed that both persons have tendency to protect and fight for the rights of the weak and the poor from state arrogance. Because of their contribution, he believed that liberation was part of the religious call to defend justice and the welfare of many people. During earlier of his time,

²⁷ Saiful Arif, 2009, *Gus Dur dan Ilmu Sosial Transformatif, Sebuah Biografi Intelektual*, Koekoesan: Jakarta.

²⁸ Abdurrahman Wahid, 1991, *Hasan Hanafi, Agama, Ideologi dan Pembangunan*, P3M: Jakarta.

²⁹ Franz Magnis Suseno, 2001, *Etika Politik: Prinsip-prinsip Moral Dasar Kenegaraan Modern*, Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

Wahono's book was one that was banned during the new order era over an allegation that liberation theology was part of Marxism, and that was closely linked or part of the banned communism. At that time, authoritarian Soeharto era gave no place for a counter argumentation and debating, otherwise the authority would take an action for any movements perceived as a threat.³⁰ The banning of his book confirmed the statement that the development of liberation theology in Indonesia was very slow because of the repressive and strong state factor. Any studies on the theologies commonly faced strong resistance from the state.

Wahono, in his book addressed various points on liberation theology. In term of its origin, liberation theology has appeared in Europe in twentieth century and has been impeccable for religious studies to see the role of religions in liberating people from globalization threat and prevent people from social sin and offering new paradigms to fix the social system that had been destroyed by its man-made systems and ideologies. The development of such liberation theology was focused on the level of thought and ideas, whereas in Latin America and Asia, it tended to be a resistant movement against the authoritarian government. The theology of repression that was popular in Latin America has shown success in fighting for the right to justice of the poor. The theology also promoted the important of understanding of imperialism, as a root cause to injustices mostly in third world.³¹

To understand how theology of liberation works within societies particularly in Asia, two opinions were expressed by Wahono. It was characterized by a praxis approach, and a theoretical-praxis approach.³² According to Pieris, for theology in an Asian context, one must start with the praxis of poverty voluntarily. For Pieris, there are two types of poverty that are rampant in Asia, one, forced poverty that was caused by impoverishing situations, and the other, voluntary poverty that was practiced by adherents of religions such as Buddhism. The first one is a form of resistance to greed, corruption, and usury. The second one, the condition of impoverishing people is a form of sin. Meanwhile Rayan, theoretically proposes the replacement of the understanding of god as guarantor of the status quo, guardian of world law and order, with an understanding of the god that

³⁰ Francis Wahono Nitiprawiro, 2008, *Teologi Pembebasan, Sejarah, Metode, Praksis dan Isinya*, Yogyakarta: LKiS.

³¹ Francis Wahono Nitiprawiro, 2008, *Teologi Pembebasan, Sejarah, Metode, Praksis dan Isinya*, Yogyakarta: LKiS.

³² Francis Wahono Nitiprawiro, 2008, *Teologi Pembebasan, Sejarah, Metode, Praksis dan Isinya*, Yogyakarta: LKiS.

exists in landless peasants, the unemployed, those who are starving and shackled, all of which are caused by the dilapidated system.³³

Furthermore, Wahono mentioned that there were four pillars on modern liberation paradigm. *Firstly*, independence. This is understood not only as autonomous or liberated territory, but also as human or people independence from any forms of dependency on outsiders that control many aspects of life. This independence also manifested in the form of gratitude to God. *Secondly*, brotherhood. As a root of unity, brotherhood was deemed as an important part of society that can manipulated the power of people in achieving a certain goal, although there are differences in class, race, gender or wealth, the brotherhood viewed those differences as advantages. On the other level of brotherhood, there are respectful act on each personality with their uniqueness and character. *Thirdly*, social justice. Upholding the equality among people on the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society. *Fourthly*, populism. Defending marginalised people can be manifested as an act of loving toward humanity, meaning that put humanity first. Helping each other might elevate patriotism into a form of state service.³⁴

Wahono believes that the emergence of new movement within theological tradition can be traced back from theology in developed countries to that in developing countries. What has been accepted before that in Latin America, theologians were those who initiated theological movement. But prior to that, it might be the role of church liberation praxis that was driven by the Vatican council II decisions in opening room for dialog towards various social problems. From this view, he saw a slight shift on the role of theologian. This is evidenced by the fact that theology was no longer the activity of elites, but that of whole society who have faith in God, those who were oppressed, exploited, impoverished that keen to gain knowledge and skill. Doing theology is no longer just formulating the teachings of faith, but the praxis of faith that is critically reflected.³⁵ Theologians in developed countries in Europe use the transcendental method that was rooted from the philosopher Emanuel Kant, while the theologians of liberation use Karl Marx's analysis with reflections on religious books.

³³ Franz Magnis Suseno, 2001, *Etika Politik: Prinsip-prinsip Moral Dasar Kenegaraan Modern*, Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

³⁴ Francis Wahono Nitiprawiro, 2008, *Teologi Pembebasan, Sejarah, Metode, Praksis dan Isinya*, Yogyakarta: LKiS.

³⁵ Franz Magnis Suseno, 2001, *Etika Politik: Prinsip-prinsip Moral Dasar Kenegaraan Modern*, Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

Liberation theology criticised globalization by offering paradigms and ways of acting that liberate humans, or what is called praxis, from all kinds of sins with all their consequences which penetrate the system and part of essential life in all dimensions. In the tradition of religious thought, apart from personal sin, we recognize social sin, sin which has formed a structure so that it is difficult for individuals in it to be free from it. Because the sin has been institutionalized in the structure, to overcome it cannot be done by personal efforts, instead structural efforts must be carried out. Likewise, in tradition, what Christians call the old journey, sin is cascaded from personal sins, economic sins, cultural sins, even sins from all sins, original sins. These institutionalized and system-shaped sins are understood by the people of Latin America and now also in other parts of the third world countries that oppress, impoverish, fool, intimidate, and kill those people who are minority, marginalized and oppressed.³⁶

One of his activity, as mentioned earlier, was advocating issues related with farmers. One of the issue that he was advocating for was the land reform. Basically, the goal of this issue was liberating people from unjust structural shackles in order to elevate social life of people and their economy to a better level.³⁷ Being the foundation for social reform, land reform has even become the basis for its implementation civil society in the future. For that, from a political perspective, sustainability of land reform requires two things: *first*, land reform should not be discriminatory, rural women must play a role; *second*, it needs a conducive democratic atmosphere which guarantees the existence of association and strengthening of the organization of farmer. According to Scott's thinking, the peasants' struggle was not new phenomenon. The resistance was aimed at fighting injustice that they encounter, because their behaviours and actions were carried out by a group of humans, both from within the community itself as well as from forces outside society, including within this is the government and its apparatus - which treat them unfairly fair. Wherever the source of injustice was spotted, peasant resistance will blossom. The resistance can just be less organized for example, by behaving with obedience, waiting for the process jobs, states and with frequent company assets became a symbol of injustice.

Moeslim Abdurrahman on Transformative Pedagogy

Moeslim Abdurrahman, affectionately known as Kang Muslim, is an Indonesian intellectual, born in Lamongan, East Java. In his Ph.D study on

³⁶ Francis Wahono Nitiprawiro, 2008, *Teologi Pembebasan, Sejarah, Metode, Praksis dan Isinya*, Yogyakarta: LKiS.

³⁷ Wahono Nitiprawiro Francis, 2002, *Hak-Hak Petani dan Proses Perumusannya*. Pustaka Cindelaras: Yogyakarta.

Anthropology at Illinois University, he developed his ideas by connecting the religious studies that were more anthropological and the critical social theories. This resulted in a more transformative character of thought. Hence, such way of thinking affects the way he sees social problem, including education. In Moeslim's view, the problem of education today was rooted in misconceptions of education. In educational studies, conceptual problems become realm educational philosophy talks. This means conceptual issues need to be cleared up first so that it will ease inside fix problems of educational practice on such a complex scene.

As mentioned above, the disorientation of education is caused by understanding of education that is not fully comprehensive. These days, teaching and learning practices are more understood as the "feeding" or transferring processes of science to as many students as possible. As a result, students become passive, or even the human dimension as the subject of change has died because the students are treated as just "consumers", and not as a knowledge "producer".³⁸ To overcome semantic fallacy of the education, Moeslim tries to restore meaning of education to become a force of change that offers concept of transformative pedagogy as the solution.

Transformative pedagogy, in Moeslim Abdurrahman opinion, is the orientation of the principles that at least involves several following things. *First*, it is part of the understanding of lifetime learning. So, education has no limit, it can be obtained wherever and whenever a student wants. *Second*, apart from emphasizing in reforming culture, it also has a political objective of carrying out social transformation that is rooted in critical thinking among students when seeing phenomenon at least in their surroundings. *Third*, orientation towards people as human agency that improves its culture and changes its own social structure, so that togetherness in improvement might reduce exclusivity, rather than growing inclusivity and integrity. *Fourth*, relying on pedagogical campus based on the environment and the community. And *fifth*, as the whole learning processes, it must be based on a philosophical conviction that after all every human is considered "stupid" and trapped in its "oppressive" structure, but still have a critical awareness of the surrounding reality through dialogical encountering with other people.³⁹

In Moeslim's view, education on religion is not just a process of indoctrination that make the child ritually pious, but at the same time

³⁸ Moeslim Abdurrahman, 2005, *Islam yang Memihak*. Yogyakarta: LKiS.

³⁹ Moeslim Abdurrahman, 2009, *Suara Tuhan Suara Pemerdekaan: Menuju Demokratisasi dan Kesadaran Bernegara*, Yogyakarta: Kanisius.

without critical reasoning. Religious education is a process that facilitates students to find religious experience.⁴⁰ It looks that the objectives of religious education is different with critical pedagogical goals. However, if it is scrutinized, the two boil down to the same point. Humans with critical awareness intersect with the function of the caliph, which is equally as historical doers, God's representatives to manage earth, and as driver of changes in social structure that creates an egalitarian, democratic, emancipatory, and just life. Inside concept of *khalifah* the divine value is emphasized because religion is the source of change. For that goal to be achieved, the function of religion of Islam should shape the student's personality.⁴¹

To facilitate and produce participating students who can think critically, developing a dialogue and willingness to engage in solving life's problems as a duty of the caliphate and the subject of change need to be applied in the curriculum⁴². The curriculum includes actual life problems, books/textbooks in its relation with the social structure of life, revelation that is understood as in dialogical with social structures. Meanwhile, the learning method must be inspirational and interactive between students and educators. There are at least three different learning methods that can be developed, namely: the face to face method problems that trains critical-dialectical thinking, dialogical method for raising critical awareness, the method of living in Islamic boarding schools, elderly homes, homes care to raise awareness.⁴³

In line with the goals of transformative Islamic education that seeks to make participating students as agents of change and to apply interactive and dialogical learning methods, the roles of teachers and students must also be equally active in understanding the social problem⁴⁴. Teacher or educators are not just transferring knowledge and conveying what's in the text book to learners, but also required to understand the textbook as well as the social life context that are discussed with participating students. Being workers of production of participatory and democratic culture, teachers must be competent-professional as well as a role model of the change actor.

Moeslim uses several concepts in formulating his ideas on education. He used the terms of: transformative pedagogy, critical pedagogy, dialogic-transformative education, transformative religious education, pedagogy of

⁴⁰ Moeslim Abdurrahman, 2003, *Islam sebagai Kritik sosial*, Jakarta: Erlangga.

⁴¹ Moeslim Abdurrahman, 1996, *Semarak Islam Semarak Demokrasi?*, Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus.

⁴² Kuntowijoyo, 1998, *Paradigma Islam Interpretasi untuk Aksi*. Bandung: Mizan.

⁴³ Moeslim Abdurrahman, 1995, *Islam Transformatif*, Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus.

⁴⁴ Moeslim Abdurrahman, 2003, *Islam sebagai Kritik Sosial*, Jakarta: Erlangga.

the people periphery, and transformative Islamic education.⁴⁵ Even though the term varies, it all came down to one point, namely how education plays a bigger role to do partiality of the margins and transformation social. In short, transformative education become a trademark of his thinking. Since he bases his thoughts on Islam, in general his idea can be called Transformative Islamic Education (PIT).

Mansour Fakh on Critical Education as a Liberation

Mansour Fakh was one of Indonesia leading scholars who got doctoral degree in Education from *Center fo International Education*, University of Massachusetts, USA. Inspired by his studies, Fakh crystalized his ideas by writing a number of influential books such as; *Masyarakat Sipil dan Transformasi Sosial* (Civil Society and Social Transformation),⁴⁶ *Pendidikan Populer, Membangun Kesadaran Kritis* (Popular Education, Building Critical Consciousness)⁴⁷, *Runtuhnya Teori Pembangunan dan Globalisasi* (the Collapse of Developmental Theory and Globalization) 2009, *Belajar dari Pengalaman* (Learning from Experiences). He was also the pioneer in the application of Paulo Freire works on Education as Liberation Practices in 1984.⁴⁸

Promoted by Mansour Fakh, Liberation Education became a concept that has been widely discussed among education communities in Indonesia. This was not a new concept. Fakh learned the concept from Paulo Freire, the Brazilian influential activist for liberation. Because of his work on liberation education, Fakh emerged as leading activist in liberation education in Indonesia. According to him, there are two theories on education in general; reproduction and production. In reproduction theory, education is a tool for domination that is always used to establish or legitimate domination of the powerful individual or group over the weak ones. In contrast, production theory is an educational model that aims to build critical awareness, the awareness of workers who are oppressed by the leadership, the rich who are enslaved by their wealth, the poor who are exploited by conglomerates and even students who are oppressed by the state. This second model of education⁴⁹ is the root of his critical education⁴⁹.

⁴⁵ Abdurrahman Moeslim, 2009, *Suara Tuhan Suara Pemerdekaan: Menuju Demokratisasi dan Kesadaran Bernegara*, Yogyakarta: Kanisius.

⁴⁶ Mansour Fakh, 1996, *Masyarakat Sipil dan Transformasi Sosial*, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.

⁴⁷ Mansour Fakh, et.al., 2005, *Pendidikan Populer, Membangun Kesadaran Kritis*. Yogyakarta: INSIST Press.

⁴⁸ Paulo Freire, 1984, *Pendidikan sebagai Praktek Pembebasan* (Terjemahan) Jakarta: Gramedia.

⁴⁹ Paulo Freire, 1984, *Pendidikan sebagai Praktek Pembebasan* (Terjemahan) Jakarta: Gramedia.

Both education models are more on processes of human liberation, which assumes that every human in the existing social systems and structures basically experiences a process of dehumanization due to class exploitation, gender domination as well as due to hegemonic and other cultural dominations. Therefore, education is a means to "produce" awareness to restore human's humanity, and in this connection, education has a role to raise critical awareness as a prerequisite for efforts to liberate.⁵⁰ This means that education must provide space to get rid of all taboos and critically to oppose the dominant hegemony in the forms of unfair systems and structures that are currently in place in society.

Then, the question that can be raised is that how the process of liberation education can be implemented through learning process that can generate critical awareness among students? In answering this question, some teachers or educators generally concentrate more on the methods of their learning processes. However, in fact, education never stands free without dialectically interacting with the environment and social system in which education is held. The process of education as a process of liberation is never separated from the social system and structure, namely the social context which causes or contributes to the process of dehumanization and isolation at the time that education is held. Especially in the current era of globalized capitalism, education is faced with the challenges of how to link between the context and analysis of its contents in order to critically understand globalization. The educators' general strategy is more focused on how to make their learning processes relevant to the current dominant social formations, namely the globalization of capitalism and neoliberalism.⁵¹ Therefore, it is not a coincidence that the output of education is in line with the need of certain social conditions that is driven by the present market and corporation.

This type of strategies seem to be more acceptable and often possible to trap them for adjustments to globalization. Furthermore, the learning processes rarely integrate the analysis of globalization and challenge how the educators and government representative on education play a role with the process of criticism and deconstruction by exploring alternative solutions to globalization. For example, education should be about ability to create a counter discourse to the dominant globalization discourse with alternative perspectives. In critical education, education is tasked to reflect critically on the dominant system and ideology that prevailed in society, and

⁵⁰ Mansour Fakhri, et.al., 2005, *Pendidikan Populer, Membangun Kesadaran Kritis*. Yogyakarta: INSIST Press.

⁵¹ Wahono Francis, 2001, *Kapitalisme Pendidikan Antara Kompetisi dan Keadilan*, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.

in the system, but in the end, it must be thought what is the alternative system that might drive people into social transformation and fairer society⁵².

To promote critical education, Mansour Fakh established liberation education in Indonesia. Critical education contained several components: assumption, facilitator and critical education.⁵³ *Firstly*, an assumption can be defined as what people consider what they think or say as correct. In critical education, assumption should critically become basic need of education. Student might be independent in their thinking and sovereign on what s/he believes as perceived knowledge. This means that by understanding the basic assumptions of critical education, anyone has the right to say that an educational process is acritical education. *Second*, a facilitator can be defined as a person who oversees, facilitate and accelerates a process to achieve the desired goals. Meanwhile, what referred to as facilitator here in critical education is someone who facilitates students to carry out a transformation in their society, from an unfair condition to a more just condition. This can be realised by providing educators who have certain progressive ideas in education. Attempts at transformation indicate that the facilitator understands the oppressive structures in the community and knows what should be done to achieve better conditions⁵⁴. In fact, sometimes and often students have strategies that are more applicable than those of facilitators. Thus, critical education is more inclined to respond to questions and solve student problems rather than to seek scientific objective of truths, although this still become the popular outcome of education.

Meanwhile, another thing that needs to be considered in the critical education method is that there is a horizontal relationship between students and the facilitator. Mansour Fakh⁵⁵ said that critical education is education that directs education to reflect critically on the dominant ideology towards social transformation. Critical education is type of education that seeks to create space to identify and analyse all the potential of students freely and critically to realize social transformation. Seeing the philosophical basis of critical education above, then there are three main characteristics of critical education. What is learned is not about teachings of a person, but the real situation of society or the experiences of a person or group of people who

⁵² Mansour Fakh, 2009, *Runtuhnya Teori Pembangunan dan Globalisasi*, Yogyakarta: INSIST Press.

⁵³ Mansour Fakh, et.al., 2005, *Pendidikan Populer, Membangun Kesadaran Kritis*. Yogyakarta: INSIST Press.

⁵⁴ Mansour Fakh, 1996, *Masyarakat Sipil dan Transformasi Sosial*, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.

⁵⁵ Mansour Fakh, et.al., 2005, *Pendidikan Populer, Membangun Kesadaran Kritis*. Yogyakarta: INSIST Press.

were involved in this real situation. Consequently, there is no authority of one knowledge that is higher than the other. The validity of a person's knowledge is determined by its evidence in the reality of direct action or experience, not by rhetoric or cleverness of speech.

There are no teachers and no students who are taught, everyone involved in this education process is both teacher and student at the same time. Therefore, in critical education, students are freed by obtaining rights as teachers in the learning processes. Students can give opinions and criticize the arguments they have without any separation between students and teachers. In general learning, many educators who conduct learning without interaction with students tend to only teach, exemplify and without providing space for students to have a dialogue.⁵⁶ In critical education, a constructive dialogical processes between students and teachers does really matters. The process of teaching and learning takes place in the form of communication in various forms of activities (discussions, play groups, etc.), and media (visuals, graphics, audio-visuals, etc.) which make critical dialogue possible between all the people being involved in the learning processes.

All these are ideal educational goals, but what about the reality on the ground? In fact, the practice of education is the opposite. Education is being used to perpetuate certain doctrines and as a tool of hegemony of power⁵⁷. Students are only used as an object and trained to be obedient with the aim of national uniformity. When this happens, education will no longer be able to make humans as *insan kamil*, a perfect human, but instead make humans as powerful robots who cannot think critically, freely towards the reality in its surrounding. This fact is what then makes humans experience the emptiness of existence as humans who basically naturally have the potential to think freely and be conscious. That is the basis of Mansour Fakih's liberation education, which at its implementation level uses a constructive critical education process and makes students take part in the development of a civilized society.

Conclusion

There are various forms of liberating in the context of liberation theology that have been discussed in this paper. Abdurrahman Wahid was the most prominent persons that represented resistance towards

⁵⁶ Mansour Fakih, et.al., 2005, *Pendidikan Populer, Membangun Kesadaran Kritis*. Yogyakarta: INSIST Press.

⁵⁷ Mansour Fakih, 2011, *Jalan Lain Manifesto Intelektual Organik*, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.

authoritarian regime be it through critical thought, critical literary works, or social transformative movement. Meanwhile, Francis Wahono is one of prominent scholar and activist that introduced liberation theology through his work, explaining the global context that can be adapted into local context, his activity in advocating the oppressed peasants has proved his persistence in dealing with social issues. Both Moeslim Abdurrahman and Mansour Fasih, in this paper, are portrayed as persons who fight for the basis of social transformation, which is education. Although both are also writing on other issues like gender and politics, the ideas of educational reform like critical education and transformative pedagogy would affect positively on how society thinks, responds, reacts on social problem. Concerning to these persons means that upholding society's right is fundamental to create live in harmony and peace because there always be threat from those in power that tend to be corrupt and greedy. This is the space that liberation theology can play a vital role, a role that benefits majority of oppressed people that can be simplified as fighting for the weak.

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