

Spirituality and Modernity According to Seyyed Hossen Nasr's Thought (A Study of Religion and Modern Human Crisis)

Cakra Heru Santosa¹, Hartiwiningsih², Hari Purwadi³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta - Indonesia

cakraherusantosa@gmail.com

Abstract-Seyyed Hossein Nasr is a magnificent intellectual and scholar. He has created many works such as essays and books. He also has diverse outline of thoughts. In this thesis the authors hope that Islamic thought has comprehensive and comprehensive foundations that are aware of God's existence and can also give appreciation to the people who develop thoughts and science. From the foundation that gives mercy to the whole universe, Islamic thought is expected to be able to straighten the weak Western thought which tends to cause moral, environmental, and spiritual damage. Seyyed Hossein Nasr also explains the spiritual as a tradition in the sense of sacred knowledge that comes from God, and conveyed through his messengers (prophets), and have the rules that live in society as an eternal wisdom from God and possessed by all religions and nations. It is expected that Seyyed Hossein Nasr's thought can make a useful contribution for all of us, especially in overcoming the crisis of science, morals, environment and unity.

Keywords- *Spirituality, Modernity, Religion, Humanitarian Crisis.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The modern world is plagued by complex crises such as natural crisis, culture-civilization crisis, socio-economic crisis, educational crisis, etc [1]. Those crises are usually interrelated to each other. Many people are getting more and more weary with the worldly life. They want justice, prosperity, security, and peace. However, the fact shows the opposite. In Europe, unemployment keeps on increasing year by year. The Middle East, which part of the economy is supported by crude oil, is also decimated by conflict of national border, ethnic crises, and conflict of sects. Similar things also happen excessively in Africa, America, East Asia, and in our own country.

People use many idioms to mark the life of today's modern society, such as 'the crisis of our age', 'the plight of modern man' (Hossein Nasr), 'the breakdown of material and moral progress (Bertrand Russel), 'the gap of heart and mind' (Rabindranath Tagore), 'alienation syndrome' (Fromm), 'spiritual emptiness' (Leahy), or 'the age of anxiety' (Bastaman) [2]. Those idioms emerge due to the crisis suffered by humans living in today's era.

The multi-crises that occur are caused by the modern industrial civilization patterns. The crises are accelerated

by globalization as a result of series of post-Renaissance Western advances, where the scientists' trust in religion was in an alarming condition at that time. Religion is expected to bring people to happiness in the world and the afterlife, but it also becomes a scapegoat that obstructs human advances.

15th Century is the culmination of the Renaissance, a century of enlightenment as well as human liberation from religious domination. Liberation also implies a shift in the way of human point of view, where the awareness of human identity undergoes a process towards individuation, distortion, progress, rationalization and secularization. This process happens like a snowball effect that continues to spin faster and become greater.

The modern Western age is a time when humans find themselves as a force that can solve problems of life. Humans are seen as great beings, who are independent of God and nature. Modern Western men deliberately break away from God (theomorphism), to further establish the human order that is solely centered on humans (anthropomorphism).

Modernism is finally felt to bring emptiness of life, which leads to numerous critics and efforts to new search. The emptiness and the loss of the meaning of life can be observed in modern humans such as in the statement of former US president, JW Bush, when he was angry and determinated to obliterate the mastermind of the September 11, 2001 terror.

The need to the meaningfulness of life becomes something important because human is a complex being, who has physical and spiritual dimensions. It is very ironic that modern humans can fly high to dominate the sky and dive to navigate the whole ocean, but they fail to find out their true identity.

Human nature of the need for religion is something undeniable. The inseparable relation between aqal (mind/reason) and wahyu (revelation) has existed in the human soul as an epistemological foundation for their happiness in the world and the hereafter. In the book "Pengantar Pola Pikir Ilmiah Islami", it is explained that the close relation between aqal, wahyu, and the human soul is something that strengthens without contradicting to

each other. It is as mentioned in the Quran Surah Rum, verse 30.

The relation between men and their Lord has existed for thousands of years since Adam was created. Humans always get guidance and wisdom from their Lord. Nasr calls this wisdom a "tradition", as the spiritual basis of humans. The authors tries to illustrate how fascinating the modernism is, but if it is not based on religion, it will experience a dangerous crisis and it will be more dangerous if Muslims replace religion with modernism.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

The authors use a qualitative method, that is "descriptive analytical" method by describing the main problems based on the data obtained from reading sources which will then be analyzed and transferred into a concept. The authors want to analyze the figure of Seyyed Hossein Nasr not only from his historical background, but more importantly is that there is a kind of "chain" of khazanah (treasures) and spiritual and thinking traditions in the Shia sect which maintains Islamic Philosophy of thought from time to time, since Al-Kindi, al Farabi, Ibnu Sina, Ibnu Rusyd, Suhrawardi, Ibn Arabi, Nashiruddin at-Thusi and then Mulla Sadra (Shadr al-Muta'allihin). The data were collected from library observation and internet. The authors are aware of the lack of information and the discussion that is too broad. Thus, the authors will describe it globally.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study of society, especially modern society, is very interesting both in terms of scientific progress and as a maximum level in the history of human civilization. Ironically, the progress of modern science is not guided by divine values which include morals or ethics and the awareness of human nature. Thus, it leads to many deviations in interpreting God's grace, just like when the Renaissance in Europe happened due to a fierce debate between Science and Religion. This article provide guidance and criticism towards modern humans so that they are not trapped in the abyss of destruction and immersed in the pool of materialism. The most appropriate figure for that phenomenon is Prof Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr who has a traditionalist background yet was raised in a modern science environment.

The authors find out that Seyyed Hossen Nasr has been the reference of various researches such as Irfan Safrudin's dissertation entitled "*Kritik Terhadap Modernisme: Studi Komparasi Pemikiran Jurgen Habermas Dan Seyyed Hossein Nasr (2003)*" [3]. Safruddin wanted to present the patterns of both thoughts from the their differences. He took the similarities of the two thinkers. He combined Jurgen Habermas's emancipatory thought and Nasr's transcendental paradigm.

In addition, Elya Munfarida's research entitled "*Konsep Manusia Menurut Seyyed Hossein Nasr (2004)*" also discussed Seyyed Hossein Nasr. In her research, Elya explained Seyyed Hossein Nasr's criticism of the Modern world and the solutions it offered. Besides that, she also explained about human nature if seen from various aspects including creation, potential and spiritual. Similar to Safruddin's discussion, Elya did not discuss further about Seyyed Hossein Nasr from ma'na traditionoanalisis, his epistemology, and to modern human criticism.

There is similar research with the two research mentioned above, but it only focused in Sufism. The research is conducted by Ujang Safruddin, entitled "*Neo-Sufisme dan Problem Modernitas : Telaah Pemikiran Seyyed Hossein Nasr (2004)*". Ujang's research discuss Nasr's post-modernism as a solution to modern human emptiness [3]. A more detail article is written by Ali Maksum. It is a thesis entitled "*Tasawuf Sebagai Pembebasan Manusia Modern: Telaah Signifikansi Konsep Tradisionalisme Islam Seyyed Hossen Nasr (2003)*". This research deals with the concept of Nasr's Islamic traditionalism as a Western anti-modernism movement by reviving Sufism as a way of spirituality towards the true nature of life. Once again, although Ali Maksum's research briefly shows a similarity, yet his writings do not delve deeper into the tradition of Islamic thought and the study of Islamic Philosophy which is the pioneer of the modern science. So, the Islamic spiritual tradition cannot be considered leaving the actions separated from the problems of the modern world.

The authors have not found any studies like this in the internet or library. However, there is a study of the Concept of Islamic Art according to Seyyed Hossen Nasr who studied about art in Islam and its relation to Spirituality. although there are differences in studies and perspectives, the study can be used as a consideration of the authors to focus more on Islamic traditions and Modern human crises based on the philosophy of hikmah (wisdom), and the concept of wahdatul wujud from Ibnu Al Farabi.

According to the authors' opinion, the study of Islamic spiritual wrapped in Islamic traditions is very interesting to be revealed more deeply. The holy traditions become unites the religions to respect each other and maintain unity as a manifestation of God's existence.

The authors conclude that the Islamic spiritual treasures (*khazanah*) means the core and foundation of Islamic knowledge. A figure like Seyyed Hossein Nasr, despite the fact that he is a Shi'ite, should be greatly considered regardless of his group, sect, and ethnicity. It is because in terms of Islamic spiritual, the focus of study is Man as God's creatures who have physical and spiritual entities, and it turns out that the whole message of Islam is pointed at human nature to remind and revive the knowledge implanted into their basic substance.

Nasr also sees nature as a theophany. It is parable to a text full of symbols which have to be 'read' by their meaning. The Qur'an is the equivalent of the text in human language, while the sentences within it are called verses ('signs'), just like natural phenomena. The nature and Qur'an verifies the existence of God: "We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it (Qur'an) is the truth". Nasr's thoughts are very much influenced by the Islamic philosophers such as Emanasi Al-Farabi, Ibnu Sina and Suhrawardi. Furthermore in the problem of Sufism, Nasr emphasizes the Sufism of Falsafi Ibn 'Arabi and the philosophy of Hikmah Mulla Sadra (al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah).

The *khazanah* of Islamic philosophical thinking never dies, but continues to enlighten. The presence of Islamic civilization proves that Islamic thoughts will never fade away. Gnostic or Sufism tradition is also a means to maintain Islamic spirituality. Unfortunately, the sufism tradition is now left by the moslem society due to the westernization.

The Westerners are known as "the post-industrial society". They are one of the societies who managed to achieve material prosperity from a set of automated technologies. However, instead of getting closer to happiness, this luxury traps people in anxiety. Modern society has turned into slaves of technology and knowledge that their humanity is trapped in a network of technological rationality systems. They even forget who they are, what they live for, and where they will go.

The modern civilization also keeps on misleading human and puts them in a state of fake progression. The successfulness of modern human does not necessarily make them closer to God. The progress of modern civilization has actually led people to arrogance.

Furthermore, the climax of the arrogance is the claim that human can achieve anything without God's contribution. In fact, due to their arrogance and misunderstanding of rationalism and materialism, many of them conclude that God is something absurd.

The emergence of Islamic thought renewal is Seyyed Hossein Nasr's respond to the modern world crisis, and especially Islam. He proposes the Islamic esoterism (sufism) as alternative values and a way of life to escape the crisis by returning to the spiritual wisdom of religion. Seyyed Hossein Nasr considers sufism a spirit of Islamic religion. Without Sufism, Islam may not survive. He also sees Sufism as a solution for mankind to know their identity and to become true human.

IV.CONCLUSION

Islamic spiritual treasures (*khazanah*) means the core and foundation of Islamic knowledge. A figure like Seyyed Hossein Nasr, despite the fact that he is a Shi'ite,

should be greatly considered regardless of his group, sect, and ethnicity. It is because in terms of Islamic spiritual, the focus of study is Man as God's creatures who have physical and spiritual entities, and it turns out that the whole message of Islam is pointed at human nature to remind and revive the knowledge implanted into their basic substance. For Nasr, Allah is the Greatest Reality, God and his divinity, Transcendent and Immanent, are very far and close to human at the same time. God is great and merciful. He is absolute, and the source of blessings. He is the beginning and the end of everything. Those definitions always believes in a meta-empirical God. Thus, Nasr keeps thinking that God can only be grasped by meta-language, or as the mystics call "the language of silent". Man who can reach Him are those who optimize their intellectuals to understand the God's nature.

Nasr observes that many Sufi traditions are scapegoated for the fall of moslem. Yet, the fact shows that Muslims misunderstand the Sufism. Esoterism or the values of knowledge in Islam are parts of an epistemology which truth can be verified. In philosophical sufism, human knowledge is divided into *al-Ilmu hudhuri* and *al-Ilmu Hushuli*. Knowledge that exists naturally without effort is *al-Ilmu hudhuri* (a priori) and knowledge that exists with effort and observation is *al-Ilmu Hushuli* (aposteriori). Since its foundation is the existence of mankind, *Hudhuri* knowledge is considered the basis of *Hushuli*. The esoteric domain is the scope of Sufism while the exoteric domain is the scope of *sharia*.

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