

Religion Evolution: *The Study of Religion Development from Evolution Perspective*

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Abstract— Religion and religious practices have existed throughout the human history and persist today in every corner of the world. Explaining religion is a serious problem for any evolutionary account of human thought and society. In most societies religion is a prime motivator of both individual and collective behavior. Most of the people live in the conflict because of their different religions, especially, the plural context of Indonesia. This context may bring conflicts. This article gives the alternative ideology and perspectives to find the universality value of religion. The alternative ideology and perspectives is about the religion evolution. Evolution of the religion is meaningful to bridge the understanding of different religions. Main idea of this concept represents the understanding of their different religion.

Discipline of ethology which means “the biology of behavior” has been used to studying religion. Ethology has approached the study of religion by using the theory of evolution by natural selection of Charles Darwin. By using Darwinian Theory it will help them to understand and accept religion that finally it becomes accepted as a science and religion. The ethology is endeavoring to understand one important aspect of religion that deals with religious behavior.

Keywords - Evolution, Religion, Behavior, Ethology, Adaptation, Natural Selection, Biology, and Pluralism.

I. INTRODUCTION

Religion develops in line with the history of human civilization. The movement of religion change is an important issue to be discoursed in 21st century. Religion is in the process of natural evolution in accordance with the move of ages in the midst of civilization clash. The clash produces religion as human imaginative product about God in certain times and spaces. Religion develops from primitive packages to modern ones, from polytheism to monotheism. The flow of thought in religion circle also develops from agnostic, theism, humanism, atheism up to free thought. Religion seems making a long devotional visit in the formulation of unique concept and form.

The universality perspective of religion belief in the history of human civilization is a puzzled observation. The assumption is that there is a complex idea towards the religion movement. Jose M. Mussacchio assumes that the development of religion is inversely proportional to moral development.

History records that the religious practices change but the moral teachings remain being based on the Golden Rule. He teaching is known as Confucius teaching in times before the Christian and Moslem prophets. The big religions have lost universalities because of being separated in the smaller denomination groups. The various religion beliefs are in contradiction and against the wholeness of the truth.”[1].

The writer is interested in studying the dynamic of religion development from evolution theory. In this point religion and science meets in harmony, and the essence of the problem is religion and science as a method. As science proposes a way towards religion. The logical reasons are: the first, the rationality of religion evolution is a way to finding the real heart of religion in human civilization. The second, the awareness of religion evolution builds the full comprehension of the religion role significance for human civilization and the whole creation. The third, the study of religion evolution brings awareness of the importance of the science role in synergizing the religion difference that potentially cause conflicts.

II. METHODOLOGY

The writer uses the discipline of ethology, which means “the biological behavior”, to analyze the religious behavior. The religious behavior becomes the focus of the religious evolutionary analysis. The reasons are that: the first, the theory of the biological behavior comes from the effort of scientists in relating religion to science familiarly. The second, the soul of the theory touches the central reality of religion. The theory of the biological behavior try to study two things, they are: whether religion contributes to the livelihood by using the cognitive mechanism. Whether religious teaching becomes part of the society. The third, the theory of biological behavior as a product of a science is able to bridge the destructive differences of religions.

The study of the religious behavior tries to study the phenomena of religions based on the empiric reality. This approach sees religions widely across times, cultures, species, that is contrary to the general method which people like. People tend to picture religion closely and emphasize only the particularity of religion. The perspective of biological behavior seeks the universal side behind the particularity of religion.

This perspective is introduced by Niko Tinbergen (1907-1988). In ethology, the first step of understanding the religious behavior is observing and characterizing by describing defining. Biologically, the behavior may be characterized by the form and function. The second step is that, proposing four key questions, they are: What is the meaning of evolutionary behavior? When and how does the behavior develop in the life of individual? What is the mechanistic cause of religious behavior? What is the adaptive value of the religious behavior or can religious behavior adapt? [2]

The study of religious behavior is limited to the phenomena which is identified by senses. The hypothesis of religious behavior is put to a test by building up the correlation of every phenomena.[3] Based on the perspective of ethology, the categorization of religious behavior which equates with the adaptations is divided into two types, they are: the first type of behavior and the second type of behavior. The first type of behavior is defined as the structure and function in the natural environment. The species of this type is universal and seen on all animal with spines (vertebrate). This type has two characteristics, they are: reflex and motoric coordination of pattern. It is built up among reflex and flexible human behaviors. The human behavior of this type are: human smile, shyness, obedience. These behaviors may be modified through time, orientation, and function. The behaviors are inherited through gen by the process of the natural selection. This first type is inherited in the same way as the structure of static anatomy.[4]

The second type of behavior is described by the structure and function in the natural environment. The shapes of the species are not universal. The behavior is modified and transmitted through the social learning process. Strategically, human behavior is motivated by tactics as the thought product, creativity, and high intelligence. Another form of behavior is symbolic language which is actualized through vocalization and writing. This second type is observed relatively in taxonomy groups as primates, sea mammals, and certain birds. Behavior is a process of the natural selection motivated by the net working of certain nerves. The selection process goes on in flexible way that the behavior and gen are related and coordinated.[5]

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Stephen K. Sanderson describes the history of religion evolution. Most of the research tend to focus on another social evolution, like demography, technology, economy, and politics instead of religion evolution. [6] Anthropologists and sociologists who are interested in the religion evolution are Sir Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917) and Hobert Spencer (1820-1903). This interest was sporadic because after them the religion evolution did not develop. It's affected by the critics of social evolution of Frans Boas, an anthropologist, with his school of thought and the domination of functionalism anthropologists, Bronislaw Malinowski and A. R. Radcliffe, who criticized the religion evolution.

Now days, the rise of religion evolution is followed up by Robert Bellah and Anthony Wallace who introduce the pattern of religion evolution. Bellah categorizes for stages of evolutionary pattern, they are: first, primitive religion found in ethnic era. Second, old religion, as religion of old polytheism from old and new world. Third, the history of religion known as monotheism religion as the religion that saves the world. Fourth, modern religion, that is, the religion of the twentieth century. [7]

This typology is reformulated by Wallace. The social religion is formed by the institution of cults. It is considered to be all of the cults that have the same purposes, explicitly, it is rationalized and supported by the same social groups. Wallace describes four types of the cultic institution, they are: first, individualistic, every individual presents private rites. Second, Shamanic, parts of shaman religion present rites to others. Third, communal, some groups of people collectively present rites of other religions at certain times. Fourth, ecclesiastical, priests monopolize knowledge of religion and present special rites before the community. [8]

The combination of the four cultic institutions forms four main stages of religion evolution, they are: shamanic, communal, Olympian or polytheism and monotheism. The writer refers to the pattern of the religion evolution proposed by Wallace, because the categorization of Wallace is holistic and detailed.

Shamanic Religion

Shamanic religion is the combination of individualistic cultic institution and shamanic. Shaman, comes from the language of Tungus, the nomadic society in Siberia. It is sometime translated as "the one who knows." [9] Shaman is usually only a practice of religion. This religion emerges mainly in the groups of hunting society and it is organized in ethnic community. Murdoks and White report on the Cross Cultural Sample Standard that 63% of Shamanic religion are found in the hunting society group and 83% in ethnic community. The Shamanic religion is found generally in all around the world and it develops through the evolutionary stages. It is determined as an ancient religion, and Shaman is the ancient religion specialist.[10]

The Shamanic religion believes in the voice of animals, local spirits, and high gods, like "the sea animal guard" *Sedna*, the sun, moon, and spirits in the air. It has two individualistic cults, they are, the helpful spirit cult and the animal toy cult. Shamans are believed to be able to diagnose and heal diseases as their supernatural power. They believe in various kinds of spirits and admit cosmological powers of animals, climates, spaces, and times.[11] Shamans show various kinds of activities like: a) healing diseases, b) protecting animal toys, c) communicating with the dead, d) recovering the lost souls, e) setting free from the evil spirits.

The Shamanic rituals are typical by doing the repeating rhythms, like, dancing, playing tambourines, singing.[12] These are activities which cause losing consciousness as "weird experiences." This reality indicates the Shamanic

syndromes which are characterized by having the hypnotic ability as great weird experiences. There is prominent similarity between Shamanic practices and religion behaviors all around the world.[13] Based on the psychobiology, the similarity between Shamanic traditions and the recent reality is the result finding of cultural diffusion.

Communal Religion

The evolutionary type of Shamanic religion to communal religion may be seen by the practices of religion rites done. Evolutionarily, Shamanic religion experiences transition to agricultural society. The Shaman religion still survives until now days in different forms. Shamans are called the healers, the witchcrafts, indigenous medical practitioners. The type of recent healers are not different from the ancient Shamans. They practices the same activity, that is, healing.[14] The church religion continues the healing practices by both formal religion doctrines and priests. In industrial society the healing religion is prominently from ancient Shaman in the form of "Faith Healer." [15]

Based on the Cross Cultural Sample Standard, the agricultural society is interested to most of the communal religion. Communal religion is also found in 52% of ethnic community. The communal religion practices individualistic cult institutions, they are, Shaman and community. Practically, communal society come together and they are involved in certain collective rites. For example, people of Trobriander are well-known ethnic people in Melanesia Island. The communal cult institutions practiced are the magic technology cults. In this tradition, people practice collective rituals led by a garden magician. The people of Trobriander also have dead spiritual cults in doing the funeral.[16]

Several sacred capabilities of Trobriander people are: the first, being able to heal diseases. The second, having a magic power to help and protect from the spirit of jealousy, witchcrafts, or other evil spirits. The other dimension of the communal religion is worshiping the ancestors. The spirits of the dead ancestors are the supernatural entities of this religion. This community respects the ancestors as respecting life and dead. As an authoritative figure, the life of the ancestors is as the source of blessings and punishments.[17] The communal religion rites are the same as other religion cults in this era that practices healing and worshipping ancestors in different forms.

The Olympian/Polytheism Religion

Olympian is a term adopted by Wallace from ancient Greek to mention the polytheism of religion. The data of the Cross Cultural Sample Standard shows that the majority of the Olympian or polytheism is about 50% found in the agricultural society intensively. There is 42% of the polytheism religion found in the agricultural society. The polytheism religion has temples of especially, gods, and professional priests who monopolize religion knowledge and who lead the rituals.[18]

In primitive polytheism, gods are equal to human-being and nature. Gods are described variously as good, evil and stupid people. Gods eat and drink and even have feasts and sexual activities. They also go for a war. Polytheism gods are

as human-beings who are limited and perishable, who may be killed and eaten. Polytheism practices grow very strongly in ancient Israel society. Natural power may be occupied by gods.[19]

The other characteristic of polytheism religion is that having ritualistic practices by sacrificing animals. It claims to be a universal characteristic of polytheism religion. An anthropologist, Marvin Harris (1927-2001) comments that "Persia, Weda Brahmana, Chinese, and Japanese generally practice domestic animal sacrificing rituals. It's hard to find mono society in the whole Eroasia and North Africa where the rites of domestic animals are not supported by the nations." [20] The domestic animals are more appreciated in having the sacrificing rites. They are functional in the sacrificing rites. On the contrary, wild animals are not appreciated, because they are functional in the sacrificing rites, and they are supplied by nature. [21]

The Polytheism religion is very well known in Sumeria and ancient Egypt, ancient Greece, ancient Rome, Maya Aztec and Inca. There are two different types of religion evolutioner. In the beginning, Polytheism religion grew in the wide agricultural society organized in small ethnic group. For example, Ashanti is from West Africa which was organized politically in the nation. Ashanti people worshiped the super figure so called Nyame. Nyame is a heaven god who is far from the world, and who determines directly human destiny.[22]

The polytheism religion then grows in agricultural society intensively. It is in the East Asia, that is, Arya. Arya people believe many gods, especially, four gods: Indra, the god of wars and climates; Varuna maintains morality and social order; Agni, the god of fire who are in connection with priests who practice rituals by using fire; Soma, the god of plants. This god is an integral part of sacrificing cults.[23] The polytheism god, Arya shows that Arya society practice agricultural activities intensively.

Monotheism Religion

Historically, monotheism religion emerges during the period so called "the action era", about 600 BC-1 AD. In this era Judaism changes into monotheism who worshiped the only and right God, Yahwe, and then emerged Hinduism and Buddhism in India and Confucius in China. Next, Laozi and Taoism in China. The following hundreds of years Christianity was out of Judaism as part of messianic movement. Islam is a big and last monotheism religion, followed by some strangers who presented Christian sect. Even though it changed into Christian in the first century AD, and most of the people lived in the city areas. [24]

The people of Western Asia develop Judaism, Christian, and Islam that have three characteristics, they are intensive agriculturalists, pastoralists, and the both combination. The people of the East of Asia developed Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucius. Based on the history of evolution, Sanderson proposed several new things of world religions spread in the era of axial, they are:[25]

1. In polytheism religion, various gods are believed to have the characteristics and wills as human-beings. The monotheism God is the transcendent God who is not the same as human-beings. God who is omnipresent, omniscience, and omnipotent.
2. The monotheism religion emphasizes on the safety of the world, generosity, and loving God.
3. The drastic progress of new monotheism presents a picture of the Almighty God who controls, demands, and punish. The unsure of punishment generally is described in the pre-action religions.
4. The doctrine of religion is becoming more complicated.
5. There is a sharp decrease in sacrificing animals.
6. The monotheism intensifies control of priests towards rituals of religion and function more powerfully than the priests of polytheism religion.

The Analysis of Religion Evolution

The writer refers to the idea of Jay R. Feireman by citing Sanderson to analyze religion evolution. The phenomena of religion evolutionary is multi, that is, biological and social. Winkelman and James McClenon comments shamanism based on neuropsychology. McClenon gives a logical scenario on how the shamanic ritual did the evolution in the surrounding of ancestors 30.000 years ago. In now days era, several scientists note that there are several prominent similarity of religion ritual to emotional disturbance so called compulsive obsessive disturbances. "The ritual module" of the brain strongly influences human-beings to involve in collective religion rituals. The compulsive obsessive disturbances is assumed to be the forms of individual pathology which produce hyperactive attitude.[26]

Biologically, various kinds of religious activities are produced from human ethology. If religious impulses are based biologically, the impulses are strongly influenced by the context of socio-ecology where human-beings live. Thus, the religion does the evolution socially by common stages, from the shamanic era to the communal, from the communal to the polytheistic, and from the polytheistic to the monotheistic. The religion evolution does not end with the coming of monotheistic religion, the religion of saving the world. The monotheistic religion changes all the time. Even though the result of religion evolution remains in the monotheistic form, there is no end for religion evolution. The transcendence of monotheistic religion is not the end of religion evolution. The process of religion evolution lasts following the movement of human historical civilization.

A sociologist, Daniel Bell, in 1960 declared that we would see "the end of ideology".[27] A political scientist, Francis Fukuyama claimed that by modern liberal capitalism we would reach "the end of history".[28] This argument confirmed that neglecting the religion differences means ending up the history of religion evolution. In the difference of religion it's found the value of religion universality as the morality basis. There is no reason for making a religion superior to the other. Every religion has a line of relation to the continuous history in different forms and concepts. It's just

like people who go to a certain direction by having different ways.

Every religion proposes only one way of morality of God and human-beings. Applying the absolute way of certain religion as the main truth is not the wise solution. Applying truth of a certain religion absolutely means reducing and closing the other ways of morality. The different ways do not lead to destructive dissension but they even enrich and strengthen morality.

The Relevance to the Context of Indonesia

The study of religion evolution is the alternative perspective to bridge the destructive separation of religions. The focus on the history of religion evolutionary is for finding the value of religion universality. In this part, the study of religion evolution is as a scientific product of multifunction, they are: the first, presenting the reality of religion living in Indonesia, and the second, proposing for rearticulating theology on religion differences. The picture of religion pluralism in Indonesia is full of complicated problems. The factual reality shows the side of religion ambivalence. On one side, it contributes to humanity, and on the other side, igniting the action of inhumanity. Several complicated problems of destructive and disintegrative religions are:

1. Indonesia as a pluralistic nation is not free from the threat of separation or primordial conflicts. Historically, several communal conflicts occurred in Indonesia, they are: in Central Kalimantan, Western Kalimantan, the Moluccas, and Central Sulawesi. The tragedy of attacking the Sufi group in Sukabumi, West Java, the invasion of Syiah group in Sampang, Madura, and the burning down the pesantren place in Depok, West Java, including the list of sad conflicts. The conflicts caused thousands of people's death and shook the foundation of the nation structure set by the founding father. Interestingly, the intensity of the conflicts moved in parallel to the strength of religion symbol and identity from radicalism in recent decades. The exclusivity and action of spreading violence gnaw on the breath of pluralism in Indonesia.[29]
2. The minority and majority problems in Indonesia has brought to a serious debate among Semitic theology groups. On one side, they want the majority-minority problems to be brought to a more substantial debate on what the nation will do for the minority-majority groups and what the minority-majority will do in Indonesia. This debate is important, because the existence of majority-minority is the social reality which may not be neglected. On the other side, there are groups who defend their opinion that the majority groups must have "more" rights than the minority groups. The reasons are that the majority groups give more contributions than the minority groups.[30]
3. The original religion in Indonesia before the coming of formal religions "in the government version" almost vanish. Many groups of Indonesian society have forgotten the original religion as their local wisdom, like Sunda religion, "wiwitan" which has been left aside from Baduy

group in Kenekes, Banten; “Buhun” is well-known in Cigugur Kuningan; there is “Kejawen” in Central Java and East Java; the original “Parmalin” religion in Batak; “Kaharingan” religion in Kalimantan; “TonasWalian” in Minahasa, North Sulawesi; “Tolottang” in South Sulawesi; “Wetu Telu” in Lombok; and “Nuauulu” religion in Seram Island in Moluccas. Generally, the original religions are degraded for animism, worshiping idols or cults. Recently, the original religions and their followers are not admitted in Indonesia. The followers are not accepted to have the rights properly to live as a nation in Indonesia, like they are not recorded to have their Identity Cards, their civil birth certificates, or civil marriage certificates. The groups of the original religions generally are in the remote areas and discriminated. They are just recorded as “the practitioners of pure and impure beliefs.”[31] The original religions own the riches of local wisdoms which contribute to the harmony of religions.

The Study of religion evolution propose the thoughts of solution to the complexity of religion problems, they are:

The first, the religion evolution strengthens the admittance of religion differences. The product of religion is not formed independently without the influences of other religions. Religions evolution continually and contribute to new religions. The triumphal attitude of religions reduce the rich values of religion evolution. Religions are not positioned in hierarchy, superior-subordination, but they are equal. The religion differences among the denominations of religions may not cancel the rights and duties of religion followers to believe in the truth of their own religions. Claiming the truth of the religions are admitted but it’s not absolutely accepted as universal truth.[32] Budhy Munawar Rachman by citing the idea of Djohan Effendy comments that “from every religion we may take a spiritual pearl which widen our scope of religions.”[33] The reality of religion plurality is not merely discoursed but it has to be expressed well in togetherness. The main need is that finding the matrix of meaning of the various kinds of religions. The universal values of togetherness may be found as a common reference of all the religion followers to endeavor human prosperity. The universal moral value is love. Love is the emission of the compassionate and merciful God.[34] The original religions then have to be given spaces of appreciation for owning the values of local wisdom which enrich the relation of pluralism in Indonesia.

The second, the religion evolution presents the importance of values of harmony inter and cross religious lives. Harmony is an attitude come from the deep part of the heart and flow from the will to interact among human-beings. The harmony is built up without having pressures from anyone. “Harmony” also has a meaning that etymologically comes from the word pillar, which means every member of society functions to have mutual supports so that the common house does not fall down. All people have an important function to strengthen and stabilize the common house.[35] The harmony of religions may be created by having humble attitude. The more religious a person is the more the person knows God and becomes

humble. Every religious adherent should realize that he or she brings the divine treasure in a fragile container, the container of understanding and human tradition.” Faith should be discussed humbly. Talking humbly is the required to genuine discourse on divinity. The humbleness is required to the credibility of discourse on God. The religious adherents who are not humble will project a bad image on religions.[36]

The third, the religion pluralism is a crucial issue in Indonesia that needs serious and objective attitudes. Theological interpretations as the heart of pluralism should build the harmonious life in Indonesia. The writer propose the idea of harmonious theology inspired by the harmonization of science and religion through religion evolution. The essence of the harmonious theology is to bridge the lack of religion differences in harmony. The center of the harmonious theology is on Christ as the Peace-maker. Christ harmonizes the human relation to God, human-beings to human-beings, and human-beings to the nature. The gap of separation is bridged in the principle of harmonious theology. The harmonious theology motivates Christians to build the commitment and acceptance of other religions or denominations. The human value is the top priority in the harmonious theology. All religions synergize equally in harmony to build humanity and the whole creation.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The evolution perspective is the stepping point to build the thought and movement of pluralism. The theory of evolution as the product of a science functions as the bridge adhered to the pluralism of religion. The evolution of religion contains the positive values to minimalize the destructive potential of religions.

Every religion owns a line of continual and constructive relation. The value of morality as the support for religion is found in the study of religion evolution. All religions should commit and build the common life in harmony.

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