

Islamic spiritualism in the modern times (the study of thought of Seyyed Hossein Nasr)

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Abstract. This article shows the thought of Seyyed Hossein Nasr concerning islamic spiritualism in the modern times. Modern society is a group of people who organized the intellectual structure through positivistic premises, and the pioneer of hedonistic doctrine mired in humanism. The consequences of modernism is, man as the main controller has distorted the reality of life that the ultimate nature of man. Modernity leaves humanitarian issue, so it is like a rolling disaster that struck the entire life of the community. Seyyed Hossein Nasr offers a traditional approach, with sufism as an alternative that is able to meet the spiritual needs of modern man. To be able to achieve the level of existence, the man must hold a spiritual approach and train the intellectual acuity. Sufism is able breathed his spirit into the whole structure of Islam both in social and intellectual manifestations. Spiritualism through understanding of sufism could be answered to the spiritual crisis of modern man through three attempts, actively practiced sufism, Islam presents a more attractive, and the functioning of sufism as a tool for the revival of spiritualism.

Keywords: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, islamic spiritualism, modernism, traditional approach, sufism, humanism.

1 INTRODUCTION

Spiritual according to Indonesian dictionary has a meaning associated with or psychological nature (spirit, mind), while spiritualism is a school of philosophy that promotes spirituality, trust to summon the spirits of the deceased and also means spiritism (Indonesian dictionary, 2008). The spirituality of Islam, is the result of the embodiment of the unity of the field of diversity. Islamic spirituality reflects the content of the Oneness of the Divine, the dependence of the whole diversity to the One, the transience of the world and the positive qualities of the existence of the cosmos (Binti, 2005). Modern word means the latest, cutting-edge, attitudes and ways of thinking and ways of acting in accordance with the demands of the times. The modernization means or measures make it modern, modern act of giving nature, and action to accept modern properties. While modernity has a sense of the situation (be) a modern, or modernity (Indonesian dictionary, 2008).

Modernity is sometimes regarded as an elementary entity that is capable of deconstructing pattern culture human perspective on everything that achieved during the course of his life, he even gives a different situation in addressing the future of religion, culture and social structure. Religion initially forming a changing culture as rational assumptions are accompanied by the presence of the concept of materialism and secularism in the space of life, so that it also encourages the growth of the idea of humanism and anthropocentrism. This idea was later dropped to specify positivistic and relativistic ideas to significantly impact the changing conception of revelation to the realm of myth, because he can not bring scientific certainty measurable (Encung, 2011).

One of the world's Muslim scientists in the field of science and spirituality of Islam is Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a highly respected intellectual figure, both in the West and the Islamic world. Seyyed Hossein Nasr is also widely known as the author of numerous books and

articles are in demand. More than 50 books and 500 articles were written has been translated into various languages.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, one of the few most prominent contemporary Muslim thinkers at the international level, that much attention to the problems of modern man. His criticism of modern man is quite sharp, as seen in two of his works concerning this topic: *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (1968), and *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (1975). Seyyed Hossein Nasr basing his discussion of the problems of modern man with the look of modern Western man, which in turn has a lot of followers and imitators, including in the Muslim world. In the West, particularly the United States, Seyyed Hossein Nasr is a very well-respected Muslim scholars today, especially after the death of Ismail Raji 'Al-Farouqi and Fazlurrahman (Lubis, 1993).

Thought of Seyyed Hossein Nasr very complex and multidimensional, being able to discuss a variety of topics, ranging from science and philosophy of Islam, sufism, perenialism, and modern civilization (Aziz, 2003). Because of his thoughts on conformity with the modern world, most experts put Seyyed Hossein Nasr into 'neo-modernist' Muslim thinker.

2 A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR

Seyyed Hossein Nasr is a Muslim philosophers whose name has been immortalized in the series *The Living Philosopher*. Experts in the field of philosophy of science, technology, and traditional Islamic sciences, as well as one of the writers in the West with the embodiment of traditional values (Haryati, 2011). Seeing his thoughts on Islamic traditionalism and beliefs about Islam's ability to answer the challenges of the modern world, Seyyed Hossein Nasr classified into 'neo-traditionalist' Muslim thinker.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr was born on April 17, 1933 in the city of Tehran, Iran. His father Vailullah Seyyed Nasr, known as scholars, doctors and educators during the Qajar dynasty. Seyyed Hossein Nasr is a traditionalist who wants to shift the intellectual civilization of modern with traditional intellectual matrix. Seyyed Hossein Nasr live in the two traditions, traditional Islamic and Western Modernity. He grew up in a family of Shiite cleric. He had gained a modern Western education in Institiut Massachusetts Technology (MIT) and Harvard University (Aminrazavi & Moris, 1994).

Primary education begun in Tehran and subsequently by his father he sent to Qom to work with a large number of Iranian scholars including at-Thabthaba'i to explore philosophy, theology, *tasawwuf* and memorize the Koran and classical Persian poetry. At the time of his studies in Iran, tension has colored the relationship between the West and the East (Thabthaba'i, 1989). Modern Western culture with all its moral complexion has affected Muslim countries are in many ways quite contrary to traditional Islam. Perhaps this is what drives the desire Seyyed Hossein Nasr for learning to the West, that's against the Western secular thought should go into the nest.

At the age of 13 years, Seyyed Hossein Nasr went to the West to continue his study on senior high school and college. He followed the mathematics department and physics in Massachusetts under the guidance of a well-known teacher Bertrand Russell. In 1954, Seyyed Hossein Nasr continued his studies at Harvard University. At first, he majored in geology and philosophy and science are dotted focus on Islamic science and philosophy. This is where Seyyed Hossein Nasr and learn the history of Islamic thought from other famous figures that HAR Gibb, the history of science at George Sarton and the history of theology and philosophy at Harry Wolfson (Aminrazavi & Moris, 1994).

During his education, both academically and through contact of thought, Seyyed Hossein Nasr much influenced by teachers and leaders of traditional Islamic thinkers such as Massigon, Henry Corbin, F. Schoun and so on. One of their ideas developed by Seyyed Hossein Nasr is a universal philosophical metaphysics. In 1958, Seyyed Hossein Nasr managed doctorate with a dissertation entitled *"An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological*

Doctrin" under the guidance of HAR Gibb who later published in 1964. After completing his studies at Harvard University, Seyyed Hossein Nasr continued her teaching career in his homeland, Iran.

Since 1958, Seyyed Hossein Nasr taught at the University of Tehran. Five years later at the age of thirty, he was appointed as a full professor in the field of the study of philosophy and history of science at the University. And from 1968 to 1972, Seyyed Hossein Nasr was appointed dean of the faculty and vice chancellor of academic fields. While teaching at the University of Tehran, Seyyed Hossein Nasr encourage students to study philosophy and other scientific tradition from their own perspective, not from the perspective of Western thought and philosophy as practiced by many universities in the world. According to him, one can not expect much to be able to understand things from another person's perspective. This, he said, supposing the same as those who tried to see through the eyes of others.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr professional expertise in the field of philosophy and history of science, does not seem to escape the influence of the intellectual environment of Iran, where he was born and raised, and the United States, where he continued his studies. Iran can be seen as a place that represents the continuity of the development of religious thought, especially philosophy and Sufism in the Islamic world until recent centuries. As recognized Seyyed Hossein Nasr himself, that Islamic philosophy has a longer life in the eastern than in the western part of the Islamic world. In Persian, Islamic philosophy survive during the last century. One part of the period of centuries VII/XIII through X/XVI is characterized by a large adjustment between the teachings of Islam.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr's credibility as intellectuals and academics not only known in his own country, but also recognized in another country so often invited to give lectures or seminars abroad, among others at Harvard University, USA in 1962-1965; The American University of Beirut in the year 1964 to 1965, and became director of the Aga Khan (Aga Khan Chair of Islamic Studies) to study to Islamization at the same university. Seyyed Hossein Nasr also gave paper on Pakistan Philosophical Congress, in Pakistan in 1964; gave a lecture at the University of Chicago in 1966 sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation, and in 1981 gave a lecture in Gifford Lectures, institution founded by the University of Edinburgh (Edinburgh University) in 1989 (Binti, 2005).

In 1967, Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mutahhari joined Husainiyah Ershad, an organization on the initiative of Ali Shari'ati (1933-1977 AD), which aimed to provide guidance to the public intellectual, based on the ideas, views, and the wisdom of Imam Husayn and based on Islamic teachings, the condition of society and Shia teachings today. Because of the difference principle with Ali Shari'ati, Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mutahhari finally resigned from the organization. According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Ali Shari'ati has brought understanding of Marxism and liberation theology in the West to Islam, and looked for to present Islam as a revolutionary force at the expense of the spiritual dimension of Islam, often the critique of traditional scholars, and abusing the institution for political purposes (Binti, 2005).

3 MODERNISM ACCORDING TO SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR

Modern society according to Seyyed Hossein Nasr is a group of people who organized the intellectual structure through positivistic premises, without trying to find a link between nature and humans (Chittick, 1981). The implication, of human nature and each compete to form their own natural structure. Finally, people today live in urbanization always feel conservatively intuitive nature because of the loss of human sensitivity to the surrounding natural phenomenon. Humans like to lose freedom of movement and expression as a result of human exploitation itself to the natural surroundings. Thus, modern humans living outside of existence itself.

According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, modern man is not only characterized by positivistic, but they always exploit the universe to act arbitrarily against him. Such as oil and gas

exploration endlessly for the sake of energy sources, bullying by means of denuded forest, or logging for development purposes. This condition is exacerbated by human tendency paced simplify life with the help of the use of technology which of course have an impact on the increasing pollution. So that the thinning of the ozone layer and global warming finally there parts of the world the West, and the East in general.

The modern world according to Seyyed Hossein Nasr characterized by anxiety about the cost of war, ecological crisis, and air and water pollution. The most acute problem facing modern man was not emerge from underdevelopment (retardation), but instead of overdevelopment. Moreover, all the problems and crises of modern civilization rooted in the pollution of the human soul appear, so human that the West took over the role of divinity on earth to get rid of the divine dimension of life. Modern humans in view of Seyyed Hossein Nasr treat nature as prostitutes, take satisfaction from nature without any sense of responsibility.

Modernity is the pioneer of materialistic lifestyle and hedonist in pools doctrine of humanism. The logical consequence of this thinking is, humans are the main controller reality of life (Hollingdel, 1968). Such an attitude, to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, has distorted the ultimate nature of man. Because of him, the human dimension of humanity lies in the human relationship with the transcendent world faraway, so if you want to build another elan vital life does not have to start from the assumption that this sacred.

Modernization by Seyyed Hosein Nasr said that in addition to bringing a positive impact also have negative impacts. This impact is derived from a rejection of the nature of the soul and the gradual removal of maknawiyah in human life. Modernity try to live by bread alone, attempted to kill God and declare independence from the afterlife (Nasr, 1967). Western society is known as "the post-industrial society" is a community that reaches the level of material prosperity of a set of technologies that completely mechanical and automatic. This luxury is not getting closer to happiness, even more plagued by anxiety. Modern society has turned into worshipers of knowledge and technology so unwittingly reduced integrity and humanity trapped in the system network technology rationality very inhumane. Even they forget about who they are, to live and where afterwards.

In the midst of a crisis of human and modern Western civilization, Muslims in various parts of the Islamic world by Seyyed Hossein Nasr split into two groups: (1) those who are trapped in the crisis of the Western world, because it follows the pattern of reckless West, and (2) those who remain faithful to the traditional values of Islam. The latter group still practices of worship and religious rituals, cling to God's law (Shari'a), and respecting scholars and saints. (Aziz, 2003).

Similarly, Seyyed Hossein Nasr's criticism against modernity as witnessed in modern society in the West. They lost the vision to-divinity and lost the ability to see the reality of life and life in intellectus. The same phrase is also said to Marcel, the loss limits are considered and believed to be as sacred and absolute rise of modern humans swirling in relative paced world, especially the system of values and morality are built. West has lost the sense of super massive natural.

4 ISLAMIC SPIRITUALITY IN THE MODERN TIMES

Framework of modernity actually leaves unresolved humanitarian issues. So the concept of modernity rolling like a disaster that struck the entire life of the community. Modernism came bringing with it a variety of new trends in the Muslim community that still maintains the traditions are considered to have been established. Modernism came with a new variant of science such as astronomy, philosophy, education that can shake the establishment of Islamic tradition. Seyyed Hossein Nasr then mapped modernity as a wave that swept the Islamic world are also reaching economic, astronomy, and the whole issue of life of Muslims (Nasr,

1990). Thus, in the current quagmire of modernity, Muslims around the world are in chaos materialism and humanism which was initiated as the main foundation of modernity.

Therefore, Seyyed Hossein Nasr offers a traditional approach, with sufism as an alternative that is able to meet the spiritual needs of modern man. According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a human to be able to achieve the level of existence must hold a spiritual approach and train sharpness intellectual because he thought pragmatic knowledge can not be used to look reality intact unless he had a vision of the whole intelektus earlier. In addition, humans are also able to know the self as a whole if he got the help of the science of God because of the existence of the relative nature would mean, in relation to the absolute god. Therefore, according to Seyyed Hossein Nasr that if he terminated his error caused by too exalt themselves ratios, he had to change the attitudes and religious life. Within the framework of 'Islamic traditionalism', Seyyed Hossein Nasr took firm understanding as to the 'tradition' which contains the wisdom of sacred and perennial. The concept of traditional Muslims by Seyyed Hossein Nasr is that (1) accept fully the Qur'an as the word of Allah. both in content and form; (2) recognizes *al-kutub as-sittah* (six books of hadith collection of standards); (3) contains Sufism or congregation as a dimension of mind and heart of the Islamic observance; and (4) always departs from realism in accordance with the norms of Islam in politics (Aziz, 2003).

Crisis of modern society in the West also gave considerable influence in the Islamic world at that time was in crisis. International Muslim countries try to take the form of modernization and industrialization categorically that resulted in the Islamic world was also experiencing a crisis as experienced by the people of the West. The concept of modernism offered by thinkers of Islam by Seyyed Hossein Nasr considered very contrary to traditional Islam. According to him, Moslem must reassessed the authentic traditions of Islam to treat the emerging crisis without having to take the concept of the West. Because according to these concepts contrary to Islam. Humanism, rationalism and secularism and modernism were opposed to traditional Islam.

Alternatives offered by Seyyed Hossein Nasr in modern human liberation through traditional philosophy is Sufism. He said that religion divided into two categories. The first related to religion or exoteric aspect and the second is the aspect of mysticism or esoteric. Sufism can not be practiced without first practice teaching correctly (Nasr, 1981). This means that the shari'ah with Sufism there is a very close relationship, and both are inseparable. Traditional Islamic view of man not as a creature imprisoned by the mind in the sense of sheer ratio as understood at the time of the Renaissance, but as a sacred creature, which is none other than the traditional man. Holy man, according to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, living in a world that has its origin and center. He lived in full consciousness since the origin containing its own perfection and strived to emulate, returne, and transmit the initial sanctity and integrity. According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, one reason for the decline of the internal life of the Muslims is the destruction of Sufism and Sufi order by movements puritan rationalism. Seyyed Hossein Nasr disagree with other Muslim scholars, who actually considers sufism and the congregation as a cause of the decline of the Moslem. With reject sufism, will causes of the decline of the people, then Islam will be reduced until all that remains is the doctrine of rigid jurisprudence, which in turn is also not helpless in the face barrage of Western intellectual.

With a positive outlook towards sufism, do not be surprised if Seyyed Hossein Nasr argues that sufism can be the answer to the spiritual crisis of modern man, especially in the West. According to him, sufism can affect the West through three efforts: (1) actively practiced sufism, (2) present Islam in a more attractive so that people can find the practices of sufism are correct, and (3) the proper functioning of sufism as a tool for the revival of spiritualism. Because it is a living tradition that is rich with treasures of metaphysical and cosmological doctrine, then sufism can revive many aspects of Western spiritual life that was hit by the crisis (Aziz, 2003).

Spirituality and mystical quest perennial and this is the fairness and natural human need. Even sufism itself contains the prevailing wisdom and eternal wisdom. This is the starting point the idea of Seyyed Hossein Nasr on perennialism. However, Seyyed Hossein Nasr reminds, that perennialism must be executed within the framework of Islamic law. For Seyyed Hossein Nasr sufism likes the soul that animates the body and is at the heart of divine revelation. Sufism is able breathed his spirit into the whole structure of Islam both in social and intellectual manifestations, even sufism as an institution organized in a larger matrix is capable of playing a role in the structure of society (Nasr, 1981). From the above description it seems traditionality approach offered Seyyed Hossein Nasr in essence lead humanity out of the confines of today's modern world of indifference where to find him. Seyyed Hossein Nasr believes that Islam is a universal character able to meet the challenges and crises of modern society.

5 PLATFORM OF TRADITIONALITY

Seyyed Hossein Nasr believes that in order to design a modern culture, humans should embrace the two views of the world at once, purity and materiality. This means that there is space in self purity materiality should be considered. Here Seyyed Hossein Nasr underline, that with modernity means someone will be destructive to the purity, so the metaphysical space in the physical world can not be presented as the spirit of the truth of the materials that exist in the world (Nasr, 1981). For Seyyed Hossein Nasr building is actually the implications of philosophical materialism Rene Descartes in the philosophy of humanity, *cogito ergo sum* (I think then I was there). The diction used to attack the metaphysical belief Descartes material and human mystical space. Descartes here are presupposes the creation of human laws in every area of life.

Concepts and ideas that are entered into the realm of human thought West where the idea traditionality increasingly not get anywhere. Here, the idea of the style of Seyyed Hossein Nasr traditionality a philosophical overview of various religions. In this case, Seyyed Hossein Nasr see how medieval Western philosophy, which later he described as the Christian tradition, began to crumble concurrent emergence of the ideas of materialism that has been built after the emergence of the theory of Copernicus and Galelio.

Moreover, the tendency of modern humans, both for nature and his humanity hand, implies the assumption of human superiority above all things. It is based on materialism which then leads to human greed in subsistence. From this beginning of the emergence of modern human catastrophe, in addition to the concept of separation between material and immaterial space. Seyyed Hossein Nasr believes, that in fact in every matter there is a 'space' which has not been decomposed by modern humans, so that it often loses its orientation. Does it matter in the form of science, technology or religion itself. Seyyed Hossein Nasr traditionality idea actually intends to rely entire modern problematics of the Qur'an, although the languages of religion also needs to be digested and is well described by any time.

6 APPROACH OF STUDY OF RELIGION IN THE MODERN TIMES

Religion or religious studies in the middle of modernity by Seyyed Hossein Nasr can be done through traditional philosophical approach (perennial philosophy). This approach is carried out starting from the existence of the view that all religions are equal or neo-vedantisme that developed in the United States after World War II. The traditional approach undertaken by Seyyed Hossein Nasr in religious studies always pay attention to religious aspects, such as human relationship with God, revelation with art, sacred symbols, rituals and religious Shari'ah also metaphysics and theology.

According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a fundamental difference other schools of thought in the study of religion arise from differences of view about the nature of reality, in which the traditional Western view of the narrow reject the reality that originally came from the

rationalism and emperism after the middle ages. Seyyed Hossein Nasr argues that the traditional flow studies covering an area ranging from the ethics of religion, theology, mysticism, rites, symbols of all religions in a spirit of absolute divine origin without rejecting manifestations or other possibilities that are changing due to changes in time.

Through the traditional approach, the truth of a religion is not only measured by the extent of the religious ceremonies that are outwardly, but beyond every form and the outward manifestation towards the transcendental. Seyyed Hossein Nasr stated that that the meeting point or religious entity in question is transcendental metaphysical unity and exceed every shape and outward manifestation. The traditional approach assumes that only one absolute truth, which implies that the essence of religion is actually just one but because religion appeared in space and time are not simultaneous, the plurality and the language of religion is inevitable in historical reality.

Every shape and religious language also contain a charge of cultural values of a community and spawned ideological groupings. Through this traditional approach, the meeting point between religions can be done at the level of esoteric (divine), not at the level of the exoteric (*Shari'ah*), so if all religions on earth is gone but the reality of origin is presented every religion will always be there. Unity of religions occurs in the sky instead of the divine human atmosphere (Schoun, 1981).

7 CONCLUSION

Seyyed Hossein Nasr is a leading Muslim philosophers in the field of philosophy of science, technology, and traditional Islamic sciences, as well as one of the leading writer in the West to be the embodiment of traditional values. He grew up in a family of Shiite clerics and lived in traditional Islamic and Western modernity. His credibility as intellectuals and academics not only known in his own country, but also recognized in another country. Seeing his thoughts on Islamic traditionalism and believed about Islam's ability to answer the challenges of the modern world, Seyyed Hossein Nasr classified into 'neo-traditionalism' thinkers. Modern society by Seyyed Hossein Nasr is a group of people who organized the intellectual structure through positivistic premises, without trying to find a link between nature and humans. Modernity is a pioneering lifestyle materialistis and hedonist in pools doctrine humanism. The logical consequence of this thinking is, man as the main controller that has distorted the reality of the ultimate nature of man. Framework of modernity actually leaving humanitarian issue, so it is like a rolling disaster that struck the entire life of the community. Seyyed Hossein Nasr offered a traditional approach, with Sufism as an alternative that was able to meet the spiritual needs of modern man. A human to be able to achieve the level of existence must hold a spiritual approach and train the intellectual acuity. Alternatives offered by Seyyed Hossein Nasr in modern human liberation was Sufism, which turn on the body and at the heart of divine revelation. Sufism is able breathed his spirit into the whole structure of Islam both in social and intellectual manifestations, even sufism as an institution organized in a larger matrix is capable of playing a role in the structure of society.

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