

Refleksi

JURNAL KAJIAN AGAMA DAN FILSAFAT

“Filsafat, Agama, dan Realitas Sosial”

WACANA

Carlos Fraenkel

Some Reflections on Philosophy, Democracy, and Religion

Nanang Tahqiq

Falsafah Kepemimpinan Rasulullah

M. Zaki Mubarak

Muslim Utopia: Gerakan dan Pemikiran Politik Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) Pasca-Reformasi

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TULISAN LEPAS

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FILSAFAT, AGAMA, DAN REALITAS SOSIAL

Agama pernah diramalkan akan menghilang perannya, terutama di tengah masyarakat perkotaan. Namun, ramalan ini tidak pernah terbukti. Sampai saat ini agama-agama masih tetap eksis, bahkan isu-isu keagamaan masih menjadi wacana yang menarik diikuti di tengah berbagai realitas sosial yang semakin kompleks.

Pada artikel pertama, Carlos Fraenkel menyajikan pemikiran tentang hubungan filsafat dengan demokrasi dan agama. Ia melihat bahwa filsafat sangat berguna dan penting untuk mengisi relung makna dari setiap tindakan manusia, termasuk dalam berkehidupan bersama dalam bentuk demokrasi dan berhubungan dengan Tuhan dalam bentuk agama.

Selanjutnya Nanang Tahqiq mengupas falsafah kepemimpinan Nabi Muhammad yang telah menjalankan misinya dengan sukses. Dia menyimpulkan, dari proses kehidupan Muhammad sampai kemudian diangkat menjadi Rasul pada usia 40, usia kematangan, menunjukkan bahwa Muhammad adalah pejuang yang bekerja keras sehingga ditunjuk sebagai penyampai pesan ilahiah. Status sebagai Rasul bukanlah “hadiah” yang diberikan begitu saja.

Artikel berikut menjelaskan bahwa agama, ketika masuk dalam realitas kehidupan sosial-manusia, akan diinterpretasi sesuai dengan latar sosial-historis-ideologis penafsirnya. Pendirian dan kiprah Hizbut Tahrir dalam pergerakan politik Islam menunjukkan hal tersebut. Zaki Mubarak memberi label kelompok gerakan ini sebagai “Muslim Utopia”, mengingat cita-cita mereka yang menginginkan persatuan dan kesatuan politik umat Islam seluruh dunia dalam bentuk khilafah.

Masih tentang pergumulan agama dengan realitas dan dinamika sosial, Sukron Kamil menentang wajah Islam yang terdapat di tataran wilayah Sunda. Dengan menggunakan –tepatnya meminjam-teori dan metode Geertz dalam meneropong agama

(Islam) di Jawa, Sukron memetakan kepemelukan Islam di kalangan orang Sunda. Dari situ, ia menemukan pola keberagamaan yang sangat variatif di tengah dinamika sosial masyarakat Sunda.

Berikutnya, pada edisi ini juga ditampilkan tulisan lepas yang diisi oleh Media Zainul Bahri dan Tantan Hermansah. Artikel Bahri menyajikan argumen-argumen, yang ingin meneguhkan kembali bahwa agama-agama meskipun tampak berbeda-beda pada segi eksoterik, sesungguhnya adalah satu dan sama dari sisi esoterik. Bahri menyebut “peneguhan kembali”, karena argumen-argumen dalam tulisan ini adalah tambahan dari argumen filsafat perenial yang sebelumnya telah dianggap sah dan representatif.

Artikel terakhir, ditulis Tantan Hermansah, menawarkan gagasan tentang perlunya rekonstruksi konsep teologi yang berkenaan dengan tanah (agraria). Penulis melihat bahwa masalah tanah —yang selama ini hanya dipandang dari segi ekonomisnya saja— harus dikaji secara lebih komprehensif, khususnya dari sudut teologi. Bagaimanapun, bumi dan tanah adalah pemberian Tuhan yang tidak akan pernah bertambah. Sementara penduduk bumi akan selalu mengalami pertumbuhan dan penambahan jumlah. Karena itu perlu penataan kembali kepemilikan tanah dengan dasar-dasar teologis, sehingga tidak terjadi monopoli dan keserakahan yang dilakukan oleh segelintir orang.

Redaksi

SOME REFLECTIONS ON PHILOSOPHY, DEMOCRACY, AND RELIGION

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Abstract: *What is the use of philosophy, especially in the present era? This article seeks to convince that philosophy is highly beneficial for human life. Philosophy does not merely speculate about abstract matters, as many people perceive, but since the time of Socrates, it has developed to be grounded and practical. Socrates brought philosophy into the public sphere, not confined to seminar rooms. From here, philosophical discussions emerged that touched various aspects of human life. Since then, philosophy has delved into radical and profound discussions on a wide range of topics, including democracy and religion.*

Keywords: *Philosophy, Religion, Democracy.*

Abstrak: *Apa guna filsafat, terutama untuk zaman sekarang? Tulisan ini berusaha meyakinkan bahwa filsafat sangat berguna bagi kehidupan manusia. Filsafat tidak hanya berbicara secara spekulatif tentang hal-hal yang abstrak saja, sebagaimana kesan banyak orang, melainkan sejak zaman Sokrates ia telah berkembang membumi (down to the earth). Sokrates telah membawa filsafat ke ruang publik, tidak hanya berkulat di ruang-ruang seminar. Dari sini muncul diskusi-diskusi filosofis yang menyangkut berbagai aspek kehidupan manusia. Sejak itu filsafat berbicara tentang apa saja secara radikal dan mendalam, termasuk tentang demokrasi dan agama.*

Kata Kunci: *Filsafat, Agama, Demokrasi*

Introduction: Aristotle or Public Health?

As you know, the journey from Canada to Indonesia is quite long and so my wife and I had time to talk about many things during the 36 hours that we spent in the airplane. One question we discussed was what is more important, to teach medicine and public health or to teach philosophy, because this is the reason for our three-week stay in Indonesia: my wife who is a medical doctor and specialist in public health, was teaching a class in public health in the new Faculty of Health Sciences at Alauddin State Islamic University in Makassar and I was teaching a class in philosophy to postgraduate students from the different departments in the Faculty Islamic Studies. Everyone agrees, I think, that teaching how to improve people's health is as useful in Indonesia as it is in Canada (and of course elsewhere too).

In general, nobody denies that health is a good thing and that medicine which is capable to restore it is of great value. If you are sick, some organ isn't properly working, a part of your body is aching, or your arm or leg is broken, you are happy to find a doctor who knows what needs to be done to get you back into good shape. But why should students study Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* in a medieval Arabic translation, and then discuss medieval Islamic and Jewish Interpretations of Aristotle's work? (This is what I was mainly doing with my students at Alauddin State Islamic University in Makassar, and I certainly enjoyed it quite a bit; we've had some very interesting and lively discussions). Is this not just a waste of time and resources? Why not send a second doctor instead, or a social worker, or an engineer, or an economist—in other words: someone whose expertise is of immediate use for improving the living conditions of the population? All these experts can provide you with tools for attaining goals

whose benefit seems obvious: becoming healthy, solving social problems in the community, building a bridge, making the economy more efficient and so forth. But what could be more useless, you will surely think, than discussing some abstract philosophical question: a problem in logic, the theory of knowledge, metaphysics, or ethics? Or why should we make an effort to understand the issues that concerned Aristotle more than 2000 years ago? Most people, it seems, can live a very happy life without even knowing that these problems exist, and will certainly feel no need to understand or solve them. And I admit, academic philosophy — philosophy as it is done at the university—can be highly specialized and abstract. When we have a guest lecturer in the Philosophy Department at McGill University, the university where I teach in Canada, who is a specialist in a field different from mine, it is even for me not always easy to understand what he or she is talking about. How much more so for people who are not professional philosophers! At first view, then, it seems that philosophy is something done by a few strange people who take pleasure in dealing with problems that nobody understands and whose solution doesn't benefit anyone. Turning now to the Indonesian context, things look even worse for philosophers. If Canadians (or citizens of other wealthy Western countries) want to waste their time with philosophy, so be it. But doesn't Indonesia have to deal with very real problems that require medical doctors, engineers, and economists to be solved, but not philosophers? Moreover, why should one teach philosophy in an Islamic context? Do the sources of Islam, the Quran and the Hadith literature, not contain a true account of God, nature, and humankind and of how these interact, as well as a set of rules for life whose observance leads to blessedness and salvation? Why then should we bother with the opinions of the philosophers on these issues?

An Argument for Philosophy

After hearing all this you may perhaps be surprised that the thesis for which I will argue here is that doing philosophy is not only important, but is the most important thing for human beings, be they Canadians, Indonesians or something else. Mr. Wahyuddin Halim, who is a lecturer in the department of philosophy at Alauddin University, explained to me that the great Indonesian theologian and educational reformer, Harun Nasution, made important changes to the way Islamic Studies are taught

at Islamic academic institutions in Indonesia such as the State Islamic University here in Jakarta. Perhaps the most important change he made was to integrate *Uṣūl al-Dīn* — Islamic philosophy and theology — into the academic curriculum. *Uṣūl al-Dīn* were not part of the old curriculum that was based on the model of al-Azhar University in Cairo. Thus, Philosophy and Theology are now part of the Islamic sciences taught at Islamic academic institutions in Indonesia. But if I am allowed to make a respectful suggestion to Komaruddin Hidayat, the rector of Jakarta's State Islamic University, I would go much further: I would make a basic philosophical education part of the university's core curriculum: classes that introduce basic philosophical ideas and forms of argumentation would then be obligatory for all students. Indeed, if I were the Indonesian minister of education, I would introduce such obligatory courses at all Indonesian high schools and universities so that every Indonesian would become a philosopher. And let me go one step further: if I were the minister of education of the whole world, I would do the same for high schools and universities everywhere. I would make philosophy, in particular learning how to conduct —and enjoy! —a philosophical debate, a universal component of education. Now some of you may think *al-ḥamdu li-llāh* that I am not the world's minister of education, not Indonesia's minister of education, and not the rector of Jakarta's State Islamic University. But let me at least explain to you why I think it so important for human beings to live a life grounded on philosophy.

As you know, philosophical inquiry began in Ancient Greece in the 6th century BCE. At the beginning it was mainly speculation about the nature of the universe, but with Socrates in 5th century Athen's philosophy underwent a radical transformation —away from nature to human affairs, i.e. to issues of fundamental practical concern. This is what Cicero, the great Roman philosopher and statesman of the first Century BCE, meant when he said that Socrates brought philosophy from heaven down to earth. But not only the content, also the social role of philosophy changed with Socrates. For Socrates philosophy was not an esoteric discipline confined to discussions in academic seminar rooms. Socrates brought philosophy right into the center of the public sphere: the market place of Athens which was the center of the city's communal life. On the market place Socrates would involve every citizen he could get a hold off into long philosophical discussions. He would mainly ask them to explain the basic ethical and

political principles according to which they lived their lives. He would ask the general who claimed to excel in courage what courage actually is, or the politician who claimed to promote social justice, what justice actually is, or the priest who claimed to safeguard religious piety in the city, what piety actually is. And every time, after debating these issues for a while with Socrates, it turned out that his interlocutors were unable to give a coherent account of what they claimed to be experts in: courage, justice, piety and so forth. In other words: they realized that they didn't really know what they were sure they knew before meeting Socrates. But what did Socrates want to achieve through all of this? Of course, he didn't just want to ridicule people by exposing their ignorance in public. He wanted to trigger a process of reflection and provide people with the intellectual tools to replace beliefs not supported by reasons beliefs they held on the authority of *taqlid* and according to which they lived their lives –through beliefs grounded on reasons. Realizing their ignorance was simply the first step in that process. But why is it so important to live according to beliefs grounded on reasons, rather than living on the basis of *taqlid*? Well, I take it that all of you agree that it is a good thing to live a life that is courageous, just, and pious. But is a life lived according to false conceptions of courage, justice, and piety really courageous, just and pious? And how can we be sure that we have good reasons to believe that our conceptions of courage, justice, and piety are true, if we don't subject them to philosophical examination? Take a Jewish settler in the Palestinian territories or a Muslim *sabih* who blows himself up in a bus in Jerusalem or in a night club in Bali. They think, of course, that what they do is courageous, just, and pious. On a higher level and with much further reaching implications the same holds true for people like George Bush and Tony Blair on the one hand and Osama bin Laden and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi on the other. And one could, of course, quote many other examples of people who acted according to conceptions of courage, justice, and piety that are highly questionable to say the least and who would certainly have benefited from a Socratic examination.

After Socrates Greek philosophers such as Plato (Socrates' most famous student) and Aristotle (Plato's most famous student) took the Socratic inquiry one step further. May be not everyone agrees that a courageous, just, and pious life is a happy and successful life. But whatever it is that makes a life happy and successful —one thing is clear: we all want to know

what needs to be done in order to live such a life. According to Plato this is indeed the most fundamental concern of human beings. In his dialogue entitled *Gorgias* he writes that “the question, how one ought to live (*hontina tropon zen*)” is one “that even a person with very little understanding will address with greater seriousness than any other question.” The problem that we saw before recurs here in a much more radical manner: for what kind of life do we live, if we base it on conceptions of happiness, and success that are false? Look at it this way: our average life span is 80 years (or at least this is true for Canada, in Indonesia, unfortunately, it is only 65). This is the time that we have to do something with our life. And do we want to look back at the end and realize that the things we pursued because we thought that they would make our life happy and successful didn’t fulfill the expectation, that you didn’t pursue true happiness, but an illusion? And when you come to think of it, it is not so obvious what the components of a happy and successful life are: is it money? fame? love? sex? friends? family? health? beauty? strength? a brilliant professional career? a fast car or motorcycle? sport? good food? a life devoted to God? a life devoted to virtue? a life devoted to meditation? a life devoted to philosophy? a mixture of the above? but then how much of each? and which is more and which is less important?

The question what a happy and successful life is—and the Greek word for this is *eudaimonia* which in the Middle Ages was translated into Arabic as *sa’āda*—became one of the most important questions around which ancient Greek philosophy after Socrates revolved. All schools of Greek philosophy proposed conceptions of the best life and engaged in long and vigorous philosophical debates about these conceptions with each other. I think it is safe to say that in the 3rd century BCE every educated citizen in Athens, which was the Centre of ancient Greek philosophy, had a fairly well-founded opinion on this matter.

Philosophy and Democracy

Now the risk of not attaining *eudaimonia*, i.e. a happy and successful life, is quite substantial, I think, if we live a life not grounded on philosophical examination. But this is not the only problem. Another problem in my view is that a democracy cannot properly function if the citizens do not live a life grounded on philosophy. Now since the fall of the Suharto regime, Indonesia is one of the world’s largest democracies.

The question, how to get democracy right, is, therefore a crucial one. Unfortunately, democracies in the West cannot serve as a model since their democratic life is not grounded on philosophy. They are, therefore, in my understanding no real democracies at all. Let me, then, briefly explain why I think that a life not grounded on philosophical examination fails to realize the most fundamental democratic value, namely freedom in the sense of the citizens' self-determination on both the individual and the collective level (the meaning of the word "democracy" is "rule of the people," i.e. the people rule themselves). The idea of democracy is that I as an individual decide how I want to live and that we as a political community decide on the shape of the communal aspects of our life. "I decide" means that the decision what to wear, what religion to practice, what professional career to pursue, what to think about God, nature, and humanity, and so forth is not imposed on me from the outside, e.g. by a dictator or by a religious institution. "We decide" means that the laws regulating the communal aspects of our lives are the expression of our will (or at least of the will of the majority of us). Now in my view liberal political philosophers like Isaiah Berlin make a big mistake when they claim that "negative freedom," i.e. freedom from external coercion, is sufficient for democratic self-determination. For the values, ideals and goals, according to which we organize our lives on both the individual and collective level, are at least at first *not* the result of self-determination. They are the result of what may be broadly characterized as socialization — conceptions that our parents, teachers, and religious leaders have put into our souls or that we derived from TV programs, films, newspapers, books and so forth. The fact, of course, that these conceptions are the product of our socialization does neither entail that they are true or false. It may well be that our parents, teachers, or religious leaders have taught us what justice, courage, piety, success, and happiness really are. But it may also well be that they have just indoctrinated us with the ideology to which they themselves adhere. The only way to find out is through philosophical examination that allows us to decide whether a concept is true, partially true, or false and correspondingly should be accepted, modified, or entirely rejected.

This is precisely the point that Plato makes in the dialogue *Protagoras* in which he included a discussion between Hippocrates, a young man from an aristocratic family in Athens, and Socrates, Plato's philosophical

teacher. Hippocrates has adopted the ideal of a successful life that was common for young men of his social background in Athens at the time: he wants to become a powerful political leader. This, he thinks, is what a happy and fulfilled life is about. When Socrates meets him, he is on the way to attend a class of Protagoras, a famous Sophist of Socrates' time ("Sophist" meaning a teacher of rhetoric and of other skills required for achieving political power).

(Socrates:) Am I right, then, Hippocrates, that a sophist is a kind of merchant who peddles provisions upon which the soul is nourished? That's what he seems like to me. (Hippocrates:) But what is the soul nourished on, Socrates? (Socrates:) Teachings, I would say. And watch, or the sophist might deceive us in advertising what he sells, the way merchants who market food for the body do. In general, those who market provisions don't know what is good or bad for the body — they just recommend everything they sell —nor do those who buy (unless one happens to a trainer or doctor). In the same way, those who take their teachings from town to town and sell them wholesale or retail to anybody who wants them recommend all their products, but I wouldn't be surprised, my friend, if some of these people did not know which of their products are beneficial and which detrimental to the soul. Likewise, those who buy from them, unless one happens to be a physician of the soul. So, if you are a knowledgeable consumer, you can buy teachings safely from Protagoras or anyone else. But if you're not, please don't risk what is most dear to you on a roll of the dice, for there is a far greater risk in buying teachings than in buying food. (313c-314a)

The main point that Plato is making in this passage is that in the same way as you need knowledge (namely medical science) in order to determine if the things that you eat and drink are beneficial or harmful for your body, you need knowledge (namely the tools for philosophical examination) in order to determine if the things that you are taught by others are beneficial or harmful for your soul. Without philosophical examination you cannot live a self-determined life. Your life will be determined by your socialization, that is: by the more or less accidental intersection of educational, social, cultural and religious influences that shaped your soul in the course of growing up. Plato famously claimed in the *Republic* that a good state can only come into existence if those who

have political power become philosophers because only, they have the knowledge required for deciding what should and what should not shape the citizens' souls. In a democracy political power is shared by all citizens. Hence, if Plato is right that good politics depends on philosophy, a good *democratic* state can only come into existence if all citizens become philosophers! Before I proceed, let me very briefly say what I actually mean by philosophy as a universal practice. I do not, of course, mean the highly specialized discussions of academic philosophy. Some people take pleasure in that, including me. But most people do not enjoy it and society couldn't function if everyone did. I'm rather thinking of a minimalist notion of philosophy that includes every (or almost every) form of argumentative discourse. If you're ready to articulate your beliefs, give reasons for why you hold them, allow others to question them and — depending on how the debate goes—defend them, revise them, or abandon them, then you're doing philosophy in my understanding.

Does Philosophy Contradict Religion?

Let me finally say something about the question, whether philosophy of the kind that I proposed following the tradition of ancient Greek philosophy is compatible or not with religion in general and with Islam in particular. I mentioned above how Socrates used to involve all citizens of Athens in philosophical debates on the city's market place. Now these philosophical debates are in fact a form of religious mission for Socrates. For what Socrates is trying to do is to verify what the oracle in the Greek city of Delphi said about him. Now what is an oracle in Greek culture? It is something quite close to the concept of prophecy in the Abrahamic religions: a holy man or woman who transmits what is revealed to him or her by one of the Greek gods (in Delphi it is the Greek god Apollo). What the oracle said about Socrates is that nobody is wiser than him. This very much surprises him, because he thinks that he doesn't really know anything for sure—he is after all a philosopher who is constantly examining and re-examining his opinions. There must, he thinks, be wiser people in Athens than him. But once he starts examining the Athenians, he finds out that they don't even know the one thing that he knows for certain, namely that he has no certain knowledge.

The Athenians are not even aware of their ignorance before getting into a discussion with Socrates. In this sense, Socrates is indeed wiser than they

are. He at least knows that he doesn't know. Now, what is Socrates attitude to religion here? He does neither reject what the oracle in Delphi said about him nor does he blindly accept it as true. Instead, he *examines* it in order to find out whether it is true or false. Once he finds it confirmed there is no reason for him to reject it. In other words: a *true* religion does not have to fear philosophical examination. And there is a significant intellectual tradition in Islam of subjecting the content of religion to rational examination. I am referring, of course, to Mu'atazilite *Kalam* that flourished from the 8th to the 11th century during the Abbasid period and is today of particular importance in Indonesia, because Harun Nasution's project of bringing together Islam, rationalism, and modernity is inspired by the rational theology of the Mu'atazila. Like Socrates, the Mu'atazilites did not simply accept God's word on the authority of revelation, but made a point of confirming it through rational proof. They thus used reason to provide a rationally defensible and coherent account of their religious tradition.

In addition, the Mu'atazilites also developed a highly sophisticated culture of debate —not only amongst themselves, but also with spokesmen of competing Muslim intellectual currents and spokesmen of other religious traditions, in particular Jews, Christians, and Manicheans. Additional evidence for this culture of debate in the Abbasid period is the fact that one of the first Greek philosophical treatises to be translated from Greek into Arabic was Aristotle's *Topics* which is essentially a manual about how to conduct a philosophical discussion (in fact, it was translated three times!). Given the pluralistic character of Indonesian society — both pluralism within Islam and of Islam and other religious communities — this makes Mu'atazilite *Kalam* a particularly attractive model of the past for conducting discussions in the present. But there are also other traditions of philosophical argumentation that were integrated into Islamic theological discourse, in particular the tradition based on Aristotle's logical writings that after Ibn Sina and al-Ghazali, became part of Islamic theology's mainstream in the East. There is then a wide range of intellectual resources within Islam that would allow for a philosophically grounded democracy in Indonesia that integrates the Islamic religious tradition shared by the majority of Indonesians. And if it were indeed grounded on philosophy, it would be —in my opinion at least—significantly superior to democracies in the West.

Conclusion: Aristotle and Public Health Reconsidered

I hope, then, that I was able to persuade you that not only medicine, but also philosophy has an important contribution to make to human life. In any case, after having worked out the arguments While preparing this lecture, I can now try to convince my wife again that philosophy is important during the 36 hours of our flight back to Canada.

