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From the Editor

The fact that Indonesia is now the largest Muslim nation has become wellknown internationally in the last few years. Despite this, it must be admitted that Islam in Indonesia has only recently entered global discussion. There has been a tendency among scholars to exclude Islam in Indonesia from any discussion of Islam or Muslim society. Islam in Indonesia has been regarded by many Western scholars as "peripheral", not only in terms of its geographic location –vis-a-vis the centers of Islam in the Middle East– but also in terms of the kind of Islam that exists in this area.

Indonesian Muslims has long complained about this. But after all, who is to be blamed? Blaming Western scholars for misperceptions and misrepresentations of Islam in Indonesia is no longer very productive. It is time for Indonesian Muslim scholars to provide a more accurate picture of Islam in their region.

One of the most effective ways to present Islam in Indonesia is through publication, such as books and journals, using international languages, mainly English and Arabic. *Studia Islamika* is intended to fill the lack of credible journals, aimed at disseminating information and academic works on various aspects of Islam in Indonesia.

Publishing a journal in international languages in Indonesia is not an easy task. The hardest challenge in this respect is the relative lack of availability of articles or reports written in either English or Arabic. We have to be honest and admit that not many Indonesian Muslim scholars are accustomed to writing in either language. This is one of the chief factors responsible for the obscurity of the development of Islam and Islamic thought in this country.

Indonesian Muslim scholars have long claimed that there were (and are) several outstanding Indonesian Muslim thinkers whose Islamic thought deserve international attention. Again, the problem is that they have published their thoughts in the national language,

Bahasa Indonesia. So far there has been no serious effort to translate their works into English or Arabic. In this respect, our journal is a humble beginning to tread the path in that direction.

Studia Islamika itself has been published by the State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) in Jakarta for several years in Bahasa Indonesia. However, Dr. Tarmizi Taher, the newly-appointed Minister of Religious Affairs, wishes the IAIN in Jakarta to publish the journal in a new format, mainly using two international languages, English and Arabic, and partly in Indonesian.

It is our pleasure that in this first edition of the new *Studia Islamika*, we are able to present articles by several noted scholars, among others, Dr. Nurcholish Madjid, Dr. Quraish Shihab, Dr. Martin van Bruinessen and Dr. Azyumardi Azra. All of their articles are written in either English or Arabic.

In addition, we publish other articles and reports by own staff which, we hope, should give readers a more comprehensive view of the current developments of Islam in Indonesia. These articles and report are: first, an intellectual biography of Professor Harun Nasution, one of the most prominent figures in the discourse of Islamic reforms in today's Indonesia; second, a long and deep interview with Professor Munawir Sjadzali, a former Minister of Religious Affairs, who completed his term of office last year; third, a report about the rise and development of ICMI (the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals) and about the Indonesian Intellectuals' responses to the provoking idea of "Clash of Civilization" written by Professor Samuel Huntington in *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993).

With all these articles and reports we are seriously attempting to present Islam in Indonesia in the many aspects of its development throughout history. We hope to maintain this variety of contents of *Studia Islamika* in the future editions whilst, of course, doing our best to improve it in all other possible ways.

Given this we invite all scholars of Islam in Indonesia to contribute to our journal. Your contribution is crucial not only for the continuing existence of this journal, but also for a better understanding of Islam in Indonesia.

Mu'tazilah Theology and the Modernization of the Indonesian Muslim Community

Intellectual Portrait of Harun Nasution

Abstraksi: *Paham keislaman macam apa yang relevan dengan tuntutan modernisasi umat Islam Indonesia, merupakan persoalan kontekstual yang dihadapi umat Islam, dan ternyata menjadi perhatian utama Harun Nasution seperti dapat dilihat dalam potret intelektualnya. Ia berpendapat, persoalan utama yang terdapat dalam umat Islam Indonesia hingga lambat ambil bagian dalam proses modernisasi adalah dominannya pandangan hidup tradisional, khususnya teologi Asy'ariah, di antara umat. Pandangan ini, menurutnya, harus dirubah dan diganti dengan pandangan hidup rasional, yang sebenarnya telah dikembangkan dalam teologi Mu'tazilah. Karena itu, reaktualisasi dan sosialisasi teologi Mu'tazilah pada umat Islam Indonesia merupakan langkah strategis yang harus diambil hingga umat Islam secara kultural siap terlibat dalam pembangunan, dan modernisasi yang dijalaninya berpijak pada tradisinya sendiri. Upaya ini ditempuh Harun tanpa mendapat hambatan yang berarti, walaupun kritik-kritik tajam banyak dilontarkan terhadapnya dari kelompok-kelompok tertentu umat Islam, terutama yang berada pada segmen-segmen lapisan menengah ke bawah. Karena yang menjadi perhatian dan upaya-upaya yang dilakukannya sejalan dengan kebijakan politik pembangunan Orde Baru, yang menghendaki Islam tampil secara kultural, bukan secara politik formal (misalnya Partai Politik Islam). Politik pembangunan Orde Baru mencanangkan stabilitas politik, karena itu perubahan sosial pada dasarnya harus ditempuh oleh masyarakat lewat perubahan budaya, bukan mobilisasi massa.*

سيفول مزاني

خلاصة

عندما قدم هارون ناستيون تساؤله قائلاً لماذا لا يلعب المسلمون الاندونيسيون دوراً فعالاً في عمليات التحديث لبلدهم اندونيسيا ، اتضح لنا انه كان يرغب في ان يعالج قضايا الامة الاسلامية في اندونيسيا بالعقل والمنطق . وانه يري ان السبب في ذلك يعود الي ان افكار اغلبية المسلمين في اندونيسيا متأثرة بمذهب الاشاعرة الي حد كبير ، فلا بد من تغيير في افكار هؤلاء المسلمين علي اساس الافكار المنطقية لدي المعتزلة ، لان التحديد في علم الكلام لدي المعتزلة يعتبر خطوة ثقافية استراتيجية ليقوم المسلمون بممارسة عمليات التحديث علي اساس متين .

وفكرة التحديد التي نادي بها هارون ، لا تواجه عقبات ولا صعوبات رغم وجود انتقادات شديدة من قبل علماء المسلمين في اندونيسيا ، لان الخطوات التي سلكها في ذلك المجال هي مبنية علي حقائق التنمية والبناء التي ارساها النظام الجديد ، حيث يود ان يسلك المسلمون في تغيير مصيرهم الاجتماعي مسلكا ثقافيا ، وذلك برسم القيم الحديثة او المنطقية في نفوس افراد المجتمع ، وليس عن طريق الحركات الفوضوية لاثارة المجتمع . ويمكن ان يكون المسلمون متقدمين بدون حزب سياسي او ما يسمى بدولة اسلامية . وهذه الفكرة كانت من العوامل المؤثرة في المفاهيم الاسلامية التي اراد هارون تطويرها .

ومن هذا المنطق نقول ان التوافق بين سياسة التنمية التي يمارسها النظام الجديد وبين اتجاهاته العقلية واضح جدا ، ولكن ليس معني ذلك ان النظام الجديد يستقله لمصالحه . وفي الحقيقة ان اتجاهاته الفكرية التي يقوم بتطويرها هي موجودة في نفسه منذ سنه المبكر . ولكن في الواقع لن تتحقق لولم تكن قائمة علي الحقائق الاجتماعية التي ارساها النظام الجديد .

Harun Nasution¹ was born on 23rd September 1919 in Southern Tapanuli, North Sumatra and came from an elite family of his region. His father, Abdul Jabbar Ahmad, went on a pilgrimage to Mecca when he was very young. When he grew up he became a successful trader, or more precisely an importer of some commodities from Singapore. It was a rare phenomenon in a colonial times for an Indonesian native to become a successful trader.

Ahmad married a daughter of an *'ulamâ'* of his region. His wife also came from an elite and religious family. She had lived in Mecca and studied Islam there, so she spoke Arabic. It was also a rare phenomenon in colonial Indonesia for a girl to be able to live in Mecca and have access to Islamic knowledge.

Because of his pious Muslim background Ahmad spent a lot of time studying Islam from the *'ulamâ'* of his region, and read *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic books) written in Malay Arabic. He thus became an authority on Islamic teachings, especially Islamic law (*fiqh*), despite the difficulties involved in studying Islam at that time. Because of his expertise in Islamic teachings, Ahmad was appointed by the Dutch government as a religious functionary, an Islamic jurist (*qâdî*) and leader of the mosque of his region. Working as religious minister, he earned a good living and so could acquire more land for farming.

Because of his family background the young Nasution was not only able to study Islamic teachings from his family, but was also able to go to the *Hollandsch-Inlandsche School (HIS)*, a 'modern' primary school established by the colonial government. This was a rare opportunity for native Indonesians, only children of aristocrats and government officials having access to HIS. The young Nasution was very interested in natural sciences and history, and dreamt of becoming a teacher when he grew up.

Having finished at the HIS, he wished to continue his schooling at MULO, a modern secondary school. However his father insisted that he should study Islam and it was almost impossible for him to oppose his father's will. As a result he attended instead MIK

¹For more information on Nasution's biography, see *Refleksi Pembaruan Pemikiran Islam, 70 Tahun Harun Nasution* (Jakarta: Lembaga Studi Agama dan Filsafat, 1989).

(*Moderne Islamietische Kweekschool*), a secondary modern Islamic School in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra. This school was 'modern' because it was influenced by the movements, thoughts and spirit of Islamic modernism, which were initially developed and spread in the Middle East, especially Egypt. The founders of MIK were graduates from Middle Eastern universities where modernist movements were gaining in momentum. In this school, Dutch was used as the primary language and students wore ties, a symbol of modernism.

Nasution said that he became interested in Islamic subjects because they seemed very modern in the hands of the MIK's teachers. It was here that he gained access to modern Muslim thought as developed by such leading Indonesian scholars or '*ulamâ*' as Hamka, Zainal Abidin and Jamil Jambek.

However, although it was modern this school was not economically well-supported. It could not pay its teachers and this impacted on the climate of the classes. Therefore Nasution could not hope for much from this school and he decided to leave it to find a better alternative. He planned to go to Solo, Central Java, where he could pursue his studies at another modern Islamic School, Muhammadiyah, the largest and most influential of modernist Muslim organizations in Indonesia. He applied to study there and was accepted. He then returned home to discuss his study plans with his family. But what happened then?

Modern Islamic thought was introduced in Bukittinggi and its influence on the *kaum muda* (youth) was known by Nasution's father who was worried that his son may also be influenced. Nasution senior, as an exponent of the *kaum tua* ("traditionalist Muslims"), could not accept and tolerate the spirit and thoughts of Islamic modernism.² Therefore Nasution was not allowed to study at the Muhammadiyah modernist school in Solo. His parents were afraid that his Islamic faith would be distorted by the modernists. In order to pull into line Nasution's understanding of Islam, his parent sent him to Mecca instead, to study Islam at the Harâm Mosque (*Masjid al-Harâm*). His mother hoped that he would

²About the struggle between *kaum muda* and *kaum tua* in West Sumatra, see Taufik Abdullah, "School and Politics: the Kaum Muda Movement in West Sumatra [1927-1933]" (Ithaca: Modern Indonesian Project, South East Asia Program, 1971).

become an Islamic teacher at this great and holy Mosque. He accepted their decision on condition that he would be supported to continue his studies later in Egypt, the land of Islamic modernism. He was interested in studying Islam in Egypt because many progressive Muslim intellectuals whom he had met in Bukittinggi, were graduates from Egyptian universities. He received particular explanations about the development of Islamic thought in Egypt from Mukhtar Yahya.³ Yahya said, as quoted by Nasution: "a modernist like you [Nasution] would be better off studying Islam in Egypt".⁴

With his parents' support and his own aim of studying Islam in Egypt, he finally traveled to Mecca. For Nasution, Mecca was in fact only a gate way to the land of Islamic modernism.

Having arrived at Mecca he soon became aware that it was, in his own words, "a medieval city in the modern age".⁵ Also he became disappointed with his insufficient Arabic. This was the primary introductory language for studying there, but was too difficult for Nasution to follow.

After one and half years, he sent a letter to his parents in North Sumatra with an ultimatum: "If I am not allowed to leave for Egypt, I will not return home to Indonesia. I will become an Arab and work as a driver". This ultimatum seemed effective; his parents soon concurred with his plan to study in Egypt.

Nasution arrived in Egypt in 1938, but his certificate, showing that he had graduated after three years at the MIK, did not help him to enter any university in Egypt. He needed an Islamic high school diploma (*Ijazah 'Aliyyah*) in order to be accepted. To obtain an Egyptian diploma, he had to take a test and so, to prepare for this, he hired a private teacher. With this serious preparation, he finally passed the test, obtained the diploma and registered himself at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy (*Usûl al-Dîn*), al-Azhar University. He chose this Faculty rather than the Faculty of Islamic

³Mukhtar Yahya graduated from al-Azhar university, and then became Professor of Islamic Studies at the State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) in Yogyakarta.

⁴*Refleksi*, p. 10.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 11.

Jurisprudence because the latter school required such high Arabic qualifications that he felt he would be unable to fulfil this criteria. Also, at the school of theology and philosophy, he could study philosophy, psychology and ethics, subjects in which he had interests.

His grades at the school were colorful, but he felt that he knew nothing about Islam. Generally he only memorized rather than analyzed the subject matters. He was again disappointed. "Having graduated from al-Azhar, I would receive a certificate to show my qualifications in Islam. But my knowledge of Islam was still poor. When I return home, I will probably teach on Islam. But I know nothing about it. This makes me afraid. I have therefore made up my mind to leave this school", said Nasution.⁶ So he decided to study at the American University in Cairo.

At the American University, he did not take courses on Islam, but on education and related disciplines instead, in particular social sciences. He finished his study here with a "senior project paper" on Labor in Indonesia, and received a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree.

He was interested in knowing whether there had been changes in the conditions of labor in Indonesia after the country's independence from Dutch colonialism in 1945. He wanted to know whether Indonesian labor was treated justly or unjustly by the government after this independence and after Japanese colonialism.

According to Nasution's analysis, the government of the young Indonesian Republic paid a lot of attention to labor problems. If there was a conflict between labor and an employer for example, the government would tend to take the side of the laborers. However it could do little to improve conditions, since the labor problems in a newly independent country like Indonesia, after 350 years of colonialist occupation, were complex and the quality of the human resources of labor itself was low.

Nasution's concern with labor problems at that time cannot be separated from the environment of his socialization. The American University was very modern and labor problems are basically a problem of modern society. In addition, Nasution was very active

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 15.

in the Association of Indonesian-Malay Students (PERPINDOM) and the Association of Indonesian Students (PPI) in Cairo. Environments such as these were very conducive to someone such as Nasution becoming involved in the socio-political problems occurring in his own country.

With his B.A. degree and abilities in Arabic, English and Dutch, he soon obtained work with some private companies in Egypt. He married an Egyptian woman and a few years later was appointed to work for the Indonesian Consulate in Cairo. This was the beginning of his diplomatic career. He was an attache of the consulate and the consul was H.M. Rasjidi, the first Minister of Religious Affairs in Indonesia. A few years later he was called to occupy a post in the Department of Foreign Affairs in Jakarta until he was posted as Secretary to the Indonesian Embassy in Brussels, Belgium.

While he was in Brussels, there were many political changes in Indonesia. In 1959, the parliamentary government was abolished and some leading political parties, including Masjumi, a Muslim party, were suspended by President Soekarno. Political parties became powerless with the exception of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). The political situation in Indonesia after the decline of the parliamentary government was very much controlled by three factions: President Soekarno and his colleagues, the PKI, and the Army. Meanwhile Masjumi was considered to have been involved in a rebellion of the Revolutionary Government of the Indonesian Republic (PRRI) in Sumatra against Jakarta. Jakarta responded to this rebellion with bombardments.

This was why Soekarno and the Armed Forces lost their trust in Masjumi, its activists and sympathizers. Any such persons increasingly became suspected and subjugated.

Nasution, as a Sumatran, was considered to be at least sympathetic to the PRRI.⁷ On this matter, Nasution points out:

... I used to be involved in a political game with Soekarno. Many of my Sumatran friends felt guilty about the bombardment of Medan [the capital city of Northern Sumatra]. I myself disliked the PKI. As a Sumatran, I disliked Soekarno's politics because I had heard how he repressed the

⁷According to H.M. Rasjidi, Nasution was a man with high principles and he joined the PRRI. See H.M. Rasjidi "Antara Saya dan Harun Nasution", in *Refleksi*, p. 265.

region. ... Fortunately I chose the anti-communist faction. Meanwhile the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) was having its heyday [in the Indonesian political constellation] at the time. ... When Soekarno cooperated with the PKI, I really became anti-Soekarno .⁸

His political traits of being anti-PKI and anti-Soekarno were confirmed shown by his resignation from his diplomatic career. He was soon black-listed, barred from entering Indonesia and other countries which had diplomatic relations with Indonesia such as Egypt. This made it impossible for him to return home to Jakarta because the PKI was in power. Fortunately an Egyptian diplomat who did not know that Nasution's name was on the black-list, provided him and his wife with visas to enter Egypt.

Having arrived in Egypt, Nasution returned to school. He took Islamic studies at *al-Dirâsat al-Islâmiyyah*, a private college. Under the supervision of a well-known scholar in Egypt, Abu Zahrah, he studied Islam in its entirety, i.e. real Islamic studies. The study method was exactly like that applied to Islamic studies in most Western universities. He enjoyed this because it stressed the ability to analyze, rather than memorize, subjects as he had once experienced at al-Azhar University. Furthermore, he found that the Islam that was presented here was very rational and modern, making him proud to be a Muslim. He read many books on Islam written by orientalists, some of which he had been able to purchase when he was in Brussels, and it was in these that he found the 'real' Islam.⁹ He also sympathized with Ahmadiyyah because he found this Islamic group rational in its understanding of Islam.

Two years later, he was invited to take Islamic studies at McGill University, Canada. It was the policy of the Institute of Islamic Studies at this Canadian University to recruit students from Christian and Muslim backgrounds. Muslim students are invited from all Muslim countries, including Indonesia. This policy plus a recommendation from H.M. Rasjidi,¹⁰ an associate professor at

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 27-8.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁰H.M. Rasjidi graduated from Sorbonne where he had written a thesis on Islam and Javanese Mysticism. Prof. Rasjidi was the second Indonesian to obtain a PhD on Islam from a western university, the first being Prof. Hosen Djajadiningrat who obtained his PhD from Leiden.

McGill and with whom Nasution had been acquainted with since he was consul in Cairo, enabled him to attend this university to study Islam.

At McGill, Nasution majored in "Modernism in Islam". When he completed his application form for the university, he stated that he was interested in researching the relationship between Islam and the state. Thus he wrote his MA thesis on "The Islamic State in Indonesia: the Rise of the Ideology, the Movement for its Creation and the Theory of Masjumi".¹¹ He wished to explicate the idea of the "Islamic State" according to the Muslim political parties in Indonesia: the Nahdatul Ulama (NU) and Masjumi, or at least their leaders' concepts of an Islamic State.

Nasution concluded that there is a concept of an Islamic State held in Masjumi, especially among its leaders, such as M. Natsir, Zaenal Abidin Ahmad, Isa Anshari, Osman Raliby and Kasman Singodimedjo, but that such a concept does not exist in the other parties. He considered how the Masjumi chose to institutionalize the idea of an Islamic State. Masjumi chose a constitutional way and as a result there were long and bitter debates in parliament about the ideology of a nation-state of Indonesia, these debates being between political parties based on different ideologies (*aliran*): Islamic, Communist, Democrat-Socialist and Nationalist.¹² The debates reached a deadlock, as there was no majority or coalition among the parties.¹³

When Nasution wrote his thesis, the PKI had established itself as the leading party, competing with Muslim Parties. He could not reach a conclusion as to whether or not the Muslim side would be the victors. As became known later, the victory did not fall to either the PKI or the Muslim parties, but rather to the army. Nasution did not consider the very real power of the army which existed in the old order of Indonesia.

¹¹MA thesis, McGill University, 1965.

¹²For details of the political ideologies at that time, see Herbert Feith and Lance Castle, *Indonesian Political Thinking, 1945-1965* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970).

¹³See Herbert Feith, *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), and Deliar Noer, *Islam di Pentas Partai Nasional* (Jakarta: Grafiti Press, 1987).

Having completed his masters degree, Nasution continued his studies on "Modernism in Islam". He wrote his PhD thesis on Abduh's theological thoughts.¹⁴

He was interested in writing on this subject because of Abduh's pervasive influence among the 'ulamā' and *ummah*, particularly among reformist or modernist movements, including the Muhammadiyah in Indonesia. Many of them interpreted and understood Abduh as a follower and thinker of the *Ahl al-Sunnah*, or theologically Ash'ariyyah. To Nasution this meant that Abduh advocated "fatalistic" or "traditional" theology. The theology of the *Ahl al-Sunnah* was considered to be fatalistic theology. But among scholars, according to Nasution's assessment, Abduh's theology was debatable. Some concluded that his theology is Ash'ariyyah but others came to the conclusion that his theology is rational and liberal—even more rational than Mu'tazilah. Nasution was eager to prove whether Abduh's theology was indeed rational and liberal as developed by Mu'tazilah or if it was traditional as developed by Ash'ariyyah.¹⁵

Having researched Abduh's writings, Nasution concluded that the view that he was theologically Ahl al-Sunnah or Ash'ariyyah, was based on his peripheral, popular and debatable book: *Risâlat al-Tawhîd*. Since this book does not explicitly state the theological commitment or intellectual tendencies of Abduh, it is not safe to conclude that he was an Ahl al-Sunnah or Ash'ariyyah theologian. However, it was also possible to reach a conclusion, based on this book, that he is committed to the rational or liberal traditions of Islamic theology, namely Mu'tazilah or Qadariyyah. Therefore if an assessment is based on this writing alone, one is on weak ground for determining the theological commitment of Abduh.

In order to solve the controversy, Nasution undertook much research on another of Abduh's books, namely *Hashiyah 'alâ Sharh al-Dawwâni li al-Aqâid al-Adudiyah*. Different from *Risâlat al-Tawhîd*, this book discusses the controversies about

¹⁴*The Place of Reason in Abduh's Theology. Its Impact on his Theological System and Views* (PhD Thesis, McGill University, 1968). This has been revised and published in Indonesian: *Muhammad Abduh dan Teologi Rasional Mu'tazilah* (Jakarta: UI-Press, 1987).

¹⁵See Harun Nasution, *Muhammad Abduh*, pp. 1-5.

classical theological issues, and here Nasution clearly found Abduh's assessment and choice.

Having completed his reading of Abduh's books, Nasution reached the conclusion that his theology is more rational and liberal than that of Mu'tazilah. Mu'tazilah is not of the explicit opinion that reason (*'aql*) is capable of creating (social) laws which force people to obey them, but Abduh does believe in reason's capability to do this.¹⁶

This is why Nasution thought that it was wrong to assume that Abduh's theology is of the Ahl al-Sunnah or Ash'ariyyah. However Nasution felt that it is generally hard for Muslims to accept his findings and conclusions, and so he was unable to publish his thesis very quickly. In a meeting one day, Muhammad Hatta, the former first vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, asked Nasution why he did not translate his thesis into Indonesian and publish it. Nasution answered: "It seems that Indonesian Muslims are not ready to accept the conclusions of my research on Muhammad Abduh. ... that he has the same viewpoints as Mu'tazilah". Upon hearing this explanation, some Indonesian *'ulamâ'*, who were present at that meeting, made negative comments saying: "It is hard to believe".¹⁷ It was not until twenty years later, after he had disseminated the rational theology of Mu'tazilah and this had become a part of the intellectual discourse of Indonesian Muslims that Nasution thesis was published.

For Nasution, rational or liberal theology of Islam, as developed by the Mu'tazilah and Abduh and other modernists, is not merely an intellectual exercise or an academic enterprise. Instead it has become the theological basis of the Islamic reformism or modernism to which he commits himself.

Restructuring the IAIN's Curriculum

Having completed his doctoral studies, Nasution returned home to Indonesia. He knew what he should do in the Indonesian Muslim community, because he continuously followed events in this community. He observed that Indonesian Muslims were less

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. v-vi.

developed, in economic and cultural terms, because they were generally theologically fatalistic and static. The theology of Ahl al-Sunnah or Ash'ariyyah seemed responsible as the primary sources of this stagnation and underdevelopment. They were narrow-minded and therefore not open to Islamic reformism or modernism, a prerequisite to *ummatic* development. This is why he aimed to replace the fatalistic or traditional world view (theology) of the *ummah* with one that was more dynamic, rational and modern. In order to implement this aim efficiently, Nasution chose education, notably higher education.

Intellectuals in Indonesia were aware that Nasution had completed his doctoral studies and so the University of Indonesia (UI), part of the Department of Education and Culture, and the State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN), part of the Department of Religious Affairs, both invited Nasution to teach at their respective institutions. As it happened the IAIN was more ready and therefore he joined this institution as a lecturer.

Before joining the IAIN Nasution had already heard about its dominant Islamic school of thought. He said:

... since I have been abroad I have heard about the condition of the IAIN - the thought developed there is very narrow and the students are not allowed to read Muhammad Abduh's books. I know this specifically because I have heard it directly from some fellows from the IAIN in Egypt. They told me that Islamic thought developed at the IAIN is still very traditional and very *fiqh*-oriented.¹⁸

Yet this did not make him pessimistic. On the contrary, he saw this sorry state of affairs as a challenge. In order to apply his interest in Islamic modernism and liberal or rational theology, Nasution proposed a restructuring of the IAIN's curriculum. He introduced a course on the history of modernism in the Muslim world, which was totally new to the IAIN. His idea was supported by the Rector of the IAIN, K.H. M. Dahlan, whom he had befriended when Dahlan studied in Egypt. However this did not mean that his ideas were easily disseminated and accepted by his IAIN colleagues, lecturers and professors. The real obstacle was their narrow-mindedness, a negative mental attitude that was a tendency of Indonesian Muslims in general. Their narrow-

¹⁸*Refleksi*, p. 39.

mindedness can clearly be seen, for example, in their comments when Professor St. Takdir Alisjahbana, a modernized or perhaps a 'westernized' Muslim, was invited to give a presentation at the IAIN. They asked: "Why is this atheist invited?!"¹⁹ Nasution response to the comment was: "To me nothing is wrong with an atheist coming to the IAIN. But I believe that Alisjahbana is not atheist. He is a rational Muslim. Maybe he does not pray (*salat*). Yet, he is not an unbeliever (*kâfir*). Upon hearing my argument, many people, particularly lecturers, made fun of me. But on the other hand, many students agreed with me".²⁰

In his first year in the IAIN, Nasution seems not to have been wholly accepted by some of the teaching staff. Yet he was clearly well-supported by the elite of the IAIN and by high-ranking officials of the Department of Religious Affairs, particularly when Mukti Ali, another graduate of McGill University, was appointed as Minister of this Department. Nasution was in fact appointed as Rector of the IAIN of Jakarta itself a few years later (there are 14 IAINs throughout Indonesia). This position enabled him to implement his modernizing ideas more thoroughly. His aim of fundamentally restructuring the IAIN's curriculum came into effect. In a national meeting of the IAIN's rectors in 1973, Nasution proposed some new subjects to be integrated into a new national curriculum for the IAIN: Introduction to Islamic Studies (covering all aspects of Islam, as a doctrine and thought, or as developed in the long history of Muslim thought), philosophy, Islamic Mysticism or Sufism (*Tasawwuf*), Islamic Theology (*Kalâm*), sociology and research methodology. At first some of the older rectors would not accept this proposal but, with the influence of the elite of the Department of Religious Affairs, especially that of its director, Muljanto Sumardi, a Columbia University graduate, it was finally agreed upon and became a national policy. Nasution was then assigned to write a textbook for the introduction to Islamic studies.

What is the significance of this course on the Introduction to Islamic Studies, insisted upon by Nasution?

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 40.

²⁰*Ibid.*

Nasution observed that Islamic studies in Indonesia were limited at that time to certain schools of Islamic thought. Theology was restricted to the Ash'ariyyah school; *fiqh* was limited to the school of Shâfi'i ; sufism was confined to the school of Ahl al-Sunnah or Sunnî, particularly that taught by al-Ghazâlî, not Shi'ite or philosophical mysticism as developed by al-Hallâj or Ibn 'Arabî. Many other aspects of Islam such as philosophy, history, politics or social institutions were ignored. From the start of their studies at the IAIN, students had to take specialization so they therefore lacked a holistic vision of Islam. They had no concept of Islam as a doctrine nor as an integral system of culture and civilization. Thus their knowledge of Islam was fragmentary.²¹ Nasution claimed that this made their perceptions of Islam very narrow, and that this was the main cause of narrow-mindedness and stagnation among the *ummah*.

The new textbook for the introduction to Islamic studies which he wrote, was to address the lack of a comprehensive understanding of Islam. In this textbook he presented all aspects of Islam within their respective schools. In the theological aspect for example, he discussed all schools of Islamic theological thought: Khawârij, Murji'ah, Shi'ah, Mu'tazilah, Ash'ariyyah, and Maturidiyyah both of Samarkand and Bukhara. So, what then is Islam?

Islamic teachings and history are based on the Qur'ân and Sunnah. Here Nasution divides Islam into the absolute and the relative. The former is the Qur'ân and Sunnah as such, and the later is the interpretation of the former as developed in Muslim history. Yet both are Islam. This idea is often repeated and stressed in his writings in order to ensure that his readers understand its importance.²² However, in Nasution opinion, the Muslim communities often confuse them or even hold the idea that all Islam is absolute. As a consequence, it becomes static without any potential for change within it. According to Nasution the Muslim communities (*ummah*) often believe that the thoughts of earlier

²¹Harun Nasution, *Islam Ditinjau dari Berbagai Aspeknya* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1977), vol. I, p. 6.

²²See for instant, his *Akal dan Wahyu* (Jakarta: UI-Press, 1982), particularly Chapter III.

'*ulamâ*' are so absolute that they are unchangeable even though they are irrelevant to the changing world.

With the new curriculum, it was hoped that the IAIN would become a better institute of Islamic studies and be able to produce more qualified graduates, who would possess the intellectual abilities needed to reform the *ummah*. Nasution felt very optimistic about this curriculum.

Having been applied for more than 15 years, this curriculum has recently been reevaluated, resulting in a lot of criticism. In particular Nasution's textbook has been questioned. So what are the problems with this textbook?

According to Nasution, the spirit of this criticism is that of old *fiqh*-oriented minds and an anti-philosophy spirit. Philosophy is now viewed as the scapegoat for so-called 'moral' decadence among the IAIN's students. Nasution argues:

I see that the motive behind the critics' wish to change the 1973's curriculum is to abolish the subject of philosophy contained within it. ... They simply do not understand the curriculum. They want to introduce morality into the curriculum, but morality is not taught but internalized, not at school but in the family. I also think that they do not understand philosophy and that they think it is responsible for students' moral decadence. Compared to Catholicism, Islam is more rational. But why does philosophy develop among pious Catholics? ... If we go back to the old curriculum, we will only know *fiqh*, ... it will be a setback and Islam will become very *fiqh*-oriented. This was the condition of the IAIN when I arrived. Everything was answered and solved by *fiqh*. ... It was dangerous. It would be like returning to 20 years ago. Pak Harto [Soeharto, President of the Republic of Indonesia – SM] and the Minister of Religious Affairs hope that the *ummah* are rational and broad-minded. [But] is their proposed alternative curriculum able to accommodate this hope? ... If we re-apply the old curriculum, we will again become peripheral and marginal, and the appeal of some people to integrate the IAIN into the Department of Education and Culture would once again become stronger in order to make it more open-minded. ... even the President would probably think that the IAIN hampers [development] since it would produce only fundamentalist and narrow minded Muslims, and he would consequently have it closed. ... We have proclaimed that the IAIN of Jakarta is a centre of Muslim modernization. If we want to keep the IAIN on the right track, the curriculum of 1973 should not be changed [to that of the old spirit].²³

His counter-criticism to the plan to change the 1973 curriculum was responded to by the elites of IAIN and officials from the Department of Religious Affairs with a suggested solution

²³*Refleksi*, pp. 41-4.

of adding some portions of the Qur'ân and Hadîth into the curriculum. Nasution agreed to this since it was not a fundamental change of the liberal spirit of the Islamic studies which he advocated. The influence of Nasution in the IAIN is obviously still strong.

Orientalist's Influence?

Nasution's liberal Islamic spirit can be clearly located in his many writings. He always tries to describe the phenomenon of Islam as it is. His emphatic attitude toward the various subjects of Islamic study often results in misunderstandings among his students and colleagues. This is a methodological problem: what is 'Islam,' how should one understand it, and why should one understand it in his way?

Some methodologies for studying Islam have been and are still being developed among Western scholars of Islam, be they 'orientalist' or 'Islamicist.' Nasution himself was, as described above, so impressed by the orientalist's works on Islam that he hardly ever had any criticisms of them, as if he accepted their views unconditionally. This causes one to conclude that he was influenced by orientalist or even has himself become an agent of orientalism. This kind of view of Nasution can be found among students, 'ulamâ' and even western educated Muslim scholars, such as H.M. Rasjidi who specifically wrote a book to criticize Nasution's textbook on the introduction to Islamic studies.

In the introduction of his book, Rasjidi, who recommended Nasution to take Islamic studies at McGill University, writes:

"Western scholars who study Islam can be divided into two groups: one group with a scientific motive, and another one with a (Christian) missionary attitude. ... the group with a scientific motive is varied: the ones who are sympathetic to Islam, the ones who help the struggles of the *ummah*, and the ones who unconsciously and because of their Christianity still hate Islam. The most important thing for Indonesian Muslims ... is the sense of a need to carry out thorough scientific research on Islamic teachings as has been done by Western scholars. ... Because of [my] curiosity about new useful things, I dedicated myself to Islam and the Indonesian Muslim community, I undertook pioneering work to channel the IAIN's graduates and others toward steeping themselves in orientalist thinking. ... But there are some among them who are disappointing. In steeping themselves in orientalist thinking, they did not find the mistakes of orientalist's understanding of

Islam, but on the contrary they took unconditionally all that the orientalist say. ... Harun Nasution, a friend of mine, whom I proposed to take Islamic studies at McGill, is one of these. He is influenced by orientalist ways of thinking which harm Islam.²⁴

How far Nasution is influenced by damaging ways of orientalist thinking is not a simple question to answer. However with an assessment of Nasution's text book which is strongly criticized by Rasjidi, it is possible to establish how far he is influenced by the orientalists, at least from Rasjidi's viewpoint.

a. The Meaning of Religion

In his two-volume textbook Nasution attempts to describe Islam in its entirety. In the first chapter, he discusses the general meaning of religion. He shows here²⁵ that there are four fundamental elements in every religion: 1) mysterious power; 2) that human destiny both in this world and in the hereafter is dependent on their good relations with the mysterious power; 3) emotional responses to the mysterious power; and 4) the idea of the sacred.

These are the general elements of any religion. But this generalization is not accepted by Rasjidi. In his opinion, this view is based on western scholars' assumptions that all religions are basically the same. Rasjidi disagrees with the idea of dividing religion into 'genus' and 'species,' in which there is a general meaning of all religions and a particular meaning for particular religions. Rasjidi maintains that religions are different whether in their geniuses or their species. So, Islam is different from any other religion. By stressing this difference Rasjidi declares that Islam is distinct and perfect. He states:

the last of the scriptural religions is Islam, brought by the Prophet Muhammad, be peace upon him, the last messenger of God; his teaching is perfect; there will never be more scripture (*why*) after it.²⁶

²⁴H.M. Rasjidi, *Koreksi terhadap Dr. Harun Nasution tentang Islam Ditinjau dari Berbagai Aspeknya* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1977), pp. 11-2.

²⁵Harun Nasution, *Islam*, vol. I, p. 11.

²⁶H.M. Rasjidi, *Koreksi*, p. 23.

Rasjidi's emphasis of the difference between Islam and other religions, and the superiority of Islam compared to other religions, is also clear when he rejects Nasution's view that Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism are also monotheistic religions.²⁷ According to Rasjidi, Christianity and Hinduism are not monotheistic religions, because of their Trinitarian creeds.

By comparison, Nasution maintains that the understanding of any religion is only correct if it is accepted by its followers. Therefore, it is correct to say that Christianity and Hinduism are monotheistic religions since their respective followers believe and state this. This methodology of understanding other religions is not apparent in the spirit of Rasjidi's writing. Rasjidi's methodology of understanding other religions is based more on a missionary spirit (*da'wah*). This approach can also be found in many of the writings of Christian Western scholars, such as Hendrick Kramer.

In contrast, Nasution's spirit in understanding other religions is not based on *da'wah* but rather on a dialogue spirit. This dialogue will only be possible if all the sides that are involved are seen as equal. The basis of this equality is humanity. Thus he says:

... the whole human race is a single family with God as its Creator. Islam teaches the oneness of humanity, the brotherhood of all men, which knows no bounds of color, race, country, language and even religion. ... This teaching of the oneness of humanity, has been neglected by Muslim leaders until recently due to existing unfavorable interreligious relations and political conditions of the past.²⁸

This leads to a number of questions. If the teaching of the oneness of humanity knows no bounds between religions, can human beings of different religions be saved? Is it only the sins of Muslims that will be forgiven?

On these matters Nasution explains:

... It is not only the sins of Muslims but also the sins of non-Muslims that will be forgiven, therefore non-Muslims may also be redeemed. ... except if they are polytheist.²⁹

²⁷Harun Nasution, *Islam*, p. 19.

²⁸Harun Nasution, "Islam and the Quest for a World Community" (a paper presented at the Fifth Assembly, World Council of Churches, Nairobi, 1975), p. 1.

²⁹Harun Nasution, "Toleransi Beragama" (unpublished paper), pp. 8-9.

When Nasution interprets the five religions (Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism) in Indonesia as monotheistic religions, and the sins of adherents of all such religions are forgiven, so they may be redeemed. It is therefore clear that there is no room in Nasution's thoughts for the *da'wah* spirit, in the sense that all human beings have to formally convert to Islam. Nasution's perception of religions, which is not appreciated by Rasjidi, enables him to understand other religions as they are. By comparison, Rasjidi is not able to understand other religions as they are because his theological basis is fundamentally missionary or *da'wah*. So, these religions can only be understood by him, not by their respective followers. Although Rasjidi claims that Islam teaches inter-religious tolerance, his theological basis for understanding other religions is potentially intolerant.

b. Islam: A Pluralistic Phenomenon

Religious tolerance not only concerns the relations between religions, but also *within* any particular religion, e.g. relations between sects or different schools of thought within Islam. Nasution's emphatic attitude toward the sects and schools of thought in Islam is clear-cut. In his opinion, Islam is fundamentally not only the Qur'an and Hadith, but also Muslims' understanding or interpretation of these as evolved throughout Muslim history. Islam is historically a pluralistic phenomenon. Again he takes special efforts to describe and understand Islam as it is, and so he does not try to hide any historical facts of Islam. For example, in writing about Islamic theology, he describes all schools of Islamic theology, such as Khawârij, Shi'ah, Murji'ah, Mu'tazilah, Ash'ariyyah, and Muturidiyyah, both of Bukhara and Samarkand. He describes their similarities, differences and even their conflicts. He does the same when he writes about other aspects of Islam: its politics, culture, civilization, social institutions, jurisprudence, philosophy, mysticism and modernism. This method of exposition has led to some misunderstandings among Muslims. Nasution was often criticized as a creator of discord among the unity of Islam and as an 'agent' of orientalist who does not want to accept the superiority of Islam. This criticism is again seen in Rasjidi's views.

When Nasution explains that Islam was manifested in the form

of a state and there are two political schools of Islam, namely Sunnî and Shi'ah, Rasjidi interprets this by saying:

Dr. Nasution's statement ... gives an impression that 'Islamic politics' is only a peripheral matter, not a basic and principal teaching. Therefore it ... only describes a clash between Ahl al-Sunnah and Shi'ah, between republican and monarchist. This is an orientalist's way of keeping Muslims away from Islamic teachings, and maintaining that Islam has no political theory and philosophy.³⁰

Rasjidi also criticizes Nasution on the latter's point that Islam as a state system has had social institutions (family, military, police, justice and education) as practiced in Muslim history for more than a thousand years. In Rasjidi's opinion, Nasution's historical exposition of Islamic institutions between the seventh and the ninth centuries gives the impression that they were the 'true' Islamic institutions and that Muslims today would assume that Islam was primitive, and irrelevant to the modern society of the twentieth century. Again Rasjidi disputes Nasution's explanation and so he says: "This is the way that orientalist describe Islamic institutions, as if these were static and can not be changed".³¹

There are further criticisms from Rasjidi regarding Nasution's exposition of Islam as evolved throughout the Muslim history. These criticisms are based on the following points. Firstly, his objection to Nasution's method of understanding Islam, namely historical understanding. To Rasjidi, this only exposes the historical development of Islam without any normative evaluation. This is considered to be a Christian orientalist way of understanding Islam. Secondly, Rasjidi's spirit to show the superiority of Islam and, by comparison, the inferiority of the Christian West.

In his criticism of Nasution's text book, Rasjidi concludes:

The textbook of Dr. Harun Nasution shows that today there are among us those who are influenced by Western orientalist methods, who assume Islam to be a social phenomenon which needs to adapt itself to Western civilization. Therefore, we will lose our Islamic identity.³²

³⁰H.M. Rasjidi, *Koreksi*, p. 39.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 40.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 150.

Rasjidi's underlying spirit to show the superiority of Islam and the inferiority of the West, is more clearly defined in his statement:

Dr. Harun Nasution always expresses amazement with western culture as if everything in the West were absolute. The human mind is also viewed as absolute. But to a Muslim, even to western thinkers like Raymond Aron, nowadays there are phenomena which reveal Western decadence. ... Westerners today are confused and seeking alternative guidance to their live. We hope they will find it in the Qur'an some day.³³

Rasjidi's criticism of Nasution has become popular, particularly among certain sections of Muslim's intellectuals. It is hard to judge whether Rasjidi is right and Nasution is wrong. A sympathetic understanding of the intellectual difference can be found in Deliar Noer's article, written for Nasution's seventieth birthday.³⁴

According to Noer, Nasution and Rasjidi come from different social and political backgrounds. Compared to Nasution, Rasjidi was more involved in social and political movements. He was the first Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesian, Indonesian ambassador to Egypt and Pakistan, and was also active in the Muhammadiyah and the Indonesian Islamic Party. Therefore his perceptions of Islam and his interests in the Muslim community (*ummah*) cannot be separated from his involvement in social and political movements. By comparison, Nasution kept himself away from such movements and concentrated on academic pursuits.³⁵ Therefore what is of significance for Nasution in developing Islamic studies in Indonesia, is different from that which is felt to be significant by Muslim activists like Rasjidi. Nasution is more open and lets his readers judge by themselves the information which he presents on Islam. Rasjidi is also open but he guides his readers to select what is considered good and fit to be exposed, and he clearly hopes that his readers' faith will become stronger. This does not mean that Nasution wants to weaken his readers' faith, but he believes that with an open exposition of Islam as it has evolved in history, Muslims can freely choose the best interpretation and

³³*Ibid*, p. 147.

³⁴Deliar Noer, "Harun Nasution dalam Perkembangan Pemikiran Islam di Indonesia", in *Refleksi*, pp. 81-101.

³⁵*Ibid*, p. 92.

implementation of Islam by themselves. On this matter, Noer says: "Compared to Rasjidi, Nasution was more convinced that everyone, through reasoning, will reach the good. Conversely, Rasjidi, like Kant, views there to be a limit on reason, and therefore revelation becomes more urgent".³⁶

If this is so, Nasution is more liberal than Rasjidi. But does this mean that Nasution was more influenced by Christian orientalist? Liberal thinking cannot possibly be located in Western societies only. It is found in other societies, including those which are Muslim, in the past and the present. Through his writings Nasution has done his best to show the origin of liberal thinking in Islam.

Islam consists of the Qur'ân and Hadîth, and interpretations of them. Hadîth is basically the Prophet Muhammad's interpretation of the Qur'ân. Therefore Nasution proposes that the primary source of Islam is the Qur'ân. Nasution often states that only eight percent of the total 6236 verses of the Qur'ân refers to creed, rituals and social stipulations. This means that the *shari'ah* stipulations are very limited on the one hand, and on the other hand, there are so many aspects of human life which require stipulations that men and women are obliged to establish these themselves without being dependent on the Qur'ân for them. This gap provides room to think and to create stipulations relevant to the changing world. In this respect, the place of reason in Islam is so central that Muslims have to solve their worldly problems rationally.

Thus, according to Nasution, the idea that the Qur'ân contains advice on all matters of human life, is without foundation. He argues:

It is wrong to say that the Qur'ân contains complete systems for politics, economics, monetary matters, human society, industry, agriculture, etc., which should be applied by Muslims. They are parts of the worldly life of the Muslim community, and the Prophet Muhammad has said 'you know your worldly problems better than I do.' This Hadîth states that the revelation does not regulate in detail the worldly life of the Muslim community ... Society is by nature dynamic. It is changing and developing ... [Meanwhile] rules by nature control people. If there are too many absolute rules to be applied, they will retard the dynamism of society. In other words, the development of society will be hampered. ... The issues of human society are provided by God for human reason to resolve. That is how the systems of Islamic government, economics, etc., came into being. They are Islamic, but

³⁶*Ibid.*, h. 93.

not absolutely Islam. They are products of Muslim reason and creativity, therefore they are relative and changeable.³⁷

God has therefore provided good opportunities for reason and creativity by restricting His laws on worldly human life. He has also allowed men and women to regulate their worldly laws themselves for the sake of human welfare. This is the theological basis of 'Islamic liberalism' as defined in Nasution's way of thinking.

Mu'tazilah and Rational Action

Nasution's inclination towards liberal thinking is more apparent in his preference for schools of Islamic theological thought. The school of Mu'tazilah is known to be liberal and rational compared to other Islamic theological schools in terms of their perceptions of the relationship between reason and revelation.

The Mu'tazilah school takes the stance that human reason is able to recognize God, its duty to thank God, good and bad, and the duty to do good and avoid bad. The only thing that human reason does not know exactly, is the way to thank God.³⁸ So what is the function of revelation for the Mu'tazilah? The function of revelation is to tell reason the way to thank God, to confirm the capabilities of human reason, and to give a more detailed description of good and bad, and the happenings in the hereafter.³⁹

This is the Mu'tazilah's perception of the relationship between reason and revelation. It can also be seen as a theological basis for human action, behavior and ethic. Therefore Mu'tazilah's ethic is fundamentally rational. This rational ethic of Mu'tazilah is seen more clearly in its perception of human will and action, whether these are determined by God or by reason and the freedom of human beings. Mu'tazilah rejects the idea of predestination (*jabariyyah*), i.e. that human will and action are determined from the outset by God. On the contrary, it believes in the free will and

³⁷Harun Nasution, "Al-Qur'an Mengandung Segala-Galanya?" (unpublished paper, 1976), p. 4.

³⁸Harun Nasution, *Teologi*, pp. 86-7, and 92.

³⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 96, 97, and 99.

free acts of human beings; the will and action of men and women are determined by themselves. They are basically autonomous, therefore their actions are voluntary (*qadariyyah*).⁴⁰

In his many writings, Nasution often stresses the Mu'tazilah's rational thinking and its concept of human freedom. Mu'tazilah theology is thus often identical with the rational and liberal theology of Islam.⁴¹ These two related aspects of Mu'tazilah theology are, according to Nasution, relevant to modern society, because it is culturally based upon these perceptions of human beings. Rationalism and liberalism have been considered to be the driving forces of modern society. By comparison, fatalistic theology represented by the theology of Ash'ariyyah is, in Nasution's mind, the cultural basis of traditional society. Therefore, in order to modernize the Muslim community is necessary to replace Ash'ariyyah, or fatalistic theology, with Mu'tazilah, or rational or liberal theology.⁴²

It is hardly necessary to say that reason is in fact very central in Islam, and that rational thinking and action are prerequisites of a positive attitude towards worldly life. But why should they be claimed to be Mu'tazilah teachings? This question is raised by Indonesian Muslim intellectuals. But Rasjidi exaggerates matters when he says:

... Dr. Harun Nasution tells [us] at length about the school of Mu'tazilah. But ... he finally says: 'there is no more school of Mu'tazilah. It is finished.' By saying so, on the surface he seems committed to the scientific line. But, his motive behind this is clear, namely to revive the school of Mu'tazilah as a school of educated pious Muslims. This motive is certainly very dangerous for the Indonesian Muslim community.⁴³

Why is it dangerous? According to Rasjidi it is clear that there are only two groups in Islam: Ahl al-Sunnah and Shi'ah. These two

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹Nasution often calls it the "theology of natural laws", which means that everything has been determined by God-made natural laws (*sunnat Allah*), rather than by God directly. See *Refleksi*, p. 43.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁴³H.M. Rasjidi, *Koreksi*, pp. 106-7.

large groups could threaten the stability and unity of Islam, and this threat could increase if there were three or more kinds of Islam. Diversity and plurality seem to be the enemies of 'conservative' politicians like Rasjidi. He simply does not see that unity has the potential to become authoritarianism.

In spite of Rasjidi's objections to what he perceives as Nasution's efforts to revive Mu'tazilah, Nasution himself believes that Muslim theological problems have been basically resolved and formulated by the classical schools of Islamic theology. Mu'tazilah, as one of these schools, produced liberal and rational answers to the fundamental problems of theology, namely the relations between men/women and God, reason and revelation, and all the consequences of these relations, especially concerning human will and action. When the modern age requires rational and liberal thinking and action, and Muslims wish to modernize themselves, why then did they forget their own liberal and rational traditions, and take the rationalism and the liberalism of cultures and traditions different and foreign to their own history, namely the West? Why do we not return to our own traditions? The world and Muslim communities are changing, and are historical. But fundamental questions of theology and philosophy are relatively a-historical, or relatively universal, and thus they can be actualized and reactualized.⁴⁴ "Here I do not understand why my Muslim friends condemned me as westernized- or orientalist-minded. They simply do not understand me," Nasution complained.⁴⁵

Does this mean that the possibility of the formulation of new Islamic theological thinking is closed? Nasution says: "It is open, but it is very difficult to produce new theological thinking. And, before we arrive at new thinking, it is realistic to return to our own traditions relevant to our modernizing community, that is Mu'tazilah, our rational and liberal theology".⁴⁶

With rational theology, there is no theological obstacle to the growth and development of rationalization, namely the rational

⁴⁴Interview with Nasution (25 October 1993). See also his paper, "Kebudayaan Islam Klasik dan Kebudayaan Indonesia" (unpublished paper, 1991).

⁴⁵Interview with Nasution, *loc. cit.*

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

explanation of reality, including that of religion itself. Therefore, science as one of the central powers of the modern society, including the sciences of religion, can develop and even replace former systems of explanation of human life, such as myths, traditional religions, etc.⁴⁷ Even though religion still plays a role in explaining reality, its role has become much less central and more limited. This is the phenomenon of the secularization of modern society. Nasution does not actually use the term 'secularization' but this does not mean that he does not agree with the idea of secularization as rationalization, as proposed in the 1970's by Nurcholish Madjid.⁴⁸ Nasution avoids the term because it is very sensitive for the Muslim community.⁴⁹ There is a long and bitter polemic concerning Madjid's idea of secularization in the Indonesian New Order. Madjid argues that secularization as rationalization is a fundamental teaching of Islam, therefore there is an obligation for secularization to occur among Muslims. Also Nasution himself commented positively on Madjid's ideas.⁵⁰

Nasution then elaborates on the relationship of rationalization to the attitude and behavior of the Muslim community. Rationalization is not only concerned with the rise and development of rational theology itself but also with rational action or behavior. As far as scientific attitudes and behavior are concerned, rationalization in the classical period of Islam enabled Muslims to be open to other cultures and civilizations, particularly those from Greece and Persia, and to develop them into genuine civilizations of Islam. In the modern world, rationalization makes Muslims responsive to Western culture and civilization without necessarily becoming westernized.⁵¹

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸See Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam, Kemoderenan dan Keindonesiaan* (Bandung: Mizan, 1987), pp. 171-203.

⁴⁹Interview with Nasution, *loc. cit.*

⁵⁰See Harun Nasution, "Pembaharuan Nurcholish Ditinjau dari Sudut Sejarah Pembaruan dalam Islam" (unpublished paper, 1973).

⁵¹Harun Nasution, "Timbulnya Modernisme dalam Islam dan Perkembangannya Sampai Abad XX" (unpublished paper, 1970), p. 23.

Rational theology, according to Nasution, determines rational and risk-taking behavior as manifested among Muslims in classical period. Entrepreneurship and trade therefore grew fast at that time, and Madinah was transformed from an agrarian area to an urban one. When this rational theology disappeared and was replaced by the theology of Ash'ariyyah or Ahl al-Sunnah, the Muslim community entered a long period of decadence. The rational theology of Islam had just been revived at the end of the nineteenth century, when the era of Islamic modernism arrived.⁵²

Human attitudes, action and behavior, are determined by systems of values or systems of meanings. These systems enable men and women to understand and interpret their environments; they then act in accordance with this understanding and interpretation. Therefore their actions have meaning, or they experience meaningful action.

Theology is one of these systems of meaning. In Islam, the theology of Mu'tazilah and Ahl al-Sunnah are both Islamic systems of meaning. Yet they are different, especially in their understanding and interpretation of human relations with God and whether the actions of men and women are determined by themselves, by God or by both. According to Nasution, Ahl al-Sunnah or Ash'ariyyah defines that the actions of men or women are determined by God. Therefore it is fatalistic and makes people passive in the worldly life. This is the cultural basis of the decadence of Muslim community that results in them being less developed.⁵³

Nasution rejects the possibility of a 'dialectic' relationship between the will of God and the human means of initiating their actions (called *kasb* in Ash'ariyyah theology). He understands the *kasb* to be simply another concept for perpetuating the absolute will of God and the absence of human will and efforts. According to the concept of *kasb*, human will and efforts are still determined by the will and power of God. Within it there is no room for human will. Human action is therefore essentially determined by God.⁵⁴

⁵²See Harun Nasution, "Islam dan Produktivitas" (unpublished paper, 1992).

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴Harun Nasution, *Teologi*, pp. 107-8.

This is Nasution's interpretation of *kasb* as developed in Ash'ariyyah. However there is a positive and optimistic interpretation of the *kasb* as can be seen in Nurcholish Madjid's views. He argues:

In the theological system of Ash'ariyyah, there is a complicated concept of *kasb*, which is often condemned as the fatalistic nature of Ash'ariyyah. But after more detailed observation, it is found that this concept must be integrated with other concepts, and if this integration is upheld, it would create dynamism.

Adherents of Ash'ariyyah or Sunnî Muslim in general, do indeed hold firmly to the doctrine of predestination that creates the impression that they are passive. They believe that the destinies of men and women have been determined by God, ... including whether or not they will be redeemed ...

Since in this world, whether someone will be redeemed or not can be observed from their actions, whether they do a lot of good or bad things. ... Therefore everyone is obliged to do good things 'to prove' that they are redeemed.⁵⁵

For Madjid the concept of the *kasb* is so integrated with the concept of *zuhûd* ('asceticism') that it brings about a worldly positive psychological condition. On the one hand, men and women's redemption or salvation has been pre-determined whilst on the other hand, this also depends on their own good deeds in the world. Therefore the doing of good deeds ensures their redemption or salvation. Because they work for the sake of God, not just for economic reasons, they are ascetic. As a result, economic surplus arises and then wealth is accumulated.⁵⁶ Therefore, for Madjid, the concept of the *kasb* is positive for the modernization of the Muslim community. Madjid even views Ash'ariyyah to be parallel with the 'Protestant ethic' or Calvinism.⁵⁷

By comparison, Nasution does not see the possibility of voluntary and rational action within the *kasb*, and therefore there is no room within it for what is known in Weberian sociology as

⁵⁵Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam, Doktrin, dan Peradaban, Sebuah Telaah Kritis Tentang Masalah Keimanan, Kemanusiaan, dan Kemodernan* (Jakarta: Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina, 1992), pp. 482-3.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p. 602.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

'worldly asceticism'.⁵⁸ What is possible within the *kasb* is not 'worldly' but 'other-worldly' asceticism', as practiced by traditional Muslim communities. For Nasution, within the *kasb* the ethic for someone to work hard does not arise from the psychological force to show that he or she is redeemed or saved, but rather from God Himself. Here, men or women are only mediums or the means of God's power and will. They do not will, nor do they act—they are passive.

Nasution believes that the economic ethic grows and develops only in a non-fatalistic community, i.e. in a rational community. In this community, it is man or woman, not God, who determines whether he or she wants to succeed or fail, be wealthy or poor, be developed or underdeveloped.

A reformist reinterpretation of the *kasb* is often integrated with the concept of *tawakkul*, namely 'trust in God'. *Tawakkul* is also considered by some to be a psychological driving force, raising from the *kasb* to accelerate worldly activity. However Nasution points out that:

The idea of *tawakkul*, which is found in Islamic mysticism, spread among Muslims. In the Middle Ages, Islamic mystical orders (*tarîqah*) spread all over the Muslim world, and they become very influential among Muslims. The idea of *tawakkul* ... is parallel with fatalism.⁵⁹

Thus Nasution does not see any psychological driving force in *tawakkul* which will modernize the Muslim community by making Muslims hardworking people with lower consumption so that they can accumulate their economic surplus. On the contrary, he believes that the work ethic required to motivate Muslims to be modern, only grows in the soil of rational and liberal theology, just as Calvinism grows on the basis of Cartesian philosophy (rationalism).

This does not mean that Nasution ignores the spiritual aspects of the Muslim community which are much practiced, particularly by Islamic mystics. Islamic mysticism (*sufism*) developed during

⁵⁸See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Unwin University Books, 1971).

⁵⁹Harun Nasution, "Islam dan Perobahan Sosial: Pemikiran dan Usaha" (unpublished paper), p. 2.

the golden age of Islam, being practiced individually at that time. It was not organized.⁶⁰ The organized *sûfi* or Islamic mystical orders (*tarîqah*) arose at the beginning of the Islamic decadent age, in particular after the thirteenth century. During this period it was practiced not only by Muslim mystics (*sûfi*) but also by the masses, producing what is called "popular sufism". 'Other-worldly' orientation therefore developed among the Muslim masses. They considered that worldly activities (trade, industry, agriculture, etc.) were contemptible. These were the jobs of unbelievers or non-Muslims.⁶¹

'Other-worldly' theological orientation is one of the primary cultural causes of a long period of Muslim decadence. If the Muslim community is still trapped by this orientation, it will remain underdeveloped. But when the wind of change and modernization blows into the Muslim community, the spirit of rational theology will blossom. This can be seen in the rise of Islamic modernism, firstly in Egypt, Turkey and India, and then throughout Muslim countries, including Indonesia. Yet it is still limited to the elite, while the majority of the Muslim masses hold on to their fatalistic theology. The theological obligation to bring about rationalization is not yet felt by most Muslims. Muslims today are still imprisoned in their traditional or irrational theology, Ahl al-Sunnah or Ash'ariyyah. Therefore, it now seems urgent to disseminate and internalize more intensively Mu'tazilîh or rational theology among them in order to enable them to become active in their own modernization and lives.⁶²

The Elite as a Strategic Target

Nasution views education to be a strategic means for disseminating the rational theology of Mu'tazilîh, and the Muslim elite must be the primary target of this socialization. Why should the elite be targeted? Perhaps because he understands the relationship between culture and social structure, and the elite and the

⁶⁰Harun Nasution, "Islam dan Produktivitas", p. 14.

⁶¹*Ibid.*

⁶²*Ibid.*

masses in the Indonesian New Order.

Nasution has some recollections of the time before he returned to Indonesian:

One of the reasons why I wanted to go back home to Indonesia was because I agreed with the Indonesian New Order government. There have been a lot of great and positive changes during the New Order, particularly if it is compared to the Old Order, or to Egypt, Syria, India and Pakistan. ... During the period of the Old Order I chose to live abroad. At that time Indonesia was underdeveloped in almost all sectors. ... What was heard about was only poverty or instability, ... or conflicts among elite leaders. I heard that it was very hard to live in Indonesia. But abroad, I had a good life.⁶³

This is Nasution's perceptions of the regime of the Indonesian Old Order. How about the New Order? He points out:

The New Order is different. When I came to Jakarta from abroad, it looked very busy and dynamic with development programs in almost all sectors. Now Indonesia has become more developed compared with Egypt in all sectors. Egypt has been left far behind. ... The New Order government is able to set and maintain national stability, therefore economic development runs smoothly. Now Jakarta is much more developed than Cairo. ... In Egypt it is hard to control national stability, maybe because there are too many political parties there. I dislike a country with too many political parties. Indonesia had a terrible political experience during the time when the government was based on many political parties; it simply could not work.⁶⁴

Nasution's perception of national instability resulting from too many political parties, influences his view of Indonesian political parties in the New Order period. He says:

With the change to the current Indonesian party system, from nine to three political parties, political stability is much more controlled and secure. In terms of political freedom, the Old Order gave more freedom to the people. I understand it. But democracy requires the culture of democracy in our community. We need a great number of educated people. If this prerequisite is not fulfilled, democracy will not work.⁶⁵

Concerning the political aspirations of the Indonesian Muslim community, Nasution rejects the idea that this must take the form

⁶³*Refleksi*, p. 45.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

of a political party. On the contrary, it seems that Islamic ideals are more realizable without a political party. It is the elite of the government, not an Islamic political party, which can accommodate the political aspirations of the Muslim *ummah*. Therefore, it is more strategic and urgent to 'Islamize' the power elites than to establish an Islamic political party. He further states:

With this New Order government, the Muslim community becomes more and more developed. I am often asked if the Muslim community can develop without an Islamic political party. In my opinion, it should not have a political party. The progress of the Muslim community is often very dependent on the power elite, namely leaders with an Islamic spirit, and is not very dependent on political parties. What has the *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP), which was claimed to be Islamic political party, given to the development and progress of the Muslim community? ... It was the Minister of Religious Affairs, Alamsyah Ratu Perwiranegara, who struggled to eliminate the *Aliran Kepercayaan* [Javanese mysticism] from being officially recognized as the religion of Indonesia. Where was the PPP? The Minister took the case to the President of Indonesia, and this controversial issue was finally resolved with the official elimination of the *Aliran Kepercayaan* [from being a mainstream religion]. How long did the PPP and our preachers struggle for that? It was obvious that the solution lay with the political power elite. If the elite had said 'no', it would not have been resolved.⁶⁶

The problem of the relationship between the Muslim community and Pancasila, as the ideology of the nation-state of Indonesia, is the same according to Nasution. He explains that the Minister argues: "Pancasila is a gift from the Muslim community to the nation-state of Indonesia".⁶⁷ This statement was accepted by both the power elite and the Muslim community. For the sake of the multi-religious and multi-ethnic nation-state of Indonesia, the Muslim community, despite being the majority in the Indonesian population, willingly sacrificed its ideals in order to apply Islam as the ideology of this nation-state. It was said by the Minister of Religious Affairs that this was a great sacrifice by the Indonesian Muslim community. This political articulation of the power elite is seen by Nasution as a great political success in reducing the

⁶⁶*Ibid.* *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP) or "United Development Party", was founded by the New Order government in 1973 to fuse the four Muslim political parties for the sake of national political stability.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

primordial political spirit of Indonesian Muslims.⁶⁸ He further argues:

... I saw that Islamic institutions have nothing to do with political parties but are about the spirit or soul of the rule. If the rule has an Islamic spirit, Muslim *ummah* will develop. That has been my viewpoint ever since. Islam will develop in a country if her leader or power elite is mentally Islamic. ... Therefore, be close to the power elite. Bring him or her the spirit of Islam. So men and women who are anti-Islam will regress. The President keeps us from destruction and underdevelopment. So, just follow him".⁶⁹

Nasution says that his 'elitist' strategy of an Islamic mission was once explained to M. Natsir and H.M. Rasjidi, two outstanding Indonesian Muslim leaders: "The strategic target of an Islamic mission is not common Muslims, but intellectuals and power elites. But they disagree. I was soon aware that Natsir is a man of political parties. ... He preferred developing and empowering the Muslim masses to Islamizing the elite".⁷⁰

Blatant Parallel

Nasution's preference for Islam as ethical values rather than as a way of life, and for an elitist strategy rather than populist one, accommodates the real politics of the Indonesian New Order. It is the policy of the government not to implement formal or literal Islam in Indonesia; it accepts Islam as a form of ethical values. Nasution's preference is not Islamic law (*fiqh*), but the theology, philosophy and history of Islam. Islamic law (*fiqh*) is a subject in which Islam is formulated as a code or system of conduct. It is *fiqh* which enables Muslims to think of everything Islamic in legalistic terms, including Islamic state, Islamic community, Islamic society, Islamic banking, Islamic political parties, Islamic government, etc.

⁶⁸Nasution wrote some articles on the relationship between Islam and Pancasila. He is of the opinion that Pancasila is a manifestation of Islamic teaching in the context of the Indonesian nation-state. See for example his "Refleksi Pancasila tentang Tata Krama Hidup Beragama Ditinjau dari segi Agama Islam" (unpublished paper, 1983) and "Islam dan Kehidupan Kenegaraan" (unpublished paper, 1981).

⁶⁹*Refleksi*, p. 47.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p. 46.

Studies of *fiqh* are not only about the legacy of Islamic laws, but also concerned with the possibility of implementing the *fiqh* in today's Muslim community. Therefore, Nasution sees the *fiqh*-oriented thinking as having the potential to rise so-called 'Islamic fundamentalism'.⁷¹ Nasution maintains that the term 'fundamentalism' or 'fundamentalist' does not actually fit any single phenomenon of Islam because historically the term refers to a phenomenon of Christianity in the West. Nasution prefers to refer to 'fundamentalist Muslim' as 'traditionalist Muslim'.⁷² This is because Islamic fundamentalism perceives Islam as not only ethical values but also rules or laws to be applied in the daily life of every Muslim, as an individual or a part of the Muslim social entity.

The question is not whether *fiqh*-oriented thinking is wrong, or rational thinking is right, or vice versa. Perhaps there is no absolute and objective answer to this question. Instead it is a problem of the interpretation of Islam which, sociologically, is a part of the social construction of reality. Therefore the problem is not whether Nasution's preference for the rational theology or Mu'tazilah is right or wrong, but how far it is relevant to the dominant social construction of reality, namely that constructed by the military regime of the Indonesian New Order. In order to understand the relevance of Nasution's theological preference for the New Order, it is relevant to describe how the reality of the Indonesian New Order is socio-politically constructed.

The military regime of the New Order came into being through a bloody revolution, in which the army and the PKI were the two main conflicting agents. This conflict brought the military force to power and they took over from the Old Order government. No force could stop the rise of the military since the old regime had lost its political legitimacy to hold its power. The Old Order had failed to develop the Indonesian economy. There was no significant economic development in Indonesia during the years before the fall of the Old Order. In fact, it was an era of conflict between a great many political interest groups, in particular between the PKI and the military.

⁷¹See *Refleksi*, pp. 43-4.

⁷²See his paper, "Islam dan Fundamentalisme" (unpublished paper).

The involvement of the military in these political conflicts came about firstly because its social origins were basically not of a professional military nature, but rather civilian masses that were involved in the military and political struggles for Indonesian independence. They did not define themselves just as professional militaries, a means of political power to maintain law and order, but instead also as an integral part or even agents of socio-political processes.⁷³ This is the concept of the *dwifungsi ABRI* (the Indonesian military dual function) which was to be firmly implemented by the New Order government.

The military regime of the New Order observed that the economic crisis was the primary cause of the fall of the Old Order regime. This is why economic development has become the priority of national development in the New Order. Social, political and cultural development should be mobilized to support it.

In order to plan short, middle and long term national development, President Soeharto invited scholars, especially economists, from the University of Indonesia (UI). They were asked to provide intellectual contributions to that planning and even to take part in its administration.

The economists, who were involved in that planning and were wellknown as technocrats, were educated at some American universities, in particular at the University of California, Berkeley. The government also invited economists from Harvard University as government consultants posted to Bappenas (Board of National Development Planning).

These technocrats and consultants were all practitioners of the neo-classical economic paradigm, a superstructure of capitalism or modernization. In order to implement this paradigm in the Indonesian context, related non-economic prerequisites are necessary, namely political stabilization and a modern culture. Therefore the American-trained 'modernist' social scientists also played significant roles in easing the plans for economic development.

⁷³See Nugroho Notosusanto, "Angkatan Bersenjata dalam Percaturan Politik di Indonesia", in Farchan Bulkin (ed.), *Analisa Kekuatan Politik di Indonesia* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1985), p. 7.

There are simple reasons why political stabilization and a modern culture are required in order to smooth the way for economic development. Economic development requires a large amount of capital investment, which cannot be provided just by local investors but must also come from international or multinational investors. They will only invest their capital if there is national political stability to protect their capital. Foreign investors had had bad experiences with the Old Order regime as their companies were nationalized. So a policy of stabilizing national politics was pursued through 'mass-depolitisation'. The New Order regime stabilized the masses through the establishment of a 'government party', the Golongan Karya (Golkar), and by controlling other political parties.⁷⁴ All political parties, social and professional organizations and interest groups, are placed under government guidance. Golongan Karya itself is a medium for political articulation among the military elite. Also the regime mobilizes the masses through many of its policies, such as the policy that all civil servants, which number in the millions, must become members of Golongan Karya.

The New Order regime not only controls and guides the political domain, but also the cultural or symbolic domain. Economic, social, political and cultural domains have been selected, integrated and packaged into what is known as the "Strategy of National Development" which was formulated by members of the military elite of the New Order regime, such as Ali Murtopo, a personal assistant to President Soeharto.⁷⁵ This strategy is also known as the 'cultural strategy', the 'strategy of modernization' or 'acceleration of modernization'.

Murtopo's understanding of the modernization and cultural strategy can be viewed as a reflection of the ideology of the New Order regime. It is a military construction of Indonesian New Order reality.

⁷⁴For information on the genesis of Golongan Karya, see for example, Leo Suryadinata, *Golkar dan Militer, Studi tentang Budaya Politik* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1992).

⁷⁵Regarding the central role of Murtopo at the beginning of the Indonesian New Order, see for example, Richard Robison, *Indonesia: The Rise of Capital* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1984), pp. 148-52.

Murtopo understands 'modernization' to be:

... a process in which development is implemented and controlled with ideas and instruments, whether this is material things, ethical orientation, science, technology or skills to attain these goals as efficiently as possible.⁷⁶

What kind of ideas or ethical orientation are needed to attain the goal of modernization itself? Naturally these would have to be modern ideas or modern ethical orientation. This grows and develops within a modern, not a traditional, system of values. According to Murtopo, the fundamental problem in Indonesian society is its traditional mentality. He argues:

In Indonesian society, which is generally traditional, modernization requires change and renewal of the system of values. Hence, modernization has to change the dysfunctional and hampering norms in [the efforts of] the development of society. ... In the transition to modern society, it is necessary to prepare the socio-cultural institutions (*tata sosial budaya*) to support development. ... The socio-cultural institutions to be disseminated and internalized among Indonesian people are the appreciation of material things and technology, and a future-oriented mind, ... Therefore, the new institutionalization is not only concentrated on economic change and renewal, ... but also, even more importantly, on the change and renewal of fundamental things, i.e. in the field of values.⁷⁷

The state apparatus and all the people of Indonesia will, of course, be the agents of the cultural strategy or the strategy of modernization. However Murtopo points out that:

Modernization, as a process, should be done within a cell-system. That is the state apparatus as a network is expected to be the driving force of healthy and fast modernization. Here is the motive of the state apparatus in the era of development and acceleration of modernization.⁷⁸

So, the primary agent of the modernization of the Indonesian New Order is the state apparatus, which is dominated by the military. There is no option to use non-state apparatus except in roles subordinate to the central agent, the state apparatus, i.e. the military and bureaucrats or civil employees, including professors as

⁷⁶Ali Murtopo, *Strategi Pembangunan Nasional* (Jakarta: CSIS, 1982), p. 56.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 43-5, and 59.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, p. 78.

they are appointed by the President.

However Murtopo maintains that modernization should not become westernization. How modernization avoids becoming westernization, is a problem which requires the attention of intellectuals.⁷⁹ Social scientists and scholars of humanities are invited to contribute their ideas to solve this problem. They are also asked to elaborate on the cultural strategy or the strategy of modernization, as conceived by the power elite.

For Muslim intellectuals, the question is how far Indonesian Muslim thought can become a part of this strategy. How large a part can Muslim intellectuals take in elaborating and implementing this strategy? This depends on how relevant their thoughts are to national development or modernization. The idea of an Islamic political party or an Islamic state, for example, is considered by the Indonesian New Order to be irrelevant. What is most relevant to the New Order is their contribution to the system of values or culture which would support or empower the spirit of modernization. Therefore Indonesian New Order Muslim intellectuals have to decide what they can contribute to national development.

On this matter, Kamal Hasan strongly argues that Islam renewal (*pembaruan Islam*) as in intellectual response to the New Order modernization, falls within the framework of the government strategy of culture or development.⁸⁰ Therefore, the so-called "cultural approach" of Islamic renewal is considered by its supporters to be more strategic than a "political approach". The statements of Madjid, "Islam yes, political party no",⁸¹ or Munawir Sjadzali, "the aspiration of *ummah* is fulfilled without a political party",⁸² or Nasution, "the progress of Islam often depends not on political parties, but on a ruling elite that has an Islamic spirit", all reflect their spirit and commitment to the "cultural approach" for

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 60, 69.

⁸⁰See Muhammad Kamal Hassan, *Muslim Intellectual Responses to 'New Order' Indonesia* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1980).

⁸¹Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam, Kemoderenan, dan Keindonesiaan*, pp. 205-5.

⁸²See Munawir Sjadzali, *Islam Realitas Baru dan Orientasi Masa Depan Bangsa* (Jakarta: UI-Press, 1993), pp. 61-6.

Muslim *ummah* in the context of the Indonesian New Order. So, Islam is constructed to be a mainly cultural not a political force, and has become, as Nakamura⁸³ says, something beautiful that it is accepted by all groups and classes of Indonesian Muslims and rediscovered as something of which to be proud.

Many pro-New Order Muslim intellectuals have chosen education as a strategic medium through which to participate in modernizing the Indonesian New Order. Exploring and re-actualizing Islamic teachings and Muslim traditions relevant to modernizing the Indonesian New Order, is considered more urgent and strategic.⁸⁴ Nasution has found the modern spirit of Islam in Muslim philosophy and Mu'tazilah theology. Advocating, disseminating and re-actualizing the 'modern' spirit of Islam (Muslim philosophy and Mu'tazilah theology) are the ways in which he participates in the modernization of the Indonesian New Order.

Sociologically, Nasution's intellectual concerns (in particular with the rational theology of Mu'tazilah, his obvious preference for a modernist movement, his ambition to replace the pervasive influence of Ash'ariyyah in the Indonesian Muslim community with Mu'tazilah, or to replace traditional with rational or modern theology) can all be seen as integral parts of the national strategy of modernization, systematically formulated and disseminated by the New Order regime as described above. Nasution himself is a part of the state apparatus and it can therefore be expected that he should openly support the New Order idea of development or modernization. He basically agrees with the strategy of national development or the idea of acceleration of modernization as formulated by Murtopo. There is no fundamental difference, in Nasution's eyes, between *his* thinking and *this* strategy. But according to Nasution, the problem with Murtopo was that he did

⁸³Mitsuo Nakamura, "The Emergence of an Islamizing Middle Class and the Dialectics of Political Islam in the New Order of Indonesia: a Prelude to the Formation of ICMI" (a paper for the conference on "Islam and the Social Construction of Identities: Comparative Perspectives on Southeast Asian Muslims", University of Hawaii, August 4-6, 1993), p. 24-5.

⁸⁴Nasution is among those who hold this view. See "Kebudayaan Islam Klasik dan Kebudayaan Indonesia [the Culture of Classical Islam and Indonesia] (unpublished paper, 1991).

not truly involve the Muslim *ummah* as an integral part of national development. On the contrary, the Muslim community was seen by Murtopo as an inhibiting factor in national development. Nasution saw this as a political problem; it is not connected with the concept of the acceleration of modernization evoked by Murtopo.⁸⁵

So, there is a blatant parallel between Nasution's intellectual concerns and the Indonesian New Order's national strategy of modernization or development. Yet it is wrong to say that Nasution is ideologically or intellectually coopted by the regime, since his concern with modern or rational culture has been internalized from when he was young and living in Sumatra. During his youth, he was socialized in modern elementary, secondary and tertiary schools. His preference for the rational theology of Mu'tazilah, his views that Abduh's theology is only relevant to the problems of Muslim *ummah* if it is Mu'tazilah, and his decision to take modernism as his major at McGill University, all reveal that the spirit of modernism or rational theology had developed in his mind before, rather than because of the Indonesian New Order's cultural strategy. However his preferences and Islamic thought would have only remained latent or even come to nothing if he had not lived in a modernizing country such as that of the Indonesian New Order. It is because of the New Order's cultural politics that he is able to advocate and disseminate the rational theology of Mu'tazilah, and to influence thousands of the sociologically agrarian-based students of the IAIN. He has also become one of the most acclaimed Indonesian Muslim intellectuals, and his ideas and opinions have been widely disseminated among the Muslim *ummah*, particularly among the elite class, as he has become an integral part of the mainstream of the Indonesian New Order intellectual discourse. Therefore the criticisms of him of Rasjidi and his supporters, for example, do not shake his views; they are strongly founded on the reality constructed sociologically by the New Order regime.

Finally, it is correct to say that Nasution is a portrait or a personification of an Indonesian New Order Muslim intellectual.

⁸⁵Interview with Nasution (10 January 1993).

He is becoming a part of the history of the Muslim Indonesian New Order.

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ستوديا اسلاميكا

مجلة أندونيسية للدراسات الاسلامية
السنة : ١ ، العدد : ١ (ابريل-يونيو) ١٩٩٤ م

هيئة الاشراف على التحرير:

عبدالعزیز دحلان
محمد ساتريا افندي
قمرالدين هدايات
مسطوحوه

واهب معطى
هارون ناسوتيون
مسلم ناسوتيون
محمد قريش شهاب
دين شمس الدين

محمد يونان يوسف

رئيس التحرير:

ازيوماردي ازرا

المحررون:

نور الفجر
يوهان هيندريك موليمان
سيقول مزانى
هيندرو براسيتير
بدري يتيم

سكرتير التحرير:

عارف سبحان

مخلص عين الرفيق

تصميم الغلاف:

س. برينكا

على اكبر

ستوديا اسلاميكا (ISSN : ٠٢١٥-٤٩٢) مجلة دورية تصدر اربع مرات فى العام عن جامعة شريف هداية الله الاسلامية الحكومية جاكرتا (STT/DEPPEN No. 129/DITJEN/PPG/STT/1976) برعاية وزارة الشؤون الدينية بجمهورية اندونيسيا ، وتخصص للدراسات الاسلامية فى اندونيسيا ، بقصد التبليغ عن نتائج البحوث والمقالات التى تبحث فى القضايا الاخيرة المتعلقة بالموضوع . وتدعو المجلة العلماء والمثقفين الى ان يبعثوا اليها مقالاتهم العلمية التى تتعلق برسالة المجلة .

تصدر المجلة بجاكرتا ، اندونيسيا .

عنوان المراسلات : ستوديا اسلاميكا ، جامعة شريف هداية الله الاسلامية الحكومية بجاكرتا ، شارع جواندا رقم ٩٥ ، تشيوتات ، جاكرتا الجنوبية ، الرمز البريدى ١٥٤١٢ ، الهاتف : ٠٠٢٧٧٩٣٠٠١ . بنك نيجارا اندونيسيا ١٩٤٦ كبايوران بارو/جامعة شريف هداية الله الاسلامية الحكومية ، جاكرتا قيمة الاشتراك السنوى فى اندونيسيا : لسنة واحدة (٤ اعداد) : ٤٠٠٠ روبية (٢٠ دولارا امريكيا) ، لسنتين (٨ اعداد) : ٧٠٠٠ روبية (٣٥ دولارا امريكيا) ، قيمة العدد الواحد : ١٠٠٠ روبية (٥ دولارات امريكيا) وتسدّد القيمة مقدما . وفى البلدان الاخرى يضاف الى قيمة العدد مبلغ ٤٠٠ روبية (دولاران امريكيا) للارسال بالبريد العادى . اما الارسال بوسائل خاصة فيرجى قبل ذلك الاتصال بالمجلة .