

**MODERNIZING RELIGION AND CULTURE: SUTAN TAKDIR ALISJAHBANA'S PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE OF VALUES**

**Norbertus Jegalus\***

*School of Philosophy, Widya Mandira University, Kupang, Indonesia*

*nobertus2306@gmail.com*

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**Abstract**

*Mind is the most unique thing that differentiates a human being from an animal and it is through the mind as such humans improve their life quality. This is why, modernizing religion and culture is indeed seen as a project of developing rationality which is one of six value groups in human beings' lives. Rationality, in turn, gives birth to science, science technology, and finally technology is used to develop humans' economy and to support any advancement in various dimensions of human beings' lives. For Islam, rationality is not something new because Islam is a rational religion. Rationality is, therefore, unique to Islam and it is not in contrast with Islam. In that sense, modernity as a major fruit of rationality is not against Islam. Learning from the West, that is, its science and technology, therefore, is necessary for Indonesia to be a modern nation, particularly in such fields as religion and culture.*

**Keywords:** *value, mind, modern, religion, culture*

**A. Introduction**

Philosophy is a critical discipline. It reflects human beings' experiences and at the same time it responds to human beings' thoughts. It has been a philosophical tradition that philosophers respond not only to realities faced by human beings, but also to their developing thoughts. The philosopher Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana (STA) has proved it.<sup>1</sup> He came up on the stage of Indonesian philosophy in order to

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<sup>1</sup>According to STA, philosophy of a free thinking and it is free to pursue the truth: "nothing is sacred, nothing is unyielding, everything is brought to the mind and open to investigation"; confirming this idea STA writes: philosophy "is not bound by any belief from the beginning, by a dogma or others" (STA, "Philosophy for the Future of Humanity", in *Philosophy and The Future of Humanity*, A Quarterly Publication of the Institute for Philosophy and the Future of Humanity, Jakarta: Universitas Nasional, 1991) p. 1-18.

respond to his people's thinkings on religion and culture in which they maintained their local traditions and cultures, but they refused other peoples' cultures.

For STA, culture is a result of human beings' wisdom. It is, therefore, legitimate for philosophy to criticise it for its advancement. Such a cultural criticism can be done because culture is man-made. Yet, can a religion be criticised? A religion as a divine revelation, of course, cannot be criticised because a divine revelation is absolut and cannot be changed. However, a religion is also an instituion that comprises divine and human aspects. These human aspects including human wisdom (*ijtihad*) established within a religion, according to STA, can be criticised. That is why, for STA, criticising a religion is not to degenerate it or to throw it away from human beings' lives, but it is to better human beings' understanding of it and to make sure that it is always relevant with human beings' lives across times and generations.

STA studied religion and culture based on philosophical perspective of values. He did not discuss dialectical relationship problem between religion and culture, that is, whether religion can influence culture or vice versa or whether religion can hinder culture or vice versa.<sup>2</sup> STA's major aim was to find out how religion and culture can be made modern. To do so, STA learned from Eduard Spranger, a German philosopher and pedagogist, who had introduced six groups/classifications of values in humans beings' lives by highly valuing one of them, that is, theoretical value.<sup>3</sup> The actualization of theoretical value is rationality and the actualization of rationality is modernity.

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<sup>2</sup>Kuntarto dan Karsidi, "Pola Relasional Agama dan Budaya. Perspektif Studi Keislaman", in *An-Nidzam: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan dan Studi Islam*, Pascasarjana Institut Agama Islam Nadhatul Ulama, IAINU, Kebumen Volume 03, No. 02, Juli Desember 2016, 164-176; and Mohammad Arif & Yuli Darwati, "Interaksi Agama dan Budaya", in *Empirisma: Jurnal Pemikiran dan Kebudayaan Islam*, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kediri, Vol 27, No. 1 Januari 2018, p. 55-63.

<sup>3</sup>Sumasno Hadi, "Pemikiran Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana tentang Nilai, Manusia, dan Kebudayaan", in *Jurnal Filsafat* Fakultas Filsafat, Universitas Gajah Madah, Vol. 21, No 1 (2011), p. 1-36.

STA's genial idea on this theoretical value has been fully described in his *opus magnum* entitled "*Values as Integrating Forces in Personality, Societies and Culture*".<sup>4</sup> In this library research which is based on a philosophical approach, its focus is on STA's masterpiece in addition to STA's other works in general, his works on religious and cultural affairs in particular.

### ***Who was Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana?***

Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana was a pedagogist, a literary author, a historian, a culturist, and a philosopher, who critically reflected the culture and religions of his people. He was born in Natal, South Tapanuli, North Sumatra, on 11 February, 1908. He passed away on 17 July, 1994, in Jakarta. Through his biography entitled *Hidup dalam Semua Kebudayaan* (Living in All Cultures),<sup>5</sup> we know that he was a great thinker with great curiosity and that he always reflected upon his own experiences. Based on his experience as an Indonesian studying in Europe, he found that it is not true that Indonesians refuted Western culture in order to establish Indonesian traditional culture.

STA believed that by learning from other nations/peoples, Indonesia can be well-developed and modern. In that sense, Japan is a good example for STA. In the past Japan was like Indonesia. It was not modern. However, by opening itself to and learning from other nations, Japan has now become a well-developed and modern nation. That is why, Indonesia may not be self-complacent and satisfied just by its traditions. Indonesia, of course, may not lose its identity, but it has to be as great as other great nations. This means that Indonesia has to change. A nation that learns a lot from other nations, according to STA, can indeed actualize its own potentials so that it can establish its own identity, not other nations' identity.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>*Essay of A New Anthropology, Values As Integrating Forces In Personality, Societies, and Culture* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1966).

<sup>5</sup>STA, "Hidup dalam Semua Kebudayaan", in "MEMOAR Senari Kiprah Sejarah", Majalah TEMPO. Book II: *Roeslan Abdulgani, Zulfikri Lubis, M. Natsir, J. Darmojuwono, Asrul Sani, Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, St. K. Trimutri, Sri Paku Alam VIII, Rosihan Anwar* (Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 1993) p. 165-200.

<sup>6</sup>STA, *Hidup dalam Semua Kebudayaan*, op. cit. 184.

In one of his trips to Europe, STA met with Karl Jaspers, a German existential philosopher. Yet, when he went back to Indonesia, he worked on his dissertation with Prof. Beerling of The University of Indonesia as his supervisor. Unfortunately, Beerling had to go back to the Netherlands because of the West Irian, now West Papua, political problem. STA then went back to the Netherlands. There he kept continuing writing his dissertation while teaching part time at the Stanford Center for Advanced Studies for Behavioral Sciences. His dissertation entitled "*Values as Integrating Forces in Personality, Society and Culture*" was then published there.

STA is familiar with the entire history of Western thought, from Greek philosophy to early 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy. There are some figures that are most frequently cited in his masterpiece "Values as Integrating Forces," namely: Descartes, founder of modern philosophy; Kant, German enlightenment criticism figure who brought together rationalism and empiricism; Hegel, German idealism figure; Marx, German socialism figure; Cassirer, German-American cultural philosopher; and, several other famous figures such as Dilthey, Durkheim, Nicolai Hartmann, Oswald Spengler, Karl Jaspers, Eduard Spranger, and Max Scheler. STA explored and processed those great thoughts of such great Western thinkers into his own frame of mind so he remained independent in his thoughts.<sup>7</sup>

He wrote many books in Indonesian and English about humanities such as fiction and non-fiction literature, art, language, history, culture and philosophy. However, he became famous not only for producing many quality works, which made him entrusted to occupy some important positions in various academic institutions both domestically and abroad, but also for his thoughts which were always critical and which often challenged prevailing public views on his era.

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<sup>7</sup>Franz Magnis-Suseno, *Pijar-pijar Filsafat. Dari Gatholoco ke Filsafat Perempuan, dari Adam Muller ke Posmodernisme* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2005) p. 133.

## B. Sutan Takdir Aisjahbana's Philosophy of Values

### *Phenomenology of Value*

Humans are distinguished from animals because humans can have an assessment while animals cannot.<sup>8</sup> That is the basic understanding of STA in his value philosophy. Animals are united with their activities. They cannot distance themselves from reality. What they do is determined purely by their instincts not by a judgment as a result of their rational mind judgment. So, in doing something, animals are not determined by an assessment of what is right and what is not right, what is good and what is bad. While human beings, there is indeed a power of instinct, but that power is limited. This is why to adapt to their environment and develop themselves, human beings rely on their abilities that only exist in them, namely their mind.<sup>9</sup> According to STA, humans are free to determine their activities because of their mind. Mind is a union among thoughts, willingness, and fantasy that, in turn, becomes human beings' basic motivations, that is, their instincts and feelings which are typical to humans.

STA further explained that the ability to assess presupposes and realizes human freedom. Because human insight is essentially unlimited and human will is also free, humans can then judge something before they have to react to the reality they face. As for animals, once they are confronted with reality, they react immediately without first having to judge it like humans. So, freedom allows humans to take a critical attitude before acting upon or reacting to something. For STA, the belief that humans are free and, therefore, responsible for their actions includes basic philosophical beliefs. Indeed there is an element of "heteronomy" and there are also natural, social and cultural realities which are predetermined and in which humans

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<sup>8</sup> STA, *Essay of A New Anthropology*, op. cit., p. 236 : "It is precisely through the evaluating process of the human mind that human behavior is distinguished from animal behavior, and the man, with his consciousness, enters an atmosphere of greater freedom".

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 3.

live, but humans do not directly react to those realities because they have to evaluating them first before responding to them.<sup>10</sup>

The moment humans begin to recognize a thing is the moment they put reality into their of awareness or recognition. The reality that is included in their horizon of introduction or recognition is given a name (a definition), for example, a chair, and at the same time what is named, that is, a chair in this case, is given a meaning (value), namely, to be seated on. This means that meanings and values of objects or reality are the results of intellectual recognition processes. Humans, in this case, respond to reality by defining it and giving it a meaning, so that reality becomes meaningful or valuable.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Value Classification***

But what is value? This philosophical question is not much reviewed by STA because his main concern is how those values are used to advance human life. Therefore he did not philosophically discuss definition of value, but he directly discussed classification of values with their use in personal, social and cultural life, and he referred to Eduard Spranger for such classification.

Eduard Spranger (1882-1963) was a philosopher and pedagogist at the University of Leipzig, Berlin and Tübingen, who taught six personality types or six types of people each with their own values, namely, theoretical, economic, religious, aesthetic, political and social values. In his masterpiece "*Lebensformen, Geisteswissenschaftliche Psychologie und Ethik der Persönlichkeit*",<sup>12</sup> Spranger explains that human life with each of its types is rooted in consciousness, so it is the structures of consciousness that shape human types. He explained that low personality types have

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<sup>10</sup>According to STA, as quoted by Franz Magnis-Suseno, "Animal life and its instincts are still bound to their environment, but in human life there is always dialectical interaction between the mind and its nature and between social and cultural environments" (Pijar-pijar Filsafat, op. cit., p. 134).

<sup>11</sup>STA, *Essay of A New Anthropolgy*, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>12</sup>*Lebensformen, Geisteswissenschaftliche Psychologie und Ethik der Persönlichkeit* (Halle: 1921 and 1950 expanded edition in Tübingen) have also been translated into English: *Types of Men*, translated by J. W. Pigor, Halle, 1928; Later Ludwig Wittgenstein, the idea of *Lebensformen* (Types of Life) became an input for his philosophy of "language games".

a basis in biology while high personality types are rooted in consciousness. All such types of values, ranging from low to high ones, are integrated within a human, that is, a holism<sup>13</sup> in which lies the meaning of human life.

According to Spranger, a theoretical human being has all such six values and the other five values are influenced by this theoretical value. People are called theoretical human beings if all other values are viewed as secondary ones and their priority is to seek objective knowledge. Therefore, the people of this theoretical type do not need the pleasures of life; they have less respect for wealth or physical materials, but what they focus on is wealth of knowledge which is not just any knowledge but true knowledge; they review religious matters rationally; social association must be useful for progress, especially for the advance of science; they are inactive in politics; they do not want to be in power and always appear as political critics. These theoretical humans consist of three major variants, namely, those of empirical theory, rational theory, and critical theory types. STA though preferred humans of rational variance theory types.

Economic human beings also have all other types of values, but they favor economic values, namely, material benefits and welfare above all those values. Therefore, economic people will always appear rich in practical ideas; they pay less attention to any form of action, but they rather pay attention to benefits, that is, judging everything by their usefulness; what is considered good is what is useful; they judge others based solely on their work performance to make a profit. In short, economic humans are practical humans.

Thus, a perfect human in the eyes of STA is a person who wants to advance, that is, someone who is theoretical and practical. Theoretical and practical human beings are very much in accordance with the objectives of STA, that is, if you want to go forward, it is necessary to develop knowledge and technology used to develop the economy.

Therefore, STA takes the whole classification of the six Spranger value categories, namely: theoretical, economic, religious, aesthetic, political and social

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<sup>13</sup>STA, *Essay of A New Anthropology*, op. cit., p. 13.

humans. We can summarize these six sets of values as follows:<sup>14</sup> 1) theoretical values or scientific values, that is, values that follow the measurement of right and wrong; what is positive is truth, and what is negative is error; 2) economic values, namely, values that depend on whether something is beneficial or detrimental, so the criteria are profit and loss; 3) religious values, namely, values related to the highest reality of a human life and that is the reality of the Holy One whose opponent is the profane one; 4) aesthetic values, that is, values related to whether or not something is beautiful, namely, what is beautiful is positive, while what is bad is negative; 5) political values, namely, values related to the dimensions of power in human life, namely, what is positive is power, while the negative is submission; and, 6) social values, that is, values related to others in living together, namely, being good or bad and also being solid or selfish.

According to STA, the six values through various configurations determine the value system or moral system that is unique to each personality, every social group and every culture. That is why STA mentions values as the integrative forces of humans with society and with their culture. STA explains that the constellation of values has a key role in the three dimensions of human reality which are also three ethical processes, namely in the formation of personality (individual beings), in people's lives (social humans), and in culture (cultured beings).<sup>15</sup>

The integration of the six values determines human integrity in the three dimensions, namely, the personal dimension, social dimension, and cultural dimension. The first is personal dimension related to personal integration. Personal integration, according to STA, must be achieved in three human centers, namely, in instinctual, emotional and intellectual life. Here STA clearly emphasizes three things in human life: first, vital integration (living things), second, integration of the heart (human will) and integration of mind (human intelligence). The second is social dimension related to social integration. Social integration depends on how configuration of the six values succeeds in supporting complexity in harmony with

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 91-93.



the three dimensions of humanity. The third is cultural dimension. It is associated with cultural integration. This cultural integration also depends on how the six values succeed or fail to support complexity in harmony with the three dimensions of humanity.<sup>16</sup>

***Where is the moral value?***

In STA's classification of values that relies on Spranger's classification above, there is no moral value. Doesn't STA recognize moral values? STA, of course, highly upholds moral values. Moral values are not included in the classification because Spranger follows the line of German phenomenological thinkers, one of whom is Max Scheler who teaches that moral value is not a type of values compared to other values. Scheler also makes a classification of values, but he makes it only on four levels of values, where the highest one is religious value.<sup>17</sup> STA does not take Scheler's classification into account because Scheller's classification does not contain any theoretical values, whereas the basic intention of STA is rationality.

Scheler argues that moral values do not constitute a category of values compared to other categories of values. Moral values are not separate from other values. Each value gets a moral weight. Moral value must be understood as a value that human beings should live with together with all other values. A trader behaves morally while working on economic values. An artist has moral values when he works on works that have aesthetic value. In short, humans realize moral values by including other values in a moral behavior.

STA, by following Kant's ethics, explains that moral values have several main characteristics, such as freedom and responsibility which are mandatory for every human being. This means that moral values are related to irresponsible human person. Moral values cause someone to feel guilty or innocent, because he is responsible. And that responsibility is only possible in the context of subject freedom. A moral value can only be realized in actions that are fully the responsibility

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 24-35.

<sup>17</sup>Scheler writes about values with these four levels in his masterpiece where he confronts his stand in ethics with Kant's ethics.

of the person concerned. Besides that moral values are mandatory for every human being. In Kant's language, moral obligation is unconditional (imperative category)<sup>18</sup> because the values are applied to humans as humans. That a student gets a low grade, the incident does not undermine his dignity as a human being. However, once he fails to uphold moral values, he humbles himself as a human being; he drops his human dignity.

STA is very familiar with Kant's moral philosophy. This is seen from the use of Kant's terms such as autonomous morals and heteronomous morals by STA. STA explains the relationship between individual and social aspects in human life according to that category. According to STA, there is a dialectic between the autonomous and the heteronomous, namely, between individuals (autonomous) and society (heteronomous). Humans are autonomous, but they face a heteronomous reality. One is personal morality, the other is social ethics. Humans live in adialectic between autonomous individual ethics and heteronomous social ethics. "Thus in a society called an individual it has two characteristics, first as an autonomous ethical person, and secondly as a heteronomous ethical member of society",<sup>19</sup> writes STA.

Humans, however, cannot escape the dialectical tension between their autonomy, that is, ethics that is centered on conscience and heteronomy which "incarnates in customs, customs and laws. These customs, habits and laws are the norms that determine the behavior of individuals as members of a society".<sup>20</sup> Autonomy is what allows an individual human life according to his/her awareness that whatever is expected or demanded by the environment, he/she must follow the conscience that tells him/her. He/she realized that he/she alone must be responsible for what he/she did. At the same time heshe is also dealing with traditions, habits and legal order of community, which all require that everyone must do it. Here lies

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<sup>18</sup> Franz Magnis-Suseno, *Etika Dasar. Masalah-masalah Pokok Filsafat Moral* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1987), p. 56-57.

<sup>19</sup> STA, *Perkembangan Sejarah Kebudayaan Indonesia Dilihat dari Jurusan Nilai-nilai* (Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 195), p. 11.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

the dialectics.<sup>21</sup> How the dialectical challenge is successfully answered, on one hand, depends on how it integrates intrinsic values and, on the other hand, also depends on the values that determine the objective form of society and its culture.

***Where is the cultural value?***

In the classification of values, cultural values are also not included. Why is it? Because STA follows Spranger's theory which says that culture embraces six values. According to Spranger, the six values are culture. In culture, humans meet with a variety of life phenomena that have been processed and arranged according to certain procedures. Humans are natural beings who not only follow natural tendencies, but also want to deal with nature by distinguishing themselves from nature. They do not want to live scattered and wander away in a fierce forest, but they build houses. That is typical of humans, which we do not encounter in the animal world. Animals have no culture. In them there is no process of development of quality of life because everything runs mechanically-biologically. Animals live in a predetermined nature and they must obey the provisions of that nature.<sup>22</sup>

Culture is a field where people can be active by using their mind/intellect to improve their quality of life. Culture is not only about clothes, but also lives that model every attitude and action based on the values that are lived. Culture is a reflection of the development of the realization of human resources. That is why it is said that humans do not have culture but humans are culture. So, culture is not clothing worn that is easily removed but it is a way of manifesting its distinctive human nature that is distinguished from animals.

**C. Modernization of Culture and Religion**  
***Rationality and Modernity***

As said above, there is a relationship between the theory of six value groups with the modernization of culture and religion. The relationship lies in the position of theoretical value that outperforms all other values because the theoretical value concerns science that impacts all dimensions of human life. Modernity is the fruit of

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<sup>21</sup> Franz Magnis-Suseno, Pijar-pijar Filsafat, op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>22</sup>According to STA the core of philosophy lies in the dialectic between autonomous and heteronomous ethics (Hidup dalam Semua Kebudayaan, op. cit., p. 187).

the actualization of theoretical values that develop science and technology. And STA wants Indonesia, which has the largest Muslim population, to become a modern nation.

The “modern” term is from the modern *Latin* word which means “now” or “new”. On the basis of this understanding we can say that humans always live in modern times as far as the present becomes their consciousness. Therefore modernity refers not only to a period of time but also to a new form of consciousness, that is, humans are aware and believe in the ability of their mind and culture. With their mind, they created science and technology.

Modern humans are people who realize themselves as themselves, not only as part of tribal or religious members. Such awareness is called the discovery of subjectivity. In modern times, with modern thinking, humans in looking at nature, others, and God, refer to themselves. Humans in their subjectivity, with their awareness, in their uniqueness, become a reference point for understanding reality. According to Hegel, humans are not substance but subjects. The substance is referred to as material density, such as a rock or a tree. Whereas the subject is the center of consciousness where person is not only aware of something that is outside himself/herself but also he/she is aware that he/she is aware.<sup>23</sup>

The discovery of subjectivity has an impact on many areas of human life. In the field of religion, religious subjectivity was born.<sup>24</sup> It was developed by Martin Luther who later produced religious reform movement in Europe. In the moral field, moral subjectivity, awakened by Immanuel Kant, was born. Kant distinguishes between morality and legality. Moral attitude is no longer measured as good as the morality of outward actions with moral norms, but it depends on the motivation that humans themselves realize as conscience.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> STA, *Essay of A New Anthropology*, op.cit., p. 41.

<sup>24</sup> F. Budi Hardiman, *Filsafat Modern Dari Machiavelli sampai Nietzsche* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2004), p. 3-5.

<sup>25</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, in *Kant's Werke* (Akademie-Tausgabe, unveränderter Abdruck, Band IV, Berlin: Walter der Gruyter & Co., 1968), p. 385-463.

According to STA, all of this happened because of essentially one cause, namely, human mind.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, STA greatly admired the power of mind, although he knew the consequences of this primacy of mind were very broad and large in Europe. Thus, for example, rationalism demands that a statement can only be accepted as true and a claim can only be considered valid, if it can be rationally justified. That means that tradition, traditional power of authority, and dogma, is no longer taken for granted. This critical attitude results in several fields, for example, social politics, religion, and science. In political field, rationalism that demands rationally power legitimacy gives birth to democracy; in the field of religion, rationalism demands that dogmas and traditions must be reexamined; and in the field of science, rationalism does not take for granted the tradition of science inherited from Aristotle, but science must always renew itself.<sup>27</sup>

### ***Culture and Modernity***

By learning from Western rationalism, STA teaches that human free will enables humans to act according to what they understand as their responsibilities. And that responsibility is closely related to what is valuable to humans. Humans are free creatures that are able to take responsibility because they are oriented to what is valuable to them. This includes, "the act of accepting one's own mistakes without conditions, and refusing all forms of excuses; thus, the individual is transformed into an act of taking full responsibility for his actions," writes STA.<sup>28</sup>

The ability to think independently equipped with rational responsibilities, according to STA, is a major reason for culture to change and develop into advanced condition. For him one of the main characteristics of culture is dynamic, not static. Therefore STA rejects Oswald Spengler's view that culture is a kind of organism that

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<sup>26</sup> STA, *Perkembangan Sejarah Kebudayaan*, op. cit., p. 6: "Mind is the basis of all human cultural life. This is why human life is different from animal life and natural life is different from cultural life. So, the so-called culture is none but the incarnation of human mind."

<sup>27</sup> F. Budi Hardiman, *Filsafat Modern*, op. cit., p. 25-30.

<sup>28</sup> STA, *Essay of A New Anthropology*, op. cit., p. 41.

has a period of growth and withering and finally it comes to a period of death.<sup>29</sup> It is also the case for culture, Spengler says, namely, it has its own spring, a period of maturity, and a period of withering. This view is rejected by STA. Culture, for STA, expresses human desire to manifest the highest forms of life. And if culture is a manifestation of life and human ideals, culture will never die. As long as humans live, culture is also alive; it will never die.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, STA is not interested in discussions about the life and death of a culture. He would rather have a discussion on two forms of culture that emerged in our modern era, namely, expressive culture and progressive culture. The so-called expressive culture is the culture of traditional society where the dominant values are the values of religion, art, and solidarity. STA refers to cultures arranged according to religious, aesthetic and togetherness values as expressive culture. While the so-called progressive culture is a culture where the dominant values are science and economics and that is modernity. The characteristic of modernity is that progress is pursued consciously and that is science. Distinctive for modernity is the primacy of science and economics on the value of religion and art and that is what makes the culture dynamic and not static like pre-modern society.

In Europe, modernity began with the Renaissance,<sup>31</sup> the era of human liberation from the confines of religion in the Middle Ages. “*Renaissance*” (French) literally means “rebirth”.<sup>32</sup> What is reborn here is ancient Greek and Roman culture. However, the Renaissance was not a reproduction of antique culture but it was a new interpretation of ancient Greek and Roman culture as the culmination of Western culture. In this case, they do not only reminisce about the past but also utilize elements of classical culture for the benefit of the future of Western culture. So the

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<sup>29</sup>Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umrisse einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte* (Munchen: C. H. Beck, 1929, p. 19).

<sup>30</sup> Franz Magnis-Suseno, *Pijar-pijar Filsafat*, op. cit., p. 137.

<sup>31</sup> Hartono Margono, “Human Reality and Perfection in the Philosophical View of Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana”, in *MIQOT*, Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman, Vol. 38, No. 1, 2004, p. 63-81.

<sup>32</sup> Alexander Ulfig, *Lexikon der Philosophischen Begriffe* (Wiesbaden: Fourier, 1997), p. 356-357.

renaissance effort is progressive and that is what opens up their view of humanity in a new way which eventually gives birth to humanism. Then humanism movement encouraged the birth of secularization in Europe.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Religion and Modernity***

STA believes that the values of modernity are theoretical and practical (economic) values. Yet he still hopes that religious values do not die; they must develop so much that they appear in a new form, which is an increasingly universal religion. Writes STA: "We must complement the advancements in science, technology and economics with a more universal religious feeling".<sup>34</sup> In this connection he views religious tolerance in the modern state as progress. STA argues, however, that tolerance is not enough.<sup>35</sup> The religious pattern itself still needs to experience a major developmental leap, which needs to be more universally accepted. The universal religion, he says, is a religion that is no longer exclusive and strongly dogmatic, but it has to be a religion in which all humanity and all civilizations are united.<sup>36</sup>

The challenge of the development of the Indonesian nation to become a modern nation is precisely related to religious values, where Indonesians are unable to accept and process modern values from the West and then seek their basis/root in their religion. STA agrees that religion is a fundamental value in modern human life, but religion itself needs to modernize itself. That is why he said that what Indonesia needs is more universal religions which are non-exclusive and dogmatic rones.<sup>37</sup>

Thus it is clear that, for STA, in the framework of modern culture with the primacy of values of science and economics, expressive culture with the primacy of

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 181-182.

<sup>34</sup> STA, *Essay of A New Anthropology*, op. cit., p. 234.

<sup>35</sup>Norbertus Jegalus, *Membangun Kerukunan Beragama dari Ko-eksistensi sampai Pro-eksistensi* (Maumere: Ledalero, 2011), p. 142-150.

<sup>36</sup>Norbertus Jegalus, *Das Verhältnis von Politik, Religion und Zivilreligion untersucht am Beispiel der Pancasila* (Munche: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2008), p. 253-256.

<sup>37</sup> STA, *Philosophy for the Future of Humanity*, op. cit., p. 10.

religious values and togetherness may not be erased. STA emphasizes that every person and every group of people cannot help but acknowledge all six value groups that are indeed universal. What differs from culture to culture is only the configuration of those values, namely, which groups of values are dominant and which are not dominant. According to STA, Indonesian people have a unique and great value, and that is the strength of Indonesian culture in the future, namely aesthetic values.<sup>38</sup> Art value is Indonesia's contribution to universal human culture.<sup>39</sup>

### ***Islam, Rationality, and Modernity***

STA knows and believes that Islam is a sacred religion in which there are teachings revealed by Allah SWA and, therefore, the truth is absolute and cannot be changed; and STA also knows that there are teachings that are produced by human thoughts and /or *ijtihad*<sup>40</sup> and are, therefore, relative and can change in line with human development across time and generations.

STA knows that the Koran is in Arabic, but not all Muslims know Arabic. So, in order that the contents of the Koran can be read and understood correctly, then translation of the Koran is needed. For STA, it is a form of human *ijtihad* for the benefit of the believers themselves. The translation effort and also the effort to explain the contents of Koran belongs to the category of human thoughts and to the extent that it can be right or wrong.<sup>41</sup> Here alone is room for a critical review of religion for the progress and good of the religious community itself. And as far as it concerns culture, STA indeed talks about a dynamic religion.

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<sup>38</sup> STA, *Essay of A New Anthropology*, op. cit., p. 80: "Everything, religion, and philosophy, economics and politics, is intertwined with art - we might even say, is dominated by art".

<sup>39</sup> STA, *Indonesia: Social and Cultural Revolution* (Kuala Lumpur/Singapore/London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 78-104; See also his, *Philosophy for the Future of Humanity*, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, *Studi Agama. Normativitas atau Historisitas?* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2004), p. 320-323.

<sup>41</sup> Abdul Kohar, "Islamic Theology and Rationalism: Analisis Pemikiran Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana", in *Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, Volume 31, Nomor 1, Januari 2020, p. 403-433.



But cultural and religious dynamics are only possible because of the role of the mind. Here STA also knows that Islam is a rational religion. It is this rationality that forms a dynamic Islamic culture and dynamism is what gives rise to the advancement of Islamic culture and religion. STA writes: "What is very interesting in the development of Islamic culture from the seventh to the thirteenth century is how the culture and religion originating from the Arabs in the poor and remote desert with the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad and the Caliph seemed to know very well that the first that must be taken from adult cultures is science."<sup>42</sup>

Therefore, for STA, the agenda of rationality in Islam is not something that is added by followers of Islam later, but it has been a kind of awareness since the beginning of the birth of Islam. STA provides this evidence: "In the history of the development of Islam and its culture in the five-six centuries it was very apparent the enthusiasm of the authorities and experts gathering various kinds of knowledge and sciences from a faraway land and from a long time ago, from chemistry to medical science, from mathematics to astronomy, from the science of farming to the science of making various objects such as paper".<sup>43</sup>

He further proved rationality as a central element of the development of Islamic culture by showing trips to faraway lands to study sciences and other cultures and they re-translate them into Arabic. "Muslims themselves travel to distant countries, writing their experiences and knowledge on cultures and tourism places that they knew to convey to Muslims. Many people were sent to all parts of the world that were famous at that time to translate into Arabic what they knew about those famous places. Colleges and institutions of knowledge and education in religious centers and Islamic kingdoms such as Baghdad, Kordova, Cairo and others became

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<sup>42</sup>In his lecture entitled "The Contribution of Islam to Malay Culture" at the Malaysian National University in 1976, STA raised some evidence of the progress of science from the 7<sup>th</sup> century to the 13<sup>th</sup> century in Islam (Sukandi Abdul Karim Mashad (ed.): *Sang Pujangga: 70 Tahun Polemik Kebudayaan Menyongsong Satu Abad S. Takdir Alisjahbana* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2006), p. 146.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

the largest, most complete and most advanced centers of thoughts and investigation and knowledge,” said STA.<sup>44</sup>

Starting from the fact of the progress of Islam, STA believes that "the time has come to think about the essence of life, the way of thinking and the effort that was born by the Islamic religion to enable miracles of such magnitude to apply".<sup>45</sup> According to STA, the essence is "a matter of psychology, spirit, the nature of mind"<sup>46</sup> that enables the culture to be dynamic towards its progress. However, according to STA, we must rely on the main source of all this, that is, the Scriptures. He said: "...we must explore the source of Islamic culture itself, namely, the Qur'an which determines the nature, namely the new Islamic human nature".<sup>47</sup>

STA argues based on the historical facts of the development of Islamic culture from 7 to 13<sup>th</sup> century and it comes from his faith and belief in the Qur'an. STA knows and believes that in the Qur'an it is stated that God created humans and put His own spirit into them, giving them mind and language. Mind and language as human traits and as a staple of cultural life distinguishes it from infrahuman animals. With ratio/intellect and language that are the main essences of human mind that gives rise to mind power, culture is created.

STA explored the history of cultural development that relied on the mind and found that the initial progress of Islamic thought influenced progress in Europe. As a philosopher, STA knew that the success of the European renaissance had its source of thought in Greek philosophy, like Aristotle. Whereas Aristotle's ideas were first expressed in Islamic culture and Europe knew Aristotle because of the Arabic Islamic Aristotle which was translated into European languages.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, rationality is not something foreign to Islam.

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>45</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>46</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Nurcholis Madjid (ed.), *Khazanah Intelektual Islam* (Jakarta: Obor dan Bulan Bintang, 1984), p. 23-26.

#### **D. Conclusions**

Modernity is not without problems. STA is aware of the ambivalence of the value of modernity and it calls the paradox and tragedy of modernity. Modernity does not only bring progress or improve the quality of human life but also undermines human life itself.

We can mention some of the realities of the tragedy of modernity: Modernity in developing science finally gave birth to scientism and positivism which only accepted truths that could be proven empirically-positive, so meta-empiric evidence like God and His relationship with humans were outside the truth. Modernity developed technology that led to humans becoming technology slaves. Modernity glorifies the economy which leads to social-moral disasters in the form of materialism and consumerism. Modernity breeds both secularization and secularism, where secularism opposes the influence of religion on people's lives. Modernity pursues economic progress which leads to the birth of capitalism that is increasingly selfless. Goods are created no longer to answer real human needs but rather to be needed. Rational modern humans were ultimately dictated by irrational capital. This is the paradox of modernity.

STA is fully aware of all this, but he does not withdraw his argument about mind primacy and maximizing the role of mind. He remains convinced that the rationality project really brings huge benefits for improving the quality of human life in all dimensions. STA's optimism rests only on the principle of philosophical values, namely, value integration. Modern humans must integrate the six values in personal, social and cultural life. So advanced and modern humans are integral human beings. For STA, in line with Spranger framework, the six values do not have the same weight because one is superior to the other. STA states that it is the theoretical value which is supposed to be the most dominant because he wants Indonesia to advance in science, technology and economics. Once again, STA's answer to the paradox and tragedy of modernity is both integration and configuration of values.

However, is the guarantee of integration and configuration of values sufficient to guide modernity so that it does not deviate from its goal of improving the quality

of human life in all its dimensions? If we depart from the facts of some of the vices mentioned above, we certainly answer that STA's guarantees are inadequate or fragile. I agree, we agree, the project of modernity in Indonesia for the sake of progress in all dimensions of human life, especially religion and culture, is crucial, but it is not enough to simply rely on the integration of values. It has to be based also on critical rationality. Since rationality of the Enlightenment has been reduced by modern capitalism to mere instrumental rationality, we need critical rationality here. If the mind is used only as a tool to develop the economy, in this case by enlarging capital (capitalism), then we cannot help but accept the consequences of the paradox of modernity: the proud rationality of the Enlightenment ultimately leads to irrationality.

In this case, it might be better for us to follow Spranger's value theory which breaks down human theory into three variants: empirical theory, rational theory, and critical theory. So, we use all these three types of rationality without favoring one of them. That means, we, by following J. Habermas<sup>49</sup>, develop knowledge in three groups: first, the empirical-analytical sciences group, in Spranger's classification, empirical theory; second, the historical-hermeneutical group, in Spranger's classification, rational theory; and third, the critical-reflexive sciences group, in Spranger's classification, critical theory.

We use the empirical-analytical science group to organize our experiences in the context of the need for mastery of nature, so it is a technical use for processing or managing our nature. As for the historical-scientific-hermeneutical group, we use it to satisfy the desire to understand humans. The purpose of these sciences is the capture of meaning for the expansion of inter-subjective understanding between humans towards their joint actions. And finally it is about critical-reflexive sciences group. The importance of this science is to criticize the use of the mind so that it is

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<sup>49</sup>Jurgen Habermas, *Erkenntnis und Interesse* (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkam, 1968). This thinking can now be read in Indonesian in Volume I of Habermas' book entitled *Ilmu Teknologi sebagai Ideologi* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1990) whose English title is *Science and Technology as an Ideology* which is his final essay.

not counterproductive. With this critical rationality we can free ourselves from unconscious powers.\*

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*Nobertus Jegalus*: A lecturer in the Philosophy Faculty, Widya Mandira University, Kupang, Indonesia; completed his Bachelor of Philosophy at Ledalero School of Philosophy, Indonesia; *Magister Artium* at the Jesuit School of Philosophy, Munich, Germany; *Dr. phil.* (Doctor philosophiae) at the University of Munchen, Germany; master and doctoral study research concerning the "Relations of Religion and the State".