
Nurcholis Majid's Study of Thought for the Civilization of Science: A Critical Reflection on the Basic Values of Struggle in the Context of Islam and Indonesianness

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ABSTRACT. Nurcholish Madjid (Cak Nur) is a reformist figure who laid the foundation for integration between Islam, modernity, and Indonesianness. However, his thinking is often only studied in the political dimension, while his epistemological dimension in building a scientific civilization is often overlooked. Objective: This research aims to conduct a critical reflection on Cak Nur's thoughts, especially regarding the Basic Values of Struggle (NDP), as the basis for the development of scientific civilization in Indonesia. Methods: This qualitative research uses an intellectual history approach and content *analysis* of Nurcholish Madjid's primary works. Results: The findings show that Cak Nur builds a civilization of knowledge through three pillars: monotheism as intellectual liberation, secularization as the process of objectification of knowledge, and civil society as an open academic ecosystem. Tawheed in the NDP transforms reason from dogmatism to critical-objective reason, while secularization gives autonomy to rationality without neglecting transcendental ethics. Conclusion: Cak Nur's thinking remains relevant in the current era of digital disruption because it offers a substantial framework for filtering information and building inclusive digital communication ethics.

Keywords: Nurcholish Madjid, NDP, Civilization of Knowledge, Tauhid, Secularization.

INTRODUCTION

Nurcholish Madjid (Cak Nur) is a key figure in the renewal of Islamic thought in Indonesia who consistently seeks the integration of Islamic values, modernity, and Indonesianness. The idea of "Islam Yes, the Islamic Party No" that he initiated was not just a political slogan, but a radical attempt to shift the focus of the ummah from symbolic formalism to the substance of Islamic ethical values in the public sphere (Barton, 2001). However, in its development, Cak Nur's thought is often only understood in the scope of practical politics and sociology of religion, so that its epistemological dimension in building the foundations of scientific civilization often goes unnoticed.

The main focus of this discourse is how the Basic Values of Struggle (NDP) formulated by Cak Nur can be transformed into a framework for the development of scientific civilization in Indonesia. The current challenges point to the tension between the technical progress of science and the emptiness of spirituality and ethics, which often leads to the disorientation of humanity (Madjid, 1992). The particular problem lies in how the principles of monotheism and secularization in the sense of proportionality promoted by Cak Nur can be the driving force of objective critical reasoning but still rooted in transcendental morality in the midst of a pluralistic society.

So far, previous research on Nurcholish Madjid has tended to focus on themes of pluralism, secularization in the political context of the state, or his intellectual biography (Effendy, 2010). Some studies on NDP are also more confined to organizational textual analysis within the internal scope of students, without linking it broadly to the concept of building a competitive scientific civilization in the global era. There is a literary vacuum (*Research gap*) which specifically dissects how Cak Nur's thought provides a theoretical basis for the development of humanist science in the midst of the current of information disruption and extremism.

The novelty of this research lies in the effort to reconstruct Cak Nur's idea of secularization and monotheism not as a mere theological issue, but as a scientific methodology to separate dogmatism from critical reason in the development of science. In contrast to previous research that views secularization as an issue of separation of religion and state, this article positions secularization as the process of "objectification" of science so that it can be managed rationally without losing its spirituality. This approach offers a new synthesis in viewing the relationship between religion and science in the context of a unique Indonesian.

The urgency of this research is very urgent considering that Indonesia is currently facing a double challenge: stagnation of scientific competitiveness at the global level and increasing polarization of identities that hinder inclusive dialogue. Reflecting back on Cak Nur's thinking is crucial to find a middle way (moderate) that is able to integrate intellectual progress with socio-religious stability. Without an ethically solid foundation of scientific civilization, society will easily be trapped in blind pragmatism or conservatism that rejects reform, thus hindering the progress of the nation in the future. Based on this background, this research aims to conduct a critical reflection on Nurcholish Madjid's intellectual heritage in the framework of the development of scientific civilization. In particular, this paper will analyze the relevance of the NDP and the concept of proportional secularization as an instrument for building an open society that is both scientific and religious. The results of this analysis are expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of an integrative education and science model, which is able to answer the challenges of modernity without ignoring the cultural roots and spiritual values of Indonesia.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method based on literature studies (*Library Research*) with an intellectual history approach (*Intellectual History*). This approach is used to trace the genealogy of Nurcholish Madjid's ideas in the socio-political context of Indonesia and how the idea transformed into a vision of civilization (Skinner, 2002). As an "analysis knife", this study applies content analysis (*Content Analysis*) qualitatively to dissect the latent meaning in the key texts of Cak Nur, which are then validated through hermeneutic interpretation techniques. Hermeneutics is used to capture the author's intent (*authorial intent*) behind the NDP text and its relationship to the challenges of modernity today (Gadamer, 2004).

The data in this study is systematically sorted and categorized into three main domains to facilitate the analysis process. *First*, the Theological-Epistemological domain, which focuses on the text of the Basic Values of Struggle (NDP) to dissect the concept of Tawheed as intellectual liberation. *Second*, the Socio-Political domain, which includes works on secularization, Indonesianness, and "Islam Yes, Partijai Islam No" as an effort to objectify religion in the public sphere. *Third*, the Sociocultural domain, which dissects the idea of pluralism and an open *society* as a prerequisite for the growth of scientific civilization.

The data analysis process is carried out through four systematic stages. The first stage is *Data Collection*, which is to collect primary works such as *Islam, Doctrine, and Civilization* and *Islam, Modernity, and Indonesianness*. The second stage is *Data Reduction*, that is, sorting out ideas that are specifically related to the development of science. The third stage is *Data Display*, where Cak Nur's thoughts are mapped based on the categorization of predetermined themes. The final stage is the drawing of conclusions through critical evaluation, which is to test the consistency and relevance of these thoughts to the current discourse of modern science in Indonesia (Miles et al., 2014).

RESULTS

This section presents the data findings from Nurcholish Madjid's primary work which are classified into three main pillars as the foundation of the civilization of science:

1. The Concept of Tawheed in NDP as the Basis of Science Epistemology

In the manuscript *Basic Values of Struggle (NDP)*, Nurcholish Madjid radically reinterprets the concept of monotheism, transforming it from a mere theological dogma to a principle of active intellectual liberation. The author found that the first function of monotheism in the NDP is as an instrument of desacralizing nature. Cak Nur argues that by disobeying God, the universe loses its sacred nature and is positioned as an object subject to the definite laws of nature or *Sunnatullah* (Madjid, 1987). This view is crucial for the civilization of science because it allows nature to be studied rationally, objectively, and experimentally without mythological obstacles. Thus, the mastery of science becomes a necessity because nature is no longer feared, but is understood as a manifestation of the orderliness of God's creation that is open to human reason.

Furthermore, the principle of monotheism functions as a motor in freeing human reason from all forms of absolute authority other than God. Cak Nur emphasized that the recognition of the oneness of Allah automatically aborts "idolatry" against worldly entities, including the authority of the intellectual traditions of the past that are often considered final and inviolable. This liberation provides space for the growth of critical reason and dynamic *ijtihad*, where scientific truth must not be shackled by historical dogmas that are no longer relevant to the challenges of the times. This anti-establishment spirit towards other than God's truth is the main condition for the creation of a progressive scientific society.

Finally, the integration between monotheism and reason leads to the concept of the caliph's mandate (*khalifah fil ardh*). Within the framework of the NDP, human beings are not only seen as passive servants, but as God's representatives who are given the mandate to manage and prosper the earth. The author notes that in Cak Nur's perspective, the responsibility as a caliph is impossible to carry out without a qualified mastery of science and technology. Thus, the mastery of science is positioned as a sacred instrument for humans to carry out the tasks of humanity and social justice. Tawheed in the NDP ultimately becomes a moral foundation that ensures that the progress of science remains on the path of devotion to God and the benefit of fellow creatures.

2. Secularization as a Process of Objectification of Science

The conceptual distinction between "Secularism" and "Secularization" is a crucial pillar in the building of Nurcholish Madjid's thought to trigger the birth of a civilization of knowledge. Based on the analysis of the primary text, Cak Nur positions secularization not as an effort to erode religious values, but as a process of objectification. This means putting worldly things such as science, technology, and the political order in a rational and functional position, without giving pseudo-sanctity attributes to things that are profane (Madjid, 1992). By releasing the burden of sacredness from worldly affairs, Muslims are given the freedom to conduct scientific experimentation and innovation openly.

In the context of scientific development, the secularization of Cak Nur's version serves to provide full autonomy to rationality. When social and technological problems are no longer shackled by rigid dogmatism, critical reason can work optimally to find solutions to human problems. As explained in the *Al-Jami'ah Journal*, the idea of secularization of Cak Nur is actually an attempt to "globalize" religious understanding so that Islam can speak in the universal language of science) (Latif, 2005). This objectification allows science to develop independently according to universal scientific principles, but still have an ethical anchor in divine values.

Furthermore, this spirit of secularization is a prerequisite for the formation of a modern society based on intellectual competence. Without the courage to "globalize" the technical affairs of life, the ummah will continue to be trapped in the romanticism of the past that hinders scientific *ijtihad*. Research in the Journal of *Studia Islamika* emphasizes that Cak Nur's idea requires the ummah to dare to face the reality of the times with an objective and measurable set of science, distinguishing between the absolute areas of revelation and the relative areas of human thought (Kersten, 2009). Therefore, the civilization of science aspired to in the NDP can only be realized if secularization is understood as an attempt to free reason from the mental constraints that often equate human tradition with divine doctrine.

3. Integration of Islam and Indonesia

The results of the reading of Cak Nur's thoughts on "Indonesianness" found a synthesis between the universal values of Islam and the locality of Indonesia. Here is a summary table of the constructs of the thoughts:

Table 1. The results of the reading of Cak Nur's thoughts on "Indonesianness" found a synthesis between the universal values of Islam and the locality of Indonesia

Components	Findings in Cak Nur's Thought	Implications for the Civilization of Knowledge
São Paulo	A Conversation (Original Mix)	The foundation of stability for scientific research.
Pribumization	Islam rooted in local culture	The birth of social sciences that are sensitive to the Indonesian context.
Civil Society	Egalitarian and democratic order	An open climate of academic freedom.

DISCUSSION

As a dynamic thinker, Cak Nur's ideas are constantly interacting with various criticisms from other intellectual factions. From the conservative-reformist spectrum, Adian Husaini gave a sharp criticism that Cak Nur-style secularization could trigger religious desacralization that led to religious relativism (Husaini, 2005). These concerns focus on the potential birth of a generation that favors secular rationalism over the authority of revelation (Miftakhuddin, 2019). On the other hand, political criticism emerged from the liberal spectrum such as Marcus Mietzner, who highlighted Cak Nur's accommodating attitude towards the New Order regime as a pragmatic step for the continuity of the reform agenda at the structural level (Mietzner, 2009).

Despite being squeezed by various criticisms, Cak Nur's frame of mind proved to have solid endurance. This is because he does not offer a practical political ideology, but rather a framework of thought (*Framework*) that is substantial and flexible. As emphasized in the study *Al-Tahrir Journal*, Cak Nur's main strength lies in the ethos of "Substantive Islam" which prioritizes the values of justice and humanity over legalistic formalism (Murtadlo, 2015). This flexibility allows the idea of integrating Islam, Indonesianness, and modernity to remain relevant as the foundation for the development of a scientific civilization that is open to dialectics and continuous improvement.

Entering the era of digital disruption and "infodemic", the urgency of Cak Nur's thinking about objectification and critical reason found new momentum. The concept of monotheism embedded in the NDP serves as the foundation of anti-dogmatism that encourages individuals to verify information critically amid a flood of disinformation. This critical reasoning is not just skepticism, but a form of intellectual honesty in seeking the truth. In addition to being a cognitive basis, spirituality in the NDP acts as an ethical filter that ensures that technological progress does not lead to the degradation of human dignity. Cak Nur's idea of inclusive pluralism provides the foundation for a multicultural digital communication ethics, which is indispensable to reduce sharp polarization in virtual public spaces (Murtadlo, 2015). Thus, Cak Nur's

intellectual heritage offers a comprehensive solution for today's information society: a scientifically advanced, socially stable, and morally sound scientific civilization.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of Nurcholish Madjid's thoughts, it can be concluded that the development of scientific civilization in Indonesia requires an integrative theological and philosophical foundation. The Basic Values of Struggle (NDP) is not just an organizational document, but an epistemological framework in which Tawheed acts as a motor for the liberation of reason from rigid dogmatism. Through the process of secularization as objectification, Cak Nur succeeded in distinguishing the realm of absolute revelation from the realm of rational human interpretation, thus allowing science to develop independently and competitively without losing its spiritual anchor.

This research also shows that the superiority of Cak Nur's thinking lies in his ability to synergize Islamic identity with Indonesianness. By placing Pancasila as a common foundation (*kalimatun sawa'*), social stability is created which is a prerequisite for an open and inclusive academic climate. Despite facing criticism from both conservative and liberal factions, the ethos of "Substantive Islam" he offers has proven to be highly durable due to its flexible and humanitarian-oriented nature. In the current era of digital disruption, Cak Nur's thinking offers strong relevance through critical reasoning and ethical filters. The principle of monotheism in the NDP is transformed into a spirit of verification (*tabayyun*) amid a flood of disinformation, while its spirit of pluralism provides the foundation for a harmonious digital communication ethics. Finally, Cak Nur's intellectual heritage invites us to continue to build a scientific civilization that is not only technically superior, but also morally and ethically solid for the progress of the nation.

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