

REFORMULATION OF CALVINIST ETHICS FROM A STUDY TURATS PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: Western culture that is full of discipline, hard work, and unyielding according to Max Weber is the implication of the application of Calvinism ethics resulting from Protestant teachings. This phenomenon does not seem to have received serious application and attention from Muslims even though Islam itself is a religion that is full of teachings of hard work and perseverance. In the Islamic world, there is what is called Islamic Calvinism. Indeed, further, careful and scientific efforts are needed so that there is no misperception about the Calvinism desired by Islam and the Calvinism originating from Protestantism. This is what will be discussed in this article, through the literature study method, researchers will examine how far the ethics of Islamic Calvinism are understood as one of the sources of community progress through the search for classical books (*turats*).

Keywords: Calvinism, Individualism, *Turats*.

Introduction

Religiosity has been understood by some, as an entity in pursuit of rewards and the search for the key to heaven but ironically ignores life and humanity. Meanwhile, among secular nations a growth syndrome is occurring, where the values of life and human existence,

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as well as humanity, become the main compass in the life of society, nation, and state. According to Fromm, within humans, there are two psychological tendencies: a non-productive orientation and a productive orientation. He refers to the first tendency as necrophilia, which involves the presence of characteristics in humans characterized by a love for death, non-productivity, and decay (hereby referred to as "decay syndrome"). On the other hand, the second tendency (referred to as "growth syndrome") operates oppositely: the presence of characteristics involving a love for life, productivity, and growth toward everything that exists on earth.¹

So, how do the Turats view the religious-oriented work ethic referred to as Calvinism? The following article will examine how the Turats interpret the significance of Calvinism as well as Bryan S Turner's critique of Calvinism. More than just a sociologist from an orientalist Western country, Turner should be used as a role model for intellectuals who never hesitate to criticize their own culture and tell it as it is.

Previous Research

From tracking down the reference sources that the author researched, there are approximately four authoritative research sources that can be a reference for research on Calvinism.

First, Max Weber in his magnum opus, *The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism*² states that hard work in European society is determined by the understanding of the Protestant religion represented by the Calvinist group. There are three core teachings of Calvinism which are part of Protestant Christianity which will later be discussed whether there are also such teachings in Islam.

Second, Masdar Hilmy and Hamish Syafaq's research entitled *In Search for Muslim Ethics of Calvinism: Improving the Quality of Public Life Through the Incorporation of Religious Narratives into the State Policies in Indonesia*.³ In the description of this article, Hilmy justifies and considers that overall the idea of Calvinism is an

¹ Masdar Hilmy and Hamish Syafaq, "In Search for Muslim Ethics of Calvinism: Improving the Quality of Public Life through the Incorporation of Religious Narratives into the State Policies in Indonesia," *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 18, no. 2 (March 1, 2024): 49–74, <https://doi.org/10.15642/islamica.2024.18.2.49-74>.

² Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism: And Other Writings* (Penguin, 2002).

³ Hilmy and Syafaq, "In Search for Muslim Ethics of Calvinism," 69.

entity that should exist and should be applied in the Islamic community. However, there has been no sharp criticism of the content of Calvinism itself. This will be elaborated on later in this research.

Third, Sukidi wrote a research entitled *Max Weber's Remarks on Islam: The Protestant Ethic among Muslim Puritans*.⁴ Sukidi criticized Max Weber for saying that Islam does not have the opportunity and potential to have a high work ethic like the Protestants. This is understandable because, according to Sukidi, Weber died when he had not yet completed comprehensive research on Islam. In Islam, there are seeds of Calvinism that exist in the Muhammadiyah organization.

Fourth, Sumanto al-Qurtuby in his writing *Calling for "Islamic Protestantism" in Indonesia and Beyond Towards Democratic and Pluralistic Islam*,⁵ outlines that Islamic Protestantism is the foundation for creating a democratic and pluralistic Islam. The tendency of this article is about religious life that can "understand" other religions to create interfaith harmony, without discussing the comparison of the work ethic between Islam today and Protestant Christianity.

Discussion

In his analysis of Protestantism, Weber has paid attention to one of the Calvinist teachings that has a strong influence on its followers, namely the teaching of predestination. In his teaching on predestination, Calvin states that God accepts some people so that they can have hope about life, but also gives punishment to some other humans to receive destruction.

For Calvin, it was destiny, a decision from God. The second is calling. This is still very much related to the principle of predestination. After Weber formulated the spirit of capitalism as an ideal type, he then interpreted the Calvinist teaching known as calling. Protestantism, as Weber puts it, teaches that the only way of human life that will be accepted by God is not by transcending worldly

⁴ Sukidi, "Max Weber's Remarks on Islam: The Protestant Ethic among Muslim Puritans," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 17, no. 2 (April 2006): 195–205, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410600604484>.

⁵ Sumanto al Qurtuby, "Calling for 'Islamic Protestantism' in Indonesia and Beyond Towards Democratic and Pluralistic Islam," *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 1, 2 (June 2008).

morality by abstaining from physical pleasures in a monastery, but by carrying out the obligations imposed on each individual, according to his or her position in the world.

The third is rationalism. This relates to the work pattern of capitalism, which demands discipline and strict and systematic organization. In his observation, Weber said that why the rational business system (capitalism) developed in the West and failed to develop in the world, was due to religious factors. This principle of rationalism is related to the above principles proposed by Luther and Calvin.⁶ Max Weber concluded that Calvinists work hard, save money, and live economically.⁷

Critique of Calvinism: Individualism as a Bourgeois Ideology

Although Weber seems so amazing in describing how important Calvinism is, it does not mean that his opinion does not get criticized and uniquely the criticism of Weber comes from Western scholars, in this case represented by Bryan S Turner. For Turner, there is one ideological issue that cannot be separated from Calvinism that will make its adherents lose social solidarity, namely individualism. Individualism, often defined as the opposite of collectivism, reflects how individuals view themselves—and their immediate family—in comparison to others.⁸ Since ideology is a very complex issue, at least any theory of ideology will deal with three issues.

First, it is important to determine whether or not ideology will be given a place in the economic system. Rigid individualism theory believes that the capitalist system must have the concepts of individual ownership, individual rights, and so on; the capitalist system cannot survive without individualistic laws relating to the infringement of property rights, ownership, and inheritance.⁹

⁶ Mawardi Ahmad and Syahraini Tambak, “Penerapan Metode Diskusi Dalam Meningkatkan Hasil Belajar Murid Pada Pelajaran Fiqh,” *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Agama Dan Ilmu Pengetahuan* 15, no. 1 (April 30, 2018): 84, [https://doi.org/10.25299/jaip.2018.vol15\(1\).1585](https://doi.org/10.25299/jaip.2018.vol15(1).1585).

⁷ Saefur Rochmat, “Abdurrahman Wahid Dan Modernisasi Pendidikan Pesantren,” *ISTORLA Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Ilmu Sejarah* 14, no. 1 (2018): 2.

⁸ P. Samuel, “Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order” (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 1.

⁹ Bryan Turner, *Relasi Agama Dan Teori Sosial Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2012), 307.

Individualism was important as a critical philosophy during the rise of the bourgeoisie, but its relationship with capitalism was temporary, especially with advanced capitalism. Individualism is indeed common in capitalist societies, but it is difficult beyond empirical observation to prove with any greater accuracy that individualism is the primary condition for the capitalist mode of production.

Second, how to relate ideology to class position and determine how ideology produces or reinforces class subordination. Regardless of whether ideology is a prerequisite for the capitalist mode of production or not, theories of individualism can generally be said to be "theories of class reduction"; individualistic beliefs are used to express the economic interests of the wealth-holding class.¹⁰

Third, it is concerned with the devices or mechanisms by which ideological beliefs are transmitted between classes, groups, and generations. In more traditional approaches, the mechanisms that connect individuals to beliefs are still seen in terms of desire, motivation, or interest. In conventional Marxism, it is class interests that can explain people's persistence in holding certain beliefs, but theoretically and methodologically it is difficult to read and discuss ideology solely through class interests. Moreover, the concept of "interest" itself has a distinctive and limited theoretical role than Marxist analyses usually presuppose. It is impossible to examine the role of ideology for social classes without placing class within a social framework, the general character of which is determined by the mode of production.¹¹ Finally, according to Turner, the end of Calvinism is the emergence of a social divide between one class of society and another.

Turats Version of Islamic Calvinism

In this research, the books that will be studied about work ethic are three books, including *Ihya' Ulum ad-Din*, *adab al-Dunya wa ad-Din*, and *Kitab al-Kasb*.

1. *Ihya' Ulum ad-Din* by Imam Al-Ghazali

According to Imam Al-Ghazali, economic activities have become part of the social obligations of the community that have been established by Allah SWT, because of the presence of humans

¹⁰ Turner, 308.

¹¹ Turner, 309.

as social creatures who certainly really need the help and help of others, namely not being able to live alone.

When Islamic rationalism, influenced by Aristotelianism, infiltrated medieval Europe, Durant argued that it threatened the "liquidation of Christianity," and relied on the work of al-Ghazali. Furthermore, since al-Ghazali placed science, philosophy, reason in an inferior position to religion and theology, the Scholastics accepted his views, which characterized much of medieval philosophy.¹² In other words, in Islam, there is already rationalism that conspires through the views of al-Ghazali, but in practice in Indonesia, rationalism is less taught to generate work ethic, especially in the world of pesantren.

2. Al-Mawardi's Adab al-Dunya wa ad-Din

Al-Mawardi explained that humans are endowed with reason to be utilized as well as possible in managing the world. This means that in Islam no fatalism has been echoed in the name of religion, to always remain silent without making efforts towards a more decent life. Reason is a tool given by Allah to humans to understand the universe and its laws. Using the mind well is part of worship because then man can fulfill his duty as caliph on earth.¹³

This view also emphasizes that Islam does not teach to surrender without effort or just depend on fate without trying. On the contrary, Islam teaches us to try our best, because human effort is part of destiny itself. In Islam, destiny does not mean accepting fate without effort, but understanding that the final result is in the hands of God after human effort. Al-Mawardi invites Muslims to be proactive in facing life's challenges and not give up on circumstances. This is in line with the spirit of Islam which encourages progress and continuous self-improvement.¹⁴

3. Kitab al-Kasb by Imam Muhammad bin al-Hasan al-Syaibani

Imam al-Syaibani is a great scholar and economic thinker who is a student of Abu Hanifah and focuses on microeconomics. Al-Syaibani's economic thinking can be seen in Kitab al-Kasb, which

¹² Shaikh Mohammad Ghazanfar and Abdul Azim Islahi, "ECONOMIC THOUGHT OF AL-GHAZALI," n.d., 8.

¹³ Muhammad Habib al-Bashri al-Mawardi, *Adab Ad-Dunya Wa al-Din* (Mesir: Darul Kutub, 1987), 108.

¹⁴ al-Mawardi, *Adab Ad-Dunya Wa al-Din*.

discusses income, guidelines for production and consumption behavior, various forms of business such as trade, agriculture, industry and employment agreements.

Syaibani's economic thinking in the modern context is still very relevant, especially in the concept of al-kasb and al-Ikhtisab¹⁵ which must refer to utility and benefit. The relevance found that the theory of al kasb ash-Syaibani regarding the obligation to work which is a production activity is closely related to the theory of productivity and one of the most important factors is the labor factor, in line with this, to create high productivity, the factor of additional labor is included with the quality of its workforce. It can be concluded that between the thought of ash-Shibani who argues that work is a form of production activities that must be based on several principles such as halal and haram should be considered, the benefit of mankind and also prosperity for the universe. It is closely related to economic productivity that when you want to create high productivity, you must also pay attention to the level of efficiency by paying attention to the capital owned and the existing labor.

From the above understanding of the Turats, we can understand the similarities and differences between Calvinism and Islamic Calvinism through the following table:

Aspects	Calvinism	Islamic Calvinism
The world is not the only goal. The hereafter is the ultimate goal	There is. Protestants refer to this aspect as <i>calling</i> , which is the call to become a chosen human being.	There is. Muslims believe that the world is a field for doing good deeds, the end result of which can be seen in the hereafter.
Halal and haram	There is none. The measure of work is to seek maximum profit.	There is. The measure works according to the applicable <i>fiqh</i> law.
Individualism	There is. Because capitalism requires individualism to make	None. The concept of <i>maqashid shari'ah</i> is a condition for

¹⁵ Setiawan Bin Lahuri, "Analisis Konsep Produksi Menurut Muhammad Hasan As Syaibani Dalam Kitab Al Kasb," *Al Tijarah* 6, no. 3 (December 2020): 175.

	a profit.	achieving social justice.
Destiny	There is. The protestant's form of having a good destiny is that in the world he works hard.	There is. The manifestation of Muslims having a good destiny is to be pious and not just work hard.
Rationalism	Ada. It teaches a life of discipline and competitiveness.	There is. Most likely lost due to the blurring of the wrong concept of <i>ikhlās lillah</i> so that it tends to be fatalism.

From the difference between Calvinism and the Islamic work ethic associated with the term Islamic Calvinism, there is a concept that Muslims should have, namely rationalism.¹⁶ Self-interest, being the point of emphasis here, is an important topic. According to Adam Smith, the emphasis on self-interest does not mean ignoring the interests of society. In his view, by maximizing self-interest, the welfare of society itself will be achieved. Consequently, in economic literature, the concept of rationality is outlined as economic actors engaging in rational action when pursuing activities that align with self-interest, while also ensuring that their choices contribute to measurable outcomes such as profit and loss for collective welfare.¹⁷

Conclusion

The Calvinism that Muslims want is a Calvinism that does not include individualism as an underlying ideological belief. To borrow Turner's phrase, there can be no glory led by the bourgeoisie without regard for social justice. This is in line with the study of turats, which states that the teachings of Islam already contain the notion of a high

¹⁶ Mino Mirshahvalad, “Coming to Grips with Rationality,” in *Crises and Conversions: The Unlikely Avenues of “Italian Shiism,”* ed. Mino Mirshahvalad (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024), 7, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-55877-1_7.

¹⁷ Dede Nurohman, “Konsep Self-Interest Dan Masalah Dalam Rasionalitas Ekonomi Islam,” *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 5, no. 1 (September 1, 2010): 100–115, <https://doi.org/10.15642/islamica.2010.5.1.100-115>.

work ethic and competitiveness like Calvinism. The problem is that the rationalism that is heralded as one of the characteristics of Calvinism seems to be less readable by Muslims. It takes the same understanding among Muslims as the expression of as-Syaibani that humans are the place of kasb to lead a better life, through education and optimal and sustainable utilization of human resources.

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