

THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION IN THOUGHT OF ALI SHARI'ATI

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Abstract: *This paper discusses about the theological thought of Ali Shariati, more precisely pertaining to the concept of liberation theology. Sub discussions in this paper comprise the biography of Ali Shariati, a list of languages to understand Ali Shariati's thought and language expressions, Ali Shariati's world view and ideology, world view Tawhid (theology) that liberates, and the philosophical concept of the creation of man. Ali Shari'ati understands religion not in a ritual dimension only. According to him, religion is the source of awareness, the cornerstone of ethics (morality), responsibility, and free will that is capable to mobilize its followers into a force of liberation from determination of multitheism ideologies that oppress. Tawhid is the foundation of liberation ideologies that negate all forms of discrimination to move towards egalitarianism (equality) of human beings. Tawhid is the spirit of resistance against tyranny and oppression, based on the values of justice. In the view of Ali Syariati, Tawhid is the ephisentrum of life and mode of existence. Tawhid necessitates teocentric world view leading men in motion of existential evolution to become teomorphis human, men the characteristic of divine attributes.*

Keywords: *Ali Sharia, Liberation Theology, World View of Tawhid*

I. Introduction

Many of us find it quite difficult to see the point wherein *tawhid* is associated with liberation. This is probably due to the situation that we have been conditioned to have a level of faith that is limited to *taqlid* (blind acceptance), rites, religious worship, and theological dogma. Our faith (*iman*) is like a robe in a mosque. As a result, Islam with *tawhid* as the foundation of its teachings

becomes less beneficial for humanity, let alone a blessing, as a matter of fact Islam is often utilized as a justification to carry on injustice (which is actually most opposed by Islam).

In practice, according to Hassan Hanafi, a theology that is preserved in a dogmatic manner can never be “the truly living view” that motivates actions in concrete human life. This is because the construction of theological doctrines is not based on pure consciousness and values of human actions. This consequently brings about a split between theoretical faith and practical faith in Islam, which in turn will be the occasion of double moral attitudes or “personality syncretism”. The phenomenon of syncretism is evident, according to Hassan Hanafi, in the existence of religious ideology and secularism (in culture), traditional and modern (in civilization), East and West (in politics), Conservatism and Progressivism (in social life), as well as Capitalism and Socialism (in economics).¹

Seeing the regressive effects of dogmatic theology, which nowadays becomes a mainstream in the enterprise of Islamic theology professed by the majority of Muslims, it becomes primarily necessary to conceive a construction of Islamic theology that is capable of addressing the occurring problems of the Muslims. It necessitates a construction of theology that can set fire to the spirit, be inspiring, and become a world view that liberates Muslims from oppression, backwardness, and foolishness. The reconstruction of Islamic theology is a very urgent issue in the context of improvement of the condition of Muslims in order to achieve a better state. Islamic theology with a more liberating tone is a kind of theology needed to redress the current situation of

¹See Hassan Hanafi, *Min al-Aqidah ila al-Tsawrah*, trans. Asep Usman Ismail, Suadi Putro, and Abdul Rauf, *Dari Akidah ke Revolusi* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2003), p. 45.

Muslims, who fall in underdevelopment and backwardness compared to other religious adherents. In order to construct a frame format of liberation theology, a new interpretation that is rational and scientific is urgently needed, in addition to preserving doctrinal reference to the sacred texts (the Qur'an and Hadith) in formulating the framework of constructive theology for Muslims.

According to Toshio Kuroda, the setting up of relevant theological constructs in order to address the problems arising all along the course of human life is based on the belief upholding Islam to be the perfect norm of life that is accommodately adaptable to every sort of nation and every age. God's revelation is eternal and universal, comprising all kinds of activities of the whole aspects of humanistic events without any distinctions between spiritual and worldly pursuit.²

Referring to Toshio Kuroda's proposition as mentioned above, it can be concluded that the scope of Islam covers the features of worldly life, mental aspect, as well as divinity. Thus theology (*tawhid*) has a vital function in the thinking of Muslims, the social institutions of Islamic politics, and in civilization.³ *Tawhid* should bear the meaning of integration or unity between the dimensions of the transcendent (spiritual) and the immanent (social). There is no strict separation between the transcendent divine reality and the immanent reality of human nature so as to set a binary positioning. In the view of Murtada Motahhari, a

²Kazuo Shimogaki, *Between Modernity and Postmodernity the Islamic Left and Dr. Hassan Hanafi's Thought: a Critical Reading*, trans. M. Imam Aziz and M. Jadul Maula, *Islam Kiri: Antara Modernisme dan Postmodernisme Telaah Kritis Pemikiran Hassan Hanafi* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2004), p. 16.

³*Ibid.*

construction of theology will eventually become a world view of *tawhid* that is uni-polar and uni-axial.⁴

Broadly put, all aspects of the social life of Islam should be integrated into “Islamic relational networks”. This network is derived from the world view of *tawhid*, which includes the contrasting aspects of religiosity and worldliness, spiritual and material, as well as individual and social. This Islamic relational network is finally tested in the form of practice of ritual worship⁵ as an obligation to be carried out by Muslims. In addition, other points that should be initiated include relationships between *tawhid* and liberation, implementation of *tawhid* in the context of oppression, and the sort of society desired in the context of *tawhid*.

Ali Shari’ati is one of the leading Muslim intellectuals of the modern age who concerns about themes of liberation from religion. Relying on the *tawhid* based world view, he stood out as a propagandist who set fire to awaken the spirit of the young in Iran in 1970s to rise up against the oppression of the Pahlavi regime. It is an undeniable fact that he is one of the leading figures in Islamic liberation theology, who even offered his own life for the mission.

II. Discussion

A. Brief Biography of Ali Shari’ati

Ali Shari’ati was born with the name Ali Mazinani on 24 November 1933 in Mazinan, a region near the holy city of Mashhad, a city considered sacred by the followers of the Shia Imami Ithna ‘Ashariah, as it is the city wherein their eighth imam, namely imam Ali ibn Musa al-Rida, was buried. His father was Muhammad Taqi Shari’ati and his mother was Zahrah. Shari’ati

⁴See Murtadha Muthahhari, *Syasyi Makoleh*, trans. Muhammad Ilyas Hasan, *Kumpulan Artikel Pilihan* (Jakarta: Lentera Basritama, 2002), p. 221.

⁵Kazuo Shumogaki, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

was then became better known to be his name, which he used for the first time in his passport to deceive the immigration authorities when he was leaving Iran for the UK on May 16, 1977 (a few days before he passed away).⁶

Ali's parents were highly respected public figures, more precisely reputable spiritual figures, in the midst of their society. In spite of this respectful social position, Shari'ati's family carried out a simple life as of other common villagers. This was the type of family that shaped Ali Shari'ati's personality, mentality, and self-identity, more specifically by his father's role as a parent, teacher, and spiritual guide.⁷ Shari'ati's youth was spent in learning, helping his parents to earn a living and participating actively in the political struggles and propaganda against the regime of Shah Pahlavi who was in power in Iran at the time.⁸

Besides the influence from his father, the formation of Ali Shari'ati's personality was also significantly affected by his grandfather *Akbund* Ahmad and his father's uncle Najib Naysapuri. It was from these figures little Ali studied jurisprudence, literature, and philosophy. Ali Shari'ati inherited sufficient scientific tradition passed down from his father, grandfather, and his father's uncle.⁹ This was obviously proved in Ali Shari'ati's further footsteps that clearly showed strong tendencies to various types of scientific and religious social

⁶ Ali Rahmena, *Para Perintis Zaman Baru Islam* (Bandung: Mizan, 1995), p. 239.

⁷ Eko Supriyadi, *Sosialisme Islam: Pemikiran Ali Shari'ati* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2003), p. 27-28.

⁸ Ali Shari'ati, *Abu Dzar*, trans. Muthahhari Paperbacks Team, *Abu Dzar: Suara Parau Menentang Penindasan* (Bandung: Muthahhari Paperbacks, 2001), p. vii.

⁹ Eko Supriyadi, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.

movements, as had been accomplished by his father, grandfather, and his father's uncle.

Little Shari'ati started his formal education at a private school in Mashhad.¹⁰ By the time he stepped on adolescence, Shari'ati quite intensely conducted assessments on philosophy, mysticism, literature, and humanitarian issues.¹¹ Upon entering adulthood, Ali had been actively preoccupied himself in religious and socio political activities. At his considerably quite young age, Shari'ati was actively involved in the "Socialist Movement of God Worshipper", founded by his father.¹² In the years of 1950-1951, when he was 17 years old, Ali was involved in the nationalist movement launched by the Prime Minister of Iran, Muhammad Mussaddeq, to bring down the regime of Shah Pahlavi. When Mussaddeq failed in a coup that he launched in 1953, Ali Shari'ati joined his father to actively participate in the "National Resistance Movement" of Mashhad branch founded by Mehdi Bazargan. As a result of this movement, he and his father were kept in prison for the period of eight months in Tehran.¹³ Still in the 1950s, Shari'ati founded a Student Association in Mashhad and made a movement to nationalize Iran's oil industry company.¹⁴

In 1959, Ali Shari'ati graduated with a degree in literature from the University of Mashhad. Subsequently in 1960, he received a scholarship from the government to continue his study at the University of Sorbonne in France.¹⁵ Shari'ati stayed for five

¹⁰Ali Rahmena, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

¹¹Eko Supriyadi, *op. cit.*, p. 31

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹³Ekky Malakky, *Ali Shari'ati: Filosof Etika dan Arsitek Iran Modern* (Bandung: Teraju, 2003), p. 14-15.

¹⁴Ali Shari'ati, *A Glance at Tomorrow History*, diterjemahkan oleh Satria Panindito dengan Judul *Islam Agama Protes* (Cet. I; Jakarta: Pustaka Hidayah, 1992), h. 7.

¹⁵Ekky Malakky, *op. cit.*, h. 15.

years in France and accumulated a variety of knowledge while at the same time actively involved in a number of liberation movements. In France, he met and studied under the supervision of many philosophers and leading scientists such as Alexist Carrel, Jean Paul Sartre, Henry Bergson, Frans Fanon, Louis Massignon, Albert Camus, and other French thinkers.¹⁶ Among the French figures who greatly influenced his thinking was Alexist Carrel, a French scientist. He even translated and developed a book by Alexist Carrel entitled *de Prayer* into Arabic under the title *al-Du'a*. Among the existentialist thinkers who considerably influenced Ali Shari'ati's thought were Jean Paul Sartre, Soren Abeye Kierkegard, and Nicholas Bordayev. In addition, Shari'ati also extensively examined the ideas of Marxism which was booming at that time in the world.

While in France, he devotedly took part in the political movement for the liberation of Iran along with Mustafa Chamran and Ibrahim Yazdi. At the same time, he was also active in the "Second National Front". During his stay in France, Shariati also actively participating in the Algerian liberation movement.¹⁷ Upon a successful accomplishment of his doctoral program in France in September 1964, he left France and returned to his hometown in Iran.¹⁸

Arriving in Iran, Shari'ati was arrested and held in prison for one and a half months on charges of active involvement in political movements against the government of Iran during his stay in France.¹⁹ After his release, he was then accepted to teach at the University of Mashhad. In addition to this, Shari'ati also taught at

¹⁶ Eko Supriyadi, *op. cit.*, h. 34.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, h. 35-36.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, h. 38.

¹⁹ Ekky Malakky, *op. cit.*, h. 20

several schools in Mashhad. Because of his political activities that were considered quite dangerous, Shari'ati was then expelled from the University of Mashhad. Together with Murtada Motahhari, Husein Behesyti, and some other Shia scholars, Shari'ati carried on establishing the educational institution of Huseiniyah Ershad, wherein Shari'ati himself was involved as one of the instructors. The period between the years 1967-1873 was a period in which Shariati preoccupied himself with teaching in Huseiniyah Ershad as well as in devoted involvement in political movements against the regime of Shah. During his teaching period in Huseiniyah Ershad he presented motivating lectures that fired up the spirit of the youth of Iran to take the fight against the government. As a result of these activities, he was finally imprisoned for five hundred days by the government. Shari'ati was released by the Iranian government in March 1975, and it was only after the insistence from some international organizations and intellectual leaders of France and Algeria.²⁰

After his release, Shari'ati realized that he did not have freedom to take part in political activities as long as he lived in Iran. Finally, on May 16 1977, he left Iran and headed to Europe. His first destination was to have a stop in the UK and then proceeded to the United States to visit his son who was studying there. However, he never managed to get to America as he was found dead under mysterious circumstances on 19 June 1977 in his family home in Schoumpton, England.²¹ The Iranian government (the Shah's regime) proclaimed his death upon a heart attack, but

²⁰Eko Supriyadi, *op. cit.*, h. 40.

²¹Ali Rahmena, *op. cit.*, h. 240.

stronger accusations indicated that he was murdered by the agents of SAVAK (Iranian intelligence agents).²²

As his political activities were so intense and his age was relatively short, Ali Shari'ati only had time to write two books in particular, they are, *Hajj* (Hajj) and *Kavir* (Desert). His remaining legacy takes the form of published books containing collections of his lectures and preaches.²³ As mentioned earlier, he also translated and adapted a number of books, such as *Abu Dhar*, *Salman al-Farisi*, and *de Prayer* of Alexist Carrel. Many of these works have been translated into Indonesian. His thoughts are quite philosophical and revolutionary and they have sufficiently affected the growing modern Islamic thought in Indonesia.

B. Understanding Ali Shari'ati's Thought and language expressions

The thought of Ali Shari'ati is multi dimensional ...he could be referred to as a -politico religio thinker- (Azyumardi Azra)²⁴

Understanding the thought of Ali Shari'ati is closely associated with a great choice of issues in the discourse of science. This is certainly not an easy task, provided that Ali Shari'ati was intensely responding to almost all circumstances that came across his time. It is quite accurate to say that Shariati is one of the figures who gave birth to a wide range of discourses associated with the complexity of life. Ghulam Abbas Tawassuli praised Shari'ati as a figure with a keen awareness, sharp intuition, courageous thinker,

²²Ekky Malakky, *op. cit.*, h. 25.

²³ *Ibid.*, h. 27.

²⁴Azyumardi Azra, "Akar-akar Ideologi Revolusi Iran: Filsafat Pergerakan Ali Shari'ati" in M. Deden Ridwan (ed), *Melawan Hegemoni Barat: Ali Shari'ati dalam Sorotan Cendekiawan Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Lentera, 1999), p. 51.

and elevated soul, to name only a few of creditable human characteristics comprised in the figure of Ali Shari'ati.²⁵

To understand the figure and thought of Ali Shari'ati means to understand the figure of a restless contemplative thinker, a spiritual humanist, an obedient Muslim (Shia), an organic intellectual, and a propagandist as well as poetic orator. Therefore, understanding the mind of Ali Shari'ati is not an easy subject, considering the complexity of his thoughts. Ali knew and was fully aware that he was living in the midst of the Muslim community (particularly Iranians) who were undergoing an atmosphere of oppression, injustice, backwardness, ignorance, and apathy. On the other hand, Ali Shari'ati was confronted with the phenomenon of silent intellectuals and scholars, intellectuals who were devotedly preoccupied with science works but were not capable of contributing in bringing about enlightenment, or religious scholars who were just busy with teaching religious dogmas and hence neglecting the spirit of religious (Islamic) liberation. Even more depressing, some of these intellectuals and religious scholars increasingly legitimized the continuity of injustice and oppression. It was in this sort of atmosphere that Ali Shari'ati lived and contemplated his life.

Conversely also, Ali Shari'ati was a humanist spiritualist, as narrated by Ali Rahmena that in 1964, the Gnosticism that he had experienced since childhood eventually became a "lightning" that transformed his life and allured him into Sufism. Shari'ati's writings during this period can be seen as evidence of his gnostic search. By explaining the process of soul searching and truth

²⁵Ghulam Abbas Tawassuli, "Sepintas tentang Ali Shari'ati" in an introduction to Ali Shari'ati, *al-Islam, al-Insan, wa Madaris al-Gharb*, trns. Afif Muhamamd, *Humanisme antara Islam dan Mazhab Barat*, (Bandung: Pustaka Hidayah, 1996), p. 7.

attainment, Shari'ati described his quest for the final destination of all Sufis.²⁶ As a spiritualist, Ali Shari'ati did not immediately melted away in spiritual preoccupations and hence neglecting his worldly life. He truly believed that spirituality should be evenly balanced with enlightenment and liberation. True spiritualists are such as the figure of Imam Ali and Imam Hussein, who stood forward as agents who fight for the liberation of people. This spiritualist humanist figure of Ali Shari'ati is apparent on his thoughts about the *Hajj*. In the view of Shari'ati, the *hajj* pilgrimage is a ritual that takes human beings to a reflection of an existential evolution and every rite of the *hajj* leads man on the true meaning of liberation.²⁷

Another aspect not to be left out in understanding the figure of Ali Shari'ati is the fact he was a Shiite fanatics who believed Shia to be a revolutionary ideology. A reflections of Ali Shari'ati's figure as a devout and revolutionary Shia Muslim figure can be seen in a number of writings wherein he set some distinctive doctrines such as the Shia imamate, *asyura*, Mahdiism, and some others as the basis of his revolutionary thoughts. Ali Shari'ati was the figure who truly believed in Shia doctrines, it was just that his reflection of the doctrines brought about different nuances of understanding from those of many other Shia followers.

Apart from being an obedient Muslim (Shia), the figure of Shari'ati should also be understood as an intellectual who is not exclusive with a particular schools of thought. His experience of studying at Sorbonne University of Paris drew Ali Shari'ati closer to the thoughts of the West. Western thinkers such as Franz

²⁶Ali Rahmena, *an Islamic Utopian: a Political Biography of Ali Shari'ati*, Trans. Dien Wahid, at all, *Ali Shari'ati: Biografi Politik Intelektual Revolusioner*, (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2002), p. 219.

²⁷See Ali Shari'ati, *Hajj*, trnas. Burhan Wirasubrata, *Haji* (Jakarta : al-Huda, 2002).

Fanon, Alexist Carrel, Jean-Paul Sartre, or even Karl Marx and many others significantly inspired the construction of Ali Syari'ati's thought. Having so much influence from Western thought, Ali Shari'ati was frequently accused of being a secret agent of Marxism and Babism.²⁸ As an intellectual who had a lot of concern on the themes of sociology, Ali Shari'ati was really interested in the dialectical relationship between theory and practice, between ideas and social forces, and between consciousness and human existence. Ali Syar'ati had a strong commitment to decaying revolutionary movements, especially those of the radical religion.²⁹

Ali Shari'ati should also be understood as a great orator who stepped forward as a propagandist for the Islamic revolution of Iran. He presented himself as a passionate, rhetorical, and eloquent speaker to easily win hearts, especially those of the young Iranians. As a propagandist, Ali Shari'ati often used jargons that severely criticized established institutions. It was upon this circumstance of him as a dangerous propagandist that Ali Shari'ati was then "terminated" by the SAVAK agency (Iranian intelligence in Shah Pahlavi regime) when he was in London in 1977.

As an accomplished orator and propagandist, Ali often used symbolic and provocative language that often made the whole point very difficult to catch. It is this use of symbolic language that brings about a little difficulty in tracking the main point of Ali Shari'ati's thought. However, his choice of using this symbolic language was done intentionally. He consciously preferred symbolic language to direct expository expressions. To Shari'ati's view, symbolic (and poetic) language, which expresses meaning through symbols and images, is the most beautiful and subtle

²⁸Azyumardi Azra, *op. cit.*, h. 58.

²⁹*Ibid.*, h. 49.

language that ever developed by humans. Symbolic language is much more universal, more profound, and more enduring compared to the language of exposition, wherein the purpose and clarity is strictly limited by time and place.³⁰ Apparently Ali Shari'ati was intending to pass on his message to all times and places, although risking the consequence of being difficult for the readers to keep an accurate track of his thought. Ali Shariati's selection symbolic language in conveying message was also greatly influenced by the spiritual transformation he experienced. According to Ali Rahmena, Ali Shari'ati employed the art of opening a concept, a language that has a visible and superficial meaning while covering a number of puzzles.³¹

The figure Ali Shari'ati with his multi attributes as described previously made his thought multi dimensional, and therefore became multi interpretable. Nevertheless, we can still see a consistent world view in his writings. Ali's views that stand out are concerning the relationship between religion and politics, which can be said to be the basis in his movement ideology. In this context, Azyumardi Azra refers to Ali Shari'ati as a religious political thinker (*politico religio thinker*).³²

Understanding the epistemology or the methodology of Ali Shariati's thought is inseparable from understanding the figure of Ali Shari'ati as a whole, the figure of multi attribute and multi-dimensional Ali Shari'ati. Ali presented his thoughts through a dialectic between the ideality of concepts and the reality as well as social practices, Ali was a man who liked to make a critical reflection of the Islamic doctrines (both in theology and ritual) to

³⁰See Ali Shari'ati, *Man and Islam*, trans. M. Amien Rais, *Tugas Cendekiawan Muslim*, (Jakarta: Srigunting Press, 2001), p. 2.

³¹Ali Rahmena, *an Islamic... loc. cit.*

³²See Azyumardi Azra, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

deliver a context a revolutionary Islamic ideology. Ali Shari'ati was an inclusive thinker who was fairly open to Western thinking and thought of it to be inspiring in understanding the teachings of Islam. And the most important point in understanding the thought of Ali Shari'ati is his use of symbolic language in presenting his thoughts to convey to the public. Ali Shari'ati looks more like a reflective thinker than an epistemic thinker. He did not leave clear or systematic epistemological constructions (as Murtada Mutahhari did), but he left a lot of notes about critical reflections upon doctrines, theories, and social reality. This is also the factor that makes it difficult to understand Ali Shari'ati's thought systemically. In any case, however, the figure of Ali Shari'ati as well as his thinking always makes a living inspiration. This is because Ali Shari'ati, as expressed by Sayyid Ali Khamene'i (the spiritual leader of Iran), is a pioneer for explanations of the most recent issues revealed by modern Islam, the issues that are difficult to answer and to understand in the era of that generation³³.

C. Ali Shari'ati on World View and Ideology

Basically, in living life people strongly rely on patterns or frameworks which are then referred to as worldviews. Briefly put, a world view is a framework we create to see the world and the events accompanying it. Man gives meaning to various events and occasions within this framework.³⁴ According to Mortadha Mutahhari, this world view then becomes the basis of ideology held by individuals and groups. Differences in ideologies held by each human being are due to differences in constructing the frame of the world view. This is the form of conclusion, interpretation,

³³“Shari'ati is not an anti religion: an interview with Rahbar on Ali Shari'ati, www.irib.com. Retrieved on 3 Mei 2012.

³⁴Musa Kazhim, *Belajar Menjadi Sufi*, (Jakarta: Lentera Basritama, 2002), p. 25.

and results of studies gained with respect to God, the universe, man, and history.³⁵

Any ideas springing from a person is inevitably influenced by the school of thought he embraces. If one is following a certain school of thought, then his beliefs, emotions, way of life, political school, social views, and intellectual, religious, and ethical concepts are not separated from his world view. In this light, schools of thought can ultimately create movement and develop or give birth to a social power.³⁶

A world view in Ali Shari'ati's proposition is man's personal understanding of the nature or existence. For example, a person who believes that the world has a Most Conscious Creator who has a power or will, and that from the records accurately maintained he will receive a reward for his good deeds or he will be punished because of his misconducts, then the person has a religious view of the world. It is based on this view of the world that a person could say: 'My way of life should be so and so and I must do this and that', and this is the meaning of religious ideologies. Thus, the idealism of Hegel, the dialectical materialism of Marx, the existentialism of Heidegger, the Taoism of Lao Tzu, the *Wibdatul Wujud* of al-Hallaj, are all included as world views. Every view of the world or the school of thought will certainly discuss the concept of man as the central concept.³⁷

The world view of a person is influenced by typical spiritual and material aspects of his society. According to Henry Bergson, a world that is viewed by an individual living in a closed society is a

³⁵Murtadha Muthahhari, *Mas'ala-ye Syenokh*, trans. Muhammad Jawad Bafaqih, *Mengenal Epistemologi*, (Jakarta: Lentera, 2001), p. 17-18.

³⁶Ali Shari'ati, *Islam Mazhab Pemikiran dan Aksi*, tans. MS. Nasrulloh dan Afif Muhammad, (Bandung: Mizan, 1992), p. 20

³⁷Lihat *ibid.*, pp.. 24-25

world that is trapped. Likewise, an individual living in an open society views the outside world to be infinite, expansive and constantly moving. Society and religion always determine man's vision of the world and hence influence his actions. Therefore, discussing the world view is essentially discussing human person as the subject. As the world view affects a person in making options of conducts, then learning the world view of a social community or a nation means learning their types of forms and patterns of culture as well as various characteristics developed by the community or the nation.³⁸

Within the domination of the materialistic world view today, Ali Shari'ati asserts himself on the choice of a religious world view. This type of worldview believes that the universe is something that comes from God, be aware and responsive to spiritual demands and human aspirations. However, the basic framework of the religious worldview meant here is a way of looking that is based on the results of scientific research, not the ones in orthodox or extreme forms. Ali Shari'ati takes the option of a synthetic world view between the two polar extreme, that is, a religious humanistic worldview, which arouse humanistic elements as a progressive creature who always looks for perfection and is very humanistic.³⁹

Ali Shari'ati offers an idea of religious humanistic view of the world to oppose the class dualism between the ruling and the ruled, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, so that people will find the original unity in developing human consciousness about his mission as the representative or the caliph of God on earth. In his view, human beings are independent creatures with

³⁸Ali Shari'ati *Man and Islam, op. cit.*, p. 22-24

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 35.

unlimited potentialities for self-determination and are not determined by external forces as they build up a spirit of *tawhid*.

A world view eventually metamorphoses and forms an ideology as a belief and ideals adopted by a certain group. Ali Shari'ati give a redefinition in understanding the term ideology. Starting from an etymological approach, Ali Shari'ati explains that the term ideology consists of two words, *idea* and *logi*. *Idea* means thoughts, ideas, beliefs, ideals, and said *logi* means logic, science, or knowledge, thus ideology is the science of ideals or beliefs. According to this definition, an ideologue is an advocate of a particular ideology or belief. Hence, ideology consists of a variety of beliefs and ideals embraced by a certain group, a certain social class, or a nation.⁴⁰

To Ali Shariati, ideology is the most essential and valuable nature as well as a special self-consciousness in human beings.⁴¹ Ideological consciousness, according to Ali Shari'ati, is a typical special awareness on any human beings without exception.⁴² This is because ideology has become the most fundamental human "need" in order to give directions or instructions in revealing the truth to the level of verifying the actions of the community and the surrounding social conditions. Simply put, ideology plays a role in giving perspective, forming an understanding, as well as directing human behavior in interacting with the world.

Contrary to the views of Marx and Weber who propose that ideology is shaped by the structure of the society, Shari'ati suggests that it is with this self-consciousness (ideology) that human beings form a society⁴³. Ideology occupies such a strong position in

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 156-157.

⁴¹Ali Shari'ati, *Ideologi Kaum Intelektual*, *op. cit.*, p. 54

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 57.

human minds and beliefs, and ideology maintains to be embraced as a plenary guide of life for its adherents. In Shari'ati's view it is only ideology that has the capability to change a society, because of the nature and the necessity of ideology which comprises confidence, responsibility, and involvement in commitment.⁴⁴ Ali Shari'ati's outlook is in line with the view of Antonio Gramsci, who suggests that ideology is more than just a system of idea. Ideology has a history of psychological validity (ideology provides a spirit of struggle). Moreover, an ideology organizes and provides a place for people to move and gain awareness of their position as well as their struggles in life.⁴⁵ As a final point, as stated by Shari'ati, it is an ideology that has the capability of transforming society.⁴⁶

D. *Tawhid* World View: *Tawhid* that Liberates

The world view of *tawhid* in the thinking of Ali Shari'ati is called by the term *Tawhid* of Being, which is scientific as well as analytical.⁴⁷ Ali sees *tawhid* as more than just theology, he sees *tawhid* as a world view. Ali Shari'ati does not uncover the concept of *tawhid* through a theological, mystical, or philosophical approach, but rather he reflects on *tawhid* in terms of world view and ideology. The ontological basis of *Tawhid* of Being as a world is in viewing the universe as a unity, not divided over the world now and the hereafter, over the natural and the supra natural, or over body and soul. *Tawhid* of Being looks at the entire existence as a

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁴⁵Roger Simon, *Pemikiran Politik Gramsci* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1999), p.83.

⁴⁶Ali Shari'ati, *Ideologi Kaum Intelektual: Suatu Wawasan Islam*, Trans. Haidar Bagir (Bandung: Mizan, 1989), p. 81.

⁴⁷Ali Shari'ati, *on the Sosisology Islam*, trans. Saifullah Mahyuddin, *Paradigma Kaum Tertindas*, (Jakarta: al-huda, 2001), p. 76.

single form, a single organism that has an awareness, idea, feeling, and intention.⁴⁸

To set Islam as an ideology to be practiced in life and to provide positive implications for human beings, Shari'ati presents in detail the stages of ideology. At the first stage, Shari'ati departs from a fundamental question about the position of humanity in relation to God and the universe. To explain this, Ali Shari'ati put the worldview of *tawhid* as the fundamental world view. For Ali, *tawhid* is not just understanding, more than that, *tawhid* is the ideology of liberation. The basis of Ali Shari'ati's ideology is *tawhid*, a mystical-philosophical world view that sees the universe as a living organism without any dichotomy. As stated by Ali Shari'ati himself, *tawhid* left a discussion circle, interpretation, and a philosophical, theological, as well as scientific debate. *Tawhid* is of community affairs. *Tawhid* comprises various issues concerning social relationships.⁴⁹

According to Shari'ati, *tawhid* world view straightly indicates that life is a singular form.⁵⁰ Life is a unity in the trinity of three hypotheses, namely God, man, and nature. *Tawhid* claims that the nature is a totality of a harmony of creation. This is of course fundamentally different from the world view that divides the reality of the world into two dichotomy of binerian categories: material - non-material, physical-spiritual, creator-beings, natural – supernatural, as well as individual - community. In Ali's view, such sort of divisions is considered *shirk* or contrary *tawhid* as it opposes

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁴⁹Eko Supriyadi, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

⁵⁰ Muhammad Nafis, "Dari Cengkeraman Penjara Ego Menuju Revolusi: Memahami 'Kemelut' Tokoh Pemberontak", in M. Deden Ridwan (ed), *op. cit.*, p. 85.

the view of unity between God, man, and he nature.⁵¹ In other words, *tawhid* world view is a world view that sees the fact as a reality that is holistic, universal, integral and monistic.

All creatures and objects in the universe is a reflection of the greatness of God. *Tawhid* worldview is an integral view of the world. *Tawhid* world view gives a “flexibility” for man to develop his freedom in order to be responsible for every act of conduct. *Tawhid* world view also regards man as a human being who has the freedom and a literally high dignity.⁵²

This is contradictive to the views of the atheistic existentialism, such as that of Sartre who firmly states that man is responsible for himself.⁵³ Sartre denies God in relation to human freedom in his existence. To Sartre, whether God exist or not it does not affect human’s appreciation of himself as an existence.⁵⁴ The negation of God in the motion of man’s “existence” is also expressed by the German materialist philosopher, Ludwig Van Feurbach, who states that God is no more than just a projection of human mind. The true reality of God is nothing but the human being himself that is projected by humans into one figure outside of himself and claims power over man.⁵⁵ Both of these philosophers consider man to be the real sentrum of existence of the universe. The opinion of the two figures, as well as those of other atheistic materialism thinkers, can be described in a poetic expression, as was written by Muhammad Zuhri, “Know that for

⁵¹See Eko Supriyadi, *op. cit.*, p. 163-164

⁵² Muhammad Nafis, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

⁵³ Fuad Hassan, *Berkenalan dengan Eksistensialisme*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 1992), p. 134.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁵⁵Lihat Donny Gahrial Adian, *Arus Pemikiran Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta : Jalasutra, 1999), p. 7.

billions of years the universe was not aware of itself, and when he came to realize his being, he was in the form of a human.”⁵⁶

In the worldview of *tawhid*, God is the goal to which direction all existence and creatures are simultaneously moving, and He is the One who determines the purpose of the universe. The worship of the power of the Absolut (The One God) is the primary appeal in the teachings of Abraham. It is a call to all people to worship a single ruler in this universe. Worship is intended for directing human attention to the purpose of creation and to believe in the One most effective of all existence and as an aim to seek shelter and to depend on all along life and history.⁵⁷

As stated by one of the great Sufis, Farid al-Din al-Attar, “If you want to be perfect, look for universality, choose universality, and be a universality.”⁵⁸ In *tawhid* world view, the nature of human reality is the potential *Ruh* (Spirit) of Allah that is breathed into the self of human beings. This Spirit of God is “universality” as meant by al-Attar. The *Ruh* of Allah is the most sublime reality in human beings that becomes the mode of human existence in his life.

Tawhid as a mode of human existence is described by Shari’ati in his very romantic, reflective, and revolutionary discussion about *Haji* pilgrimage. He explicates the pilgrimage as the “homecoming” of man to the Absolute and Infinite God, and there is nothing like Him. The journey back “home” to God

⁵⁶Muhammad Zuhri, *Langit-langit Desa : Himpunan Hikmah dari Langit-langit Sekarjalak* (Bandung : Mizan, 1993), p. 34.

⁵⁷See Ali Shari’ati, *Religion Versus “Religion”*, trans. Afif Muhammad and Abdul Syukur, *Agama Versus “Agama”* (Jakarta : Pustaka Hidayah, 2000), p. 29.

⁵⁸Eko Prasetyo Darmawan, *Agama Bukan Candu* (Yogyakarta : Resist Book, 2005), p. 31.

indicates a definite movement towards perfection, goodness, truth, beauty, knowledge, power, values, and facts.⁵⁹

Tawhid as a mode of existence means that God is the point of origin as well as the point of returning for human beings. He is the starting place of all divine attributes existing in humans. In contrast to the philosophy of Jean Paul Sartre's existentialism which regards God as the one who hinders the freedom of man, Shari'ati views God as a liberator of man. By means of making approaches to Him, man will be freed from values dirty rotten mud, which symbolizes the condition of dehumanization, and thus heading to the Holy Spirit of God as the source of all values of universal humanism.

The world view of *tawhid* demands human to only have fear on one force, namely the power of the Lord, and be confidence that all other powers besides His are not absolutely or false. *Tawhid* guarantees human freedom and glorifies only Him. This view moves men to fight against all forces of domination, shackles, and humiliation of man over man. *Tawhid* has an essence as the idea that works for justice, solidarity and liberation.⁶⁰ The logical implication of *tawhid* world view is that accepting the conditions of society that is full of contradictions and social discrimination and accepting divisions in society are considered as *shirk*. Thus, in the view of Ali Shari'ati, a classless society is a consequence of *tawhid*.

E. The Philosophy of Creation of Man and Insan Kamil: From Theocentric to Teomorphic.

Ali Shariati starts his discussion about human being from the philosophy of the creation of Adam. He sees Adam as a representative symbol of humanity as a whole. In interpreting the

⁵⁹Ali Shari'ati, *Haji, op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁶⁰Eko Supriyadi, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

creation of Adam, Shari'ati discusses the events of creating Adam from the Spirit of God and dirty mud. The two elements are interpreted symbolically: dirty mud means humility, stagnation, and absolute passivity, while the Spirit of God is a symbol of the relentless movement toward an unlimited perfection and glory.⁶¹

Man is a synthesis of the two elements, and both of these (dirty mud and the Spirit of God) are constantly dragging and will eventually force man to choose the drift of one of them.⁶² In the early days of his creation, human is placed at the neutral point, and within his passage of life human moves in evolution, either progressive evolution towards the Spirit of God or regressive evolution toward the dirty mud. When human makes progressive evolution he will arrive in the glory and true perfection ("united with Him"), whereas when a regressive evolution takes place, human will fall in rank and will only be equivalent to dirty mud, which, in the language of the Qur'an, is mentioned to be worse than cattles.

Upon creating Adam, God taught him the knowledge of the "names" of all things. So in the scheme of creation of man, God is the creator as well as the first teacher to humans. Later on, man presented himself as the agent who gave names to his world. Because of God's "treatment" upon human was so special, angels made a protest to God for His favoring human. Responding to the protests of the angels, God then asked Adam to demonstrate his capability in the presence of the angels, and God told the angels to prostrate to Adam. Shari'ati explains that prostration of angels before Adam is a symbol of humanism. The degree of human being is elevated in such a way to become one level higher than

⁶¹*Ibid.*

⁶² Ekky Malakky, *op. cit.*, p. 82

that of the holy angels. This elevation of man's degree over the angels is not because of racism, but rather because human possesses knowledge.⁶³

An interesting point in the philosophy of creation of man in Shari'ati's scheme is the point about man as the only creature that is given the mandate by God to carry out duties as His caliph. This is because humans have the capability and confidence to take on the formidable task. Then it is evident that human beings are endowed by God with courage, virtue, and wisdom in the universe. Man is not merely God's caliph but also the carrier of His mandate, and the guard His most precious grace. He quoted Jalal al-Din al-Rumi, on the point that mandate and God's gift is a free will.⁶⁴

Shari'ati classifies human existence into two categories, namely *insan* and *basyar*. *Basyar* is human existence in the stage of ordinary beings, which does not have the ability to change as any other of God's creatures. *Basyar* in Qur'anic terms has the same meaning with the term *l'etre en soi* or being in self in Jean Paul Sartre's philosophy of existentialism. Being in self is the mode of human existence that is static, passive, neutral (not affirmative nor negative), and without purpose.⁶⁵ *L'etre en soi* as *basyar* is human existence as a "heap" of objects with no consciousness and free will, whereas *insan* is human being in a sense of "becoming". In other words *insan* is the existence of human beings who have been given force by the power of Divine Spirit, so they can move dynamically. The concept of *insan* in Shari'ati is synonymous with the concept of *l'etre pour soi* or being for self. *L'etre pour soi* is a

⁶³ *Ibid.*.

⁶⁴ Ali Shari'ati, *Man and Islam*, *op. cit.*, p. 8

⁶⁵ Save M. Dagun, *Filsafat Eksistensialisme*, (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 1990), p. 100.

different mode of human existence from *l'être en soi*. *L'être pour soi* is the mode of human existence that has awareness of the self as well as of the reality around him, and has the free will to make his choice, so that people can make an active and dynamic motion as a “becoming” being. Shari’ati’s division of the two categories of human existence was quite possibly inspired by the work of Jean-Paul Sartre’s existentialism. However, in contrast to Sartre, Ali Shari’ati’s concept of the becoming human motion has a clear goal, that is, God as the centrum and mode of existence. Ali criticizes Sartre by pointing out that his existentialism morality along with its consequences are ridiculous.⁶⁶

In Ali Shari’ati’s thought, the perfect man or the ideal man is the vicegerent of God who accepts the mandate from the Lord in the form of self-consciousness, free will, and creativity that manifests in human as a two dimensional being. The battle of the two elements in man (The Spirit of God and the dirty mud) allows humans to proceed into an ideal human (*insan kami*). The potential of consciousness, free will, and creativity comprised in human beings makes it possible for man to have battle “in himself”, and ends up with man’s ability to win the Spirit of God upon the dimensions of dirty mud, through adopting characters corresponding to the attributes of God.⁶⁷

The ideal human being is a *theomorphist*,⁶⁸ a man in whose personality the Spirit of God has won the battle over the part of

⁶⁶Ali Shari’ati criticized this view of Jean Paul Sartre in his poem: “You will be turning and keep turning in a circle/you will freeze/like a lake, like a pond /you will remain like a circle/like zero. See Ahmad Nurullah, “Genesis: dari Dentuman Besar ke Revolusi (Tinjauan filosofis tentang Puisi Ali Shari’ati)”, in M. Deden Ridwan, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

⁶⁷ Ekky Malakky, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

⁶⁸The term *theomorphis human* is basically not invented by Ali Shari’ati, but rather, the term was first used by Muslim thinkers coming from India, Muhammad Iqbal.

himself that is associated with the dirty mud as the representation of the devil. The ideal man is a man who has been freed from indecision and contradiction between the “two infinities”. Shari’ati maintains that the ideal man has three main features, namely, truth, goodness, and beauty. In other words, the ideal man is capable of being integrally combines knowledge, morality, and art in himself. He is the vicegerent of God who preserves commitment to the three graces of God upon him, namely, self-awareness, free will, and creativity. The ideal man is the vicegerent of God who has embarked on the thorny path of servitude while bearing the burden of mandate, until he comes to the end of the line and becomes the Caliph as well as the “holder of His mandate”.⁶⁹ The *theomorphist* humans are humans who adopt the attributes of Allah as their characters.

Man becomes perfect or ideal not because of his personal relationship with God while at the same time neglecting humanity affairs, nor a man who denies God in the movement of his life. A Man becomes perfect as he devotes to the struggle for perfection of the human race as a whole.⁷⁰ According to Shari’ati, a man becomes ideal through finding and fighting for mankind, and through this way he will “find” God. In other words, the ideal man is a man who does not leave the nature and his fellow human beings⁷¹ while at the same time continues to have an “intimate relationship” with God as his beloved.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁷⁰ This is in line with Muhammad Iqbal’s statement that “a perfect man is not a man who projects God as in Feurbach’s statement, nor he is a man who “dissolves” in God as of the pantheists; a perfect man is a man who absorbs the attributes of God and make them as *elan vital* for the power that changes the world. See Donny Gahrial Adian, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁷¹ Ekky Malakky, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

Shari'ati poetically describes about the ideal man as a man whose minds always thinks philosophically but it does not make him content with the fate of mankind. Political involvement does not make him demagogic and showing off. Science does not make his beliefs and ideals fading. His belief does not dry his minds or hinder his logical deduction. Piety does not make him a powerless ascetic. Social activity does not stain his hands with immortality. Ideal man is a man of *jihad* and *ijtihad*, a man of poetry and sword, a man of loneliness and commitment, emotions and genius, power and love, as well as belief and knowledge. He is a man who unites all true human dimensions.⁷² Ali Shariati's depiction of the figure of the ideal man almost impossible to find in today's reality of humanity, which is filled with falsehoods. However, if we go back to the true purpose of man's creation then we will believe that for sure, in every era there must be a man with sincerity who manages to achieve such a noble degree.

III. CONCLUSION

Ali Shari'ati understood religion not as a collection of doctrines in a more ritual dimension. To his view, religion is the source of awareness, the cornerstone of ethics (morality), responsibility, and free will that is capable to mobilize its followers into a force of liberation from determination of multitheism ideologies that oppress. In Ali Shariati's perspective, *tawhid* is not a merely theology discussed in the realm of science and philosophy, but it is the plenary ideology of the integrality of life from the One, in unity, heading towards the One.

For Shari'ati, *tawhid* starts from a scientific, philosophical, and analytical understanding about God and leads to a universal

⁷² Ali Shari'ati, *On the Sociology Islam, op. cit.*, p. 109

liberation of humanity from both personal and social idols. *Tawhid* is the foundation of liberation ideologies that negate all forms of discrimination and head towards human egalitarianism (equality). *Tawhid* is the spirit of resistance against tyranny and oppression, based on the values of justice. In the view of Ali Shariati, *tawhid* is liberation, equation (egalitarianism), and universal justice.

In Ali Shari'ati's perspective, *Tawhid* is the ephesentrum of life and mode of existence. *Tawhid* necessitates teocentric world view leading men in motion of existential evolution to become teomorphis human, men the characteristic of divine attributes. A theomorphist human is a man whose consciousness is soaring into the sky, but his devotion carves activism on earth. This is the ideal man, who appears as a liberator.

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