

LANGUAGE, RELIGION, AND MODERNITY: ZAKI NAGUIB MAHMUD'S ISLAMIC RATIONALISM PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

This article aims to reveal the idea of renewing thought in the minds of Zaki Naguib Mahmud. The method used in this research is descriptive-qualitative and is included in the literature research. The process of collecting data in this study is by observing, in the sense of tracking various references that have relevance related to the focus of the study, such as his work entitled *Qishab al-Falsafah al-hadithab*, *Qisshab al-Falsafah al-Yunaniyah*, *Qisshatul Adab fi al-'Alam* as well as from books, articles, and so on which function to support these data. The data analysis technique used in this research is the content analysis method. From the studies conducted, the linguistic revolution is the entrance to renewal. Zaki saw the need for a linguistic revolution. He offers to change from the tradition of words to the practice of work and from words to meaning. The renewal of religious thought offered by Zaki is an epistemological criticism of Islamic religious belief. Zaki invites us to examine and differentiate between Religion, Religious Knowledge, and Religious Thought. For Zaki, religion is sacred and sacred. Meanwhile, religious knowledge and thought are impure; they can be touched and criticized. Islamic thought turath is divided into two, *al-Ma'qul* and *al-La Ma'qul*. The attention of Muslims to the latter rather than the former and their narrow understanding has caused them to be backward. So serious attention is needed to the ma'qul side of classical Islamic heritage and reinterpreting the meaning of *al-La Ma'qul*.

Keywords: Language; Religion; Modernity; Islamic Rationalism; Zaki Naguib Mahmud.

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan mengungkap gagasan pembaruan pemikiran Zaki Naguib Mahmud. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian literatur ini adalah deskriptif-kualitatif. Pengumpulan data penelitian ini melalui proses observasi, dalam arti menelusuri berbagai referensi yang memiliki relevansi terkait dengan fokus penelitian, seperti karya yang berjudul *Qishab al-Falsafah al-hadithab*, *Qisshab al-Falsafah al-Yunaniyah*, *Qisshatul Adab fi al-'Alam* serta dari buku-buku, artikel, dan sebagainya yang berfungsi mendukung data-data tersebut. Teknik analisis data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode analisis isi. Dari kajian yang dilakukan dapat diketahui bahwa revolusi linguistik merupakan pintu masuk pembaruan. Zaki melihat perlunya revolusi linguistik. Ia menawarkan perubahan dari tradisi kata ke praktik kerja dan dari kata ke makna. Pembaruan pemikiran keagamaan yang ditawarkan oleh Zaki merupakan kritik epistemologi terhadap keyakinan agama Islam. Zaki mengajak kita untuk mengkaji dan membedakan antara Agama, Ilmu Agama, dan Pemikiran Agama. Bagi Zaki, agama itu sakral dan keramat. Sementara, ilmu dan pemikiran agama adalah relatif (*touchable*); dapat disentuh dan dikritik. Turats pemikiran Islam terbagi menjadi dua, *al-Ma'qul* dan *al-La Ma'qul*. Perhatian umat Islam kepada yang terakhir daripada yang pertama dan pemahaman mereka yang sempit telah menyebabkan mereka menjadi terbelakang. Maka diperlukan perhatian serius terhadap sisi ma'qul warisan Islam klasik dan menafsirkan kembali makna *al-La Ma'qul*.

Kata Kunci: Bahasa; Agama; Modernitas; Rasionalisme Islam; Zaki Naguib Mahmud.

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the echo of renewal (*tajdid*) and the awakening (*shabwah, nahdbah*) of Islam has emerged widely in the world.¹ It certainly gives new hope to the Muslim community. The claim of Islam's universality, which affirms that Islam is *shalih likulli zaman wa makan* (relevant to all situations and times), requires constant innovation in religious understanding to ensure that Muslims can continue to live in the historicity of their era.

As one of the *sawami* (heavenly) products, Islam needs to be manifested on earth. The theocentric that appeared in various Islamic schools and thoughts in the past must be followed by an anthropocentric grounding program.² The heavenly edition of Islam is only Allah, and perhaps the Angel Gabriel knows. Depending on their backgrounds, humans can only apprehend the earth's edition of Islam.

The embodiment of Islam on earth in various appearances, faces, polarization, and fragmentation of Muslims into multiple groups and schools is an indisputable reality.³ Religion has multi faces and many colors.⁴ Islam is no exception, from the conservative and fundamentalist to the liberal and relativist. The first wants Islam to continue to be authentic and

pure. Meanwhile, the latter wants adjustments to the times.

Renewal means various efforts to adapt Islamic teachings to contextual developments. In contrast to the typology presented by Harun Nasution in his book *Renewal of Islamic Thought*, which divides Islamic teachings broadly into two patterns, the first is the purification of Islamic teachings according to the time of their descent to Muhammad. The second is contextualizing Islamic teachings according to the times.⁵ If the downfall of the Muslim Ummah is stagnation and the closing of the door to *ijtihad*, then the purification movement often pushes in that direction.

The contextualization of Islamic teachings has given birth to many figures and movements. In India (and Pakistan), there was the Mujahidin movement, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and Muhammad Iqbal.⁶ In Ottoman Turkey, religious thought reform movements can be categorized into three groups; Pro-Western, Islamist, and Nationalist. However, in various parts of the world, it is always the nationalists who win the majority. That is the movement that combines religious teachings with their locality. One of their figures was

¹Muhammad Abid Al Jabiri, *Agama, Negara, Dan Penerapan Syaria* (Yogyakarta: Fajar Pustaka Baru, 2001). Lihat juga Zaki Naguib Mahmud, *Qiyam Min At-Turats* (Kairo: Dar asy Syuruq, 1984).

²Junaidi Abdillah, "Dekonstruksi Tafsir Antroposentrisme: Telaah Ayat-Ayat Berwawasan Lingkungan," *KALAM* 8, no. 1 (July 1, 2014): 65–86, <https://doi.org/10.24042/klm.v8i1.168>., Toto Suharto, "The Paradigm of Theo-Anthropo-Cosmocentrism: Reposition of The Cluster Of Non-Islamic Studies in Indonesian State Islamic Universities," *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 23, no. 2 (December 15, 2015): 251–82, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ws.23.2.308>., dan Rz Ricky Satria Wiranata, "Jalan Tengah: Kritik Paradigma Pendidikan Di Barat (Sebuah Kajian Filosofis Historis)," *Al-Misbah (Jurnal Islamic Studies)* 8, no. 2 (October 7, 2020): 86–93, <https://doi.org/10.26555/almisbah.v8i2.1980>.

³Arif Al Anang and Ahmad Husein, "Genealogi Aliran-Aliran Politik Dalam Islam," *Fajar Historia: Jurnal Ilmu Sejarah Dan Pendidikan* 4, no. 2 (December 31, 2020):

68–79, <https://doi.org/10.29408/fhs.v4i2.2592>., H.A.R Gibb, *Aliran-Aliran Modern Dalam Islam* (Jakarta: Tinta Mas, 1952)., Wildana Latif Mahmudi, "Pertumbuhan Aliran-Aliran Dalam Islam Dan Historinya," *Bangun Rekaprima: Majalah Ilmiah Pengembangan Rekayasa, Sosial Dan Humaniora* 5, no. 2, Oktober (October 1, 2019): 78–86, <https://doi.org/10.32497/bangunrekaprima.v5i2,Oktober.1578>., dan Ramli Abdul Wahid, "Aliran Minoritas dalam Islam di Indonesia," *Journal of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Societies* 1, no. 2 (July 14, 2018): 141–63, <https://doi.org/10.30821/jcims.v1i2.1071>.

⁴A.N. Permata, *Metodologi Studi Agama* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2001).

⁵Harun Nasution, *Pembaharuan Dalam Islam: Sejarah Pemikiran Dan Keagamaan* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1996).

⁶Aida Arosoaic, "Understanding the Creation and Radicalisation of the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) and the Indian Mujahideen (IM)," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 41, no. 3 (July 3, 2018): 519–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2018.1469205>.

Mustofa Kamal Atatürk, which later called the Father of Modern Turkey.⁷

Meanwhile, the reform movement in Egypt was led by Jamaluddin Afghani, then Muhammad Abduh, and Rasyid Ridho.⁸ Other emerging figures include Ali Abdurrazik, Ahmad Amin, Amin Al-Khauili, Zaki Naguib Mahmud, Toha Husein, and others.⁹ Nowadays, contemporary Islamists have emerged for the renewal of Islamic thought with their respective concerns. Muhammad Arkoun, Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, and Muhammad Sahrur, for instance, offered a new reading model for the Qur'an.¹⁰ Hassan Hanafi and Farid Essack offer a theological format to liberate Muslims from decline. There were also other names, such as Al-Jabiri and others.¹¹

Among Muslim thinkers who are concerned and consistent with the issue of renewing the understanding of Islamic diversity and are keen to discuss and adjust the Islamic tradition with the times is Zaki Naguib Mahmud, a reformer from Egypt. However, Muslims have not widely mentioned his name (1905-1993). Zaki is an Egyptian reformer whose ideas and ideas have yet to be widely known. The great appellations of Hasan Hanafi, al-Jabiri, Arkoun, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, and others covered the originality of his thoughts.¹²

Speaking of criticism of Arab (Islamic) thought, Zaki was a pioneer. In the early phase of his intellectual life, Zaki had the ambition to make the West (Europe) an alternative solution to the decline of the eastern nation. It's just that later this changed as his thinking matured. Zaki called on Muslims to return to their traditions (*turaths*). Zaki's call for Muslims to return to practice can be understood as an effort to make tradition (*turats*) a medium to save the Arab (Islamic) nation from decline. It is also a medium for exploring new perspectives on life in the present and the future. Muslims can learn from their predecessors how to seek solutions to their problems. Life's issues usually have the same knots. History teaches us how the salaf brilliantly responded to the challenges of their era. By reading our predecessors' works, we can choose which things are suitable and by the present.

Based on the previous research, few articles have mentioned or addressed Zaki Naguib Mahmud directly. However, there are three articles related to Zaki's philosophical thoughts; Marek Dziekan's article entitled *Miedzy wschodem a zachodem filozofia arabska w koncepcji zakiego*

⁷Clive Foss, "Kemal Atatürk: Giving a New Nation a New History," *Middle Eastern Studies* 50, no. 5 (September 3, 2014): 826–47, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2014.913574>; Emzar Makaradze, "The Role of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in Republican Turkey," *Historia i Polityka*, no. 32 (39) (June 1, 2020): 153, <https://doi.org/10.12775/HiP.2020.021>; Fatma Ulgen, "Reading Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on the Armenian Genocide of 1915," *Patterns of Prejudice* 44, no. 4 (2010): 369–91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2010.510719>.

⁸M. Shabir, "Muhammad `Abduh and Islamic Reform," accessed December 29, 2022, https://www.academia.edu/35655116/MUHAMMAD_ABDUH_AND_ISLAMIC_REFORM; Pegah Zohouri, "Pluralism in Contemporary Islamic Thought: The Case of Mohammed Arkoun, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd and Abdolkarim Soroush," 2021, 149–69, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-66089-5_9.

⁹Shabir, "Muhammad `Abduh and Islamic Reform."

¹⁰Mulawarman Hannase, "Transmisi Wahyu: Antara Filsafat Takwil Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid dan Teori 'Message Production' Ilmu Komunikasi," *Mumtaz: Jurnal Studi Al-Quran dan Keislaman* 1, no. 2 (2017): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.36671/mumtaz.v1i2.7>; Nur Zainatul Nadra Zainol, Latifah Abd Majid, and Muhd Najib Abdul Kadir, "Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd as a Modern Muslim Thinker," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 5, no. 1 (June 1, 2014): 62–70, <https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.05.2014.008>; Zohouri, "Pluralism in Contemporary Islamic Thought."

¹¹Muhammad Abid Al Jabiri, *Takwin Al-'Aql al-'Arabiy*. (al-Markaz ats-Tsaqafi al-'Arabi, 1991); Al Jabiri, *Agama, Negara, Dan Penerapan Syariah*; Muhammad Abid Al Jabiri, *Wijah Nazar: Nabw 'adab Bina' Qadaya al-Fiker al-'Arabi al-Mu'asir* (Markaz Dirasat al Wihdah al Arabiyah, 1994); Al Jabiri, *Takwin Al-'Aql al-'Arabiy*.

¹²Hannase, "Transmisi Wahyu"; Zainol, Abd Majid, and Abdul Kadir, "Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd as a Modern Muslim Thinker"; Zohouri, "Pluralism in Contemporary Islamic Thought."

nadziba mahmuda (1905-1993) in Polish,¹³ Mohamed Othman Elkhosht's articles entitled *Contemporary Islamic Philosophy Response to Reality and Thinking outside History*,¹⁴ and Ahmad Abdel Halim Atiyya's report on *Philosophy, Modernity, and Revolution in Egypt*. Among those three articles, Dziekan's article was the only one that discusses Zaki's thoughts sufficiently by calling him a thinker between West and east.¹⁵

Unlike the previous research, this paper is literature-based research that investigates Zaki Naguib Mahmud's philosophical thoughts about how to form proper Islamic thought reform—in a sense, looking at the conceptual building of Zaki Naguib Muhammad's turats and their relevance to the development of Islamic thought. This article focuses on criticism of the logic of positivism built by Zaki in looking at various issues. Like other positivist philosophies, logical positivism also bases its principles on positivistic reasoning about everything. Apart from that, this article tries to explain the paradoxes (*al-mufaraqat*) in Zaki's logic building in-depth and with philosophical studies. It also discusses how Zaki is related to western philosophy, which of course, cannot be ignored and has a significant influence on the development of Zaki's thought.

The method used in this study is descriptive-qualitative and is included in library research. The use of the descriptive-qualitative process is due to its suitability with the object and focus of the study under study. This research seeks to produce findings that cannot achieve through measurement or statistical procedures. The study of literature (library) is a study that is used to collect information and

data with the help of various materials in the library, such as documents, books, magazines, historical stories, and so on.

The process of collecting data in this study is by observing, in the sense of tracking various references that have relevance related to the focus of the study, such as his work entitled *Qisshab al-Falsafah al-hadithah*, *Qisshab al-Falsafah al-Yunaniyah*, *Qisshatul Adab fi al-' Alam* as well as from books, articles, and so on which function to support these data. The data analysis technique used in this research is the content analysis method. This analysis will process selecting, comparing, combining, and sorting information from related data sources to accept valid inferences. In clarifying the validity of the data, the researcher triangulated the sources and methods.

ZAKI NAGUIB MAHMUD; HIS JOURNEY AND WORKS

Yaqut al-Hamwy, in his book *Mu'jam al-Udaba'*, called Zaki Naguib Majmoud as *Abu Hayyan At-Taubidy* as the philosopher of writers (*faiilosuf al-Udaba'*), and writer of philosophers (*Adib al-falasifah*). The nicknames were based on his works, which combined philosophy with literature to make it easier to understand various readers. Zaki has successfully presented the most complex ideas in easy-to-understand literary expressions.¹⁶ He also parses the most complex philosophical problems in simple everyday language. He brings philosophy out of books and academic papers into something that can speak and manifest in real life.

Zaki Naguib Mahmud was born in Mayyit al-Khauili village in Az-Zarqa region, Dimyath province, on the 26th of Dhul Qa'dah 1322

¹³M. Dziekan, "Miedzy Wschodem a Zachodem. Filozfia Arabska w Koncepcji Zakiego Nadziba Mahmuda (1905-1993)," *Studia Philosophiae Christianae* 42, no. 2 (2006).

¹⁴Mohamed Othman Elkhosht, "Contemporary Islamic Philosophy Response to Reality and Thinking Outside History," *Journal of Humanities and Applied Social Sciences* 1, no. 1 (January 1, 2019): 2–24, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHASS-05-2019-001>.

¹⁵Dziekan, "Miedzy Wschodem a Zachodem. Filozfia Arabska w Koncepcji Zakiego Nadziba Mahmuda (1905-1993)"; Othman Elkhosht, "Contemporary Islamic Philosophy Response to Reality and Thinking Outside History."

¹⁶Taufiq A. Dardiri, "Perkembangan Puisi Arab Modern," *Adabiyat: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra* 10, no. 2 (December 19, 2011): 283–308, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajbs.2011.10204>.

(February 1, 1902). In His childhood, he participated in the Qur'an *tahfidz* program. Then he entered the Sulthan Mustafa Madrasa in Maedan As-Sayyidah Zainab in Cairo when he was 15 years old. His father worked at the Sudanese government representative office in Cairo. Four years later, Zaki's family moved to Sudan. They remained in Khartoum until he had almost finished his *Tsanawiyah* school. Then he moved to Egypt. After completing his *Tsanawi* education in Egypt, Zaki enrolled in the *Mu'allimin 'Ulya Madrasa*, a madrasa that has produced Egyptian thinkers and writers such as Ibrahim Abdul Qadir Al-Mazni, Ahmad Zaki, Muhammad Farid Abu Hadid, and Abdurrahman Syukri.¹⁷

Zaki was born in the middle of a middle-class family. To support the development of his talent, he finally urbanized to the heart of Egypt, Cairo, in 1909. It was here that he continued his studies at one of the early state schools. In 1914, he accompanied his father to Khartoum, who was entrusted with working in the Sudanese government. He completed his primary, secondary and upper secondary education in downtown Sudan. In his new residence, he deepened the culture of Anglo-Saxon and the philosophical structures of positivism and experimentalism. This education was very influential in the course of his life in the future. Although he lived in Sudan, he also studied in Cairo at the *Mu'allimin al-'Ulya* school, leaving in 1930.

His journey abroad began when he was sent to London for six months to become a teacher at one of the institutions there. He was appointed to become a teacher in the Ministry of Education after his arrival from London. In 1939, he received a Literature award from the Ministry of Education through his monumental works, which he co-authored with Ahmad

Amîn, namely *Qissab al-Falsafah al-Yunaniyah* and *Qissab al-Falsafah al-Haditsab*. Furthermore, for a year, he worked at the Ministry of Culture, founded by Tahâ Husein at the Ministry of Education. In 1948, Zaki earned his doctorate in London with the dissertation title *al-Hatmiyah adz-Dzatiyah*, which later returned to his homeland to become a philosophy teacher at the university Fuâd I (now Cairo University). After returning to Egypt, he worked as a lecturer at the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Adab, Cairo University, until he was dismissed in 1965. Then in 1968, he left for Kuwait and became a professor of philosophy at the University of Kuwait for about five years.¹⁸

In addition to academic work, in 1953, Zaki was appointed as an employee at the National Culture Ministry. The Egyptian revolutionary government founded this department. Then, he left for America in the same year. He was a visiting professor at Columbia University in South Carolina. After spending one academic year, he was transferred to teach at Bullman University in Washington. In 1954-1955 he was appointed as the Cultural Attache at the Egyptian embassy in Washington.

His journey as a Muslim thinker was divided into three phases. *First*, the initial phase was his journey in Egypt until he left for Europe, where he gave much criticism of social life in Egypt. Second, he presents examples from ancient and modern philosophy as enlightenment. In this phase, he collaborated with Ahmad Amin. He wrote three books entitled *Qisbah al-Falsafah al-hadithab*—Contemporary philosophical narratives, this book discusses contemporary philosophical figures and their thoughts; *Qissab al-Falsafah al-Yunaniyah*—Greek philosophical narratives, this book discusses Greek intellectual figures

¹⁷Dziekan, "Miedzy Wschodem a Zachodem. Filozfia Arabska w Koncepcji Zakiego Nadziba Mahmuda (1905-1993)."

¹⁸Ahmad Fadhil, "Sinergi Agama dan Ilmu dalam Pemikiran Zaki Najib Mahmud," *Al Qalam* 17, no. 86 (September 29, 2000): 1-28, <https://doi.org/10.32678/alqalam.v17i86.663>.

and their ideas and *Qisbatul Adab fi al-'Alam*—social-humanities scientific narrative.

The second phase of his journey began after he returned from Europe in the 1960s. In this phase, Zaki tried to change the existing norms with European norms by imitating and adopting the Western civilization because he believed that the Western perspective was more appropriate for the present and more concerned with scientific knowledge.¹⁹ Western civilization has a tradition of respecting and acknowledging scientific knowledge, being serious about working, and being humanist, which seems absent in the Arab world traditions. Zaki also introduces logical positivist philosophy, which places logic as the primary source. He explained the philosophy according to his perspective. On the other hand, he rejected classical Arabic turath. One of his books represents this phase is *Al-Falsafah Al-Wadh'iyyah wa Khurafat al-Metafizyqa*—Contemporary philosophy and metaphysical deviations.

The third phase of his journey describes his return to the Arab *Turats*. He read and studied the *turats* to find new knowledge from Arabic thought, combining them between East and West, heart and mind, soul and matter, and between knowledge and values.²⁰ In this third phase, Zaki proposes a new philosophy model based on Arabic thought. He proclaimed a renewal for Arabic thought and took advantage of its *turats*. In one of his writings, Zaki emphasized that “leaving *turats* is suicide (killing civilization) because in *turats* is our language, our literary works, as well as the works of scholars, writers, and also our predecessor philosophers.”²¹

Zaki argues that Muslims tend to feel enough to only memorize the Qur'an without

realizing its actual teachings, such as the sciences of the cosmos and others, which are what makes the Islamic world left behind compared to the West civilization.²² If Muslims were aware that scientific studies, such as discoveries about electricity, magnetism, atoms, and others as a religious obligation, they must have become the rulers of the world or astronauts who explore outer space, becoming factory owners who take raw materials from underdeveloped countries at low prices, then sell them into high-quality products. Muslims should have become rich meanwhile poverty in other nations. The reality is that Muslims do not think that way. They think that worship alone is a divine commandment. When Europe was busy concentrating on studying the universe, Muslims were busy exploring the previous scholar's works related to the Qur'an. They did not add anything to the classical interpretations or study the universe's phenomena.

Zaki wrote more than 40 books in various fields, from thought to literature and philosophy. Among his most important works are the following; *Hayat al-fiker fil 'Alam al-Jadid*—thought in the contemporary era, *Bertrand Russell, David Hume, Asy-Syarq wa al-Fannan*—which contains about Eastern thought and its figures, *Quyyur wa Lubab, tajdid al-Fiker al-'arabiy*—renewal of Arabic thought, *al-Ma'qul wa al-La Ma'qul fi Turatsina al-fikri*, dan *Ru'yah Islamiyah*—Islamic thought. In addition to some of his books, he translated several foreign works into Arabic, such as *Muhawarat Aflathon, Tarikh al-Falsafah al-Ghorbiyyah*, and *Al-manthiq Nadzariyyat bahts*.

He has been awarded various honors and recognition, including the best motivational work for his book *Nahwa Falsafah 'Ilmiyah*

¹⁹Fadhil; Khozi Khozi, “Perspektif Zakî Najîb Mahmûd Tentang Ilmu Dan Agama Dalam Logika Positivisme,” *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam* 1, no. 1 (June 4, 2011): 55–74, <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2011.1.1.55-74>.

²⁰Mahmud, *Qiyam Min At-Turats*, 1984.

²¹Zaki Naguib Mahmud, *Al-Ma'qul Wa al-La Ma'qul Fi Turatsina al-Fikri* (Kairo: Dar asy Syuruq, 1987).

²²Zaki Naguib Mahmud, *Fi Hayatina Al-'Aqliyah* (Kairo: Dar asy Syuruq, 1981); Zaki Naguib Mahmud, *Tajdid Al-Fiker al-'Arabi* (Kairo: Dar asy Syuruq, 1993); Zaki Naguib Mahmud, *Budzur Wa Judzur* (Kairo: Dar asy Syuruq, 1990).

(1960), the state award for literature in 1975. In addition, he received the same award from the University of the Arab League (1985), the American University in Cairo (1985), and the Sultan 'Uwais of the United Arab Emirates (1991). He recorded his journey in 3 books; *Qisbatu Nafs*, *Qisbatu 'Aql*, and *Hashad as-sinin*, published in 1991, and are his last books. After that, he decided to stop writing after he felt nothing new that he could offer. Moreover, despite his physical condition, his eyesight is getting weaker. Until then he died on 12 Rabi'ul Awwal 1414 (September 8, 1993).

LANGUAGE REVOLUTION AS THE PILLAR OF RENEWAL

Zaki emphasized that language is the manifestation of thought. Therefore, if a nation wants to renew its thinking, it must work on its language. It is impossible to change thought without changing the language.²³ Hence, language is society's reflection and representation. Logical analysis of language is an essential tool to achieve knowledge by the provisions of nature. To strengthen his methodology, Zaki uses a method developed by Viennese philosophers (especially Syalex and Carnab) in the 1920s. Only in *Nazariyah al-Ma'rifah* and Nahwa's 'Ilmiyah Philosophy did he begin to create the logic of positivism. He said that knowledge embodied in language is centered on general concepts and that each type of these concepts has a position and type of change, incredibly understanding and knowledge of mathematics and the physical sciences, as language can be achieved clearly and in detail.²⁴

The Language Update Revolution, as described by Zaki, has more value. Why is that? Because of the language used for conversations

and sermons, it also contains thoughts. Die Tarasy also made a similar statement that language is not just an expression of opinion but is also an inseparable part of the thinking process. Therefore, the development of science is also related to the development of language. Ibn Jinni also developed this kind of method through his golden work. Namely, al-Khasais, where which distinguishes between *qaul* and *kalam*. *Qaul* is the movement of two tongues, while the word is only formed if the pronunciations are complete.²⁵

There are two ways to develop language: by setting the privileges of adab and as a mediator to arrive at an optimal point. These two revolutions are necessary to solve the existing problems. Language is thought, emphasized Zaki. If a nation wants to renew its thinking, it must update its language first. It is only possible for thinking to change by changing language. Language is a reflection of things that develop in a society.²⁶

The importance of language in human life is no doubt. Some philosophers even define humans as creatures who speak, in that the ability to communicate is a differentiating factor between humans and animals, for example. Human language can transfer knowledge and compile scientific theories.²⁷

Muslims had experienced a period when the Sufistic religious spirit was at the forefront. They are engrossed in discussing the unseen and leaving the martyrs behind. Muslims prefer to discuss mystery matters rather than what appears before their eyes. They like the absolute rather than the relative and growing. It all affects the use of their language. The Arabic language they use is more as a medium for *Mi'raj* to the sky rather than as a medium for understanding the reality of the cosmos.²⁸

²³Mahmud, *Tajdid Al-Fiker al-'Arabi*.

²⁴Mahmudi, "Pertumbuhan Aliran-Aliran Dalam Islam Dan Historinya."

²⁵Ghozi, "Perspektif Zaki Najib Mahmud Tentang Ilmu dan Agama dalam Logika Positivisme"; Zaki Naguib Mahmud, *Qiyam Min At-Turats* (Kairo: Dar asy Syuruq,

1984); Zaki Naguib Mahmud, *Tajdid Al-Fiker al-'Arabi* (Dar asy Syuruq, 1993).

²⁶Mahmud, *Qiyam Min At-Turats*, 1984.

²⁷Mahmud.

²⁸Mahmud, *Budzur Wa Judzur*.

In other parts of the world, the western world emphasizes secularism. They were busy with natural and exact sciences and left, or at least gave priority to religion and mysticism. This is also evident in the development of their language. They use English more often as a medium to read the universe rather than as a medium to reach heaven. People with the first condition use their language as a medium for *Mi'raj* to heaven; if you want to change, you must change the media they use. Likewise, the second condition is that if they're going to change, they have to change the media used.²⁹

According to Zaki, Fusha Arabic is a language that does not rely on human nature. We don't see the connection between the Arabic language and the course of the wheel of life. That's why many Arab nations created Arabic '*amiyah*, which is more contextual and reflects their situation. With Arabic '*amiyah*, they can express the circumstances of everyday life. With the '*amiyah* language, they can play an active role in various fields of social life.

There is only a picture of a people with a steady revolution of thought except by looking more deeply at the language and the procedures for using it. It is because language itself is a thought, an idea. However, that does not mean that every sentence or word spoken is the fruit of thought. Some words are just nonsense. Specific conditions for words that arise from language have something to do with thought. In the first part of his book *al-Khasaish*, Ibn Jinni distinguishes between "*al-qaul*" and "*al-kalam*." According to him, *al-qaul* is whatever is spoken by two lips. At the same time, *al-kalam* is a word that has been perfect and stands alone. So, from here, every *kalam* must be *qaul*, but not vice versa.

There is an essential division between the two kinds of sentences that turn into thoughts. There are sentences related to field facts. There

are other sentences about the penalties after it, but they have nothing to do with reality. If you say, for example, "The State of Kuwait is located near the Arabian gulf." This sentence connects with reality and can be seen and written down on paper. But if you say, for example, "Riding a ship is more exciting than boarding a plane. Because planes are faster than ships, fun isn't based on speed." These two sentences together produce one conclusion. However, these two sentences and their results do not point to something in the outer reality. This last sentence cannot be said to be true or false because the arrangement of these sentences does not represent what is. Those who say it do no good; the hearer gains nothing either. It's just a sentence spoken from the mouth, that's all.³⁰

Unfortunately, the language we find in our traditional books is most of this last kind. It does not provide a step forward for our lives. Take the word "eternal," for example. This word is ubiquitous and very general. It is also very abstract. So if comments like this are found in the language used by the writer and the scholar, then this further confirms that the writer, or the group of scholars, does not give food to hungry people, does not give drinks to those who are thirsty, nor does they provide clothes for those who are hungry. Naked.³¹

Undeniably, the revival of our civilization in the 19th, 20th, and even now must be accompanied by a resurgence of its language aspects. This is a definite must-have. But what is seen from the rise of language today is taking two different paths. One chooses the path used by a group of people who want language as a counterpoint to '*amiyah*. Meanwhile, the other way is taken by a group of people who think that the revival of language is by reviving the old one.

²⁹Mahmud, *Qiyam Min At-Turats*, 1984.

³⁰Mahmud, *Al-Ma'qul Wa al-La Ma'qul Fi Turatsina al-Fikri*.

³¹Zaki Naguib Mahmud, *Hashad As-Sinin* (Kairo: Dar asy Syuruq, n.d.).

What is expected is that the language will be able to develop with two conditions. First, the language maintains its uniqueness in terms of literature. Both languages are means of conveying messages, not just songs that are sung. With this, it is hoped that language can lead us into a period of scientific thinking that is proven to be able to solve various life problems.

RENEWAL OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

The scripture's text is limited, while human problems are complex and continue to develop. It requires continuous updating. Discussing the reader with the context is an ongoing issue. The success of analyzing the text with the context will significantly determine the people's fate.

In his efforts to reform religious thought, Zaki distinguishes the terms religion, spiritual knowledge, and religious thought. Religion means the absolute teaching of God. Meanwhile, religious knowledge is a person's understanding of religious teaching. Religious thought is a holistic view of religion as a whole. So the science of religion is partial or a certain point of view of one teaching. Thus, religious thought is universal and comprehensive.

Religious values are absolute and never change, while relative measures can judge religious thought. Thus, religious thought experienced a period of glory or vice versa. By using hermeneutics, Zaki divides the elements that support religious belief into three parts, namely:³²

a. Idea (*fikrah*)

This idea (*fikrah*) is discussed with the Devine words/ sentence in religious texts in religious language.

b. Religious Thinker

Religious thinkers are the embodiment of an idea. Or in other words, a statement must manifest in a person who believes in it.

c. A condition that concerns this idea and makes it better.

Zaki argues that the true thinker can turn his big ideas into guidance for travelers to be more vigorous, prosperous, and in better condition. The previous scholars have done this by understanding religious values, setting targets, and choosing suitable media to achieve the intended goals. They brought forth religious ideas that were suitable for their living conditions. Therefore, they could realize the awakening of the first Muslim generation and its glory. We do not see this role in Islamic religious thinkers today. On the contrary, Islamic religious thought is feeble and often becomes an obstacle to progress. The weakness and decline of Islamic religious thought are due to several factors, including:³³

a. Stagnant on the old meaning

Thought must grow and develop over time; for example, Surah Al-Anfal verse 60 states that swords, arrows, horses, and others were the symbol of strength in the past. They were a sophisticated tool for war at the time of the revelation of the above verse. Now times have changed. The power of war is no longer the things above. However, even the current military force is not the only means of scaring the enemy. There are other models, such as science and technology, economics, and politics.

b. A narrow understanding of religious norms and teachings

A little knowledge of spiritual teachings often hinders a person from developing. Instead of being a motivator for development, Religious norms sometimes become a barrier for a person to grow.

Religion offers humankind various norms and teachings. Faith allows us to apply which models are correct according to our lives. A thinker must formulate life targets to be

³²Mahmud, *Al-Ma'qul Wa al-La Ma'qul Fi Turatsina al-Fikri*.

³³Mahmud, *Tajdid Al-Fikr al-'Arabi*; Mahmud, *Budzur Wa Judzur*; Mahmud, *Qiyam Min Al-Turats*, 1984.

achieved. The first problem that Zaki faced when he launched his reformation idea was the attitude of religious fanaticism which on several occasions transformed into terror in the name of religion. According to him, a passionate attitude is not productive. Spiritual thoughts are not holy, like the text of the Koran, which is the word of God. The two factors above are the legacy of other factors that caused the “golden civilization” of Islam to disappear, swallowed up by the progress of Western civilization.³⁴

As a result of the two factors above, it seems that Muslims no longer have creativity in thinking and working. Even if there are works that were born after the era of decline, then the side of originality no longer looks like it was in its heyday. It is tough to find “something new” in the works of scholars produced in the era of decline. There are only repetitions and repetitions of previous works. This repetition usually takes the form of summaries (*kbulasab/mukhtasar*), marginal notes (*hamisyah*), and explanatory (*syarah*) explanations for explanations/notes in (*hasyiyah*) works of classical period scholars.

More concerning is not the lack of original works produced by scholars but the emergence of new symptoms where Muslims have positioned the results of these scholars as “holy books” which have absolute truth that no one can contest. The thoughts of the scholars expressed in these works are also no longer positioned as products of *ijtihad*, which have relative truth accuracy (*dzanny*). Still, their thinking in several ways has been raised to a level of precision to be on par with the Al-Qur’an and Hadith. Some experts term this incident with *taqdis al-afkar*.³⁵

Because the “truth” of the thoughts of the previous scholars had reached an absolute degree, their followers were not allowed to issue opinions or ideas that differed from theirs. The emergence of the expression among Muslims that “The door to *Ijtihad* has been closed” and the wide acceptance of Islamic society proves that *taqdis al-afkar* happened. The creative thinking of Muslims died at that time.

Related to this, Fazlurrahman once said that the closing of the doors of *ijtihad* during the 4th century H./10 A.D. and the 5th century H./11 A.D. had led to stagnation and decline of Muslims, both in the field of law. including science) and intellectual sciences (theology and religious thought). Even for the philosophical sciences, the decline experienced by Muslims is genuinely concerning. This is caused by the “hatred” of Muslims towards Western intellectualism (secular), philosophy, and even their neglect of popular Islamic sciences due to the influence of Sufism.³⁶

Until the end of the Ottoman Empire (March 3, 1924), the frozen thinking among Muslims still occurred. In history, it is stated that the government of the Ottoman Empire preferred the option of upholding only one religious ideology (school) rather than many schools of thought. Schools that were not in line with the government’s official schools at that time were suppressed, which castrated their freedom. Consequently, people’s fanaticism towards a particular school of thought is rampant, and *ijtihad* has almost no room to develop.³⁷ Even if there is an opportunity to perform *ijtihad*, then even that is limited to *al-ijtihad fi al-Mazhab* (*ijtihad* only on issues that mature within one school of thought), not

³⁴Dzikan, “Miedzy Wschodem a Zachodem. Filozofia Arabska w Koncepcji Zakiego Nadziba Mahmuda (1905-1993)”; Mahmud, *Fi Hayatina Al-‘Aqliyah*; Mahmud, *Qiyam Min At-Turats*, 1984.

³⁵Mahmud, *Al-Ma’qul Wa al-La Ma’qul Fi Turatsina al-Fikri*; Mahmud, *Fi Hayatina Al-‘Aqliyah*; Mahmud, *Tajdid Al-Fikr al-‘Arabi*.

³⁶Shabir, “Muhammad `Abduh and Islamic Reform.”

³⁷T. Kodal, “Atatürk ve Türk Ocakları – Türk Ocakları,” accessed December 29, 2022, <https://www.bursaturkocagi.org.tr/ataturk/ataturk-ve-turk-ocaklari/>; Foss, “Kemal Atatürk.”

absolute *ijtihad* as developed during the heyday of Islam.³⁸

TURATS AND MODERNITY

Muslim thinkers are concerned about the position of *turats* in dealing with the times. They emphasize that Muslims should explore classical relics and use them as the basics in viewing reality. This basic must be enriched based on the development in the world. Zaki mapped the classical *turats* into two parts; *al-Ma'qul* (rational logic) and *al-La Ma'qul* (irrational logic) (Mahmud, 1987). Both are the wealth of Islamic thought. Nevertheless, unfortunately, in their journey, Muslims were fixated only on the *La Ma'qul*. Meanwhile, the *al-Ma'qul* is drowned by the Sufistic definitions.

a. *Al-Ma'qulfituratsina*

The rational logic method is a method of thinking. This method has advantages over the others because this logical method has coherent steps in concluding. This method is bound by the laws of causality, which everyone can study, in contrast to the Sufistic approach, which relies on the sharpness of subjective intuition and inner experiences that have a subjective and relative measure between one person and another logical mind.³⁹

Imam Ghozali *ata'wil* introduces *Misykat al-Anwar* in reading Surah an-Nur verse 35 to describe the human thought journey. Muslims' journey can also be mapped with the classification of Surah an-Nur (35) as follows: The early stages of human perception are the senses formulated in the Qur'an as *Al-Misykat*. Inside the *Misykat*, a lamp (*mishbah*) is the symbol of human intelligence that can understand empirical meanings. Inside the

mishbah is *Nur* or light, the power of human understanding (Human Intelligence).

In understanding empirical meanings, the human mind is assisted by imagination, described as a mirror (*zujajah*) that surrounds the lamp (*mishbah*). The source of this imaginary resource is a blessings tree (*syajarah mubarakah*), which is a symbol of the thought that constitutes rational sciences. The blessing tree is like the principles that guide the wanderer. This blessed tree shines with its oil. As if this verse implies the existence of knowledge with the active intellect or God's revelation.

Therefore, it can also apply the phases of thought above to the development of human civilization. The initial phase is the phase where myth becomes the ruler. Then followed by a period in which reason and intellectual became commanders. Next was divine revelation.

b. *Al-La Ma'qulfituratsina*

Muslims have been through difficult times and stuck to the tradition of *la ma'qul*. As discussed in several points above, one of the knots is because they ignore the *ma'qul* and only concentrate on *la ma'qul*. Zaki invited Muslims to redefine the misunderstood Sufism teachings. The definition of *Wali* (guardian/holy pious), in the classical repertoire, refers to a strange person who can walk on water, turn a stick into gold, etc. Now that should extend that definition to scientists discovering electricity, atoms, submarines, and others.⁴⁰

CRITICISM OF ZAKI NAGUIB MAHMUD

As one of the significant figures with various thoughts, criticism toward Zaki Naguib

³⁸Foss, "Kemal Atatürk."

³⁹Mahmud, *Al-Ma'qul Wa al-La Ma'qul Fi Turatsina al-Fikri*.

⁴⁰Mahmud.

Mahmud is very natural, especially when Zaki introduced something new in his time. Zaki was a controversial figure and widely criticized because he represents two cultures (West-East), his criticism of the established thought/practice rather than supporting them, and his great desire to lead Muslims in a better and advanced direction.⁴¹

One of Zaki's critics is Muhammad Al-Bahi, who sees Zaki as an extension of Western interests. By rejecting metaphysics, Zaki considered having categorized God as superstitious.⁴² Responding to the criticism, Zaki emphasized that Al-Bahi did not thoroughly understand his thoughts. Al-Bahi had failed to understand and had difficulty distinguishing between Comte's positivism, Carnap's positivism, or Schlick's positivism.⁴³ As a result, a person will experience confusion in their attitude towards religion and philosophy and mix up the language of religion and philosophy. In other words, religion will be philosophized, while philosophy is religious.⁴⁴

From a methodological point of view, Zaki's concept of *al-Ma'qul* and his criticism of *al-la-ma'qul* elicited various reactions from other Muslim thinkers. Abduh Farraj is the most outspoken figure in rejecting the logical positivism built by Zaki in criticizing the *al-La Ma'qul* dimension or metaphysics in general. The first thought that Farraj criticized was the concept of the unity of language and thought. For Farraj, Zaki's idea contradicts psychology, considered by logical positivism figures as an exact science. Psychology asserts that mental activities such as knowing, conceptualizing,

imagining, remembering, and thinking are independent of expressive words. In many cases, they are often unable to express what comes to mind, which proves that words and thoughts are not one unit.⁴⁵

To answer these criticisms, Zaki wrote a work entitled *Nahw Falsafah 'Ilmiyah*. This job finalizes his logical positivism view as contained in the results of *al-Mantiq al-Wad'i and Kburafat al-Mitafisiqa*. The disagreement between Farraj and Zaki regarding the unity of language and thought stems from their difference in perspective. Farraj argues that language and thinking cannot be combined because he looks at the "inside" of human beings. Therefore, a person sometimes needs help to express his thoughts in words or writing. As for Zaki, what someone says or writes is what they think about because Zaki sees more from the outside of human beings. However, it would not be correct to say that Zaki denied the outspokenness of a thought.

Besides Al-Bahi and Farraj, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd is a vigorous critic of Zaki. According to Nasr, Zaki belongs to the opportunistic-reformative group when he talks about the revival and renewal of Islam.⁴⁶ According to Nasr, Zaki's *Hashad as-Sinin* is a complete portrait of the restlessness of thought and philosophical "confusion" that shapes the writer's rationalistic life journey. When explaining the "fourth phase" of Zaki's thought process, Nasr concluded that Zaki had suffered defeat, as was the case with the activists of the revival discourse or the modernism movement.⁴⁷

⁴¹Nasution, *Pembaharuan Dalam Islam: Sejarah Pemikiran Dan Keagamaan*.

⁴²al Bahi, *Al-Fiker al-Islami al-Hadis Wa Sillatuhu Bi al-Isti'mar al-Gharbi*. (Kairo: Maktabah al-Wahbah, 1997).

⁴³Mahmud, *Hashad As-Sinin*.

⁴⁴Mahmud, *Qiyam Min At-Turats*, 1984.

⁴⁵A. Farraj, "مجلة الثقافة لسنة 1951 العدد 659," accessed December 29, 2022, https://archive.alsharekh.org/MagazinePages/MagazineBook/AL_thqafa/althaqafa_1951/Issue_659/index.html.

⁴⁶NHA Zaid, *Teks Otoritas Kebenaran* (LKis, 2003).

⁴⁷Z. Fareen Parvez, "Politicizing Islam Across North and South," in *Politicizing Islam: The Islamic Revival in France and India*, ed. Z. Fareen Parvez (Oxford University Press, 2017), 0, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190225247.003.0001>; C. Christine Fair, "Students Islamic Movement of India and the Indian Mujahideen: An Assessment," *Asia Policy* 9, no. 1 (2010): 101–19, <https://doi.org/10.1353/asp.2010.0002>; Fadhil, "Sinergi Agama dan Ilmu dalam Pemikiran Zaki Najib Mahmud."

Hashad as-Sinin is considered to work with a poor contribution. Nashr thought that Zaki's discourse of enlightenment and awakening offered many contradictions. The contradiction does not only concern Zaki's view of the modern West but also of traditional Muslims, as in the following examples:

- a. A withdrawing attitude (thinking) is fast when modernist discourse faces its traditionalist opponents. Nasr even described this attitude as "giving up" and "losing" In Zaki's context, this withdrawn attitude was seen when he published a *Khurafat al-Mitafiziqqa* in 1951. In subsequent publications, Zaki then changed its title to *al-Mauqif Min al-Mitafiziqqa*.⁴⁸ The editorial change from "*khurafat*" to "*al-mauqif*" has shown Zaki's withdrawal attitude and, at the same time, emphasizes the reasoning crisis he faces. It is common among elite Muslim thinkers.⁴⁹
- b. Intellectual dualism. This attitude occurs among Muslim intellectuals, whose thoughts cannot bring about actual cultural change.⁵⁰ There are contradictions in their actions and thoughts between their words, and practical steps are irrelevant.⁵¹

In reading religious texts, Nasr positioned Zaki as Hasan Hanafi with his Islamic left and Syahrur. All of them accommodate contradictions based on benefits and virtues. It reflects eclecticism and justification.⁵² Eclecticism (*at-taufiq*), in this context, is an attempt to combine Western progress with *turats* (Islam). Still, the end of this effort is justification or positioning *turats* as something that cannot change. The impact of this kind of eclectic-justifiable habit is the emergence of an attitude of quickly withdrawing (revising) when confronting the two entities (West-Islam).⁵³

There are exciting things about Zaki's attitude in dealing with criticisms and blasphemy against him. Zaki does not seem too obsessed with having his thoughts accepted by those who disagree with him. However, when responding to complaints related to religion, Zaki tries hard to convince his readers that he is not a logical positivist group that classifies religion as part of metaphysics which is considered nonsense and cognitively meaningless. Instead, he tries to develop and adapt the analytical concept of positivism that he adheres to make his existence so the community can accept his thoughts.⁵⁴

CONCLUSION

Linguistic revolution is the entrance to renewal. Zaki sees the need for a linguistic revolution. He offers to change from word tradition to work tradition and from word to meaning. The revival of religious thought offered by Zaki is an epistemological critique of Islamic religious belief. Zaki invites us to observe and distinguish between Religion, Religious Science and Religious Thought. Religion is sacred and holy. While spiritual knowledge and religious faith are not divine, they can be touched and criticized. *Turats* Islamic thought is divided into two, *al-Ma'qul* and *al-La Ma'qul*. Muslims' attention toward the latter rather than the first and their narrow understanding has caused them to be backward. So serious attention is needed to the *ma'qul* side of classical Islamic heritage and reinterpreting the meanings of *al-La Ma'qul*.

⁴⁸Mahmud, *Hashad As-Sinin*.

⁴⁹Zaid, *Teks Otoritas Kebenaran*.

⁵⁰Mahmud, *Hashad As-Sinin*.

⁵¹Zaid, *Teks Otoritas Kebenaran*.

⁵²Zaid.

⁵³Wiranata, "Jalan Tengah"; Suharto, "The Paradigm of Theo-Anthropo-Cosmocentrism"; Othman Elkhosht, "Contemporary Islamic Philosophy Response to Reality and Thinking Outside History."

⁵⁴al Bahi, *Al-Fikr al-Islami al-Hadis Wa Sillatuhu Bi al-Isti'mar al-Gharbi*.

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