

Ahmad Wahib and the Academic Struggle in Indonesia's Multicultural Society

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Abstract

The paper reviews Ahmad Wahib's (1942-1973) underlying ideas on religious concept and its epistemological construct and its present experience in contemporary Indonesia. A young proponent of rational understanding of Islam and society, he stands out as leading advocate of humanistic approach as enshrined in his activism in HMI that projected rational, holistic, existential and sympathetic understanding of Islam. His work highlighted religious issues of pluralistic nature, in defining the contours of Indonesian society. The method of study is based on qualitative survey in the form of library and documentative technique. It traces the historical work of Ahmad Wahib and the corresponding literature in the field. This was analyzed using descriptive, analytical and historical method to interpret and concluded his idealism and struggle. The study found that Ahmad Wahib had developed in-depth philosophical viewpoint of Islam based on contextual understanding of its sources, outlining his response and insight on issues pertaining to moral, spiritual and intellectual implication of religious postulate in society, emphasizing its role to drive modern cultural and ethical renewal based on its balance theoretical principle which offers ideal interpretation of the socio-political condition and future direction in Indonesia.

Keywords: Ahmad Wahib, critique, thought, reform, HMI



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Abstrak

Makalah ini meninjau pemikiran konseptual Ahmad Wahib (1942-1973) tokoh muda Islam dan salah seorang pelopor HMI (Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam) dan penganjur paham Islam yang rasional, eksistensial, bebas dan simpatik. Ia menganalisis pergulatan idenya terkait masalah-masalah religius dan pengalamannya dalam masyarakat majmuk di Indonesia. Ini ditelusuri dari catatan harian Ahmad Wahib yang membentangkan pandangan-pandangan etika, hukum, sastra, politik dan sosialnya yang kompleks dan peranannya dalam menggerakkan pembaharuan Islam yang moden. Kajian ini bersifat kualitatif dari jenis penelitian kepustakaan dan dokumenter. Ia menganalisis secara deskriptif, komparatif, historis dan analitis catatan-catatan harian Ahmad Wahib, selain penulisan dan karya-karya lain yang terkait berhubungan dengan pemikiran dan kritik sosialnya. Kajian merumuskan bahwa Ahmad Wahib adalah pengkritik dan penafsir budaya yang kental dengan akar sejarahnya yang moderat dan bergaris sederhana. Tulisannya menekankan pada pemahaman kontekstual tentang Islam dan kebudayaan dan penjurusan modennya yang menawarkan pandangan-pandangan falsafah yang ideal terhadap kondisi-kondisi moral dan sosio-politik yang memprihatinkan di Indonesia.

Kata kunci: Ahmad Wahib, kritik, pemikiran, pembaharuan, HMI

Introduction

This paper traces the thoughts of Ahmad Wahib (November 9, 1942-March 31, 1973), a thinker from Sampang, Madura who was influential in the reform movement and student discussion environments, especially HMI. He is remembered as a moderate and medium-leaning young Muslim figure who sparked the ideals of Islamic reform, along with Nurcholish Madjid, a figure of Islamic neo-modernism, who concluded that "reform should begin with an act of close interdependence, i.e. breaking away from traditional values, and seeking future-oriented values".¹ Wahib responds unapologetically to the challenges of the times with the power of dialectical that he initiated and mobilized from Islamic and Western sources. His extraordinary and interesting arguments in working on issues of Islam, modernity and secularism, sharia and intellectual property, the lack of law and values in society have raised the ideas of freedom in addition to his criticism of the corruption and falsehood of the ulama and the government. The main part of this article discusses his activism and his deep

¹ Noor, I. "Liberal Islam and the Tradition of Islamic Reform in Indonesia", *Ilmu Ushuluddin* Vol. 3 No. 3 (2003): 1.

discursive awareness of the hermeneutical content of religious texts ² related to questions of religion and laws and his efforts at reform.

Biographical sources about Ahmad Wahib are recorded in the latest literature written by Nurdin, ³ Saidiman Ahmad et. al., ⁴ Muliati, ⁵ H. Faisal Ismail, ⁶ and Muhammad Khusnul Khuluk⁷ which cites his complex ideas that discuss metaphysical and divine understanding, the basis of leadership, secularism, pluralism, criticism of scholars and the values of tolerance that have had an impressive influence in Indonesia. This is in addition to his own work *The Upheaval of Islamic Thought: The Daily Diaries of Ahmad Wahib* edited by Djohan Effendi and Ismed Natsir ⁸ which contains a brief background on his life history and his brief research on philosophy and his support for Western theories as well as his understanding of classical Islamic doctrines and teachings, which reflects his appreciation and search for the essence and teachings of classical Islam. his true maqasid (the purpose of the Shari'a) as he stated: "I do not know what Islam really is. I just knew Islam according to Hamka, Islam according to Natsir, Islam according to Abduh, Islam according to ancient scholars, Islam according to Djohan, Islam according to Subki, Islam according to others. And frankly I'm not satisfied. What I am looking for I have not found, I have not found it, which is Islam according to Allah the creator. How? Direct study of the Qur'an and sunnah? I'll try. But other people will also think that what I got is Islam according to me. But let me say, what is important is the belief in my common sense that what I understand is Islam according to Allah. I have to be sure of that!" (Ahmad Wahib March 28, 1969) ⁹

In her writing on Ahmad Wahib's philosophy of thought, Nadhirah Mohd Rubani ¹⁰ shows that Wahib's reform ideas were coloured by elements of liberal thought that were contrary to the traditional orthodox spirit and

² Noor, I. "Liberal Islam and the Tradition of Islamic Reform in Indonesia", p. 2.

³ Nurdin. "The Renewal of Islamic Thought: A Study on the Contribution of Ahmad Wahib's Thought to the Renewal of Islamic Thought in Indonesia" (Postgraduate Thesis, University of Indonesia, 2006): 1.

⁴ Saidiman Ahmad et. al. (eds.). *Renewal without Apologia? Essays on Ahmad Wahib* (Paramadina Foundation & HIVOS, 2010): 10.

⁵ Muliati. "Ahmad Wahib: Reinterpretation of Islamic Teachings", *Al-Fikr*, Vol. 17 No. 3 (2013): 3.

⁶ Ismail, H. F. *The Polemic of the Renewal of Islamic Thought Ahmad Wahib, Appreciation and Criticism* (Yogyakarta: Basabasi, 2018): 4.

⁷ Khuluk, M. K. "Ahmad Wahib and Islamic Political Thought" (Paper, Islamic Politics Study Program, Sunan Ampel State Islamic University, Surabaya, 2014): 2.

⁸ Wahib, A. *The Upheaval of Islamic Thought: The Daily Record of Ahmad Wahib*, editor Djohan Effendi, Ismed Natsir (Jakarta: LP3ES Publisher, 1981): 6.

⁹ Wahib, A. *The Upheaval of Islamic Thought*, p. 12.

¹⁰ Rubani, N. "Elements of Liberal Islam in Ahmad Wahib's Idea of Reform", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 16 No. 1 (2023): 9.

understanding and became an inspiration for the JIL (Liberal Islamic Jemaah) group. He disputed the methodology of interpretation of the Qur'an and hadith, and brought a new interpretation of the concept of worship and the reinterpretation of Islamic law. Meanwhile, Irfan Noor ¹¹ explains the tendency of his thought pattern which "emphasizes the process of progressivation and historical-sociological accommodation rather than being confined to the hegemony of the text". Meanwhile, Ayu Alfiah Jonas ¹² revealed that the map of reform ideas proposed by Wahib had actually appeared earlier, but was not widely known. His thought activities have a wide impact as an awareness of arts and culture matters and national and humanitarian values. Ahmad Wahib proposed that reform is a never-ending process and therefore a continuous review of existing thoughts is a must.

This study is qualitative, from the type of literature and documentary research. He collected data excavated from comprehensive primary and secondary sources in the form of Ahmad Wahib's diaries as well as materials in the form of books, manuscripts, articles, theses, magazines, newspapers and other related writings. The materials obtained are analyzed descriptively, analytically, historically and comparatively to produce scientific and objective findings and final conclusions.

Discussion

A brief explanation of Ahmad Wahib's thinking is formulated in a brief discussion in this section which focuses on the philosophy and ideals of reform championed in the HMI movement. This idealism was developed in the reform movement that had a decisive influence on the struggle of students, especially the discussion circles of HMI as sketched in his diary, which left an impression on the formation of his ideas and outlook on life.

Ahmad Wahib is a controversial and unique cultural figure, intellectual, and thinker. He has expressed the idealism of fresh thought and expressed a rational understanding of Islam through his work "*Diario Records*." This work outlines ideas of complete reform and displays a well-established understanding of the fundamentals of thought, culture, philosophy, religion, law, sharia, ideology, politics, freedom, democracy, and justice. In response to the brief essays contained in this *Record*, it is clear that the idealism and idealism of the struggle he inspired to apply the principles of reform in thought is clearly engraved. *This record* is a legacy of his thought recorded "according to his

¹¹ Noor, I. "Liberal Islam and the Tradition of Islamic Renewal in Indonesia", p. Sec. 19.

¹² Jonas, A. A. "Ahmad Wahib: Recording Thoughts in a Diary" (August 27, 2020), retrieved from bincangsyariah.com/khazanah/ahmad-wahib-mencatat-catatan-harian/

opinion and arrest of the problems he thinks about" as a result of discussions with activists and exponents of HMI (Islamic Student Association) Yogya, and members of the forum "Discussion Circle *Limited Group*" at IAIN Sunan Kalijaga between mid-1967-1971.

The discussion which was attended by Muhammad Dawam Rahardjo, Djohan Effendi, H.A. Mukti Ali, Syu'bah Asa, Saifullah Mahyuddin, Djauhari Muhsin, Kuntowidjojo, Syamsuddin Abdullah, Muin Umar, Kamal Muchtar, Simuh, Wadjiz Anwar, and outsiders such as Deliar Noer, Nono Anwar Makarim, Rendra, Prof. Sudjito, Sutrisno Hadi, Lafran Pane, Pranarka, Karkono, Boland, Bakker, Niels Mulder, James Peacock and others have been recorded in detail, which "consists of 17 thick handwritten books" that formulate his reflections and struggles and hard thoughts on religious and political issues.

Intense conversations with in-depth discussions on basic issues in religion "often encourage people to reflect and rethink, perhaps even to re-question what they have been understood about religious matters." This is expressed by Djohan Effendi in his introduction to the book *The Upheaval of Islamic Thought*: "Both Syu'bah Asa's brother and Dawam Rahardjo and other friends wanted to see Wahib's diary published, not because Wahib was a person close to them, but because they knew the role that Wahib had played for several years in a reform group... I think, for the sake of the reform process that has not yet been completed, Ahmad Wahib's diary has an important meaning. This note is important in terms of the importance of studying religious problems and social changes in our homeland." ¹³

This record reveals Wahib's fundamental framework of thought and his fresh idealism about the legal aspirations and objectives of the Shari'ah, and lays out the basic principles of freedom of ideas and pronunciation, and the empowerment of reason and ijtihad. It reflects the results of his deep reflection, and his strong thinking and aspiration to peer into distant horizons and horizons, which have led him into a hard struggle of minds. According to Sulaiman Djaya (finalist of the 2003 Ahmad Wahib award): "Ahmad Wahib's records are arguably the best example of how thought is lived totally and passionately." According to H.A. Mukti Ali in his introduction: "His (Wahib's) activities in the student movement led him into the environment of religious and social problems. This, I think, prompted him to reflect a lot. And in the reflections that he did, he was involved in a violent struggle of thoughts. The sparks of the struggle of the mind were visible and greatly colored his diaries." ¹⁴

Wahib discusses in *his Notes many complex religious questions, which "often touch on theological problems that are often unthinkable", and raises more fundamental religious questions, which unravel ideological teachings, and Islamic attributes and attitudes in*

¹³ Wahib, A., *The Upheaval of Islamic Thought*, p. 74.

¹⁴ Wahib, A., *The Upheaval of Islamic Thought*, p. 34.

the face of the challenges of modernization, secularization, socialism and Marxism. In the course of his search, Wahib raised issues that were "unheard of by many, especially those related to religious matters", and "showed thoughts that at the time were considered 'obsolete' from the minds that were considered common among Muslims," on the basis of absolute freedom of conscience and mental capacity, and thus, "it is not surprising that many of the things he wrote were enough to make most people's foreheads wrinkle, especially for those who consider what he is questioning to be taboo and final questions".

This record reveals the content of his thoughts obtained from his contemplation and the experience he absorbed from the natural phenomena that were revealed. He is not much based on scientific methods and references to foreign literature that are outside his educational and social environment, as he expresses: "I don't have the capital of knowledge. All I have is the desire or emotion to think, to continue to seek the truth and to strive to uphold honesty and goodness. That is why the thoughts that I collect in the writings are more of a scientific analysis. Most of my thoughts are just the result of meditation while eating, sleeping, riding a bicycle, walking along the highway, watching movies, riding spurs, etc. without an adequate knowledge base." ¹⁵

Background of Livelihood

Ahmad Wahib was born on November 9, 1942 in the city of Sampang, Madura, in a strong association with religious principles. His father, Pak Sulaiman was a religious leader and leader in his area. According to Wahib, his father was an enforcer and pioneer of the *islam* movement in Indonesia, which was somewhat radical: "My father was a rebel in his time. In his youth he had criticized some of the contents of religious books that he considered incompatible with the Qur'an and hadith. He even told his teachers and friends that books like *Sultam* and *Safina* needed an overhaul... My father was the first santri figure in Sampang to send his daughter to public school. And he was the first santri figure in Sampang to marry his son just as required by religion, something that I myself still question, but it was the courage of my father to make other alternatives to his environment. And this kind of thing needs to be studied." ¹⁶

Wahib himself, once tasted a short life of the pesantren even though he did not study student discipline. Wahib entered the general education path and took a definite study at Pamekasan High School in 1961. He continued his studies to Yogyakarta and enrolled at the Faculty of Exact and Natural Sciences (FIPA) Gadjah Mada University. However, he did not have time to complete his studies even though he had reached the final level. In his early years in Yogya,

¹⁵ Wahib, A., *The Upheaval of Islamic Thought*, p. 72.

¹⁶ Wahib, A., *Upheaval of Islamic Thought*, p. 80.

Wahib stayed in a catholic dormitory, a Realino student dormitory. This is where he begins his notes about his experiences with Muslim children in the dormitory going to the mosque every Friday, the concept of the sermon he sketched for his friend, and the notes of the books he had to buy as a FIPA student, and the titles of the articles he recorded from *Gema Islam* magazine, *Al-Jamiah* and others and classified them well.

While studying in Yogya, he was active in the student movement, and was a member of HMI as a prominent activist and absorbed into the "elite environment" of HMI Yogyakarta. Outside of HMI, Wahib joined the "Discussion Circle *Limited Group*" led by H.A. Mukti Ali. His social environment was quite wide, and he tied up intellectual networks with prominent figures such as A.R. Baswedan, Ki Muhammad Tauchid, Samhudi, Karkono, Ashadi Siregar, Tahi Simbolon, Aini Chalid and several other figures from the former Masyumi, Ahmadiyah and PNI constituent members. Wahib also wrote papers and articles published in daily newspapers and his critical articles on religious and political issues and his views on the future of Islamic architecture.

Between 1969 and 1973 Wahib began working as a candidate reporter at Tempo magazine, which he said had "seized his time" to think about big ideas about society and the state and outline his enlightenment aspirations. He expressed this when describing his background as a journalist, and the difficulty of maintaining his idealism to be compromised by the pressure of living in a violent city: "Well, what occupies my mind a lot as a journalist is: presenting an event in the form of news so that it is clear to the reader and at the same time appeals to their hearts. There is little time to think intensely about what the problems in these events are (the horizontal aspects, the strange problems, which are much more interesting to report from their vertical aspects, the surface phenomena that are very contemporary) and their solutions. Thinking seriously about the real subject matter, is not enough. This is probably what makes my brain dull and my thinking ability decreases. Many things that I used to almost master well, now seem like foreign goods after four months of being a journalist. But what to say. I have to pursue this work, no matter how negative the effects." ¹⁷

Islam Without Apology

His thinking was based on the conception that man should "use his thinking power to the fullest". Therefore, many of his beliefs are based on rationalism and logical views. His religious understanding is based on a *zahir*

¹⁷ Wahib, A., *The Upheaval of Islamic Thought*, p. 150.

textual foundation that celebrates the hermenetic meaning of the explicit and implicit path. His interpretation of the Qur'an and al-hadith is based on *the asbabun nuzul* or the spirit of the times revealed verses which according to him are "less seen" by the interpreter in unravelling the understanding of the text. This prompted him to criticize attempts to desecrate and rape the verses of the Qur'an and hadith pronouncements either in use or interpretation. According to him, the use of verses should be associated with the spiritual constellation of the recording of the journey of the Prophet (saw), as well as its highest and pure essence and maqasid. He rejects the naked understanding of hadith texts without reference to the background and spirit of the times (*zeitgeist*) that presents them (*asbabul wurud*).

He also criticised the outdated and conservative ideas in the HMI leadership, which fundamentally contradicted his progressive and reformist views. According to him, the line taken by HMI from 1967 to mid-1969 was an outdated, reactionary and primitive step. His struggle in formulating the conception of HMI continued, and from the Malang congress, he gave birth to the conceptual framework of HMI and outlined its role to become a modern, cadres, independent, and non-committed organization to a group.

His philosophy of thought is intensely connected with all possibilities and his interactions with: religion, tradition, people, nation, humanity, organization and others. He expressed a strong belief in the philosophy of freedom that gives room for conversion and the proliferation of ideas, and expressed the idealism of the struggle that defends personal independence and freedom in shaping his thinking and the direction of his views: "Today many things are on my mind. For example, will I be like the old people I often criticize today? How do I keep my thoughts young and my desire for a steady direction in my thoughts? I think the first thing is to develop a basic attitude that appreciates and understands the various realms of mind in all times and places. The second is to always follow the development of existing thinking and pay attention to social problems with the basic attitudes above so that we can always be given refreshments and new ideas."¹⁸

Social Scene

Wahib fought for progressive social values that revealed the foundations of freedom and justice and *the responsibility of the jama'i* in the struggle. The social theories he outlines reflect the aspirations of the struggle to defend justice,

¹⁸ Wahib, A., *The Upheaval of Islamic Thought*, p. 20.

freedom, honesty, change, and the cultivation of civil society and embrace universalist values of truth inspired by various cultural frameworks and traditions. In formulating Nurcholish Madjid's progressive ideas on Islamic social and political policies he expressed: "The ideas of socialism and democracy... should be accepted as the main theme of the struggle of Muslims as well as as a concrete formulation of the teachings of the Qur'an. This thought he put forward as the realization of an open-minded attitude towards the peaks of human thought on social problems, wherever the idea or idea comes from, as Muslims have opened their attitude to the work of the Westerners in the field of natural problems - science and technology." ¹⁹

He also reminded of the threat of repression planned by the government to suppress the people's movement by manipulating the intellectuals: "After escaping from the old oppression, are the Indonesian intellectuals not entangled in subtle new forms of oppression, and do they all need to leave their professions as *professional rebels*? Now most intellectuals have become technocrats, aka screws in the government's rhetoric. Intellectuals in turn are used again by the government to defend *its policies* or as *solidarity makers*. Apparently, the government is indeed trying to hedge itself with intellectual arguments. Therefore, intellectuals need to foster a radical, dynamic and puritanical *moral movement* among free intellectuals (artists, students, lecturers, experts who have the target of control, the government (*sic*), in addition to the forces of society itself, so that the power of the ABRI and GOLKAR does not become absolute." ²⁰

His social views and philosophy are based on the ideals of freedom and a strategic *democratic attitude*, which provides space for freedom and encourages the proliferation of thoughts. According to him: "One of the attitudes of a democrat is not to commit mental terror against people who want to behave differently. Letting others determine their attitude with a feeling of freedom, without fear, according to their own heart is a reflection of the attitude of a democrat... The Democrats' target is not "to make him decide on his attitude as we have" but "to make him consciously aware of his weaknesses". Democrats don't like it when others agree or agree with him because they have to, because they are horrified by violent attacks or all kinds of mental terror." ²¹

One of the catalysts for mass empowerment, as expressed by Wahib, is a robust methodological framework. Progress in the west, with its achievements

¹⁹ Wahib, A., *The Upheaval of Islamic Thought*, p. 92.

²⁰ Wahib, A., *The Upheaval of Islamic Thought*, p. 192.

²¹ Wahib, A., *The Upheaval of Islamic Thought*, p. 58.

in science and technology and the agility of its ideas and civilizations, has been greatly influenced by the mold of its ideal method, compared to the situation of the ummah in this region which is still shackled by dilapidated discourse and clashing of ideas between the young and the old. According to him: "The field of methodology is very advanced in the western world, with which tools they can tear apart one after another the veil that envelops these secrets of nature, society and humanity. In the western world methodologies are developed and used not only to obtain new truths, but also to disseminate existing truths. Seeking certain truths in order to spread other truths that already exist. This is called methodology in teaching. They diligently conduct research in the field of methodology, including in this teaching methodology how to teach a science or way as efficiently as possible. In Indonesia, we learn French for many years and then we can say that we have mastered it. In the United States, thanks to efficient methods, teaching French with the same results can be done in much shorter time." ²²

Religious Experience

The religious thought he handled was mostly focused on theological questions, which outlined 9 main themes, which explored 1. God's work in the world in theological review, covering the issues: God, man and nature, sunnatullah, ayatollah and the revelation of Allah; revelation as a matter of theology; Islamic concepts of historical development; the issue of God's transcendence and the manifestation of His actions in real life; human beings as caliphs and secularization as a theological problem; 2. The concept of man in Islam, includes the following problems: Islam, the mystery of destiny; the duties of human authority; 3. The position of the Qur'an and Sunnah in understanding Islam; 4. The evolution of nature and man; 5. Atheism; encompassing the problems: the divine and the existential; the possibility of dialogue with atheism; 6. The development of theology among Christians 7. Theological attitudes towards non-Islamic religions; 8. Faith in the unseen, covering the problems: what is meant by the unseen; angels, jinn and demons; Adam, Eve, heaven and hell; afterlife; 9. The problem of the congregation in the individual nature of Islam, includes the following problems: Islamic solidarity; political religion and spiritual religion.

The basic concern he often raises is hypocrisy, embodied in the practice of religious elitists who show the contradiction between theoretical and practical

²² Wahib, A., *The Upheaval of Islamic Thought*, p. 156.

values, as he asserts: "religious groups are incapable of translating their ideas in secular languages plus the hypocrisy of some of their own exponents... Therefore, it is the obligation of religious groups to introspect why they are now so incompetent (criticism of religious groups is not heard)." ²³

He dealt with many of the crises that arose in religion by referring directly to the book and the sunnah, by setting aside the role of religious authority in his environment, as he stated: "Frankly, I would like to meet the Prophet Muhammad (saw) in person and would like to invite him to live in this 20th century and give him his answers. I have lost faith in the so-called heirs." ²⁴

This desire is reinforced by his argument that the only judge in Islam is conscience: "the only judge in Islam for the life of a Muslim is his conscience, not the fatwa of the ulama, not the contents of religious books, the rulings of friends and so on. All of the latter are just considerations that really must be considered. Islam is conscience after taking into account the opinions, interests, ideals of others and the social groups around them." ²⁵

Wahib carries the idea and idealism of a great struggle, to uphold freedom of ideas and thoughts and awaken awareness and spirit of *ijtihad*. His determination is to ground the appreciation of religion according to the framework outlined by the law and sharia. The strength of his idealism was consistently maintained, even though it was shaken by the challenges that came one after another, as he described when he was grappling with life in Jakarta: "In Jakarta I felt foreign. I don't have any personal friends... How many of my own good friends were reluctant and distanced themselves from me after they knew that there was no more gain to be gained from a person who had no power like me. So what is that power? Call it money, influence and social status! Consider how many idealists have collapsed and have now compromised. What they used to attack, now they do it themselves. Yogya is often referred to by some friends as the city of idealists. As far as I can see, no idealists from Yogya can survive their idealism in Jakarta, a fierce city. In Jakarta, they are "forced" to be inconsistent. Now I must confidently hold my fate in my own hands." ²⁶

Reconstruction and Ijtihad

The ideals of reform initiated by Wahib emphasized the importance of *ijtihad* and efforts to work on sharia *maqasid* and legal idealism. In the process

²³ Wahib, A., *The Upheaval of Islamic Thought*, p. 36.

²⁴ Wahib, A., *The Upheaval of Islamic Thought*, p. 132

²⁵ Wahib, A., *The Upheaval of Islamic Thought*, p. 39.

²⁶ Wahib, A., *The Upheaval of Islamic Thought*, p. 92.

of reform, Wahib put forward the ideas of thorough and consistent thought about the courage to think and polemic, the method of throwing new ideas, the integral scholarship policy, the basis for the reform of Islamic thought, the principles of rationalism, intellectual honesty, and the social and political implications of changing views on religion, as well as the revolutionary practices of the reformers. He expressed the principles of freedom of thought and giving and denial of the dilapidated taklid culture. This ability is backed up by the confidence of generating innovative ideas, and driving a sustainable culture. This is what Wahib expressed when he saw the naivety of the life of the oppressed people from the point of view of economic achievement and the renewal of ideas.

"I don't understand the situation in Indonesia, there are people who have been pedicab drivers for ten years. It does not increase. A barber told me that he had been working as a barber for 20 years. His income is almost constant. How is this? Why are there Indonesians who have been the same workers for decades? Their knowledge has not increased either. What is the difference between shaving 3 years and shaving 20 years? What is the difference between boosting a pedicab for a year and ten years? The idea of moving forward even slowly is still very lacking in Indonesia. Recently I saw a picture of an old man in a magazine. He has been a dodol cutter for 35 years at a dodol company. Cut it down... Cut it on, every second, hour, day, month, year,..., up to 35 years. Masya Allah!

For me, in working it must be guaranteed and fought for two things:

Income must increase

Experience and knowledge must continue to grow."²⁷

This backward and oppressed position far from economic development is what triggered his conviction and fighting power to improve and renew the lives and identity of the people and to launch his liberal ideas about strategic economic stimulus measures.

Conclusion

In closing, the brief discussion highlighted above concludes that the philosophy of thought put forward by Ahmad Wahib is formulated based on practical, critical and rational considerations to answer religious problems from a broad and dynamic legal framework. His worldview is based on the fresh tradition of *akliyah* that has colored the Islamic Middle Ages and given birth to a tradition of thought and *ijtihad* that also triggered the enlightenment and

²⁷ Wahib, A., *The Upheaval of Islamic Thought*, p. 51.

discovery of civilization in the west. Wahib has mapped out something to continue, his thoughts recorded in his diary are a treasure trove of thoughts that are valuable for the younger generation. The idealism of thought initiated by Wahib must be proclaimed as an ideal Islamic fikrah towards the restoration of consciousness and ijtihad, as expressed by Wahib when revealing his reflection on his philosophy: I am not Wahib. I am me-wahib. I seek, and continue to seek, to and become Wahib. Yes, I'm not me. I am the self, the one who is constantly evolving into me.

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