

Religion in the Postmodern Thought

Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi^{1*}

¹ Universitas Darussalam Gontor, Indonesia.

Citation (CMS-fullnote):

Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi. "Religion in the Postmodern Thought," JIOS 2, no. 1 (2024): 67-81,
<https://doi.org/10.21111/jios.v2i1.41>

Submitted: 19 June 2024

Revised: 20 June 2024

Accepted: 22 June 2024

Published: 22 June 2024

Copyright: © 2024 by Journal of Islamic and Occidental Studies (JIOS).

Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).



Abstract: As understood, postmodernism is a worldview that borrows its nomenclature from the era after modernism. It became a progressive thought with ideas notable for denouncing absolute truth. This article aims to explain what postmodernism is and how religion is understood by its people, mainly by referring to the thoughts of postmodern philosophers who played an important role in undermining religious traditions through the devaluation of religious values, namely Nietzsche (1884-1900), Wittgenstein (1889-1951) and Heidegger (1889-1976). In the discussion, it is found that postmodernism has a distinctive conception of God and religion. It dissolves the highest values, which is God, to which all other value may refer to as their foundations. Since human reason cannot conceive the nature of God, postmodern intellect disestablishes the metaphysical way of thinking. Thus, the postmodernists get it religion in so diverse way that conflicting to the predominant conviction of theologians.

Keywords: *Postmodernism, Religion, God, Metaphysics, Value.*

Abstrak: Seperti yang dipahami, pascamodernisme adalah pandangan dunia yang meminjam nomenklatur dari era setelah modernisme. Ini menjadi pemikiran progresif dengan ide-ide yang terkenal karena mengancam kebenaran absolut. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan apa itu pascamodernisme dan bagaimana agama dipahami oleh para penganutnya, terutama dengan merujuk pada pemikiran para filsuf pascamodernisme yang berperan penting dalam meruntuhkan tradisi agama melalui devaluasi nilai-nilai agama, yaitu Nietzsche

* **Corresponding Author:** Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, (hfzark@unida.gontor.ac.id), Universitas Darussalam Gontor, Indonesia.

(1884-1900), Wittgenstein (1889-1951), dan Heidegger (1889-1976). Artikel ini menemukan bahwa pascamodernisme memiliki konsepsi yang khas tentang Tuhan dan agama. Paham ini meleburkan nilai-nilai tertinggi, yaitu Tuhan, yang menjadi dasar bagi semua nilai lainnya. Karena akal manusia tidak dapat memahami sifat Tuhan, maka akal pascamodernisme meniadakan cara berpikir metafisik. Dengan demikian, kaum pascamodernis mendapatkan agama dengan cara yang sangat beragam yang bertentangan dengan keyakinan utama para teolog.

Kata Kunci: *Pascamodernisme, Agama, Tuhan, Metafisik, Nilai.*

Introduction

Religion in the postmodern thought is an animated discourse among sociologists, philosophers and religious thinkers. Akbar S Ahmed,¹ Ernest Gellner,² David Griffin,³ and Huston Smith⁴, are few examples of the current thinkers who presented their extensive and interesting discourse on the subject. There are, at least two reasons, why this issue is now significant and is fascinated. First, the issue of religion is unceasingly discussed from the modern until postmodern time. Second, postmodernism is a contemporary movement as well as a philosophical doctrine that according to Gellner its influence stretched out into anthropology, literary studies, philosophy, and religion.⁵ Although these assumptions might be reckoned too simplistic in some ways, they may assist us to discern its relevance and to determine the best possible approach to this issue. Apparently to deal with postmodern thought we need to trace back what had prevailed in the modern era. In consonant with this view Akbar holds that considering modernism is the pre-condition to define and to measure postmodernism.⁶ Silverman in somewhat a strong tone posits that the significance of postmodernism is to *marginalize, delimit* and *decentre* the primary work of the modernist.⁷ This implies that to apprehend the postmodern thought necessitate the review of the modern thought, as for the former *dissolved* the latter. From this way of approaching the issue we may determine that to elaborate the postmodern view of religion we have to trace back the “early”

¹ Akbar S. Ahmed, *Postmodernism and Islam* (London: Routledge, 1992).

² Ernest Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1992).

³ David Ray Griffin, ed., *God and Religion in the Postmodern World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

⁴ Huston Smith, *Beyond the Postmodern Mind: The Place of Meaning in a Global Civilization* (Illinois: Quest Book the Theosophical Publishing House, 1989).

⁵ Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, 23.

⁶ Ahmed, *Postmodernism and Islam*, 6.

⁷ Hugh J. Silverman, “The Philosophy of Postmodernism,” in *Postmodernism-Philosophy and the Art*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman (London: Routledge, 1990), 1.

postmodern thinkers whose doctrine had attacked the modern foundation of religion. Postmodern concept of value is the most relevant. Therefore, this discourse will restrict and highlight the thoughts of the postmodern philosophers who played their determinant role in disestablishing religious traditions through devaluating the religious values. Nietzsche (1884-1900), Wittgenstein (1889-1951) and Heidegger (1889-1976), are the major philosophers whose thought and doctrine are quite relevance in this respect. While elaborating their doctrines the corresponding thought of others will be alluded.

Result and Discussion

The Rise of Postmodernism

There are controversies among the historians regarding the rise of postmodernism. It is because to mark the emergence of postmodernism is not such a simple thing as it involves a longstanding process of change and reform deeply rooted in the condition of modern time and even before. Despite that controversy the generally accepted assumption suggests that mark for the rise of postmodernism being the disclosure of modernity. What is our particular concern is that in the area of religion the rise of postmodernism brought a distinctive change from pre-modern and modern period. The landmarks of changes are discernable from the approaches that tend to be moving from theistic to secular and atheistic.

The theistic nature of Western mind according to Houston Smith prevailed until the eleventh century and was characterized by the trend that God was the central discourse of the philosophers and theologians.⁸ In the following centuries the Western mind, which had come to be capsulated in the so-called Modern Mind brought a new way of looking at things and resulted in the rise of modern science, during which the Western worldview underwent cardinal change.⁹ The discourse concerning God was limited only among theologians, whereas the philosophers took much interest on sciences. The period when the project of modernity came into focus, according to Habermas was the 18th century, in which case the rational modes of thought promised liberation from irrationality of myth, religion and superstition.¹⁰ This, in fact, was a secular movement sought the demystification and desacralization of

⁸ Smith, *Beyond the Postmodern Mind: The Place of Meaning in a Global Civilization*, 5.

⁹ Smith, 4.

¹⁰David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 12–13.

knowledge and social organization. James E. Crimmins notes that in the process of desacralization, or in Weber's terminology 'disenchantment', in the West, science has often been set against religion and depicted as one of the principal agents of the retreat of traditional religion.¹¹ The outcome of this condition was the desacralization of religion and changes from being the central discourse.¹²

The foregoing sketch suggests that by the abolishment of the transcendental values, divine as well as human, God is subsumed into the soul of nation and that is culture. This is in a way could imply the liberation of rational thought from religion and any other kind of belief. In fact, it is a time of critical question against religion and accursed period when the discussion of whether God exist or not was very little. Despite that condition Alain believes that the 18th century was still metaphysical century,¹³ but the metaphysical foundation to defend religious truth gradually became untenable and waited for the destruction of metaphysics in the following century.

The nineteenth century is the time when modernity began to be questioned by a new philosophical movement, which has lost the conviction that reality is personal. While in philosophy the sense of the cosmos has been shaken by skepticism, in scientific field this permeates the stance of science towards reality. The major tendency of these movements is that they doubt that reality has an absolute order which man's understanding can comprehend. This, the denial of absolutism, is a serious blow towards central discipline of philosophy, namely objective metaphysics. The emergence of existentialism and analytic philosophy, two dominant movements and the creature of the Postmodern Mind then replaced the metaphysical system. Silverman asserts that the closure of metaphysical path of thinking and the end of modernism are coincidence.¹⁴ This new system of thought is called Postmodernism. However, the rise of postmodernism was not only marked by the replacement of objective metaphysics with the new system but also the denigration religious doctrine, which is based on metaphysics. The turning point from metaphysical to analytical path of thinking can be referred to the ideas of Marx and Nietzsche

¹¹ James E. Crimmins, ed., *Religions, Secularization, and Political Thought* (London: Routledge, 1990), 7.

¹² Alain Finkielkraut, *The Defeat of the Mind*, trans. Judith Friedlander (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 18.

¹³ Finkielkraut, 19.

¹⁴ Silverman, "The Philosophy of Postmodernism," 5.

on religion.¹⁵ So with reference to our assumption it is true that the postmodern approach of religion is atheistic. In what follows we shall elaborate one of the most notable programs of postmodernism that is the renowned doctrine of value.

Postmodern Concept of Value

The concept of value is highly significant in our current discussion because on the one hand it is *sine qua non* of religious thought and well-known doctrine of postmodernism on the other. The program of postmodernism is the dissolution of modernity through the radicalization of its own constitutive tendency. It is performed by a critique of the higher value through a reduction of these values.¹⁶ When the program is pursued the result is the dissolution of value by itself. This celebrated doctrine, announced for the first time by Nietzsche (1844-1900) and contributes much to the devaluation of value, is *nihilism*. In the beginning of the *Will to Power* Nietzsche illustrates nihilism as the situation in which “man rolls from the centre towards X”, which mean “that the highest values devaluate themselves.”¹⁷ Heidegger (1889-1976) in rather the same tone defines nihilism as “the process in which, at the end, there is nothing left of Being as such.”¹⁸ The two has almost the same mindset and tendency. In Nietzsche the process of *nihilism* is the devaluation of the highest value, which lead to his renowned doctrine, “the death of God”. In Heidegger nihilism implies that Being is annihilated in so far as it is transformed into value or the reduction of Being into value, in which case, reality has no absolute order and reduced into Being and in turns into value. The flow of Nietzsche and Heidegger’s argument similarly results in the devaluated value, which no longer rely on something metaphysical, religious or divine.

¹⁵ Nancy Love, *Marx, Nietzsche, and Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 1–7, 113–34.

¹⁶ Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-Modern Culture*, ed. Jon R. Snyder (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 167.

¹⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (New York: Vintage Book, 1968), 8–9.

¹⁸ Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-Modern Culture*, 19.

The doctrine of the so-called “European nihilism” is that it is a new way of determining the concept of value in place of religious belief. Snyder asserts that *nihilism* is chiefly concerned with the resolution and dissolution of truth into value but in the form of human belief and opinion.¹⁹ In terms of Nietzsche the dissolution of truth into value is in the form of “will to power.” This means that philosophy of nihilism aims to dissect and dissolve all the claim of traditional metaphysical thought. Metaphysics, in which God is its absolute foundation of thought and value, is denigrated and left aside. It is because, as Nietzsche holds, when metaphysics reaches the point of the supposed truth like God and soul, it is nothing more than subjective values and no less error than any other human belief and opinion. To him, there is no difference between truth and error, for both are always ‘delusory’ and we cannot rely on anyone of them. So, if we reject the error we have also to reject the truth or “to do away with one is to do away with other too”.²⁰ On the basis of this doctrine Nietzsche defines metaphysics as “science which deal with the fundamental errors of mankind, but as if they were fundamental truth”.²¹ The blow of the doctrine of nihilism towards the metaphysical thought indicates the attack of the religion as the basis of morality.

The theory of European nihilism can be more obviously viewed from what is now usually referred to as the “the philosophy of difference”, ascribed to both of Nietzsche and Heidegger. All the distinction between truth and falsehood, rational and irrational must be dissolved outside or prior to our language and the concept embedded in it. *Difference* is essentially a product of the human “will to power” or “the will to interpret”. This means that everything we encounter in our experience of the world is no more and no less than an interpretation; and thing in the world is always interpreted into the terms of our own subjective values. Due to this interpretative tendency the only world that can ever be known is the world of differences or the world of interpretation. The philosophy of difference supplies one of the key links

¹⁹Vattimo, xi.

²⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idol*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 41. In *Will To Power*, he asserts that “Truth is the kind of error” Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 493.

²¹ Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-Modern Culture*, xii.

between nihilism and hermeneutics (the philosophy of interpretation).²² So nihilism and philosophy of difference marked the phenomena of postmodernity, but in its later development the rejection of transcendental truth is obvious. Ernest Gellner states that the atmosphere of the Postmodern thought is discernable from the notion that “everything is text, that the basic material of text, societies and almost anything is meaning, that meaning are there to be decoded or ‘deconstructed’, that the notion of objective reality is suspect.”²³ In the current intellectual atmosphere the world is meanings. Everything is meaning and meaning is everything, and hermeneutic is its prophet. For this condition Gellner infers that postmodernism tends to be in favor of *relativism*.²⁴ Not only was this label the tendency of *relativism* but also shows the hostility to the idea of unique, exclusive, objective, external or transcendent truth. It is because postmodern mind holds that truth is inward and subjective things and that the world is not totality of things, but of facts.

In short, the postmodern philosophy dissolves the highest values, which is God, to which all other value may refer to as their foundations. All values must be said to stand in a relationship of universal equivalence where each value is equal to all other value and can be converted into, or exchange for, any other given value. Therefore, the true nature of all value is exchange value, and it is into this flux of value that the traditional metaphysics has today begun to dissolve and disappear. Now if the experience of Postmodernity is the reduction of everything to exchange value, which implies the infinite interpretability of reality, there would be no legitimate value that has privilege over any other value; every human subject engages in an endless labor of interpretation of every aspect of existence. Thus, religion has no more right to claim to have a privilege over human source of value invented by the philosophers. Hence religion is perceived as the same as man’s own perception carrying no absolute truth in it and hence having equal status to philosophy. If

²² Vattimo, xiii.

²³ Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, 23.

²⁴ For further detail of the discussion of religious relativism see Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi et al., “The Impact of Postmodernism on the Thought of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (IMIs),” *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization (JITC)* 13, no. 2 (2023): 30–47, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.132.03>.

this is the case religion in the postmodern thought constitute quite different form and nature.

Postmodern View of Religion

From the foregoing it is obvious that western thought in religion was first theistic in nature and then, in the modern period, it moves to secular approach and finally, in the postmodern era, became atheistic. It seems that the Western concept of religion undergone a systematic changes leading to postmodern attitude. The turning point of that change that occur along with the rise of the postmodern thought is that the philosophers reduced theology into anthropology,²⁵ in which the Christian God is described as nothing else than a product and reflect of the supernatural human mind. Further development shows that from anthropological nature the description of God moves to the explanation of man's historical condition. Marx, for example argues that religions express human suffering that caused by economic exchange relation or separation of modern man's egoistic life in civil society from his species-life in political community.²⁶ Nietzsche also thinks that religions express suffering, but suffering of different sort. To him man suffers because he is sickly animal; he suffers himself from the internalization of his instinct, which accompanies social existence. What man suffers from is the meaningless of his existence. So he suffered from the problem of his meaning.²⁷ These ideas disclose that the absolute reality, value and power, namely God, was belittled and replaced by human values. Therefore, Alfred North Whitehead noted that the new trend of thinking in the twentieth century is "away of faith".²⁸ Akbar illustrates that the postmodern trend of thought is the rejection of the established religion.²⁹ Foucault portrays the postmodern condition from the description of its consequences:

²⁵ Ludwig Fuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), xii, xli.

²⁶ Karl Marx, *Early Writing*, ed. Quinton Hoare, trans. Gregor Benton and Rodney Livingston (New York: Random House, 1975), 1: 378.

²⁷ Love, *Marx, Nietzsche, and Modernity*, 124.

²⁸ Smith, *Beyond the Postmodern Mind: The Place of Meaning in a Global Civilization*, 8.

²⁹ Ahmed, *Postmodernism and Islam*, 27.

“Most of us no longer believe that ethic is founded in religion, nor do we want a legal system to intervene in our moral, personal, private life. Recent liberation movements suffer from the fact that they cannot find any principle on which to base the elaboration of a new ethic. They need an ethic, but they cannot find any other ethic than an ethic founded on so-called scientific knowledge of what the self is, what desire is, what the unconscious is and so on.”³⁰

Thus, the salient feature of religion in the postmodern era was its being discarded from its previous status as the source of human value and of truth. The approach is now based on a mental concept, which is isolated from the concept of belief or the conception of God and accordingly became atheistic. These in turn shake the prevailing concept of belief, of religiosity and of truth. So, the concept of God, of religiosity and of religious truth will be the three focal points that would hopefully depict the postmodern thought of religion.

The atheistic approach towards religion was due to the failure of the postmodern thinkers to comprehend the concept of God. Nietzsche’s pronouncement on “the death of God”, which is a philosophical rather than theological statement, was an ample evidence of this. In his *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche accuses the vague concept of God (of theologians) as responsible for the decline of theism in Europe. To him, God in Christianity cannot hear, and if he can he does not know how to help. God also cannot make himself clearly understood and He is himself vague about what He means.³¹ But interestingly, as he could not understand God he formulates his own concept based on perception. To him God is human perception of something strong and great in himself.³²

The foregoing quotation exhibits that atheistic approach, for it shows that Nietzsche does not believe that God exist, real and external to man. God is simply human perception about something he feel strong. Besides, he also rejects the teaching of an established religion, Christianity. In his *Will to Power* he says that “the entire Christian teaching as to what shall be believed, the entire Christian ‘truth’ is idle falsehood and deception: and precisely the opposite of what inspired the Christian movement in the beginning. The Christian way of life is no more a fantasy than the Buddhist way of life: it is a means to being happy.”³³ Nietzsche seems to be showing his frustrated feeling against this religion and came with an idea that satisfies his own thought. He admits that “Christianity is still possible at any time”, but it does not necessarily rely on dogma, require neither the doctrine of personal God nor that of immortality, nor that of redemption, nor that of faith and it has absolutely no need of metaphysics.³⁴ The religion that would perhaps satisfy

³⁰ David Owen, *Maturity and Modernity: Nietzsche, Weber, Foucault and the Ambivalence of Reason* (London: Routledge, 1994), 200.

³¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Classic, 1972), 62.

³² Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 86–87.

³³ Nietzsche, 98.

³⁴ Nietzsche, 124–25.

Nietzsche thought is that which forms a way of life and not a system of belief, which tells us how to act and not what we ought to believe. He prefers the act in the world rather than the concept of belief in God.

Like Nietzsche, Heidegger's rejection of God of metaphysics is consistent with a non-metaphysical relationship to God. To him the upshot of thinking for theology is to cease to think of God as *cause sui*, as the causal energy that creates and sustain the cosmos, and to turn instead to the God before whom one can dance or bend one's knees. This he calls the truly Divine God.³⁵ Heidegger's rejection of God of metaphysics and non-metaphysics agree with Wittgenstein. He claims that he has understood the conception of God, in so far as it is involved in one's awareness of one's own sin and guilt, but he could not understand the conception of Creator.³⁶ This indicates that he can hardly understand and believe God in the metaphysical sense, as the creator, the sustainer and the cause of this universe. For if God is conceived in such way its application in reality would become problematic. In his *Notebooks* of 1916 Wittgenstein says that talking something about the world is talking about its meaning and 'to pray is to think about the meaning of life; and to believe in God means to see that life has a meaning. It is because God does not reveal himself in the world.'³⁷ Thus, the problem is that Wittgenstein tried to replace the belief in God with the meaning of life and substitute praying to God with thinking about the meaning of life. Here the significance and the essence of praying as religious activities, especially in relation to the activity of thinking is not given adequate explanation. In his *Lecture and Conversation* he says that when the thoughts of human life is found in worship in the form of praising and glorifying, it does not refer to God, it is only worship of God.³⁸ What is interesting noting here is that on the one hand he admits the ritual activities in religion and on the other hand he rejects God, to whom the worshipping activities is directed. It is indeed inconceivable to admit religion and to perform worship without believing in the existence of God. The focal point of the above account is that both Wittgenstein and Nietzsche reject the idea that religion rests on metaphysical foundation, but when this rejection is applied to religious life or to "non-metaphysical relationship to God" it becomes untenable.

The way the postmodernists perceive God and the manner they conceive religion must have brought several consequences. If religion is perceived as such the form of religiosity must have corresponded it. Wittgenstein characterized the religiosity not from merely ritual activities, like to say a lot of prayers but from social activities, like helping other people:

³⁵John D. Caputo, "Heidegger and Theology," in *Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B. Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 285.

³⁶Norman Malcolm, *Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View*, ed. Peter Winch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 9.

³⁷Malcolm, 10.

³⁸Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lecture and Conversation on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, ed. C. Barret (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966), 56.

“But remember that Christianity is not a matter saying a lot of prayers; in fact we are told not to do that. If you and I are to live religious lives, it mustn't be that we talk a lot about religion, but that our manner of life is different. It is my belief that only if you try to be helpful to other people will you in the end of your way to God.”³⁹

Wittgenstein's concept of religiosity coincidentally corresponds to Nietzsche's understanding of religion. While the former admit that religiosity refers to social and not ritual activities, the latter holds that religion is not necessarily based on faith, dogma or belief in the personal God. But what should be the basis of social act is not given ample explication. If the social act is based simply on human judgment and nothing to do with the whole concept of belief, it become no more religious, for God is not involved in it. If being social can bring someone to the way to God the concept of social act should be based on what is commanded by God. To discern the command of God necessitates the very fundamental concept of belief, mainly the concept of God. Here Wittgenstein's conception looks problematic, for he holds that the philosophical proof of the existence of God could not bring anyone to believe in God. Although one is able to prove God's existence in an intellectual analysis he himself would never have to believe such proof. It is because, he argues, one could convince someone of God's existence through a certain kind of upbringing, by shaping his life in such and such a way or by experiences.⁴⁰ This statement implies that Wittgenstein views religiosity from the quantity of works, but the works are separated from the doctrine of creeds. Certainly, this will result in the works that are isolated from religious tenets. This is parallel to Wittgenstein's prediction that the future of religious life will not depend upon churches and it will be without any priest or ministries. Consequently, one should live without the consolation of belonging to a church.⁴¹ This view, though looks like sociological analysis, clearly rejects the religious authority that must have been the consequence of postmodern doctrine of *nihilism*. This is relevant to what was asserted by Snyder above that the religious truth is dissolved into value that emerges in the form of human belief and opinion. However, Dupre asserts that any attempt on the basis of pure reason to

³⁹ Malcolm, *Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View*, 11.

⁴⁰ Malcolm, 19.

⁴¹ Malcolm, 20.

establish or disestablish the truth of religion must indeed result in distortion.⁴² Now it is worth looking at the postmodern views of religious truth.

Nietzsche in his *Will to Power* asserts that truth in the old sense was truth only because the old morality affirmed it, and it follows that we no longer have need of any former truths. Truth is dependent on morality and that morality is supreme value, which is determined by the instinct of decadence. Therefore, he infers that we have to abolish the supreme value hitherto morality. So, in place of metaphysics and religious values he introduces what he calls “naturalistic value”, which is proved “by presupposition concerning what truth ought to be like for us to recognize it.”⁴³ This notion of truth while rendering his *nihilistic* doctrine, demonstrates an attempt to dissolve religious truth into value or to replace religious truth with that of philosophy. In fact, he tries to replace the ontological and moral quality of truth with a purely cognitive one. This standpoint was so dominant among the postmodern philosophers that many who had become disheartened about the prospect of religious truth fill the demands for empirical verification and introduce a new form to escape the trouble, that is linguistic theory. Wittgenstein, who wrote *Philosophical Investigation* is one of those who reputed with this theory. Nevertheless, linguistic theories usually legitimate any discourse in its own right, independently of others. If the theories are to relate to what has been traditionally understood as religious truth, they require several qualifications. The systems in the theories must be coherent not only within itself but also with other. The basic interpretation of experience should not contradict the higher system of interpretation where religious truth places its stake.

The situation seems problematic, as the truth of religion and of philosophy is irreconcilable. On the one hand religion cannot justify the truth of philosophy and philosophy resist accepting religious truth on the other. The challenge for religion is that its truth should share some basic assumptions with other areas of truth. Otherwise, the term *truth* in it would cease to preserve any meaning at all. To fulfil the task philosophers need to move back to the realm of ontological truth. Heidegger attempted to establish a theory of religious truth that reasserts the priority of *ontological* over *epistemic* truth. He regards that truth derived from the cognition of things, even the correct one, is not more

⁴²Louis Dupre, “Truth in Religion and Truth of Religion,” in *Phenomenology of the Truth Proper to Religion*, ed. Daniel Guerriere (New York: SUNY, 1990), 19–28.

⁴³ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 249–55.

importance than the “openness” or “pretense” that concerns our own existence, on the basis of which we make our vital decisions and which determines the genuineness of our relation with other men. So, truth does not possess its original seat in the proposition but in *disclosure* through which openness essentially unfolds.⁴⁴ Thus, the essence of truth is not focussed on the subject but on the openness within which Being itself appears. This theory definitely moves closer to the essence of religious truth and indeed its origin is religious. However, since the theory is dependent upon traditional idea of religion, philosophy would resist accepting it. As if the *disclosure* theory wait for the advent or the growth of hermeneutic philosophy, which attempts to justify it by a careful analysis of modes of cognition without being restricted by the *epistemic* criteria of the positive science. However, Huston Smith observes that in postmodern thought there is no truth in reality and postmodernist even wonder if truth has any meaning.⁴⁵ With just that explanation and without going into further detail of the problem of truth the foregoing illustration suffice us to infer that the postmodern concept of religious truth subject to evaluation and change for it is not absolute anymore.

Conclusion

The point that worth noting that postmodernism builds a “theology” based on its own foundation, though it does not term it as such. In this “theology” God is included in the closed system of rational explanation, which in fact originated from the modern thought. Since human reason cannot conceive the nature of God, postmodern mind disestablishes the metaphysical path of thinking. Consequently, the postmodernists understand religion in so different way that contradictory to the prevalent belief of theologians. The concepts of God, of religiosity and of religious truth are incompatible with those of religious doctrine. Indeed, like modernism postmodernism *vis a vis* religion are always set in antagonistic situation or in a battle-like manner. The triumph is for none and the blame, if we have to blame, is for both sides. Postmodern philosophy had failed to apprehend the religious concept of God,

⁴⁴ Martin Heidegger, “On The Essence of Truth,” in *Basic Writings*, ed. David F. Krell, trans. John Sallis (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 129–33. See also in Magda King, *Heidegger’s Philosophy* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), 148–49. Ernst Tugendhat, “Heidegger’s Idea of Truth,” in *Martin Heidegger Critical Assessments*, ed. Christopher Macann, vol. III: Language (London: Routledge, 1992), 80.

⁴⁵ Smith, *Beyond the Postmodern Mind: The Place of Meaning in a Global Civilization*, 233.

of truth and of religious acts. Religion, especially Christianity, was unable to present itself within an open rational explanation so that it becomes tenable to any philosophical challenge. David Harvey suggests since reason in postmodern mind is without any spiritual or moral goal the crisis of the present time is due to the absence of God's truth. Therefore, the postmodern theological project is to reaffirm God's truth without abandoning the powers of reason.⁴⁶ Thus the reconciliation between the theory of truth of theologians and of philosophers is the task that remain to be done to escape the trouble.[]

References

- Ahmed, Akbar S. *Postmodernism and Islam*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Caputo, John D. "Heidegger and Theology." In *Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, edited by Charles B. Guignon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Crimmins, James E., ed. *Religions, Secularization, and Political Thought*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Dupre, Louis. "Truth in Religion and Truth of Religion." In *Phenomenology of the Truth Proper to Religion*, edited by Daniel Guerriere. New York: SUNY, 1990.
- Finkielkraut, Alain. *The Defeat of the Mind*. Translated by Judith Friedlander. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.
- Fuerbach, Ludwig. *The Essence of Christianity*. Translated by George Eliot. New York: Harper & Row, 1957.
- Gellner, Ernest. *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Griffin, David Ray, ed. *God and Religion in the Postmodern World*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989.
- Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991.
- Heidegger, Martin. "On The Essence of Truth." In *Basic Writings*, edited by David F. Krell, translated by John Sallis. New York: Harper & Row, 1976.
- King, Magda. *Heidegger's Philosophy*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964.
- Love, Nancy. *Marx, Nietzsche, and Modernity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

⁴⁶ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 41.

- Malcolm, Norman. *Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View*. Edited by Peter Winch. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Marx, Karl. *Early Writing*. Edited by Quinton Hoare. Translated by Gregor Benton and Rodney Livingston. New York: Random House, 1975.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin Classic, 1972.
- — —. *The Will to Power*. New York: Vintage Book, 1968.
- — —. *Twilight of the Idol*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968.
- Owen, David. *Maturity and Modernity: Nietzsche, Weber, Foucault and the Ambivalence of Reason*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Silverman, Hugh J. "The Philosophy of Postmodernism." In *Postmodernism-Philosophy and the Art*, edited by Hugh J. Silverman. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Smith, Huston. *Beyond the Postmodern Mind: The Place of Meaning in a Global Civilization*. Illinois: Quest Book The Theosophical Publishing House, 1989.
- Tugendhat, Ernst. "Heidegger's Idea of Truth." In *Martin Heidegger Critical Assessments*, edited by Christopher Macann, Vol. III: Language. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Vattimo, Gianni. *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-Modern Culture*. Edited by Jon R. Snyder. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Lecture and Conversation on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*. Edited by C. Barret. Oxford: Blackwell, 1966.
- Zarkasyi, Hamid Fahmy, Henri Shalahuddin, Harda Armayanto, and Mohd Fauzi Hamat. "The Impact of Postmodernism on the Thought of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (IMIs)." *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization (JITC)* 13, no. 2 (2023): 30–47. <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.132.03>.