

## THINKING OF FAZLUR RAHMAN ABOUT ISLAMIC EDUCATION

**Mirawati**

### **Abstract**

Fazlur Rahman is one of the new innovator in Islam that has a big influence in 20 century, especially in Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, and other countries (Islamic countries), and the Chicago America (West country) that has the various thinking related with the problem. He success thinking critically either Islam or West tradition. He successes to develop a method that can give alternative solution toward contemporary Muslim. Fazlurrahman offers the idea that neo-modernism, it is certainly included in the educational aspect. Education surrounding the neo-modernism have two models; traditional and modern. Both of these models have different character. In one side follow toward old model while the second want to rebuilt the new version in education. In otherwise, both of them have the same objectives to empower people (empowerment). The differences only in matter of technical and operational methods. According to Rahman, the goal of Islamic education is formatted to realize Muslim that civilized order and consistent to God.

Key words: Islamic education

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Islamic education faces many problems either conceptual theory or practice. One of the conceptual theory problems that make deep thinking is epistemology problem. Basically, scientific process in Islam has been written in Al-Quran.<sup>1</sup> Al-Quran is categorized as *perennial knowledge* that presents abstraction about the Islamic education view. Instead of in reality of its spread, the understanding of substance of Al-

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<sup>1</sup> Ahmad Tafsir gives comment in understanding the knowledge from Al-Quran that content of Al-Quran can be understood in science, filsafat, and mystics. If we look at from other aspects, the content of Al-Quran should be understood and believed as the revelation from Allah. Thus, the content of Al-Quran is scientific; there are logically and mystics. The way to deliver the knowledge to other people; first, the knowledge that revelation, second, the receipt of revelation. Look at Ahmad Tafsir, *Ilmu Pendidikan dalam Perspektif Islam*, Bandung, Rosda Karya, 1992, page. 8.

Quran is colored by human logically without looking at history aspect. Thus, the pure content of Al-Quran sometimes gets distorted. From this distorted, negative value of religion appear and spread. It demands Muslim to care and introspect themselves.

The next problem appears is claiming of Islamic Education Stagnation.<sup>2</sup> Islam reputed is not able to solve the social problems that have relation to the decrease of education. Therefore, the spirit to look at forward should be inculcated in histories view. Islam has a educational story that begin from “Simple Education”.

From the long story, Islamic education appears many dimensions. It means Islam has many point of view that usually changes. The process of passing thinking of Islamic education is divided from 3 steps. *First*, Starting from the moving of Prophet Muhammad until build *Dar al Hikmah* di Baghdad in 217 H/832 M. *Second*, Starting the built of *Dar al Hikmah* until built Nizamiyyah school in Baghdad in 462 H/1065 M. *Third*, After Nizamiyah school until the damage of the khalifah of Turki Usmani.<sup>3</sup>

In the next time, because of the time passing, it gives the influence in education, where in this education will become as ideology view that talk about how the criteria of education talks about. Besides, it also includes the setting of historical stories that influence the coming of model of education, one of them is said by Fazlur Rahman.

Fazlur Rahman is one of the new innovator in Islam that has a big influence in 20 century, especially in Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, and other countries (Islamic countries), and the Chicago America (West country) that has the various thinking related with the problem. He success thinking critically either Islam or West tradition. He successes to develop a method that can give alternative solution toward contemporary Muslim.

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<sup>2</sup> Explanation or mapping about the biggest of Islamic suffering star from 1750 up to 2000 can be written in Karen Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History*, Yogyakarta: Ikon Terlitera, 2002, page 165. History shows that firstly, Islamic education is learning Al-qur'an and develop its to become a piety system that surrounds Islamic education, start from Rasulullah SAW era. But in the first and second century of hijriah appears assessment the knowledge that exist in the famous personal. School curriculum pioneered by Syi'ah organically, however after Syiah failure on Saljuk dynasty and changed by Ayyubi, schools and academies foreclosed by sunni that hold by Al Azhar in Egypt (Dynasty of Fatimiyah Islamiyah) that makes law and theology as central of Islamic high Education System.

<sup>3</sup> Muhammad Jawwad Ridla, *Tiga Aliran Utama Teori Pendidikan Islam: Perspektif Sosiologis*, Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2002, page. 22.

## B. Discussion

### 1. History of Fazlur Rahman

As ontologism view, the writer starting by look at the history of Fazlur Rahman. Fazlur Rahman. Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988) was from Ulama' family that lied on Hanafi's mazhab. <sup>4</sup> Fazlur Rahman was born in September, 21, 1919 in Hazara Distrik, India. This place in located in North West, Pakistan. His father, Maulana Shahab al-Din is one of preacher (ulama') graduated from Doeband. His family is known as ulama' family that usually diligent to do the obligation. Their family usually praying on time and regularly, such as praying, fasting, pilgrimage, and etc. It is the proof that the condition of his family is categorized in sunni and still follow the tradition. After that he got merried with Mrs. Bilqis Rahman. <sup>5</sup>

Although his family tend to follow the tradition, but the way of their life is adapted toward depend on modernisms. His father was really respected to modern education. Therefore, because of the support of his family that give many influences to his thinking for the future. <sup>6</sup>

Since he was 10 years old, he has already memorized the Al-Quran (30 juz). When he was 14 years old or in 1933, Fazlur Rahman was moved to Lahore, his ancient home. After that he entered modern school. This school was built by Muhammad Qasim Nanotawi in 1867. <sup>7</sup> While in the night, he was still get the Islamic education traditionally from Maulana Shahab al-Din in his home. Fazlur Rahman was really like study filsafat, Arabic Language, Hadist and Tafsir. Furthermore, his improve his

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<sup>4</sup> Pioneer of Madzhab of Hanafi was Nu'man bin Tsabit bin Zautha bin Mah. He was born in 80 H(699 M) and passed away on Rajab in 150 H(767 M). his father is despent of dispersion(Kabul- Afganistan), his father has moved to Kuffah before he was born. See KH. Moenawar Chalil, *Biography of Empat Serangkai Imam Mazhab*, Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, page. 19. Mazhab of hanafi grew in Iraq the place where pioneer was born. Iraq as place of fiqh development, ra'yu ideology from Rasulullah's friends. Ibnu Mas'ud was a prophet's friend that delivered by Umar bin Khattab to be teacher and Qadli in Kuffah by bringing fiqh Umar thinking. This mazhab was adopted by many people in India, China, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Uzbekistan, and etc. This mazhab officially became a Mazhab contained in *Majallah al-Ahkam al-Adliyyah*. See Abdul Aziz Dahlan (et.al), *Ensiklopedia Hukum Islam*, edition. I, Jakarta: Ichtiar Baru van Hoeve, 1996, page. 511-513.

<sup>5</sup>The name of Fazlur Rahman' wife was found from Ebrahim Moosa note as book editor *Revival and Reform in Islam*. Look at Fazlur Rahman, *Gelombang Perubahan dalam Islam: Studi Tentang Fundamentalisme Islam Islam*, Jakarta: Rajawali Grafindo Persada, page. 2001, page. V.

<sup>6</sup> M. Hasbi Amiruddin, *Konsep Negara Islam Menurut Fazlur Rahman*, Yogyakarta: Ull Press, 2000, Page.9.

<sup>7</sup> Syarif Hidayatullah, *Intelektualisme dalam Perspektif Neo-Modernisme*, Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2000, page. 15.

intellectual by mastering many languages, such as Persia, Urdu, English, French and Dutch. Besides, he also mastered Greek and Yunani.<sup>8</sup>

In 1940, Fazlur Rahman finished his Bachelor of Art (BA) in Arabic Language in Punjab University Lahore. In 1942, he finished his Master degree (MA) also from the same university. He did not continue study in Middle East, but he tried to pass West Country. When he was 27 years old (1946), he continued his doctoral in Oxford University. His dissertation was about Ibnu Sina undered the supervisor Professor S. Van de Bergh and H. A.R. Gibb. His Ph.D (Philosophy Doctor) was get in 1949, although he already finished his Ph. D in Lahore, India. He still took Ph.D in Oxford University because he thought the Punjab University was still has low quality.<sup>9</sup>

After he got Ph. D from Oxford University, Rahman was not directly back to Pakistan that already separated from India. He was still afraid with his country that was still difficult to receive the graduation from West Country. Therefore, he decided to teach in Durham University, in England and then moved to Mc.Gill University, Montral, Canada. From this university, he built Institute of Islamic Studies that pioneered by Wilfred Cantwell Smith. After that, he became popular until know as one of Institute of Islamic Studies in West Country.<sup>10</sup>

Fazlur's thinking was more famous and took special attention by Pakistan's government. In the beginning of 1960, Fazlur back to Pakistan to become a senior staff in one of research institution in Karachi named "*Institute of Islamic Research*".<sup>11</sup> This institution became a place where people can enlarge their knowledge to improve ability in Islam. Therefore, it was published *Journal Islamic Studies*. This journal is still survive until now on and publish regularly and become International journal. Scientific and intellectual recognition Fazlur Rahman making it believable as the director of the

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<sup>8</sup> Abd A'la, *Dari Neomodernisme ke Islam Liberal: Jejak Fazlur Rahman dalam Wacana Islam di Indonesia*, Jakarta: Paramadina, 2003, page.34.

<sup>9</sup> When he was learning in England, Fazlur Rahman had opportunity to learn west languages. He mastered nine languages: Latin, Greek, English, German, Turkish, Arabic, Persian and Urdu as his own language in Pakistan. It can be seen from his scientific works that used one from mastered nine languages fluently. According to frederich Mathewson denny in *The Legacy of Fazlur Rahman*, fazlur Rahmna started learn German before left India. He translated book *Die Richtungender Islamichen Koranauslegung* written by Ignaz Goldzihir into english language that has been published widely by E.J. Brill Leiden in 1920

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, page.13.

<sup>11</sup> Institute of research was built in 1960 by Ayyub Khan. After that he acts as protector. The first Director of this institution was Dr. I.H. Qureshi. Look at Taufiq Adnan Amal," Fazlur Rahman dan Usaha-Usaha Neomodernisme Islam Dewasa Ini", in *Fazlur Rahman, Metode dan Alternatif Neomodernisme Islam*, 1<sup>st</sup> published, Taufiq Adnan Amal (peny), Mizan : Bandung, 1987, page. 13.

agency two years after serving (1962). Fazlur Rahman seems appointment to head the agency received less traditional blessing of the clergy because according to them, the post of director of the agency should have a right to the privileges elusive traditionally educated scholars while Fazlur Rahman regarded as a modernist groups and has many contaminated with western thoughts<sup>12</sup>.

Many literatures mentioned that everything done by Fazlur Rahman get pros and cons especially traditional groups. These conflicts continued and arises political conflict between traditional preachers and government under leader Ayub Khan, as modernist people. Beside as a director of Institute Islamic Research, in 1994, Fazlur Rahman is appointed as the member of advisory council of Islamic Ideology in Pakistan government. Both of these agencies have close relation. As if data and material that used as planning of Law is requested by advisory board from the result of research from research institution.<sup>13</sup>

The pressure of Pakistans' community to Fazlur Rahman required him to take decision. A few days after demonstration, exactly on 5 September 1968, Rahman offered to resign from his post. His submission was received directly by the president Ayyub Khan. At this condition, Fazlur Rahman received an offering to teach from the University of California, Los Angeles. In 1968, he and his family decided to move there.<sup>14</sup> Then, in 1969, he taught at the University of Chicago and was appointed

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<sup>12</sup> Hasbi Amiruddin, *Op. Cit*, page 12. It also can be looked at in Salem M. M. Qureshi, "Religion and Party Politics in Pakistan," *Contribution to Asian Studies*, vol. 2, 1971, page.59.

<sup>13</sup> Taufiq Adnan Amal, *Op. Cit*, page.14. Fazlur Rahman thinking that digressing are about Sunnah and Hadits, riba and bank rate, almsgiving, and how to butchered the animals mechanically. This is become controversial in Pakistan. The peak of anger to Fazlur Rahman is the disagreement toward his monumental work in Islam. The book that was written in 1966 translated in Urdu language successfully and launched in September, 1067 in Local Journal *Fikr-u-Nazr*. In that book, Fazlur Rahman said: Al-Quran is Allah said as whole and in ordinary meaning also Muhammad said. It can be seen in Islamic masterpiece directly. In his masterpiece said; For Al-Quran itself and also its consequences for Muslim, Al-Quran is Allah said (Firman Allah). Prophet Muhammad also belief that he is as Messenger from Allah who receive the message from Allah, the really different substance (supreme substance), (we try to make it sure the meaning of "really different substance"), until he refused, by this awareness strength, some of claims from historical that really fundamental from Judea-Kristiani tradition about Ibrahim and other prophets. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, Bandung: Pustaka Publisher, 2000, page.32.

<sup>14</sup> Abd A'la, *From Neomodernisme...*, *Ibid*, page. 39. Compare to Taufiq Adnan Amal, *Op. Cit*, page.19. A'la explained that Fazlur Rahman moved in 1968 explicitly while Taufiq did not mention when the moved clearly, instead of explain that after Fazlur Rahman released as Adviser council in 1969, Rahman moved directly. Furthermore, A'la also did not mention the certain time he was be a professor while Taufiq said Rahman became a professor since 1970. We also can compare to M. Hasbi Amiruddin that said: "Fazlur Rahman moved to West country because he became a lecturer in California University, Los Angeles in 1968. In 1969, he became a professor in Islamic thinking field in Chigago University, where this was a last place where he worked until his death in 1988." Look at M. Hasbi Amiruddin, *Konsep Negara Islam.....*, *Op. Cit*. page.12.

professor of Islamic thought at the university. then he moved forward with his career abroad. He decided to stay in West country, precisely in Chicago since 1968 until his death. In teaching, he taught some courses ; understanding al Qur'an, Islamic philosophy, Tasawwuf, Islamic law, Islamic political thought, Islamic modernism, the study of the character of Islam; al Ghazali, Ibn Taymiyyah, Shah Wali Allah, Muhammad Iqbal and others. Furthermore, in 1985, Rahman was present to meet invitation from Indonesian government. Since there, Fazlur Rahman saw the real state of Islam in this country, as well as lecturing at several places during the two months. The last, when he was 69 years old, on the 26th of July 19, he died at a hospital Chicago.<sup>15</sup>

## **2. Fazlur Rahman Thinking about Education**

Based on the idea that neo-modernism<sup>16</sup> offers, the inside of the building can also understand what is desired by Fazlurrahman, it is certainly included in the educational aspect. Education surrounding the neo-modernism have two models; traditional and modern. Both of these models have different character. In one side follow toward old model while the second want to rebuilt the new version in education. In otherwise, both of them have the same objectives to empower people (empowerment). The differences only in matter of technical and operational methods. Furthermore, traditional method used a simple things, whereas the modern oriented to something new and complicated. Traditional education have great hope in preserving the old culture because the legacy of the past is very meaningful to the development in the future. It does not mean that

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<sup>15</sup> Fazlur Rahman was written nine books, and also dissertation and thesis and more than 1000 articles. There are some of his books;

- 1). Kitab al-Najat and Kitab al-Syifa' (Translated by Ibnu Sina), London: Oxford University Press, 1952.
- 2). Avicenna's Psychology, London: Oxford University Press, 1959.
- 3). Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1958.
- 4). Islamic Methodology in History, Kirachi: Central Institute of Islamic Research, 1965.
- 5). Islam, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1966.
- 6). Major Themes of the Qur'an, Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980.
- 7). The Philosophy of Mulla Shadra, Albany: State University of New York, 1985. Difference from Adams who said this book was published in 1975.
- 8). Islam and Modernity: Transformation of n Intellectual Tradition, The University of Chicago Press, 1982.

<sup>16</sup> Neo modernism is new modern view. It is used for giving identity toward Islamic thinking that arises in past decade that was synthesis, especially the effort between traditionalisms and modernism. Fazlur Rahman divided Islam into two sides; Islam normative and Islam histories. Islam normative means teaching Islam based on Al-Quran and as-Sunnah absolutely. While Islam histories means teaching Islam that understood and practiced by human and became Islamic civilization as Islamic histories as relative and conditional.

traditional education want to take steps to prevent a new culture, but it is more selective in accepting new conditions so as to put it to go through the process of filtration.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, traditional education tries to guide transfer of knowledge. It means the process of education that is focused on empowering the systematic and yet provides flexibility to the learners. Any matter of policy remains the authority of the institution. Besides, traditional education still use handbook which is also made by the institution. It is clear, the series of traditional education is not going to be able to encourage students to be active because that happens a lot of treatment indoctrination.<sup>18</sup>

Neo-modernisms was offered by Fazlur Rahman has some ideas toward Islamic education, namely;

#### **a. The goal of Islamic Education**

According to Rahman, the goal of Islamic education is formatted to realize Muslim that civilized order and consistent to God. It was taken in order to re-examine the nature of the revelation of the Quran. He explains:

*This place is for talking the revelation theory in detail. As if we want to deal with the factual of Al-Quran itself, it needs enough limitations. In this brief story, it is done effort fairly, either about history or demand Islam itself. Basic spirit from Al-Quran is moral where force monotheism and social fair. Moral law is everlasting, means the God obligation. People cannot arrange and omit moral law but should surrender to him. It called Islam and its implication in our life*

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<sup>17</sup> According to Vernon Smith, traditional education is based on some assumptions;

- 1). There is a group and certain important creativity that will be learnt by students.
- 2). Formal education is the best place for students to get knowledge.
- 3). The best way in order the students can learn is by groping them in the class based on their age.

This system has some characteristics:

1. Students usually sent to school in certain district
2. They will enter the class depend on their age
3. The students come to school each level depends on their age at the time.
4. They will go the next level every one year.
5. The principle of otoritarian, means students should follow the regulation
6. Teachers' role are teaching, apply depend on the demand of curriculum.
7. Teacher centered and text orientation.
8. Promotion depends on teachers' assessment.
9. Centre of Curriculum toward the academic subjects.
10. General Material based on curriculum are text books

<sup>18</sup> Indoctrinations means education tends to giving material. Students for example as empty glass that should fill the water. This method makes students really easy to direct by teachers. Giving doctriation is really easy to done, especially in elementary school level. Therefore, Vernoni said traditional model should be developed in elementary . Simplify, this model still give the freedom for students, but firstly students already taught ethic and moral, so, they will obey the regulation from their teacher.

*such as praying. It happened because the emphasis Al-Quran toward moral law until God sent down Al-Quran.*<sup>19</sup>

Fazlur Rahman stated the objective of Islamic education is to engraft the commitments' values through moral education and communicate it into teaching.<sup>20</sup> It focuses on toward assessing the psychologies intelligence development that converts the demanding for educational system modern while at the same time also has national Islamic values whether nationality is seen as a part of Islamic goal or Islamic is seen as a part of nationalism.<sup>21</sup>

#### **b. The method of Education**

Fazlur Rahman mentioned Islamic education method related to teaching that involves communication between teacher and student. Fazlur Rahman also mentioned that students pass each level of class by finishing every subject to higher subject.<sup>22</sup>

According to Fazlur Rahman, this system does not give much time for every subject. But it is not the only methods that used, usually students resume in one subject and in the next class, they learn the same materials in detail and include the comments. While Fazlur Rahman said that teacher obligation teaches the comments in that lesson. This method is conventional method which not focuses on students. Furthermore, Islam also educate the students concern to mature as Rasulullah taught his followers. Fazlur Rahman offend education method in some model of educations. Such as Halaqah, zawiyah, school and university.<sup>23</sup>

In *maturing* the students not only focuses on teacher centered, but students also active to follow many forum and education seminar. Thus, as if the teacher only gives the explanation in teaching tafsir, it is not mature the students. He also thinks Islam is not able to develop pedagogy model. Islamic education also cannot reach the goal if teacher only apply Islamic model.

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<sup>19</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* Page. 34.

<sup>20</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernitas*, Page. 62

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, page. 277.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*



### c. Curriculum of Education

Fazlur Rahman thinks the material or subject that be curriculum in Islamic education needs reconstruction, especially if we see the traditional education is still clumsy. Besides, many societies still do not want to involve in their environment. Furthermore, Islamic education tends decrease. Because of these reasons, Fazlur Rahman criticize Islamic curriculum. He said:

*By narrowing the field of general science by no general thinking and natural sciences, so curriculum become limited toward Islamic pure science with grammatical and literature as the needed. There are four Islamic subject; Hadits (tradition), Fiqh or Law including Ushul Fiqh (The principle of law), Kalam (Theology), and tafsir. In some school owned by right side Alhul Hdits, even theology is suspected, so, the only has three subjects. In some school, sufi's books are added. The number of books only a few. Thus, Master who graduated from West and original thinking that arise in past time were really special for themselves and did not get many knowledge toward formal curriculum.<sup>24</sup>*

Many subject become the core curriculum material such as hadits, kalam, and tafsir are not able to give the fully answer about Islam unless only taught by using critical book (hasiyah). The limitation of curriculum should rearrange and add with the other materials. Thus, it will create the combination between Islamic thinking and science, such as adding by grammatical, literature and others.

### C. CLOSING (ANALYSIS) AND CONCLUSION

Education is a thing that should be concerned as effort to humanize to make human aware of their humanity. Education occupies crucial position in various dimensions. Progress and setback of nation is depended on rate and dynamic of existing education. Therefore, it is not excessive argument to state that substance of education should be ideal with reality is necessity. Fazlur Rahman as Islamic reformer has description about history of education. He also as witness of failure in meaning Al-qur'an and sunnah by Muslim. First: derived from its, traditional critique of science in Islamic history he states with neo modernism style.

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<sup>24</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, page. 275. It also can be seen: Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity : Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982.

Formerly from that opinion, Fazlur Rahman presses the importance of ethic that taken from Al-qur'an which will be used as fundament of thinking development and educational practice. Rahman also participated in formatting strategy, purpose, method and latest curriculum of Islamic education.

Interesting thing from Fazlur Rahman idea that can be taken is Islamic education model through his curriculum that refers to form of Islamic education and science integration, (although this term is not stated by Fazlur Rahman) but it can be seen from Fazlur Rahman thinking about Neo-modernism.(synthesis effort between traditionalism and modernism thinking ). In other occasion, fazlurrahman also stated that aim of substance of Islamic education is to improve human morality, his argument” because Al-Qur'an emphasizes moral value therefore Allah delivered Al-qur'an ”. Besides, Fazlur Rahman offered method model of active method, it means a teacher has not to obtrude to students to have same perception with their teacher, because of that he said that a teacher of tafsir (interpretation) may not only give *syarah*(interpretation) because it will not develop Islam.

From this opinion, writer saw there are two sides of understanding: First: fazlur Rahman idea about aim, method and curriculum of Islamic education are acceptable because education model that has character (moral) is able to provide filter on globalization today. It may be in line with determining the latest curriculum, namely curriculum 2013 that is more emphasize on competence, thinking of competence-based attitude, skills and knowledge. The fundamental character of curriculum 2013 is demand ability of knowledgeable teachers and find out knowledge as much as possible because today students are easy to browse information through development of technology and information. While, students are encouraged to have responsibility toward environment, interpersonal ability, intrapersonal ability, and ability to think critically. The aim is to provide productive, creative, innovative, and affective generation.

Second: consider that Indonesia as plural community in religion, ethnic, and understanding of text by people that have same religion, Fazlur Rahman idea sometime produce “groups” because when it impinge with “west” value some of us feel un “comfortable” and it cannot be reneged to make “conformity/ balance” is most difficult.

Because of that, traditionalist and modernist will walk independently. Moreover, all of job vocations are formatted by “dichotomy” model. It is one of reason why traditionalists want to survive their existence and they reject modernism automatically. According to writer, it is tolerable but Fazlur rahman’s ideas are difficult to be accepted by some of Muslim because Fazlur Rahman’s ideas/ thinking are used as references by some people on behalf of Liberal IslamicNetwork / JIL.

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