

REVIEWING POVERTY IN INDONESIA: KARL MARX'S VIEW OF RELIGION IS AN OPIUM

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to review poverty through Karl Marx's view of religion as an opium. This research is a qualitative research with sociological approach. Karl Marx's view of religion is an opium, it is very constructive. In Indonesia, social assistance financial report by Ministry of Religious Affairs increases in line with the number of poor population. The provision of social assistance that is not constructive will make the poor more surrendered.

Keywords: Poverty; Karl Marx; Social Theory; Religion.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengulas kemiskinan melalui pandangan Karl Marx tentang agama sebagai opium. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan sosiologis. Pandangan Karl Marx tentang agama adalah opium bersifat sangat konstruktif. Di Indonesia, laporan keuangan bantuan sosial oleh Kementerian Agama meningkat seiring dengan jumlah penduduk miskin. Pemberian bantuan sosial yang tidak membangun akan membuat masyarakat miskin semakin pasrah.

Kata Kunci: Kemiskinan; Karl Marx; Teori Sosial; Agama.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is an inherent phenomenon and occurs in almost every country. The problem has been around for a long time, and it is real. Indonesia is one of the countries facing poverty. Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) of Indonesia uses the concept of ability to meet basic needs as the basis for measuring poverty. With this approach, poverty is seen as the inability from the economic side to meet the basic needs of food and not food (clothing, housing, education, and health) as measured in terms of expenditure. Therefore, based on this approach, the concept of poverty line (GK) is built on two main foundations, namely food poverty line (GKM) and non-food poverty line (GKBM) (www.bps.go.id accessed on February 14, 2021).

The number of poor population in Indonesia based on BPS can be seen in Figure 1.

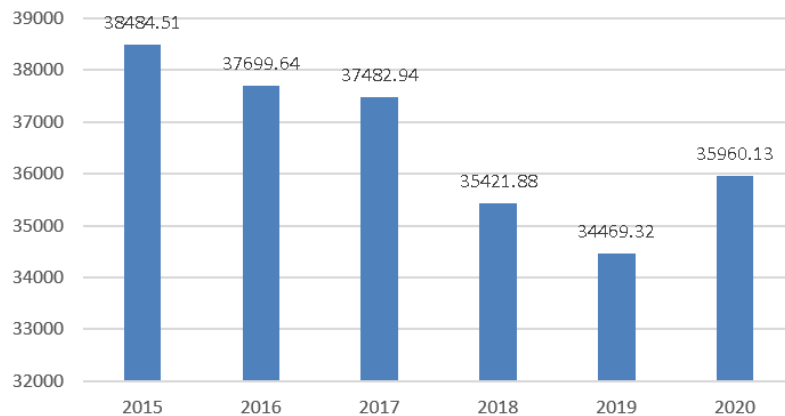


Figure 1. The Number of Poor Population in Indonesia 2015-2020 (in Thousand People) Source: Data processed by the author, BPS (www.bps.go.id, accessed on October 14, 2020)

According to BPS, poverty is caused by structural and cultural factors, cultural is the cause of human culture / poor people itself while structural comes from outside / government as policy makers and decisions. According to religion views, poverty occurs due to the imbalance of the acquisition or use of natural resources / is termed as persecution, because of the reluctance of humans to dig up natural resources to lift them to the surface, or to find alternatives to them / *kufur* (Yulasteriyani, Randi, and Hasbi 2019). No matter the prevailing poverty benchmarks in Indonesia, people do still feel grateful to God. It appears that the scale of gratitude in Indonesia has the validity of adequate constructs and factors accompanied by internal consistency that is also good. One indicator of Listiyandini's research is that "When my wishes have not been realized by God, I remain convinced that that is the best of Him". The indicator has a yield of 0.55. Items with a grateful scale > 0.3 are relatively good (Listiyandini *et al.* 2017). This proves, Indonesians are full of surrender to God. The author links human surrender to Karl Marx's view of religion as opium.

Karl Marx was a prominent philosopher and theorist in the 19th century. Marx's thoughts have been a stimulus for the development of sociology, economics, philosophy, critical attitudes, politics, and culture. The presence of his theory was never perceived as an intellectual thought, but as Marx's attempt to improve the living conditions of mankind out of oppression and arbitrariness (Wirawan, 2015).

Karl Marx was famous for saying that "religion is opium". This sentence is often interpreted as Marx accusing religion, misleading and deceiving the people. Found in later Marxist rhetoric, Marx's speech was often used in the sense of accusation, that religion by promising happiness in the after-life realm, made the poor and oppressed accept fate instead of rebelling against it.

According to some reviewers of the biographical development of Karl Marx's thinking, there has been some significant shift in Marx's attitude towards religion. Beginning with accepting traditional Christianity when he was young, Marx then rejected the crudely theistic beliefs based on

developed criticism. Later, Marx criticized religion from its functional side (Turner, 2012).

Melis (2019) stated the fact that the unemployment rate in the muslim-majority country is relatively high (Melis, 2019). Anna (2014) gave a similar thought, that religion can be a solution to poverty through growing religious institutions (Anna, 2014). Diener (2011) stated nations with more difficult living conditions (e.g., widespread hunger and low life expectancy) are much more likely to be very religious (Diener, 2011). Jawad (2009) stated that faith in human beings is able to produce the welfare of society, one of that is by developing religious institutions (Jawad, 2009). Guiso (2003) found that on average, religious beliefs are associated with embodied economic attitudes in income and per capita growth. But religious people tend to be more racist and less profitable (Guiso *et.al*, 2003). Grier (1997) stated that religion has a negative influence on economic development (Grier, 1997).

In this discussion, the author is interested in reviewing poverty in Indonesia in Karl Marx's view of religion as an opium, a phrase that is so controversial. Surely, it aims to see poverty through Karl Marx's view of religion as an opium. Based on description above, the question in this study was formulated: How is the review of poverty in Indonesia from Karl Marx's view of religion is an opium?

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative research with sociological approach. The method used in this study is descriptive method. Descriptive method is a method about the empirical world that occurs today. The purpose is to create descriptions, descriptions or paintings, systematically, factually, and accurately regarding the facts, properties and relationships between the phenomena investigated.

The process of collecting data using library studies. Library studies is collecting data in the scientific articles, books, information data of related institutions and so on. This literature study is considered capable of reviewing the phenomenon of poverty from Karl Marx's view of religion is an opium. Literature studies are able to explore related studies quickly, accurately and clearly.

DISCUSSION

A. Karl Marx's Thoughts Background

Karl Marx was born in Trier City in 1818, a town on the Border of West Germany that was then part of Prussia. Karl Marx had no interest in religion since childhood. Unbeknownst to his father he went to Berlin to study philosophy. In this city of Berlin, Marx's thoughts began to be influenced by Hegel (Wirawan, 2015). Although Marx was heavily influenced by Hegel, there were differences. Hegel only formulates the mind, what is still needed is for that thought to become a reality, in other words the theory must become practical (Farihah, 2015).

Marx's view of religion could not be separated from his life experience and history as well as his family. At Marx's age, his family was almost

certainly forced to convert from previously Jewish to Christian. The reason for the change of religion of the Marx family was because of his father who wanted to become a Civil Servant as a Notary Public.

In addition to the experience of individual and family diversity, Marx was externally confronted with a social and religious condition in which he felt very trampled on human dignity pioneered by the state driven by the nobility and capitalists by dredging wealth over the suffering of the lower society, while the high Protestant religionists no longer showed their prophetic function, even as they legitimized the ruling political verdict by giving religious advice in order to accept the conditions and reality of life they faced. Religious values are made opiate for the poor so that they accept the conditions they face, while the rulers remain in their positions of power and maintain the status quo (Lutfi & Khairullah, 2019).

B. Karl Marx's Social Theory

There are three central issues described by Karl Marx, namely: (1) the theory of class struggle; (2) dialectical/historical materialism theory; (3) more value theory.

Marx asserted that human emancipation can only be achieved by class struggle. Social class is a typical symptom found in post-feodal society. Marx then mentioned that in the class structure there are differences, namely the upper class (the owners of capital and industrial tools) and the lower class (proletariat, labor). This inter-class relationship according to Marx was characterized by the relationship of exploitation, sucking, and the relationship of power (between the powerful and the controlled). Marx's view in determining the structure of society and development in history were social classes. The social classes are not a problem, but rather a human effort to improve life by holding a division of labor. Workers get wages worth what workers need to recover their energy and the needs of their families (Wirawan, 2015).

Judging by his thinking which is also influenced by Feuerbach's materialistic philosophy, then according to Marx the development of history can be explained definitively and scientifically because it is based on a real economic system. Therefore, it is not surprising that many view Marx's theory as deterministic (history is determined by economic factors, while human freedom plays no role in change). For Marx, history was more about the development of production than the realization of rational principles (Fink, 2019).

C. Reviewing Poverty in Indonesia from Karl Marx's View on Religion is an Opium

“Religious suffering is at the same time an expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.” (Marx, 1844).

Karl Marx thought of religion as an impediment to social change. This thought is reflected in his own assertion that religion is the opium of society (Munir 2016). Marx envisioned religion as a fantastical illusion consumed

by individuals because of its euphoric effects such as opium(Horii, 2017). It was in this unease that Karl Marx declared Religion to be alienation; Religion is opium(Lutfi & Khairullah, 2019).

When Marx wrote that religion was an opiate for society, his references were organized religious beliefs and the practices that followed those beliefs. At the time, traditional Christian beliefs and practices symbolized ideological slavery by the bourgeois to the proletarians(Bonadio, 1960).

Man must look even more carefully into him to understand why religion serves as opium (Yilmaz, 2018). The form of religion as opium expressed by Karl Marx (1) is reflected in the reality of human life itself, namely projecting himself to God and never seeing the nature of himself, (2) reveal that human suffering is the place of God's presence. This understanding breaks down human understanding of religious autonomy that curbs self-freedom and avoids religion and stays within the rules of one's own self as a human nature to take part. (3) Religion is only to be followed, not to protest. Man can only submit to religion, must not argue. This is what karlmarx's anxiety is because here man can not realize himself in real life. Man has always been enraged by religion, but man has always depended on it causing chaos, and destruction of the order of life (Munir, 2016).

The currents of globalization and the order of capitalism also enter Indonesia, certainly enriching the strong and impoverishing the weak. The presence of religion in Indonesia until now has played more of a role as a religion for the poor than the religion of the poor. Social assistance financial report at the Ministry of Religious Affairs continues to increase. In 2016 was Rp 1.188 trillion, 2017 was Rp 1.421 trillion, 2018 was Rp 968 billion, in 2019 was Rp 1.250 trillion (Ministry of Religious Affairs Financial Report 2016-2019, www.kemenag.go.id, accessed on February 20, 2021). Religion provides curative assistance to the poor. Provision of food aid from the Ministry of Religious Affairs to underprivileged families, on Thursday, December 19, 2019 in Satra Village, Klungkung Regency, Bali (www.kemenag.go.id/berita, accessed on February 20, 2021). Religion performs reformatory services such as providing scholarship assistance to economically incapable students. One of the evidences of education assistance is the program of subsidizing Single Tuition for poor students of IAIN Tulungagung in 2019 (www.kemenag/berita, accessed on February 20, 2021).

Here are the fluctuations in the number of poor population in Indonesia. In 2015 the number of poor population amounted to 38484.51 thousand people and continued to decline until 2019, 37699.64 thousand people, 37482.94 thousand people, 35421.88 thousand people, and 35421.88 thousand people. Unfortunately, in 2020 the number of poor population has increased to reach 35421.88 thousand people (www.bps.go.id, accessed on October 14, 2020).

Based on the data, can be seen that social assistance financial report increases in line with the number of poor population in Indonesia. The provision of social assistance that is not constructive will make the poor

more surrendered. Seeing the presence and role of religion in Indonesia as exposed above and in order to improve ourselves so that we can present a religious life that is liberating and prosperous, we need to listen and consider what Karl Marx said that religion is opium.

Marx was critical because he realized that an important factor of religion was precisely being in the afterlife (Bonadio, 1960).

The entry of ideology or belief system of society which includes religion is inseparable from the research and observation of Karl Marx on the pattern of dis-faith society at that time. Karl Marx saw and understood society in terms of structure, where in his conception Karl Marx divided society into two large structures, namely infrastructure (base) and superstructure (upper building) (Kambali, 2017). Religion in this aspect is not "superstructure", but parts and packages of production and economic exchange (McKinnon, 2005). The religion that was supposed to liberate turned out to be the legitimacy of the repressive rulers to perpetuate its interests. Religion has broken society with promises of saving the hunger and suffering of time.

Economic arguments against religion describe religion as a superstructure to a more fundamental social problem (Bonadio, 1960). According to him, people are attracted to religion because it is based on his emotional needs that are far from happiness. Economic suffering leaves people with no other choice, thus expressing it into religion. Thus, religion is nothing more than a momentary hallucination, so it is an enemy that must be destroyed. Man will never have real happiness if he is still under religious illusions.

The result of this study supported by some previous studies. Melis (2019) stated the fact that the unemployment rate in the muslim-majority country is relatively high (Melis, 2019). Guiso (2003) found that on average, religious beliefs are associated with embodied economic attitudes in income and per capita growth. But religious people tend to be more racist and less profitable (Guiso *et. al*, 2003). Diener (2011) stated nations with more difficult living conditions (e.g., widespread hunger and low life expectancy) are much more likely to be very religious (Diener, 2011). Grier (1997) stated that religion has a negative influence on economic development (Grier, 1997).

CONCLUSION

Karl Marx's criticism of religion is very constructive. According to Marx, material problems in society cannot be solved theologically. Karl Marx thought of religion as an impediment to social change. The emergence of these concerns lead to the Karl Marx's thought that religion is an opium. In Indonesia, social assistance financial report by Ministry of Religious Affairs increases in line with the number of poor population. The provision of social assistance that is not constructive will make the poor more surrendered. If we want to present a religious life that prospers, we need to consider what Karl Marx said about religion is an opium.

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