

Language, Religion and Modernity: Zaki Naguib Mahmoud's Islamic Rationalism Philosophy

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ISSN (P):2708-6577
ISSN (E):2709-6157

Abstract

This article aims to reveal the idea of renewing Islam in the minds of Zaki Naguib Mahmud. The manifestation of Zaki Naguib Mahmoud's ideas is very relevant in the contemporary Islamic world. However, narrow interpretations of religious texts dominate creativity and innovation in Islamic thought. Therefore, this study focuses on the basic ideas of Islamic renewal used by Zaki Naguib Mahmoud. Through literary studies and semantic analysis of Zaki Naquib Mahmoud's works, language (al-Qur'an and Hadith) was the primary source of Islamic scientific knowledge, religion as an open interpretation and modernity as a complex reality be correlated with a rational and innovative nature.

Keywords: Language, Religion, Modernity, Zaki Naguib Mahmoud

Introduction

In recent decades, the echo of renewal (*tajdid*) and the awakening (*shahwah, nahdhah*) of Islam has emerged widely in the world (Al Jabiri, 1994, 2001). It certainly gives new hopes for the Muslim community. The claim of the universality of Islam which affirms that Islam is *shalih likulli zaman wa makan* requires constant innovation in religious understanding to ensure that Muslims can continue to live in the historicity of their era.

As one of the *sawami* (heavenly) products, Islam needs to be manifested in the earth. The theocentric that appear in various Islamic schools and thoughts in the past must be followed by an anthropocentric grounding program (Abdillah, 2014; Suharto, 2015; Wiranata, 2020). The heavenly edition of Islam is only Allah, and perhaps the Angel Gabriel knows. Humans can only apprehend the earth's edition of Islam which depends on their respective backgrounds.

The embodiment of Islam on earth in various appearances, faces, polarization, and fragmentation of Muslims into various groups and schools is an indisputable reality (Anang & Husein, 2020; Gibb, 1952; Mahmudi, 2019; Wahid, 2018). Religion has multi faces and many colours (Permata, 2001). Islam is no exception, from the conservative and fundamentalist to the liberal and relativist. The first wants Islam to continue to be authentic and pure. Meanwhile, the latter wants adjustments to the times.

Renewal means various attempts to adapt Islamic teachings to contextual development. In contrast to the typology conveyed by Harun Nasution in his book *Renewal of Islamic Thought*, which divided Islamic teaching broadly into three patterns, the first is the purification of Islamic teachings according to the time of their descent to Muhammad. Second, the contextualization of Islamic teachings according to the times (Nasution, 1996). If the decline of Muslims is stagnation and the closing door of *ijtihad*, then the purification movement often pushes in that direction.

The contextualization of Islamic teachings has given birth to many figures and movements. In India (and Pakistan), there were Mujahidin movement, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and Muhammad Iqbal (Arosoaie, 2018; de B. Codrington, 1947; Fair, 2010; Laxer, 2019). In Ottoman Turkey, religious thought reform movements can be categorized into three groups; Pro-Western, Islamist, and

Nationalist. However, in various parts of the world, it is always the nationalists who win the majority that is the movement that combines religious teachings with their locality. One of their figures was Mustafa Kamal Atatürk, which later called the Father of Modern Turkey (Foss, 2014; Kodak, 2014; Makaradze, 2020; Ülgen, 2010).

Meanwhile, in Egypt, the reform movement was led by Jamaluddin Afghani, then Muhammad Abduh and Rasyid Ridho. Other emerging figures such as Ali Abdurrazik, Ahmad Amin, Amin Al-Khawi, Zaki Naguib Mahmoud, Toha Husein and others (Shabir, 2017). Nowadays, contemporary Islamists have emerged for the renewal of Islamic thought with their respective concerns. Muhammad Arkoun, Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, Muhammad Sahrur, for instance, offered a new reading model for the Qur'an. Hassan Hanafi and Farid Essack offer a theological format to liberate Muslims from declining. There were also other names, such as Al-Jabiri, Fazlurrahman and others.

Among Muslim thinkers who are concerned and consistent with the issue of renewing the understanding of Islamic diversity and are keen trying to discuss and adjust the Islamic tradition with the times is Zaki Naguib Mahmoud, a reformer from Egypt though his name has not been widely mentioned by Muslims (1905 -1993).

Many famous Islamic thinkers from Egypt, including Muhammad Abduh, Nasr Hamid, and Hassan Hanafi, already gain a lot of attention and popularity among Muslims in Indonesia (Hannase, 2019; Zainol et al., 2014; Zohouri, 2021). Meanwhile, the name Zaki Naguib Mahmoud has not widely known. Based on the previous research, there have been few articles mentioning or addressing Zaki Naguib Mahmud directly. However, there are three articles related to Zaki's philosophical thoughts; Marek Dziekan's article entitled *Miedzy wschodem a zachodem filozofia arabska w koncepcji zakiego nadziba mahmuda* (1905-1993) in Polish, Mohamed Othman Elkhosht's articles entitled *Contemporary Islamic Philosophy Response to Reality and Thinking outside History*, and Ahmad Abdel Halim Atiyya's report on *Philosophy, Modernity and Revolution in Egypt*. Among those three articles, Dziekan's article was the only one that discusses Zaki's thoughts sufficiently by calling him a thinker between west and east. While the other two articles only mention Zaki's thoughts in moderation (Dziekan, 2006; Othman Elkhosht, 2019).

This paper is literature-based research that aims to investigate Zaki Naguib Mahmoud's philosophical thoughts regarding the idea of how to form an appropriate Islamic reform. The analysis of Zaki's thoughts uses a semantic approach that focuses on extracting and analyzing the hidden ideas in Zaki's works.

Zaki Naguib Mahmoud; His Journey and His works

Yaqut al-Hamwy, in his book *Mu'jam al-Udaba'*, called Zaki Naguib Mahmoud as *Abu Hayyan At-Tauhid* as the philosopher of writers (*failosuf al-Udaba'*), and writer of philosophers (*adib al-falasifah*). The nicknames were based on his works, which combine philosophy with literature to make it easier to understand by various readers. Zaki has successfully presented the most complex ideas in easy-to-understand literary expressions (Dardiri, 2011). He also parses the most complex philosophical problems in simple everyday language and brings philosophy out of the books and academic papers into something that can speak and manifest in real life.

Zaki Naguib Mahmoud was born in Mayyit al-Khawi village in Az-Zarqa region, Dimyath province, on 26th of Dhul Qa'dah 1322 (February 1, 1902). In His childhood, he participated in the Qur'an tahfidz program. Then he entered the Sulthan Mustafa Madrasa in Maedan As-Sayyidah Zainab in Cairo when he was 15 years old. His father worked at the Sudanese government representative office in Cairo. Four years later, Zaki's family moved to Sudan. They remained in Khartoum until he almost finished his Tsanawiyah school. Then he moved to Egypt. After completing his Tsanawi education in Egypt, Zaki enrolled in the Mu'allimin 'Ulya Madrasa, a madrasa

that has produced Egyptian thinkers and writers such as Ibrahim Abdul Qadir Al-Mazni, Ahmad Zaki, Muhammad Farid Abu Hadid and Abdurrahman Syukri.

Zaki completed his studies at this madrasa in 1930, and then he taught there until 1943. After that, he left for England to earn a doctorate in philosophy. In 1947 Zaki finished his doctorate from the University of London with a dissertation entitled "*al-Jabar adz-Dzatiy*".

After returning to Egypt, he worked as a lecturer at the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Adab, Cairo University, until dismissed in 1965. Then in 1968 he left for Kuwait and became a professor of philosophy at the University of Kuwait for about five years.

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

His journey as a Muslim thinker divided into three phases. *First*, the initial phase was his journey in Egypt until he left for Europe, where he gave much criticism of social life in Egypt. Second, he presents examples from ancient and modern philosophy as enlightenment. In this phase, he collaborated with Ahmad Amin and wrote three books entitled *Qishah al-Falsafah al-hadithah*, *Qisshah al-Falsafah al-Yunaniyah*, and *Qisshatul Adab fi al-'Alam*.

The second phase of his journey began after he returned from Europe until the 1960s. In this phase, Zaki tried to change the existing norms with European norms by imitating and adopting the Western civilization because he believed that the west perspective is more appropriate for the present and more concerned for scientific knowledge (Fadhil, 2000; Ghozi, 2015). Western civilization has a tradition of respecting and acknowledging scientific knowledge, serious about working, and humanist which seem absent in the Arab world traditions. Zaki also introduces logical positivist philosophy in which places logic as the primary source. He explained the philosophy according to his perspective. On the other hand, he rejected classical Arabic *turats*. One of his books represents this phase is *Al-Falsafah Al-Wadh'iyyah wa Khurafat al-Metafizika*.

The third phase of his journey describes his return to the Arab *Turats*. He read and studied the *turats* to find out the unexplored knowledge from the Arabic thought and combined them between East and West, heart and mind, soul and matter, and between knowledge and values (Mahmud, 1984).

In this third phase, Zaki proposes a new philosophy model based on Arabic thoughtpoint of view. He proclaimed a renewal for Arabic thought and took advantage of its *turats*. In one of his writings, Zaki emphasized that "leaving *turats* is suicide (killing civilization), because in *turats* is our language, our literary works, as well as the works of scholars, writers, and also our predecessor philosophers" (Mahmud, 1987).

Zaki argues that Muslims tend to feel enough to only memorize the Qur'an without realizing its actual teachings, such as the sciences of the cosmos and others, are what makes the Islamic world left behind compared to the West civilization (Mahmud, 1981, 1990, 1993). If Muslims aware that scientific studies, such as discoveries about electricity, magnetism, atoms and others as a religious obligation, they must have become the rulers of the world or astronauts who explore outer space, becoming factory owners who take raw materials from underdeveloped countries at low prices, then sell them into high-quality products. Muslims should have become rich meanwhile poverty for other nations. The reality is that Muslims do not think that way. They think that worship alone is a divine commandment.

When Europe was busy concentrating on studying the universe, Muslims were busy studying the previous scholar's works related to the Qur'an. They did not add anything to the classical interpretations, did not study the phenomena of the universe.

Zaki wrote more than 40 books in various fields, ranging from thought, literature and philosophy. Among his most important works are; *Hayat al-fikr fil 'Alam al-Jadid*, *Betrand Russell*, *David Hume*, *Asy-Syarq wa al-Fannan*, *Qusyur wa Lubab*, *tajdid al-Fikr al-'arabiy*, *al-Ma'qul wa al-La Ma'qul fi Turatsina al-fikri*, *Ru'yah Islamiyah*, and *Jannah al-'Abith*. In addition to some of his books, he also translated several foreign works into Arabic, such as *Muhawarat Aflathon*, *Tarikh al-Falsafah al-Ghorbiyyah*, and *Al-manthiq Nadzariyyat bahts*.

He has awarded various honour and recognition, including the best motivational work for his book *Nahwa Falsafah 'Ilmiyah* (1960), the state award for literature in 1975. In addition, he received the same award from the University of the Arab League (1985), the American University in Cairo (1985), and the Sultan 'Uwais of the United Arab Emirates (1991).

He recorded his journey in 3 books; *Qishatu Nafs*, *Qishatu 'Aql*, and *Hashad as-sinin*, published in 1991, and are his last books. After that, he decided to stop writing after he felt nothing new that he could offer. Moreover, despite his physical condition, his eyesight is getting weaker. Until finally, he died on 12 Rabi'ul Awwal 1414 (September 8, 1993).

Language Revolution as the Pillar of Renewal

Zaki emphasized that language is the manifestation of thought. Therefore, if a nation wants to renew its thinking, they have to work on their language. It is impossible to change thought without changing the language (Mahmud, 1993, pp. 205–206). Hence, language is the reflection and the representation of society.

In Muslim tradition, they have experienced a period where the Sufistic religious spirit has been at the forefront for such a long time. They were occupied in discussing the unseen and leaving the martyrs behind. Muslims prefer to discuss mysterious matters than those that appear physically. They prefer the absolute to the relative who was constantly changing. All these matters influence the usage of the Arabic language. Arabic is only used as a medium for Mi'raj to the sky rather than as a medium for understanding the reality of the cosmos.

On the other hand, the western world prioritizes secularism which was occupied with natural and exact sciences and put religion and mysticism as the second priority. It can be seen in their language development. They often use English as a medium to read the universe rather than as a medium to reach heaven.

According to Zaki, Arabic *fusha* is a language that does not rely on human nature. Therefore, we almost do not see the connection between Arabic and life. Many Arab nations then created Arabic *'amiyah* which is more contextual and reflects their situation. With Arabic *'amiyah*, they can express the circumstances of everyday life and play an active role in various fields of social life. Zaki offers the following steps:

a. From the Words Civilizations to the Work Civilizations

The first revolutionary step that Zaki offers is to change the traditions, from words to working a lot—in other words, changing from the world of language to the world of things. In the Middle Ages, Muslims tend to believe that the classical works were already perfect and as successors, we could only give *syarh* and *ta'liq*. As a result, over the centuries, Muslim only produced *syarh* and *ta'liq* works of classical books. The debates are limited to words rather than the actual meaning.

b. From words to meanings

Muslims have to concentrate on discussing the meaning rather than arguing over words. Language characteristics are closely related to the characteristics of the community. People say what they think. Then people will get the experience of right and wrong in a language, and it on to the next generation. It means errors that

may have developed in the past are being transferred to the next generation through language.

In the Arab world, Arabic language developed into two different patterns: *fushha* and *'amiyah*. *Fushha* Arabic is a standard language that has not changed much from time to time. While the *'amiyah* language is more familiar with various changes. It refers to the Arabic used for daily communication. In another word, it can be said that *fushha* Arabic is formal Arabic and *'amiyah* is the vernacular Arabic. The difficulty for the Arabs is that they have to think in *fushha*, but the used to communicate in *'amiyah*.

One of the stagnation examples of *fushha* language is found in the *Lisanul 'Arabic dictionary*, the complete Arabic dictionary. *Lisanul 'Arabic*, as a complete dictionary does not include terms related to science and technology developed at that time.

Lisanul' Arab, as stated by Ibn Khaldun, is full of Bedouin vocabulary. Philosophical and scientific terms have developed and entered the Arab world since the era of codification, but Ibn Mandzur, the compiler of *Lisanul 'Arabic* did not want to include them as Arabic terms (Al Jabiri, 1991, pp. 78–79). Furthermore, the term that developed later stated that whatever comes from not Arabic *fushha* is not considered Arabic and should not be accepted or even rejected. Therefore, it resulted in difficulties by Arabs/Muslims to keep up with developments.

Renewal of Religious Thought

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

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

Religious values are absolute and never change, while relative measures can judge religious thought. Thus, we can say that religious thought experienced a period of glory or vice versa.

By using hermeneutics, Zaki divides the elements that support religious thought into 3 parts, namely:

- a. Idea (*fikrah*)
This idea (*fikrah*) is discussed with the Divine words/ sentence in religious texts in religious language.
- b. Religious Thinker
Religious thinkers are the embodiment of an idea. Or in other words, an idea must manifest in a person who believes in it.
- c. A condition that is being the concern of this idea, and make it better.

Zaki argues that the true thinker is one who can turn his big ideas into guidance for the travellers to be more vigorous, prosperous and better condition. The previous scholars have done this by understanding religious values, setting targets, and choosing suitable media to achieve the intended goals. They brought forth religious ideas that were suitable for their living conditions at that time. Therefore, they could realize the awakening of the first Muslim generation and its glory.

We do not see this role in Islamic religious thinkers today. On the contrary, Islamic religious thought is feeble and often becomes an obstacle to progress. The weakness and decline of Islamic religious thought are due to several factors, including:

- a. Stagnant on the old meaning
Thought must grow and develop over time, for example, in Surrah Al-Anfal verse 60 stating that swords, arrows, horses and others were the symbol of strength in the past. They were a sophisticated tool for war at the time of the revelation of the above verse. Now times have changed. The power of war is no longer the things above. However, even the current military force is not the only means of scaring the enemy. There are other models such as science and technology, economics, as well as politics.
- b. Narrow understanding of religious norms and teachings
Narrow understanding of religious teachings often hinders a person from developing. Instead of being a motivator for development, Religious norms sometimes can become a barrier for a person to develop.

Turats and Modernity

Muslim thinkers have a long concern about the position of *turats* in dealing with the times. They emphasize that Muslims should explore the classical relics and use them as the basics in viewing reality. This basic must be enriched based on the development in the world.

Zaki mapped the classical *turats* into two parts; *al-ma'qul* (rational logic), and *al-La Ma'qul* (irrational logic) (Mahmud, 1987). Both are the wealth of Islamic thought. Nevertheless, unfortunately, in their journey, Muslims were fixated only on the *La Ma'qul*. Meanwhile, the *al-Ma'qul* seems to be drowned by the Sufistic definitions.

a. Al-Ma'qul *f*ituratsina

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

Misykat al-Anwar is *ata'wil* introduced by Imam Ghazali in reading Surah an-Nur verse 35 to describe the human thought journey. The journey of Muslims thought can also be mapped with the classification of Surah an-Nur (35) as follows:

The early stages of human perception are the senses formulated in the Qur'an as *Al-Misykat*. Inside the *Misykat*, a lamp (*mishbah*) is the symbol of human intelligence that can understand the empirical meanings. Inside the *mishbah*, there is *Nur* or light as the power of human understanding (Human Intelligence). In understanding empirical meanings, the human mind is assisted by imagination, described as a mirror (*zu'ajjah*) that surrounds the lamp (*mishbah*). The source of this imaginary resource is a blessings tree (*syajarah mubarakah*), which is a symbol of the thought that constitutes rational sciences. The blessing tree is like the principles that guide the wanderer. This blessed tree shines with its oil. As if this verse implies the existence of knowledge with the active intellect or God's revelation.

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

b. *Al-La Ma'qulfituratsina*

Muslims have been through difficult times and stuck to the tradition of *la ma'qul*. As discussed in several points above, one of the knots is because they ignore the *ma'qul*, and only concentrate on *la ma'qul*.

Zaki invited Muslims to redefine the misunderstood Sufism teachings. The definition of *Wali* (guardian/holy pious), for example, in the classical repertoire, refers to a strange person who can walk on water, turn a stick into gold, etc. Now that definition should be extended to the scientists who discover electricity, atoms, submarines and others.

Criticism of Zaki Naguib Mahmoud

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

One of Zaki's critics is Muhammad Al-Bahi, who sees Zaki as an extension of Western interests. By rejecting metaphysics, Zaki considered to have categorized God as superstitious (al Bahi, 1997, pp. 239–246).

Responding to the criticism, Zaki emphasized that Al-Bahi did not thoroughly understand his thoughts. Al-Bahi had failed to understand and had difficulty distinguishing between Comte's positivism, Carnap's positivism or Schlick's positivism (Mahmud, 1979, p. 73). As a result, a person will experience confusion in their attitude towards religion and philosophy and mix up the language of religion and philosophy. In other words, religion will be philosophized while philosophy is religiousised (Mahmud, 1984, p. 115).

From a methodological point of view, Zaki's concept of *al-Ma'qul* and his criticism of *al-la ma'qul* also elicited various reactions from other Muslim thinkers. Abduh Farraj is the most outspoken figure in rejecting the logical positivism built by Zaki in criticizing the *al-la ma'qul* dimension or metaphysics in general. The first thought that Farraj criticized was the concept of the unity of language and thought. For Farraj, Zaki's concept contradicts psychology, considered by logical positivism figures as an exact science. Psychology asserts that mentalactivities such as knowing, conceptualizing, imagining, remembering and thinking are independent activities of expressive words. In many cases, they are often unable to express what comes to mind which prove that words and thoughts are not one unit (Farraj, n.d.).

To answer these criticisms, Zaki wrote a work entitled *Nahw Falsafah 'Ilmiyah*, a work that finalizes his logical positivism view as contained in the works of *al-Mant'iq al-Wad'i* and *Khurafa't al-Mi'ta' fi si'qa*.

The disagreement between Farraj and Zaki regarding the unity of language and thought stems from their difference in perspective. Farraj argues that language and thought cannot be combined because he looks at the "inside" of human beings. Therefore, a person sometimes cannot express his thoughts in words or writing. As for Zaki, what someone says or writes is what they think about because Zaki sees more from the outside of human beings. However, it would not be correct to say that Zaki denied the outspokenness of a thought.

Besides Al-Bahi and Farraj, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd is a vigorous figure in criticizing Zaki. According to Nasr, Zaki belongs to the opportunistic-reformative group when he talks about the revival and renewal of Islam (Zaid, 2003, p. 30).

According to Nasr, Zaki's *Hashad as-Sinin* is a complete portrait of the restlessness of thought and philosophical "confusion" that shapes the writer's rationalism life journey. When explaining the "fourth phase" of Zaki's thought process, Nasr concluded that Zaki had suffered defeat, as was the case with the activists of the revival discourse or the modernism movement.

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

- a. Withdrawing attitude (thinking) is so fast when modernist discourse faces its traditionalist opponents. Nasr even described this attitude as "giving up" and "losing". In Zaki's context, this withdrawn attitude was seen when he published a *Khurafat al-Mitafiziqa* in 1951. Zaki then changed its title to *al-Mauqif min al-Mitafiziqa* in subsequent publications (Mahmud, nd, p. 301). The editorial change from "*khurafat*" to "*al-mauqif*" has shown Zaki's withdrawal attitude and, at the same time, emphasizes the reasoning crisis he faces. It is a common phenomenon among elite Muslim thinkers (Zaid, 2003, p. 37).
- b. Intellectual dualism. This attitude occurs among Muslim intellectuals, where their thoughts cannot bring about actual culture change (Mahmud, n.d.). There are contradictions in their actions and thoughts between their words and practical actions are not relevant (Zaid, 2003, p. 37).

Nasr positioned Zaki as Hasan Hanafi with his Islamic left and Syahrur in reading religious texts. All of them accommodate contradictions based on benefits and virtues. It is a reflection of eclecticism and justification (Zaid, 2003, pp. 64–65). Eclecticism (at-taufiq), in this context, is an attempt to combine Western progress with *turats* (Islam), but the end of this effort is justification or positioning *turats* as something that cannot be changed. The impact of this kind of eclectic-justifiable habit is the emergence of an attitude of quickly withdrawing (revising) when the two entities (West-Islam) must be confronted.

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

Conclusion

Linguistic revolution is the entrance to renewal. Zaki sees the need for a linguistic revolution. The idea he offers is to change from word tradition to work tradition and from word to meaning. The renewal of religious thought offered by Zaki is an epistemological critique of Islamic religious thought. Zaki invites us to observe and distinguish between Religion, Religious Science and Religious Thought.

Religion is sacred and holy. While religious knowledge and religious thought are not holy, they can be touched and criticized. *Turats* Islamic thought is divided into two, *al-Ma'qul* and *al-La Ma'qul*. Muslims' attention toward the latter rather than the first and their narrow understanding has caused them to be backward. So serious attention is needed to the *ma'qul* side of classical Islamic heritage and reinterprets the meanings of *al-La Ma'qul*.



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