Negative Theology Construction in Islamic Education System: An Analytical Study

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Abstrak
Studi ini menitikberatkan pada konstruksi konsep negatif ketuhanan (teologi) yang dikembangkan dalam sistem pendidikan seperti madrasah atau pesantren. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis konstruksi teologi negatif dalam sistem pendidikan Islam yang berkembang di madrasah atau pesantren di Malang, Jawa Timur, Indonesia. Untuk membahas isu ini secara kritis, penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain penelitian fenomenologi dan prosedur Miles dan Huberman dalam menganalisis data. Temuan studi mengungkapkan bahwa wacana teologis negatif menunjukkan arena profetisasi nilai-nilai ketuhanan yang gaya ekspresinya bersifat apofatik. Kenyataannya, ia mengkonstruksi pengetahuan teologisnya sekaligus "menolak" konstruksi pengetahuan tersebut dengan logika negasi dan paradoks. Implikasi bagi sistem pendidikan Islam adalah kerangka tujuan pendidikan yang berorientasi pada aspek kemanusiaan dan ketuhanan; atau dimensi profan dan transendental. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa teologi negatif berkontribusi wawasan baru tentang aksiologi pendidikan Islam.

Kata Kunci: Aksiologi, Depistemologi, Pendidikan Islam, Teologi Negatif

Abstract
This study focuses on the construction of the negative concept of divinity (theology) developed in the educational system such as madrasas or pesantren. Therefore, the aim of this study is to analyze the construction of negative theology in the Islamic education system developed in madrasas or pesantren in Malang, East Java, Indonesia. To critically discuss the issue, this study used a qualitative approach with phenomenological research design and Miles and Huberman's framework in analyzing the data. Study findings expose that negative theological discourse denoted an arena for the prophetization of divine values whose style of expression was apophatic. Apparently, it constructs its theological knowledge as well as "rejects" the knowledge construction with the logic of negation and paradox. The implications for the Islamic

education system are the framework of educational objectives is oriented to aspects of humanity and divinity; or the profane and transcendental dimension. It indicates that negative theology contributes to novel insights into the axiology of Islamic education.

Keywords: Axiology, Depistemology, Islamic Education, Negative Theology

INTRODUCTION

This article analyzes the concept of divinity in the Islamic education system with reference to the Sufism and philosophical discipline (of Islamic education). Therefore, this article opens a metaphysical discourse of divinity that has been constructed in Islamic education. It is undeniable that the dynamics of God is always interesting to be discussed by the experts. Like Neuberger's (2018) research which analyzes the concept and image construction of God; and Scott's (2006) research which attempts to explore the concept of God's personality within the framework of modern theology. All of these researches try to unravel the theological value constructs that are meant to answer the big questions about God.

Some researchers have even tried to analyze the different concepts and images of God in same-gender-attracted (gay) communities, such as Colpitts & Yarhouse (2019) in their research. This means that the concept of theology is very much influenced by the metaphysical values construction of human divinity. On the other hand, theological constructions influence human attitudes and actions. Therefore, there are several studies that examine the relationship between these two domains, such as Stulp et al. (2019) in their research which is based on the relationship between the dimensions of religiosity and well-being; or Visala's (2020) research on freedom of action in theological constructs. It is reasonable then, if the divine discourse continues to be studied from the aspect of human spiritual experience, such as Shook's (2013) research; from the aspects of gender and beliefs, such as Howard, et. al. (2018) research, even from the aspects of the doctrine of penance, such as Buck (2020) research.

The construction of the divine concept (theology) is a normative reference containing divine discourse –read: the system of knowledge– and identification of the truth. This aims of the divine discourse is convince religious people of the truth of their faith through a comprehensive and formulated understanding. Therefore, the concept of divinity guides the people to "the satisfaction" towards their spirituality. However, knowing and also understanding the essence of God is a paradox that continues to haunt

theology. Welz (2016) in her research admits that there are difficulties in defining God. This crisis also raises serious problems in theological construction, namely: the attitude of the people who question its validity and standardization. This is termed as negative theology; it offers a subjective ontological argumentative perspective. It also puts "God" not as an objective reality as the general definition that society understands.

Indeed, negative theology can find a solution for the frozenness of the concept of divinity. It is reasonable if some researchers are interested to discuss about theology, such as Jugrin's (2018) research which examines the thinking of the more modern theologians of Dionysius –the father of negative theology-, or Kars' (2018) research which focuses on describing the intellectual atmosphere of two figures (Ibn Arabi and al-Qabrafiqi) who are contradicting the human ability to imitate God's attributes. Thus, the construction of negative theology has strong roots in the Western civilization, until it began to enter the realm of Islam. Likewise, in the Islamic education system, it also begins to merge with the philosophical concept of education, especially in Islamic educational institutions (such as Madrasas and *Pesantren*).

Based on this framework, this research focuses on the construction of negative theology in the existing education system in Madrasas and *Pesantren* in Malang, East Java, Indonesia. This research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design because it analyzes the divine discourse and identifies theological truth in the Islamic education system. There are 11 informants involved in this research consisting of 3 *pesantren* caregivers, 2 *pesantren ustadz*, 4 madrasah principals, and 2 madrasah teachers. Techniques of data collection used in this study are interviews, observation, and documentation.

In the case of interview, in-depth interview is used to collect the data related to the philosophical values of negative theology. Meanwhile, the participant observation is used and functioned to obtain the data related to the implications of negative theology on Islamic education; whereas the documentation technique is used to obtain detail information about the madrasah and *pesantren* institutions. The obtained data then were analyzed by using Miles and Hubermann's theory. It is used in order to record the research context in the form of the researchers' appreciation.

NEGATIVE THEOLOGY DISCOURSE IN ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Negative theological discourse among Islamic educational institutions such as Madrasas and *Pesantren*, especially in Malang is very unusual. Even within the Islamic education system itself this topic has never been discussed by academics and practitioners. This phenomenon arises because the construction of negative theology does not have a discourse language that is commonly used in Madrasas and *Pesantren*. It is as if Rubenstein's (2003) thesis which states that negative theology can only be expressed through negative language is true. This is because the Madrasas and *Pesantren* themselves tend to express the concept of divinity in a positive way. Therefore, the divine metaphysics that they build has a rationalistic dimension by sticking to the revelation ethics (al-Quran). It is caused by the design of their theological narratives is based on the informative reasoning of revelation elaborated with the authority of reason.

Therefore, the majority of Madrasas and *Pesantren* in Malang state that the metaphysical conception of divinity based on observation and experience is a mistake. The concept of divinity is originating from the reality of humanity although the result of the contemplation or reasoning cannot be justified. God for them is unseen and irrational "reality"; so knowing and understanding God should be based on authoritative information (al-Qur'an). They are also aware of the difference in the rationality of each person in understanding the meaning of al-Qur'an. In fact, this situation can shape the different concepts of divinity in Madrasas and *Pesantren* societies.

Some of the Madrasas and *Pesantren* communities actually are open to a space for experience and rationality which is contributing to the concept of divinity. From these experiences, the perception of divinity will develop, so that the metaphysics of divinity cannot be separated from the rationality of meaning. Just like suffering which becomes the pattern of spiritual meaning; which sometimes contradicts each other. Kilby (2020) in this context suggests that in order to avoid this contradiction, theology needs to maintain a future-oriented eschatology and give concrete hope. Therefore, the Madrasas and *Pesantren* communities tend to place the discussion of God as a normative construction. They believe that the parameter of religious truth lies in the revelation which is the source of the divine concept.

Due to this thought, it is reasonable that the majority of Madrasas and *Pesantren* understand divinity through a positive approach. When ripples of different understanding appear, negative theology is actually understood as the antithesis of positive theology. So far, God has been expressed through positive statements such as "God can be known" or "God can be thought of", on the other hand, in negative theology God is understood with negative statements such as "God cannot be thought of" or "God cannot be known." There are even some people who are being extreme by choosing not to reveal their divine concept. This divine thought eventually divided the Madrasas and *Pesantren* communities into two parts, namely: followers of positive (the majority) and negative (the minority) theologies. Indeed, the concept of divinity has an impact on the attitudes, actions and beliefs of the people. For example, is the act of treating the environment around —the relationship between humans, nature, and God (Rozi, 2019). Therefore, the characteristics of negative theologians can only be seen through the discourse revealed from themselves. Moreover, the limits of their divine expressions are the expressions of oddity that are difficult to define and predict.

It seems like the oddities of this negative theology cannot be taken for granted by the Madrasas and *Pesantren* circles themselves. They prefer to accept the concept of divinity which is definitive and clearly contains the image of God who is "Supreme Good". Therefore, they consider the vagueness of the concept of divinity in negative theology is incompatible with religious guidance –read: the revelation (al-Qur'an). This is because theological oddities for religious groups in Madrasas and *Pesantren* do not usually appear so that they –the theological oddities– can be discussed, or even practiced. However, the voices of negative theology gradually emerged to the surface and contributed to the discussion of educational theology.

There are two patterns that are relatively manifested in the construction of negative theology in Madrasas and *Pesantren* in Malang, namely: first, the negation pattern; it refers to the concept of theology that expresses negation "definition" towards God. In Madrasas and *Pesantren*, this pattern believes that we never know God comprehensively. They believe that God is a mystery who will be known as the unknown God. Second, the nihilistic pattern; It defines God through unspoken attitudes and is expressed in words. Those who adhere to this concept are inclined to "be quiet" and "not bring up the words", because they believe more that God cannot be described

by any expression. They choose to reveal the latent and hidden concept of God within themselves.

These two patterns characterize the theological discourse of Islamic education institutions which encourage the opening of gaps in the reconstruction of divine diversity. This means that in Madrasas and *Pesantren*, there are two camps that are mutually "face to face" and tend to "criticize". However, this dynamic actually develops an attitude of tolerance and openness to theological diversity (heterodoxy) in the institutional environment of Islamic education. This implication itself has been pointed out in the conclusion of Iswahyudi's (2017) research in which it states that heterodox theology serves to construct the principle of non-consensus truth in a pluralistic life order. The strengths of tolerance wrapped in spiritual values are manifested in every action and attitude of the Madrasas and *Pesantren* communities. Therefore, the negative theological discourse amidst the Madrasas and *Pesantren* communities in Malang is actually used as an arena for the prophetization of divine values. Therefore, the values of negative theology are not only a style of expression that is negative, but they are also apophatic.

Those who have negative theological beliefs tend to cover themselves with expressions that are beyond the conventional concept of divinity. They believe that the spiritual-transcendental experience is intuitive and abstraction, thus its perfect essence cannot be described. In fact, not everyone can find spiritual-transcendental experiences; hence these spiritual-transcendental experiences tend to be more subjective and diverse. Therefore, they –the people who have negative theological beliefs– are unable to provide a concrete description of spiritual experience with their own definition. Based on this subjectivity, negative theology is considered by some as not "grounded", so that it is positioned against the divine reason that the majority of the Madrasas and *Pesantren* communities believe. It is even considered that it is not a concrete, positive, and anthropomorphistic representation of the theological beliefs of the Madrasas and *Pesantren*.

Unfortunately, negative theology does not function to describe the theological beliefs of Islamic educational institutions. The metaphysical concept of divinity offered by negative theology is considered absurd and very abstract. Apophatic descriptions of God, such as the belief in the existence of God that goes beyond the conceptualization

of being and not being, cannot be translated at all levels of the Madrasas and *Pesantren* communities. Whereas, Ibn Arabi's theological hierarchy, as concluded in Hasyim's (2012) research, states that theological reality is integrated with the spiritual understanding and experience of the actor. Thus, the adherents of negative theology firmly emphasize the metaphysical definition of divinity to have a hierarchy that is in harmony with their understanding and experience of spirituality. However, they set boundaries that God cannot be conceptualized through reason (reasoning) and human language. They set an example as "the Wisest" cannot be pinned to God, because divine wisdom cannot be limited by human reason. This was also expressed by Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) when he made attempts at negative theology.

The reasoning for the negative theology that is being debated by the Madrasas and *Pesantren* in Malang lies in a clash of principles. The adherents of this theology have contradictory ideas, borrowing terms from al-Fayyadl (2012), namely: negation and negativity. The denial of this positive concept of divinity on the basis of metaphysical arguments for apophatic deity puts it in the binary of opposition. The researcher saw the debate arises more on differences in beliefs about the metaphysics of cataclysmic and apophatic deity. Negation in this context is manifested in the form of denial of the concept of God, while negativity is in the form of a background for the arguments of denial of positive theology. In this context, the clash of divine metaphysical discourses in Madrasas and *Pesantren* often occurs. In fact, it has implications for a relatively radical theological construction, namely: the concept of God's impossibility is understood by human rationality. This concept continues to permeate in Islamic education, especially the philosophical system that underlies the development of Islamic educational concepts and theories as in its axiological dimensions.

It is undeniable that the discourse of negative theology can finally open up dialogical spaces in Madrasas and *Pesantren*; including in Islamic education material, which contains the dimensions of *aqidah*, in which it is rich of divine metaphysical concepts. In fact, the discourse of negative theology also opens up opportunities for the development of Islamic science in Madrasas and *Pesantren* to be more massive and systemic regarding the divine discourse. This dynamic implies that negative theology encourages the dynamic development of Islamic scholarship which will ultimately have

an impact on the more moderate religiousness of Madrasas and *Pesantren*. One of the respondents in this study told the researcher that the concept of negative theology in Madrasas and *Pesantren* is more often debated in the nuances of tolerance and religious brotherhood. The underlying spirit is to understand and explore the meaning of divinity in the midst of the order of human life.

DEPISTEMOLOGY OF NEGATIVE THEOLOGY IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION

The negative theology that exists in Madrasas and *Pesantren* in Malang has unique characteristics. It teaches the only way to reveal the divine experience through the affirmation of statements and understanding of God. Thus, the Madrasas and *Pesantren* communities can only speak with negative expressions, or even choose to remain silent and do not state any expressions. Instead, they idealized the metaphysical knowledge of divinity that was born from within. In fact, the metaphysics of divinity that they embrace do not have definitive conceptions. Although it has an impact on the development of self-morality or society in general; and this has been stated in Simone Weil's "*Human Personality*" (Rowlands, 2009).

On the other hand, they believe that if a person has faith, s/he will accept the knowledge inherited from a certain divine metaphysical tradition. Through this tradition, "something" that is believed about God is essentially a reflection of what has been known. In this context, God can be known and understood through knowledge which contains various metaphysical conceptions of divinity. Therefore, the majority of the Madrasas and *Pesantren* communities in Malang emphasize divine knowledge as the basis of faith. Naturally, in the Madrasas and *Pesantren* education system, faith is formed on the basis of knowledge-based doctrine. The strength of doctrine in education, according to Kidd (2019), lies in the epistemic knowledge that underlies educational values.

In the paradigmatic of negative theologians, knowledge is a means of knowing the existence of God as the first cause. They also emphasized that we only know the relationship between physical reality and God but not the reality of God's essence itself. The implication is that theological knowledge about God is only conceptual which is born from the imagination of humanity. Thus, it cannot be used as a basis for justifying the truth of knowing and understanding God. According to them, divine metaphysical

knowledge is basically knowledge not about "God". Various things about divine reality are only the reflective imagination of humans on their spiritual experiences. Therefore, a good attitude is an act of silence and limits rational understanding. For negative theologians, "God cannot be defined; even to Dyonisius, God is the light and dark –but not both" (Turner, 1995: 22).

In the Islamic education system, divine knowledge is essential to be indoctrinated to all members of the Madrasas and *Pesantren*. Interestingly, the doctrinal process is adjusted to the understanding ability of the Madrasas and *Pesantren* communities. Thus, the principle of negation of divine metaphysical knowledge does not cause "jerking" paradigmatic. As empirically, negative theology can still be abstracted in the form of conceptuality as a cluster of ideas, perspectives, views, and approaches at the divine level with the principles of negation and nihilism in it. These two principles are often seen on the stage of educational reality in Madrasas and *Pesantren* in Malang. Even the construction of negative theological conceptualities has a strong relationship with the educational system. This is as stated in Muslih's (2019) research that the theological dimension actually encourages the development of science.

Thus, the discourse of negative theology in these Madrasas and *Pesantren* has its own epistemology. Although essentially, it still has affinity with other theologies; the characteristics of the epistemology of negative theology are very different from other theologies. Of course, in this context, the negative theologians position their epistemology as a construction of knowledge about "non-knowledge" deity. When it is explained, its singular characteristics are very clear because negative theology contains contradictions and paradoxes. A negative theological conceptuality can be said to be a metaphysical discourse of divinity, but at the same time it is not a discourse. This means that even though it is talking about knowledge, it is actually talking about knowledge as the non-existence of knowledge.

Although negative theology deals with divine knowledge, it negates that knowledge itself. This means that it constructs aspects of its knowledge as well as "rejects" that knowledge. Therefore, another term of this theological epistemology is known as "depistemology", namely epistemology which also criticizes its epistemology (de-epistemology). Within the scope of the negative theologians in Madrasas and *Pesantren* in Malang, this epistemology constructs divine knowledge, as well as

criticizes and exposes this knowledge. It is reasonable then, if the adherents –the negative theologians– prefer to "be quiet" and not reveal the definitive reality of divine metaphysics. This condition also applies in natural science, in which nature is expressed as "the trails" of God and the manifestation of absolute reality, that is, a complete unity. The implication is that science and theology lead to knowledge of God, even though God's essence itself cannot be understood (Obolevitch, 2010).

The *depistemology* of negative theology revealed in Madrasas and *Pesantren* can be mapped into three major variants, namely: knowledge sources, knowledge procedures, and knowledge objectives. It is necessary to admit that tracing the sources of divine metaphysical knowledge from negative theology in Madrasas and *Pesantren* in Malang is an act of reading into paradoxical facts. Positive theology –as a construction of knowledge about divinity– has very clear sources of knowledge. This source is clearly used as the basis for building/developing faith and belief, as revealed in Wahyudin's research (2017). Meanwhile, in negative theology, the metaphysical knowledge construction of divinity is denied /rejected. The adherents in Madrasas and *Pesantren* in Malang express themselves through the "quiet" attitudes and language. This is because they think that the expressions constituting the metaphysical knowledge of divinity will not be able to describe the essence of God. Obviously, the negative theologians do deny the construction of knowledge about God.

Interestingly, the negative theologians still bind and base their self-confidence on revelation, reason, and tradition. However, they tend to interpret revelation and tradition in a different form from the conventional or positive theological styles. Even though they are different, they do not want to be considered as having committed a pattern of deviation from the religious truth in Islam. These binding and foundation are in fact only manifest representations of fundamental beliefs. Even for them, a substantial source of the epistemological construction of negative theology lies in the absence/non-existence of the source itself. The divine doctrine in Islamic education is said to be a form of "introduction" towards the divine essence. They believe that God is a reality beyond the reach of the human mind. Hence, knowledge is only an introductory copy of reality which is absolute and is not "understood".

Therefore, approaching and understanding God cannot be done through binding and basing oneself on knowledge; even though it comes from divine authority, namely

the revelation and existing traditions. The negative theologians believe that approaching God can only be done by starting from a point of emptiness. The implication is that any source of knowledge is considered meaningless or even non-existent. This emptiness for them is a form of the absence/non-existence of a source of knowledge, thus they also have no foundation or basis for truth. In this context, they rely more on the reality of truth on no basis. This is what often raises criticism, due to the assessment that the foundation of truth in epistemology is very urgent to develop science. Moreover, the adherents of cataphatic theology (the positive theologians) closely tie themselves to revelation, reason, and tradition –or the source of the truth that is in knowledge. Thus, it is reasonable that the negative theological discourse in Madrasas and *Pesantren* in Malang does not really surface.

Negative theologians believe that the truth is not necessarily based on any foundation. Moreover, divine truth is considered sacred, so of course it cannot be described according to profane values. The absence/non-existence of this source of knowledge does not mean that negative theology has shifted towards nihilism, namely: the view that holds that human existence has no purpose. In fact, negative theology makes sanctification and deconstruction of the attributions of human elements in divine metaphysical knowledge. Hence, the point of emptiness which becomes "the source" of negative theological knowledge does not lead to stagnation. Instead, it transformed the negative theology into a process of searching for the meaning of divinity. This search is a form of the negative theologians' total self-reaction to the sacredness of reality. Apparently, negative theology constructs its knowledge based on the emptiness or non-existent source of knowledge.

However, the negative theologians have a basic framework of thinking that can be traced through the structure of their theological logic. We need to admit that negative theology does not recognize the existence of knowledge constructs that arise from rationality –although it is based on revelation and religious traditions. They think outside the custom of cataphatic (positive) theology which tends to rationalize divine knowledge through causal and analogical logic. This is very evident in Christian theology about human predestination and freedom, as revealed in the research by King Jr (2020). They prefer to use thinking patterns that elevate the sacredness of transcendental reality and let go of the profane dimension.

However, they tend to position knowledge as continuously negated by other realities. They try to escape the ontological traps of humanity, so that the purity of God's essence is not tainted by attribute or profanity labels. They negate the existence or knowledge of God which is composed of ontological concepts and presuppositions. Therefore, negating the effort to understand God actually leads to trap on the knowledge that is not about God. Likewise, when they explain the divine material in learning, the concept of God is essentially not "the real God". In this context, the researcher termed the presuppositions and descriptions of God as "God Profane", namely: the concept of God that is generated by human perception and knowledge.

The presuppositions carried out by the negative theologians are conceptually a method of thinking that compares, equates, and analogize to represent what is not the truth. They presuppose transcendental reality to provide understanding of "learner". This means that every concept developed about an object contains an element of presupposition in it or is structured metaphorically. Thus, it has no permanent and stagnant claim to truth. It means that these truth claims are ambiguous and open to possible interpretation. Reasonable, the negative theologians often think in paradoxical ways.

Therefore, negative theologians in Madrasas and *Pesantren* in Malang continue to argue about understanding over understanding. Their thinking pattern tends to put two things that are contradictory and negate each other in the same statement and acknowledge the truth of both. One example, the concept of transcendence for them is a concept of perfection and the perfect, but this concept still requires negativity. Seemingly for them the concept of perfection in transcendental reality is affirmed by the negativity itself. Hence, they acknowledge perfection, but on the other hand, it is also denied. Thus, in this context, theological statements labeled as word particle "not/non" are emerged. For them this "non-ness" is seen as something that shows the limitlessness of God's essence. Hence, an event is only "possible" from the "impossible" itself, this is the logic of the paradox.

Their logic recognizes that there is an intrinsic conflict between two understandings or knowledge. However, they also acknowledge the truth in each of this conflicting knowledge. This pattern of thinking is relatively often criticized by the positive theologians because they believe that there can be no truth between two

contradicting knowledge. However, for the researcher, the heterodox of cataphatic and apophatic views are treasures of theological thought in Islam which are very useful in developing the non-consensus principles of truth and harmony in life. The process of acculturation and assimilation of thoughts and segregation of knowledge will color the dialectic of theological culture.

The existence of this paradoxical logic is a critical antithesis of analogical logic in cataphatic theology. Usually, cataphatic theology often looks for points in the likeness of humans and God. Analogical logic indeed positions itself essentially on the logic of the "likeness" of God as the "sacred one" with humans as the "profane ones". This logic is based on the assumption that there is an ontological condition in which God and man can be equated in a relation of the same understanding. The construction of knowledge from this logic is ultimately negated by the logic of apophatic theology, namely: the logic of negation and paradox.

AXIOLOGIC OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN NEGATIVE THEOLOGY

Based on this description, adherents of negative theology have a spirit to de-profane cataphatic theology. It cannot be deniable if their theological views are considered by many Madrasas and *Pesantren* circle to have no purpose (non-teleological). One of the arguments to be realized is the purification of the divine concept, which essentially contains human ideas and projections. Hence, negative theology wants to purify the divine idea from the claim of "dogmatism" that shackles human beings. On the other hand, there is a view that ancient theology was deemed not to have adequate functions and benefits. Even ancient creeds and teachings have become idols, ended in man himself and replaced God's indescribable reality. Negative theology in this context affirms God's holiness for all dimensions of the divine concept that are considered final.

It is common for negative theological discourse to raise theological problems without the desire to reach certain teleology. It is the range between "knowledge" and "no knowledge" that gives rise to the reality of negative theologians' beliefs. It is undeniable that in Islamic education of Madrasas and *Pesantren*, there is a dynamic form of faith between "rational" and "mystical" knowledge; among the results of the method of "*Burhani*" and "*Irfani*". This dialectical process has shifted the stagnation of

cataphatic theology, which provides space for "certainty" of metaphysical knowledge. It can be assumed to represent the asymmetry between cataphatic and apophatic theology. The fundamental structure of the belief in the Islamic education system is theological knowledge that continuously contracts due to the contradiction between them.

Essentially, the de-profanation of the cataphatic theology has the aim of "unifying" the "*abid*" (servant) itself, and "*ma'bud*" (God). The adherents of negative theology believe that there are no obstacles to achieve "union" with God. Usually, they think of their theology as a form of representation of their love for God. This feeling cannot be described in the form of a verbal or written sentence, except for a sentence or statement of negating a cataphatic expression. However, on the other hand, it also affects their social behavior in the community. Heineck's (2017) research found that there was a relationship between self-religiosity and prosociality.

For them, love is a feeling that does not require rational-empirical ontological certainty. Instead, what they need is a sense of "limitless enjoyment" with or through a dichotomic paradigm (i.e, between logic and intuition; between knowledge and ignorance that does not apply). Therefore, they tend to see God based on the exaggeration and negation of God's positive ontological conceptualization. This process guides Islamic education in Madrasas and *Pesantren* to be oriented towards cultivating and developing the divine awareness of the subject of education –read: students and *santri*. Therefore, the basic concept of education from negative theologians is a systematic effort to develop and enlighten the spiritual dimension and develop physical potential in a balanced manner. The axiological dimension they want to manifest is the divine moral action in the subject of education.

This dimension emerges from the basis of metaphysical criticism of cataphatic divinity, in which a de-ontological dimension frames their religious beliefs. It is a metaphysical critique of divinity which tends to go beyond the traditional concept of cataphatic theology. One example is that God is a reality that cannot be limited by the concept of a word or sentence. This ability has created a theological discourse full of contradictions and paradoxical concepts in Madrasas and *Pesantren* –read: also, in the middle of the Islamic education system. However, the paradoxical nature -which is revealed in the performance-, confirms their "sacredizing" the divine reality. According

to them, the fact of de-ontological infinity and the unrevealing reality of God will position "The divinity of *Dzat Allah*".

Therefore, the implications of negative theology in Madrasas and *Pesantren* in Malang are not only on the theological-philosophical dimension but also in the empirical-moralistic dimension. That is, they emphasize the balance between the divine and human dimensions; spiritual and social aspects. They assume that through the maturity of divine consciousness, it can emerge a paradigm of integration of Faith, Science, and Charity; between *Iman*, *Islam*, and *Ihsan*. It cannot be deniable if the lewd act, they have the nuances of transcendence; that is, a continuous effort in order to "overcome" and "exceed" the relationship between "themselves" and God.

As researchers have seen in Madrasas and *Pesantren*, these aspects are gathered at the culminating point, namely the construction of *Muttaqin* humanity. In this dimension, adherents of negative theology stretch *muttaqin* "achievements" along a linear-algorithmic line: *mukmin*, *muslims*, and *muhsin*. Thus, the Islamic education system they have developed is integrated with apophatic theology values –read: theology which based on Sufism. Adherents of negative theology believe that an integrated Islamic education can open a path of balance to foster social intelligence and spirituality in the subject of education. Everything arises based on divine intelligence, unspoken and written, yet firmly rooted in their hearts. To achieve this goal, they clean the scientific construction of Islamic education from dichotomic isms while de-profaning Islamic education theology. The creation of this orientation was carried out massively through theological dialectics and developed by doctrination. The divine consciousness that exists in adherents of negative theology can be said to be the Abdullah figure, while constructive action –read: *pious deeds*- represents this awareness. Therefore, their actions bring goodness and grace in the realm of humanity and nature.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that the negative theological discourse in Madrasas and *Pesantren* has relatively massive implications. One of them is on the theological discourse side of Islamic education institutions, in which it participates in contributing to the axiological construction of Islamic education. Therefore, the objectives of Madrasas and *Pesantren*

education are not only oriented to the divine aspect but also to the human aspect. This integrality goal is formed from the source of knowledge and logical patterns that exist in the negative theological *depistemology* system itself. Therefore, the adherents of negative theology in Madrasas and *Pesantren* in Malang continue to unprofaned the metaphysical knowledge of cataphatic divinity.

Therefore, negative theology has shifted the theological framework in Madrasas and *Pesantren* in Malang –included Islamic-based school-, shifting it into a metaphysical form of apophatic deity. All cataphatic theologies only stand as theologies that pretend to describe transcendental reality with their metaphysical principles, logic, and conceptual procedures. In fact, the metaphysics of apophatic divinity can position itself as a more progressive theology in Islamic educational institutions. It even also has implications for claims of truth and metaphysical knowledge in Islamic educational theology.

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