

## **The Role of Intellectual (Philosopher) in the Society According to Edward Said**

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### **ABSTRACT**

What is an intellectual? And what do they do in society? Although these two questions are not easy to answer, it is undeniable that in Indonesian society they are considered intellectuals have a special position. According to Edward Said, the life of an intellectual is essentially concerned with knowledge and freedom. The basic question asked is how people tell the truth? What truth? For whom and where? Here, we see many problems that in fact the intellectuals are enabled to sell themselves to the ruler for payment or more likely because they feel usable. They place the sharpness of thinking in the service of ruling political interests, become producers of meaning for the sake of propaganda, and become what was once considered a court beggar or kiai palace. It is quite surprising how many intellectuals without reserve devote themselves to an ideology, for example the Nazi movement in Germany, various Communist and Marxist regimes, regimes based on religion or other ideologies. We recall the leading European intellectuals who remained a member of the Communist party in France after the Soviet Union crushed the Hungarian uprising in 1956 and after the Warsaw Pact troops crushed the experiments of communism with human faces in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Thus, the betrayal of the intellectuals was not a sectarian phenomenon . Based on these conditions, this article tries to retrace the role of intellectual (philosopher) in society in the perspective of Edward Said. Then, the results of reflection are revised in the Indonesian context.

**Keywords:** Intellectual, Society, Edward Said, Integrity, Betrayal

### **INTRODUCTION**

Intellectual (philosopher) groups in Indonesia have a privileged position. This is marked by the opinion of an intellectual (philosopher) who has no power at all, perhaps he is just a lecturer at a college, can be a headline on the first page of the newspaper. It is the result of an undemocratic situation. Undemocratic occurs because all official opinions are determined and fixed by the government and all the official parties must repeat them. The public is not interested, is bored, a priori, and has no confidence in what is officially echoed. Intellectual (philosopher) groups can be said to be a clever man/woman to say oppositional things in such a way that he gets away with it. Because he really mastered the art of talking and did not depend on the boss who was entitled to determine what could be said, he can say things that politicians do not dare say. Intellectual (philosopher) groups are wrapping arguments well, for example theoretical abstract opinions, so that they are able to voice alternative views.

Based on this condition, this article tries to explore how the role of intellectuals (philosopher) in society. Said asserted that intellectuals (philosopher) are expected to be the creator of a language that says what is true to the ruling. According to Said, intellectual life is essentially about knowledge and freedom (Said,2014:xii). The basic question asked is "how do people tell the truth?, What truths? For whom and where?" Intellectual (philosopher) groups may be solid with his group, but always critically. Dealing with his audiences, he does not first want to satisfy them, but challenge them. Because of their involvement in truth, they can not sell himself to any party. He must challenge orthodoxy and dogma, both religious and political. He is a representative figure in public and represents an establishment. Therefore, he must side with truth and justice. This means that if you want to defend basic human justice, you must do it for everyone, do not just selectively for those who are supported by the people on your side, your culture, and your nation.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. Indonesian Intellectual**

The history of modern intellectuals in Indonesia began when the Dutch East Indies colonial government established schools for noble children and indigenous bureaucrats (Hindryati,2014:xl). Schools are held because bureaucracy is increasingly in need of skilled workers. The natives who attend school, both domestically and in the Netherlands, are enlightened. They become literate against the ghosts of imperialism-colonialism and yearn for the nation-state. The national movement is initiated and driven by newly educated people.

The educated native elite played a major role in grounding nationalism and liberating the country. The central figure in this national movement are Wahidin, Tjipto, Sutomo, Tirtoadisurjo, Mas Marco, dan Tan Malaka (Hindryati,2014:xli). When the government is formed, the intellectuals occupy important posts in the bureaucracy. Hatta and Sjahrir respectively became vice president and prime ministers. Soekarno became head of state. The other intellectuals are Iwa Kusuma Sumantri, Achmad Soebardjo, dan Wilopo become cabinets. The other intellectuals which has no place in the bureaucracy, penetrated the private world by becoming party activists, teachers, humanists, artists, journalists, lawyers, and so on.

However, there was a shift in the position of post-independence indigenous intelligentsia. After the Dutch rulers leave, they are practically substitute rulers. As the most educated people who are now free to move, they play a new role with excessive zeal. Despite the entry into the bureaucratic environment, these intellectuals generally remain as a bastion of common sense that can be critical of power itself, for example Sjahrir, Agus Salim, Soedjatmoko, dan Soemitro Djojohadikusumo who once joined a team to represent Indonesia in the united nation forum (Hindryati,2014:xlili). The end of the era of parliamentary democracy and the emergence of Sukarno as the ultimate control of power gave birth to a new political climate. The intellectuals are also affected by it. Sukarno's authoritarianism as well as the provision of wind to the Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*) has sharpened the situation. Those who are critical are put in prison, for example Sjahrir, Moh. Roem, M. Natsir, Ide Anak Agung Gede Agung, dan Mochtar Lubis. The most critically excluded academicians are HB Jassin and Muchtar Kusumaatmadja. The fall of Sukarno at once became a defeat and victory for the most educated people in this country. The losers, if they are alive, fall in the dark corners of history. While the winner out, open access to power. The New Order's military-bureaucratic-technocratic government with Golkar functioned as a political machine made the people educated as one of the main sources of recruitment. More than the mass of Sukarno, the New Order had originally given a special place to the intellectuals, both in bureaucracy and Golkar.

Since the time of the Dutch East Indies, the intellectuals in this country have been empowered by the government. Especially in the early formation of the republic when the new colonial rulers leave. This kind of recruitment is considered fair. But things changed, when Leimena, Soemantri Brodjonegoro, Emil Salim, Sadli, Ismail Sunny, or Sutjipto Wirjosuparto cooperated with the Soekarno government. They are branded as intellectual

prostitutes for serving deviant powers. This stamp was re-attached when Sumantri Brojonegoro (rector of the University of Indonesia), Tojib Hadiwijaya (rector of IPB), Sumitro Djojohadikusumo (senior economist), and Ali Wardhana (dean of the Faculty of Economics UI) were appointed Cabinet Ministers of Development. Quite a few examples where brilliant intellectuals who are part of the bureaucracy must subordinate their beliefs, in the interest of power. In the campaign period, for example, they should be campaigners who proclaim success stories of cliches of development.

The circumstances that squeeze and twist common sense have depleted the intellectual tree. Tribal, religious, racial, and class distinctions have embraced primitivism and impermissibilities, including among the most educated. This primordial attitude is also evident when responding to the case of Satanic verses Salman Rushdie's novel, the Nobel Prize to Bishop Belo and Ramos Horta, as well as racial and religious upheavals in the country today. Independent intellectuals who persist in declaring truth to power still exist in this country but there are not many. In performing his role as a guardian of a common sense fortress, they position themselves as activists and intellectual professionals, for example Y.B. Mangunwijaya, Arief Budiman, dan George Junus Aditjondro (Hindryati, 2014: xlviii).

## **2. The Role of Intellectuals According to Edward Said**

Edward Said shows Antonio Gramsci and Julien Benda are the two most popular intellectual (philosopher) descriptions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci argues that all human beings are intellectual (philosopher), but not everyone in society has an intellectual (philosopher) function (Gramsci, 1973: 57). Gramsci demonstrate and share the intellectual function in society in two types: traditional intellectual and organic intellectual (Said, 2014:1). Traditional intellectuals (philosopher) such as teachers, clerics, and administrators are continuously doing the same thing from generation to generation. Organic intellectuals (philosopher) that Gramsci sees as being directly related to the class or companies that use them for various purposes and to enlarge power and control. Gramsci believes that organic intellectuals (philosopher) are active in society and seek to change the mind and expand the market. Unlike traditional intellectuals, organic intellectuals are always actively moving and acting.

Julien Benda states that the intellectual (philosopher) means a handful of highly gifted and endowed moral philosopher-kings. They are in charge of building the consciousness of mankind. Julia Benda states that the betrayal of intellectuals (philosopher) is more a criticism

of intellectuals who do not ignore calls and have compromised their principles (Benda,1980:43). True intellectuals (philosopher) create order in society and are very rare, among them Socrates, Spinoza, Voltaire, and Ernest Renan. They hold the principle of truth and eternal justice. True intellectuals (philosopher) also do not achieve practical goals, but find satisfaction in practicing art, science, and metaphysical speculation. True intellectuals (philosopher) are fighting corruption, protecting the weak, and opposing aberrant authority.

Based on these two thoughts, Said asserted that intellectuals (philosophers) are individuals with certain public roles in society that can not be reduced to professionalism, class members who are only competent in their field. Intellectuals (philosophers) are individuals who are gifted with the gift of representing, expressing, and articulating their messages, views, attitudes, philosophy, and opinions to the public. This role is limitless and can not be played without feeling as someone who catapulted it to the public in order to raise questions when facing orthodoxy and dogma in order to become a person who is not easily coopted by government or corporation (Said,2014:8). Intellectuals (philosophers) are representative figures of public affairs. He is seen to represent the stance of certain circles and articulate it despite having various obstacles. However, intellectuals (philosophers) need to have distinctive features in speaking, writing, and teaching. The work is considered important, recognized publicly, and includes both commitment, risk, courage and vulnerability.

When we remember an intellectual (philosopher) like Sartre, we are reminded of personal temperaments, feelings as important figures, hard endeavors, risks, do not hesitate to talk about colonialism or commitment to social conflicts that anger enemies, and empower his friends. When we read Sartre's relationship with Simone de Beauvoir, his rivalry with Camus, and his brilliant collaboration with Jean Genet, we would put Sartre in his neighborhood. In that environment and to some extent because they are in this state. The purpose of intellectual (philosopher) group activity is to increase human freedom and knowledge. However, major narratives have been replaced by local situations and language games in the postmodern era. Postmodern intellectuals (philosophers) rate competence, and do not universal values such as truth or freedom.

Then, what is the current role of intellectuals (philosopher)? Said told that a very independent intellectual with a social vision must be passionate and have a great ability to communicate his idea in a frank and compelling prose. Independent intellectuals (philosophers) must dare to face the melancholy due to helplessness to their marginality or to

the choice of joining the rank of institution, company or government as a relatively small member of the group (Said,2014:16). Politics is everywhere. There is no place to escape to the reality where life really reflects the lifestyle of art and pure thought, or in this case a truly objective life. Intellectuals (philosophers) are far from their time span, growing in line with the emergence of mass representation politics associated with the information industry or the mass media. The ability to survive can only be realized by damaging the image of official narrative and cultural transformation.

This task is very heavy. Intellectuals (philosophers) always stand between solitude and seclusion. For example, how difficult the intellectual (philosophers) position of the Gulf War against Iran is to remind the population that America is not without any purpose of power or freedom altogether, even though its involvement is perceived by certain circles as a world policeman. For Said, the intellectual (philosopher) role of the moment was needed to open forgotten things, to explain connections that might be denied, and to present alternatives of thought that would avoid war and the destruction of humanity (Said,2014:18). Basically, intellectuals (philosophers) are not the creators of consensus and peace, but those whose presence is characterized by their critical and tasteful attitude for not accepting a simple formula, or a cliché, or something that goes unchallenged and accommodating to power by not committing or saying something that is less favorable to the authorities. This is not always related to the voice of criticism of government policy, but more than that, the intellectual work of maintaining the state with vigilance, is always conscious of its duty not to let truth be distorted or accept an idea that can dominate all life. As long as this role involves a realistic and rational view, as well as an elaborate struggle to balance personal issues and the demand to publicize ideas and public speaking, this task is never ending, never finished, and always less than perfect (Said,2014:19).

### **3. The Reflection of The Role of Intellectuals According to Edward Said**

Based on the situation of Indonesia dan some arguments or the role intellectuals (philosopher) according to Edward Said, we can learn talking about intellectuals (philosophers) today also speaks specifically about nationality and religious radicalization. In a certain degree, the locally narrowed focus of the intellectual (philosopher) worldview is also concerned with the breeding of special studies which may be regarded as the cause of the development of an intellectual (philosopher) role in modern life. Speaking of nationality, which is the nursery of nationalism is nationalism. Every intellectual is born in a particular

language environment and almost all his life uses the language that is the medium of his intellectual (philosopher) activity. In this case, the intellectual (philosopher) must use the national language. This is not only for reasons of comfort and intimacy but because he hopes that with that language there will be a special sound, special emphasis, and finally his perspective. But the special problem facing intellectuals (philosophers) is the language community in every society dominated by existing habits of expression. One of its primary functions is to maintain the status quo and ensure that everything runs smoothly, unchanged, and without challenge.

Solidarity that does not begin with criticism is never a short answer. People always have choices. Do you know what you do or do not, and may not be neglected, or might support a stronger one. In this case, it is good to argue again that you will be out there, but must be appropriately used. By referring to consensus on group or national identity, the intellectual (philosopher) group must show how a group is not a natural or existing entity from its origin but built up and produced. Even in some cases, objects found in a history of struggle and conquest behind them must be displayed. Intellectual is a general sociological picture. That's because he stands at two extremes. They oppose the existing norms or in an accommodative way, they prepare the order and continuity in people's lives. For Said, only the first possibility of these two possibilities is really a modern intellectual role that challenges the existing norms. Because the current dominant norms are strongly associated with the state because being governed from above by the self-victorious and always in the position of authority always demands loyalty and submission.

Moreover, in many cultures today, intellectuals (philosopher) tend to ask more, instead of communicating directly with the common symbols discussed. Even in many third world countries, antagonism stirs up between the power of the status quo of countries with disadvantaged citizens, locked within, but not represented or suppressed by it, gives real opportunities for intellectuals (philosophers) to challenge the upcoming march victory. However, intellectuals (philosophers) are always trapped and unrepentantly challenged by the issue of loyalty. All of us are without exception covered by nationalities, religious or ethnic communities. No one, regardless of the volume of statements, is free from the organic ties that bind individuals into families, communities, and nationalities.

## **CONCLUSION**

The presence of intellectuals (philosopher) as a torch of society is of course increasingly needed now amid the increasingly chronic economic and political crisis. The stuttering power of coping with the increasingly complicated daily problems is likely to make those who rule the dark. Here the task that can be played by educated people is mainly to remind every deviation of state power. In addition, they also conduct social consciousness (awareness) for the sake of civil society. The risk of doing this is huge. Intellectuals can experience not just exclusion and the threat of terror, but silenced eternally.

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