MAPPING THE COMMODIFICATION OF RELIGION IN PHILOSOPHICAL-ETHICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract: This work examines the philosophical-ethical debate regarding the commodification of religion amidst the duality of views regarding the commodification of faith that are developing, both from a negative and positive perspective. In the process, the author conducted a literature review of works about the commodification of religion from various perspectives, leading them to a philosophical-ethical analysis to obtain valid and reliable information. In the end, the author found two significant views regarding the commodification of religion in ethical philosophical discourse. *First,* some see the commodification of belief as a negative thing, thus positioning it as a process that has a secular nuance, is synonymous with capitalism, and must be avoided. Instead, it is feared that the commodification of religion will have the impact of dimming and disappearing the spiritual and social power of faith as a determinant of socio-religious action, as happens in traditional societies. However, on the other hand, some groups see it from a positive perspective, placing the commodification of religion as part of the process of adapting religion to modernity, which inevitably must be passed if religion is to survive in today's transmodern era, which is filled with consumerist desires or extraordinary consumerism. Instead, these groups see that consumerism does not significantly influence religious spirituality. Instead, it will expand the reach of religion and all its attributes at the global level.
Keywords: commodity, Spirituality, Capitalism, Consumer Culture, Modernity

Abstrak: Tulisan ini mengkaji perdebatan etika filsafat mengenai komodifikasi agama di tengah dualitas pandangan komodifikasi agama yang berkembang, baik dari sudut pandang negatif maupun positif. Dalam prosesnya, penulis melakukan tinjauan pustaka terhadap karya-karya tentang komodifikasi agama dari berbagai sudut pandang, menganalisis etika filsafat untuk memperoleh informasi yang valid dan dapat dipercaya. Penulis menemukan dua pandangan signifikan mengenai komodifikasi agama dalam wacana etika filsafat. Pertama, ada yang memandang bahwa komodifikasi agama sebagai hal yang negatif sehingga memposisikannya sebagai proses yang bernuansa sekuler, identik dengan kapitalisme, dan harus dihindari. Sebaliknya, komodifikasi agama dikhawatirkan akan berdampak meredupkan dan menghilangkan kekuatan spiritual dan sosial agama sebagai penentu tindakan sosial keagamaan, seperti yang terjadi pada masyarakat tradisional. Namun di sisi lain, sebagian kalangan melihatnya dari sudut pandang positif, dengan menempatkan komodifikasi agama sebagai bagian dari proses adaptasi agama terhadap modernitas, yang mau tidak mau harus dilalui jika agama ingin bertahan diera transmodern saat ini yang penuh dengan tuntutan dengan keinginan konsumeris atau konsumerisme yang luar biasa. Sebaliknya, kelompok tersebut menilai konsumerisme tidak berpengaruh signifikan terhadap spiritualitas keagamaan. Sebaliknya, hal ini akan memperluas jangkauan agama dan segala atributnya di tingkat global.
Kata kunci: Komoditas, Spiritualitas, Kapitalisme, Budaya Konsumen, Modernitas

A. Introduction

Religion and the various discourses contained in it today are no longer seen as independent entities; religion as a sacred ideological belief is no longer accessible to the biases of profane humanitarian interests. Religion and the numerous discourses included within are no longer regarded as independent things; religion as a sacred ideological belief is no longer free of the biases of profane humanitarian goals. Religion has become a significant element and coloring of numerous cultural systems or notable civilizations worldwide; therefore, this is nothing new. Recent phenomena show that religion is not an entity that exists in a vacuum and is sterile from various interests; it is present and "presented" in multiple interests, especially economics. This is what is currently emerging in various forms of escalation regarding the commodification of religion in multiple media today.

Commodification, as a term, began to be used in the mid-1970s. It is defined as the act of changing, treating, or making something into a mere commodity, even though that something is not essentially commercial. The commodification of religion, as Kitiarsa said, turns religion and its discourse into "goods" that are valuable and can be sold.[1] So, the commodification of religion makes religion a commodity to be bought and sold.[2] Some figures even go further by expressing it as something intertwined with economic, political, and ideological interests so that the commodification of religion is seen as a representation of various goods, which makes the use of religious symbols an arena for fighting over meaning in the practice of commodification. It is not surprising, then, that Barker places the commodification of religion as a process of capitalism.[3]

The process of commodification of religion has made religion a product for profit by making specific religious issues into commodities to be bought and sold. Considering that many religious ideologies and movements can be blown up and narrated, it will be interesting to discuss various perspectives whose culmination will increase public attention to these issues. A further point that can be asked is whether these actions meet specific philosophical standards and ethical codes. For example, how can it be seen from the perspective of the theory of social action developed by Max Weber?[4] Alternatively, other philosophical-ethical theories can reveal the motives and ethical social philosophy behind existing acts of religious modification occurring amid conditions in today's modern world society, which has experienced polarization due to the extraordinary tsunami of information.

1. Meaning of Commodification of Religion

Religion now plays a different function than in the era of postmodernism or even transmodernism. In Modernism, religion was always considered to be an opponent

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[1]Kitiarsa Pattana (Ed.), *Religious Commodifications in Asia: Marketing Gods*, (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 1–6.

[2]Elis Zuliati Anis, Ala Iklan Komodifikasi Identitas Keislaman dalam Iklan di Televisi Indonesia. *Makalah* dalam *seminar "Agama dan TV: Etika dan Problematika Dakwahtainment",* 9 October 2013, pp. 8–9.

[3]See Morissan. *Manajemen Media penyiaran: Strategi Mengelola Radio & Televisi,* (Jakarta: Kencana Prenada Media Group, 2009), pp. 80-89.

[4]Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, translated by Talcott Parsons,* (London & New York: Routledge, 2005).

of science,[5] and thus needed to be responded to, ignored, or forgotten; then, in this era of trans modernism, religion begins to be viewed as a commodity that produces[6]. Today's monetization of religion exhibits this problem.

As a concept, social scientists initially put forward the commodity to show how capitalism achieves its goals by accumulating capital to be used as capital to be transformed into exchange value. Commodities and commodification are two entities that have an object and process relationship, which are the leading indicators of global capitalism that is currently taking place. Commodification is translated as a form of transformation of relationships that are free from things that are economic commodities to become economic ones. In this context, Vincent Mosco does not hesitate to define commodification as transforming use values into exchange values or changing use values into exchange values.[7]

Linguistically, the meaning of commodification itself is taken from the word commodity, which means something that has the quality of "desirable" or "useful" and "saleable object" or "object of trade."[8]The material meaning above is then directed to a process termed "commodification," which is translated as a process. According to Horkheimer & Adorno, commodification is a form of global capitalism that accumulates capital today. Commodification has transformed the use value of something into exchange value that is commercial and economic.[9] In this way, goods or things that previously had no economic exchange value become economically valuable.

Referring to its conceptual history, the term commodification can be traced to a concept introduced by Karl Marx, which refers to a form of transformation in social relations that was initially non-commercial to become commercial. In social relations, a shift occurs in reducing relationships that were not initially commercial to become commercial. As a result, commodification has changed social relations, which were initially humanistic, into business relations, where humanitarian relations will be seen as relationships between objects, things, and traded things.[10]

It is not surprising then that in his response to this problem, Jean Baudrillard explained that in commodified society, there are social relations whose order has changed into commodities, where material and non-material things are traded to gain profits, both in nature and in nature. Material or non-material. That is why Karl Marx called commodification a cash payment without feelings. This refers to the condition of the bourgeoisie who live in a capitalist social system when they exercise control over society and transform personal and selfless values into exchange values. They have consciously changed pure and selfless family relationships into

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[5]Mohd. Arifullah, *Rekontruksi Citra Islam di Tengah Ortodoksi Islam dan Perkembangan Sains Kontemporer*, (Jakarta: UI Press dan Sulthan Thaha Press, 2004), pp. 27-34.

[6]About Postmodernism and Transmodernism, see Mohd. Arifullah, *Paradigma Keilmuan Islam: Autokritik dan Respons Islam terhadap Tantangan Modernitas dalam Pandangan Ziauddin Sardar*, (Jakarta: GP Press, 2015), pp. 89-101.

[7]Vincent Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication: Rethinking and Renewal*, (London: Sage Publication Inc 1996), p. 57.

[8]Greg Fealy & Sally White (eds.), Expressing *Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008), p. 16.

[9]Max Horkheimer & Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 94.

[10]Saiful Hakam, Cahya Pamungkas, dan Erni Budiwanti, "Komodifikasi Agama-agama di Korea Selatan", *Jurnal Kajian Wilayah*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2016, p. 160.

relationships that stand above commercial matters so that everyone will see that everything has no value if it does not have retail exchange value.

Looking at the definition of commodification above, many things have been modified in today's capitalist system, such as education and religion. The commodification of religion is widespread nowadays, considering that religion, as an inseparable part of culture, significantly influences consumer behavior. Several studies have shown how religion and its various traditions have been modified to gain certain benefits. For example, the "haul" tradition in some areas has been changed for certain uses; instead of a haul, it has become nothing more than a cultural festival followed by a bazaar for tourism purposes or other economic benefits.[11]

Religious commodification in this context is a form of transformation that transforms religious symbols into commodities traded to gain profits. This can be seen in the transformation of the fashion world, places of worship, and religious symbols. When commodification is used in the spiritual realm, certain aspects of religion are transformed into commodities that can be bought and sold on the market. In other words, the commodification of faith is an attempt to pull religion into the commercial realm or to change aspects of belief and religious symbols into commodities that can be traded, bought, and sold to gain a certain profit.[12]

Looking at the discussion above, the commodification of religion can be interpreted as an effort to make religion and its various attribute elements into economic commodities that can bring commercial profits. Understanding religion in this context, of course, applies to belief in an open understanding not only limited to Islam alone,[13] considering that commodification of religion can occur in any religious entity, not only Islam.

2. Commodification of Religion in Sociological Discourse

Kitiarsa has clearly expressed the concept of the commodification of religion in social science discourse by citing the definition of religion as explained by Peter L. Berger in his work The Sacred Canopy. Through this work, Berger explains that religion is a collection of moral rules and spiritual protection for humanity and the society that follows it.[14] Berger further emphasized that human beings who believe in religion cannot get out of the "holy ceiling," which he terms the Sacred Canopy, because getting out of that ceiling means falling into a world entire of darkness, disorder, and even "insanity."[15] In Clifford Geertz's perspective, the term "sacred" is

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[11]See Muhammad Ferri Setiawan, "Commodification of Religious Tradition (Critical Study on Tourism of Islamic Tradition *Haul* at Pasar Kliwon, Surakarta)", Proceeding *of the 3rd Conference on Communication, Culture and Media Studies,* 2016

[12]Hakam, et al., "Komodifikasi Agama-agama di Korea Selatan", p. 161.

[13]Karya Saiful Hakam et al, misalnya menunjukkan bahwa komodifikasi agama juga terjadi pada Budha yang ada di Korea Selatan, di mana agama Budha telah dihadirkan di ruang publik, alih-alih ruang pasar dan menjadi komoditas yang diperdagangkan atau berefek ekonomi. Lihat Hakam Dkk., "Komodifikasi Agama-agama di Korea Selatan".

[14]Pattana (ed.). *Religious Commodifications in Asia*.

[15]Peter L. Berger, *The sacred canopy: elements of a sociological theory of religion*, (Garden City. New York; Anchor Doubleday, 1969), p. 134.

interpreted as something that helps humans overcome various fundamental problems regarding their existence.[16]

We can also trace Berger's concept of a "sacred ceiling" from the views of Emile Durkheim, as explained by Geertz, who revealed that religion is a collection of sacred values and beliefs inherent in a community of society.[17] However, according to Berger, the sacred refers to a mysterious and wondrous quality of power inherent in relations between humans, believed to reside in the objects of human experience. The sacred exists not merely on a different cosmological and cultural platform but is separated from material daily routines. The concept of the sacred sky (the sacred canopy) is widely used to analyze the development of religions worldwide as follows: First, this metaphor presents the impression of the existence of pious individuals and communities in a secular world so that religion has been recognized as influencing private and public life. Second, what will happen when belief, understood as something sacred, interacts with or encounters the capitalist economy and secular modern life? According to Kitiarsa, the commodification of religion brings religion into the market and turns something sacred into something that is traded. Thus, religious commodification like this can be seen as an adjustment and response of faith to the penetration of global capitalism. This is contrary to the views of secularization theory thinkers who predict that the role of religion will decline significantly as an essential individual determinant in determining the actions and social awareness of society leaders, including individuals within it, experiencing modernization and rationalization.[18]

Still referring to Kitiarsa's views, the leading secularization thinkers who emphasize religion's role in modernization, such as sociologists Peter L. Berger & Thomas Luckmann, stated that modernization inevitably causes a decline in religion's role in society and individuals.[19] This view differs from some other groups' who argue that the secularization model is not the basis for the loss of religiosity or the role of organized religion in social life.

Referring to the views of sociologists above, in today's modern era, there are indications of a significant decline in the role of religion in social systems and consciousness. According to Wilson, this is caused by the rise of secularization theories, which focus on the workings of social systems and the functions of social action in secular social systems so that social systems have rational and secular mechanisms. As a result, belief in supernatural powers as an expression of public rhetoric or a previously widespread individual preference became dim and lost its capacity as a determinant of social action, as happened in traditional society. Modern humans have learned to regulate their behavior by rational buildings that form a modern and secular social order, where religion is no longer used as a basis for action because a systematic and measurable reasonable basis has replaced it.[20]

Regarding the state above, Berger mentioned that the views regarding secularization developing today tend to be wrong and value-free. Secularization

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[16]See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (USA: Basic Books, Inc, Publisher, 1973), p. 87.

[17]Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures,* p. 88.

[18]See Kitiarsa, *Religious Commodifications in Asia*.

[19]Peter L. Berger & Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality, The Treatise in The Sociology of Reality*. (Garden City, N.Y.: Peguin Book, 1991).

[20]Bryan Wilson, 1985. "Secularization: The Inherited Model," dalam Phillip E. Hammond, (ed), *The Sacred in a Secular Age: Toward Revision in the Scientific Study of Religion*, (Barkeley. the University of California Press, 1985).

theory thinkers tend to see the resilience and subtlety of religion in facing the powerful forces and challenges of modernity, especially with the rise of the modern nation-state and the world capitalist market economy.[21] Therefore, for Kitiarsa, criticism of secularization theories has been circulating and carried out since the end of the Second World War by researchers studying capitalist economic development in the United States and East Asia. The main argument put forward against the theory of secularization is Weber's view of the disenchantment of the world,[22] which is only partially true.

What is unfortunate is that Weber and the scientists who followed him did not predict that the decline in the role of religion in modernity was a direct result of the separation between "the secular" (profane) and "the religious" (ukhrawi), which led to the loss of the influence of religion in the public sphere. As criticized by Beckford.[23]Religion thus becomes a response to the forces of modernity in the opposite way. The more a society becomes rationally modern, upholds scientific traditions, is facilitated by progress and mastery of technology, and is economically prosperous, the greater its tendency to be fascinated or re-enlightened by their beliefs. Thus, the theory of the secularization of religion will directly conflict with Berger's work "Desecularization of the World" (1999), which explains the errors of the secularization theory and the widespread revival of religion at the end of the 21st century. In general, the proposition raised is the commodification of faith as part of a secularization phenomenon, which is deemed not to be able to eliminate the role of religion in the public sphere but, on the contrary, will strengthen the position of religion in the public sphere. This view was later expressed more widely by Pattana Kittiarsa.[24]

In this context, Kittiarsa also mentions that the commodification of sacred things will not cause a critical decline in religiosity, as argued by secularization theorists such as Hammond and Wilson, as explained above.

This means that the commodification of religion does not cause a religious crisis or produce new religious forms and movements that challenge institutionalized religious beliefs, practices, and organizations. In essence, it can be concluded from Kittiarsa that commodification does not necessarily lead to the disappearance of religion in the public sphere but rather to how faith responds adaptively to the waves of modernity so that it continues to exist.[25]

This view is reinforced by several experts who have conducted research in several countries, such as Eamonn Conway, in his work entitled "The Commodification of Religion and The Challenges for Theology: Reflections from the Irish Experience," which conducted a study of commodification in Ireland. The author's results show that although religion is commodified in Ireland, it does not affect the local community's understanding of theology.[26] Instead, the

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[21]Berger & Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality,* 2.

[22]Marx Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organizations*, (New York: Free Press, 1947, p. 155.

[23]James A. Beckford*, Cult Controversies: The Societal Response to New Religious Movement*, (New York: Tavistock Publications, 1985), 127. Lihat juga Nigel Parton, "The Backford Report: A Critical Appraisal", *The British Journal of Social Work*, Vol. 16, No. 5, 1986, p. 512.

[24]Kitiarsa, Religious *Commodifications in Asia,* 1.

[25]See Kitiarsa, Religious *Commodifications in Asia.*

[26]Eamonn Conway, "The Commodification of Religion and The Challenges for Theology: Reflections from the Irish Experience", Bulletin *ET, Special Issue*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2006, pp. 152-161

commodification of religion does not significantly impact the decline in people's trust in the faith they believe in.

Apart from that, it also needs to be emphasized that, in reality, the commodification of religion colors how relations between the market and religion are formed. Empirical experience shows a significant continuity of religious influence in Indonesia amidst the powerful modernization trend and cultural irregularities in postmodernism. The commodification of religion in Indonesia is the result of complex cultural and historical construction. Thus, the commodification of religion is produced in a complex cultural context, meaning that it requires a preliminary understanding of the cultural framework to reveal the social, economic, and political significance that shapes the actual understanding. The process of commodification of religion is not taken for granted. However, it is found and explicitly embedded in global-local traces in the market economy and the explosion of postmodernism.

3. Religion and Public Space

Today's religious issues concern the display of religion, whether it can be displayed in public spaces or is limited to private rooms. This issue has attracted much attention because it has raised various religious problems, especially in public spaces; for example, sacred symbols have received strong protests for being displayed in public areas. So, it is essential to discuss religious issues in public spaces.

However, before discussing religion in the public sphere, we should understand the concept in depth. According to Chua Beng-Huat and Norman Edwards, public space has a reasonably broad scope; as quoted by Roger Scruton, "public space" is a term to describe a place designed where everyone interacts and has the collective right to access it. It is a place for unplanned meetings between individuals, where politeness between people will always be needed and enforced.[27]

On the other hand, several experts also understand public space, as mentioned by Terzi and Tonnelat, both of whom see that the meaning of public space tends to be ambiguous in English and French. The Habermassian vocabulary shows the development of public space thinking, making public space a public space and a public sphere. In understanding public space, fields and roads become the physical form. In contrast, the public domain is a collection of mass media such as newspapers, television, and the Internet as democratic components. Cedric and Stephane argue that this substantial definition exists because of two fundamental errors: allowing society to use public space indiscriminately and giving rise to unclear boundaries. Apart from that, efforts to generalize the meaning between public space and the public realm have given rise to blurred boundaries regarding the importance of public space as between physical space and media.[28]

In line with Terzi and Tonnelat, Gutiérrez also briefly touched on the public sphere, namely the idea of a city that cannot be separated from its city area and the social time of its people. This can be seen where diversity and overlapping activities can be assessed. The network of roads and places is an actualization of the city that

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[27]C. Beng-Huat, and N. Edwards, (eds), *Public Space: Design, Use, and Management*, (Singapura: Singapore University Press, 1992), pp. 1–10.

[28]C. Terzi and S. Tonnelat, "The Publicization of Public Space," *Environment and Planning A*, 0(0), 2016, pp. 1–18.

shows the social nature of its people.[29] Public space is a new, modern, and developing form of meeting space. Just as shopping centers are not just commercial facilities but arise due to social demands, the need for security, urban lifestyle needs, seller strategies, and so on.

Apart from understanding public space as space that can be viewed from various angles, Németh understands public space as free space in urban areas. He measured how free the existing public space was. In their writings, according to several researchers, prioritizing security and personal interests can limit the freedom and diversity of activities that occur in public areas. Providing a guardrail for security reasons can make it difficult to access public spaces.[30]

The concept of "public space" is not new in political theory, legal science, and jurisprudence. Public space is a discursive space where various groups can discuss things they want or even come to certain decisions as a mutual agreement. In this context, Jurgen Habermas translates public space as an area of social life where public opinion is formed. Habermas also explained that public space is a medium for communicating information, views, and principles as a religious society in a democratic country.[31]

A good public space is one in which all members of society have the intention and will to communicate with each other, where various ideas formulated in religious language are thoughtfully considered and discussed critically as valuable cognitive potential. Furthermore, in an excellent public space, all citizens, whether religious or not, accept that the state is neutral in determining good and bad views of life (*Weltanschauung*). A public space must allow religious people to express their ideas in their unique language. Meanwhile, parties who are not religious are expected to cooperate in understanding what is described in religious language.[32]

In the context of public spaces above, it is unsurprising that, according to Hubermas, using religious symbols in public spaces is not a problem because religion as a "good life" cannot be separated from everyday life. Religion is also used as a way of life (*Weltanschauung*) and as a moral source for public discourse, so it has an essential role in the public sphere.[33]

In Indonesia, the use of religious symbols in public spaces is still a gray area; until now, no law has specifically and fundamentally regulated and discussed religion in public spaces. If we trace it back, before 1965, faith in Indonesia was still included in the private sphere. This can be seen in the Identity Certificate (KTP), which did not have religion then. The available columns only relate to name, gender, nation (ethnicity), place, date of birth, occupation, and address. Furthermore, after 1965, Law no. 1/PNPS/1965 concerning The Abuse and Blasphemy of Religion, in its explanation, states that the only religions recognized in Indonesia are Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism.[34]

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[29]See E.M. Gutiérrez, "Urban growth, policy, and planning of public space", *International Review of Sociology*, No. 21, Vol. 1, 2011, pp. 89–102.

[30]J. Németh, "Controlling The Commons: How Public is Public Space?", *Urban Affairs Review*, No. 48, Vol. 6, 2012. Pp. 811–835.

[31]F. B. Hardiman, Ruang Publik: Melecak "Partisipasi Demokrasi" dari Polis sampai Cyberspace, (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2010), p. 229.

[32]Nikmah Lubis, "Cadar dalam Ruang Publik: Analisis Wacana Kritis Norman Fairclough pada instagram @Aisyiyahpusat", *Tazkir: Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu-ilmu Sosial dan Keislaman*, Vol. 06, No. 2, Desember 2020, p. 215.

[33]Hardiman, Ruang Publik, p. 229.

[34]Lubis, "Cadar dalam Ruang Publik, pp. 210-211.

The above recognition applies to this day in Indonesia; religion is no longer determined by individuals but is regulated and recognized by the state. The state's recognition of certain beliefs was also caused by fear of the danger of communism in Indonesia. The alleged coup by the Indonesian Communist Party (*PKI*) in the past forced someone to have absolute religion. Those who have no faith will become easy targets for being accused of being communists and will be arrested or disappear. During the New Order era, the use of religious symbols, especially the headscarf, received serious attention from the government, and the use of the headscarf was prohibited in schools and workspaces. However, after the Reformation, the hijab began to be allowed to be used as an identity for Muslim women.

Meanwhile, conscious is an advanced version of the hijab. The veil wearer receives excellent resistance.m This happened due to the stigma that veil wearers are of fundamentalist Islam (hardline Islam) and are also closely related to the terrorist movement, which is widespread nowadays. As a result, veil users received widespread rejection in the public sphere.[35]

This most controversial issue of clothing has become a debate yet again after the statement by the Minister of Religion, Fachrul Razi, who said that ASN were prohibited from wearing veils and pants during work. This regulation is motivated by positive efforts to prevent radicalism in Indonesia. Unfortunately, this statement raises pros and cons in various circles. For example, some say that clothing has no bearing on the performance of ASN; in fact, some claim that people who wear prohibited clothing work harder. Many people also regret the policy of the minister of religion because it simplifies the link between the veil and skinny trousers and perpetrators of radicalism.

Looking at the phenomenon above, religious expressions in public spaces and assessments are complex and stand-alone. Nowadays, the judgment of religion in the public sphere is also influenced by, or closely related to, or inseparable from, the development of information technology. Electronic and online media convey religious expression by many people individually or in groups. Certain groups or organizations have also used electronic or online media to describe religious discourse by translating spiritual practices and beliefs into new contexts. This reality is seen in the religious phenomenon in Indonesia's public spaces today.[36]

Based on the understanding above, what is needed now is an effort to build an atmosphere of deliberative democracy in the public sphere. In this context, Habermas emphasizes that public space is a space that works based on practical moral discourse involving rational and critical interactions that are built to find solutions to political problems. Rules in "public space"(public sphere) according to Habermas include: First, focus on rational and critical debate and avoid emotions or emotive language in the discussion; Second, focus on the content of the statement, not the speaker; Third, equality of all participants so that status does not play a role in the debate; Fourth, freedom in discussion, where each subject must be open to debate and the various issues required during the meeting; Fifth, freedom to assemble; Sixth, freedom of speech, expression and publication regarding matters of general interest; Seventh, the desire to reach consensus in debate.[37]

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[35]Lubis, "Cadar dalam Ruang Publik, p. 211

[36]Muh. Bahruddin, "Partisipasi Publik: Isu Agama dan Politik Demokrasi di Media Online", *Majalah Ilmiah Semi Populer Komunikasi Massa*, tt.

[37]Vicent Miller, *Understanding Digital Culture,* (London: Sage Publication), 2011.

Habermas states that, historically, discussions about the public sphere peaked in the mid-19th century, which further increased press censorship, media commercialization, and the growth of private media oligopolies in the mid-20th century. The lack of inclusive and attractive public spaces is seen as one of the main symptoms of the political crisis to date. In this condition, Miller is optimistic about the development of communication technology, especially the Internet, which can contribute to revitalizing the political public space because of these reasons: First, the Internet increases access to political information that will be used in rational debate and deliberation; Second, improved accessibility and ease of publication, allowing people to consume and generate political discussion; Third, the potential for anonymity on the Internet opens up space for equal status between participants; Fourth, freedom of speech and association is aided by anonymity.[38]

However, Miller sees that although online media has the characteristics of anonymous participants, it opens up opportunities to place anyone in an equal position in opinions and discussions, with freedom of speech and association. The emergence of groups on social media, such as Facebook, or personal media that can be used to mobilize the masses, such as WhatsApp, are democratic media that anyone can use regardless of position or status.[39] The mass mobilization in the 212 Islam defense action on December 2, 2016, in Jakarta, which demanded that the Governor of DKI Jakarta, Basuki Cahaya Purnama, be tried for blaspheming religion, is proof that massive public participation in online media has a significant influence, especially in democracy. However, does this condition immediately solve problems in democracy, especially in deliberative democracy? Democracy in the internet space tends to be incomplete.[40]

Looking at the above phenomenon, the issue of religion and politics, in many cases of faith in the public space, has given rise to new problems, namely the massive uncontrolled speech, especially in online media. The flood of information carried out by participants tends to be emotive and generate hostility. Religious and political issues merge without any boundaries or resolution. Friendships on social media are damaged. The actions of people who have different opinions then choose to remain silent, or what is more extreme is blocking and unfriending. Differences of opinion are no longer about achieving consensus, as Habermas envisions in the public sphere.

Personal matters are raised in discussion forums so that they often injure other participants, giving rise to fear in expressing their opinions. This is what then gives rise to a lot of hate speech on Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and so on. These uncontrolled emotions can no longer even see rationality in discussions. Domination occurs in specific individuals and groups to attack the opinions of other individuals or groups. Hoax/false information appears everywhere. Images are manipulated to confirm certain beliefs.[41]

Therefore, Castells sees the above as timeless, a phenomenon created by hypertext and other new multimedia features, such as hyperlinks, message exchange, and image manipulation. This is what is considered historically destructive about something natural. It is a form of communication that changes

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[38]*Ibid.,*

[39]*Ibid.,*

[40]Bahruddin, "Partisipasi Publik".

[41]*Ibid.,*

how organizations, people, and anything exist. All messages of all types become one in one medium. Media has become very broad and diverse, making it easy to shape. Media absorbs the entire human experience, past, present, and future, in the exact multimedia text.[42]

In such a context, Champ and Chien refer to cyberspace as a place where electronic and social media exist as virtual spaces. Cyberspace provides various facilities for users to find hope and new ways to interact well in economic, political, social, and other aspects. This reality in virtual space makes the Internet an open space for anyone to interact or construct themselves. However, according to Van Dijk, anyone who connects automatically becomes part of or a network community member.[43]

The participation of online media users currently shows massive developments. However, it does not necessarily present a public sphere as dreamed of by Habermas, which prioritizes rationality, honesty, independence, and without pressure from anyone, even the majority. On the other hand, the online media currently developing is prone to conflict, hate speech, insults, fake news (hoaxes), and the similar things. The Internet is a medium that can be used for political discussions or debates, exchanging ideas, and constructing discourse in response to political realities. However, this function is the same as using the Internet as a virtual tool. The Internet can become a public space as a medium attached to the reality of any society, depending on the user who accesses it.[44]

Ideally, rationalized power is power determined by critical public discussion. This kind of discussion is only possible in a social area free from censorship and domination. This is what Habermas calls public space. In principle, all public members are allowed to enter the room. Citizens are private people, not people with business or professional interests, not officials or politicians, but their conversations form a public. This is because what is discussed is not personal issues but issues of public interest. It is in this situation that these private people become public because they have the guarantee to assemble and associate freely.[45]

This means that religion can be accessible in public spaces without suspicion; it depends on how it is packaged. However, when placing faith in the public domain, religious communities must also be prepared to put religion not only as something sacred but also profane, as a commodity that can be discussed, debated, and criticized instead of being a commodity for economic interests and so on.

4. Philosophical-Ethical Discourse on the Commodification of Religion

The previous discussion clearly illustrated that the commodification of religion occurs in the development of the modern world, which can be seen naturally by several groups. Commodification does not significantly influence religious spirituality in any form. There is a current belief that religion can be freely displayed

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[42]M. Castels, *The Rise of Network Society.* Vol.1. "The Information Age Economy, Society, and Culture", (Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

[43]Jan Van Dijk, *The Network Society,* (London: SAGE Publications, 2006).

[44]Camp, Jeand and Chien, Y.T. *The Internet as Public Space: Concepts, Issues, and Implications in Public Policy*, dalam jurnal ACM SIGCAS Computers and Society, Volume 30 Issue 3, September 2000, pp. 13 – 19.

[45]Jurgen Habermas, *Ruang Publik: Sebuah Kajian tentang Kategori Masyarakat Borjuis.* Terjemahan. (Bantul: Kreasi Wacana, 2012). Lihat juga Ignatius Haryanto, *Jurnalisme Era Digital: Tantangan Industri Media Abad 21.* Jakarta: Kompas Media Nusantara, 2014).

in the public space to obtain various interests, where religion is legitimately used as a commodity for social, political, and economic interests. The problem is, how does this matter when viewed in a philosophical-ethical paradigm that places religion on an idealistic normative plane?

In philosophical discourse (political economy), Vincent Mosco stated that commodification occurs in political economy as a process of transforming use values into exchange values (the process of transforming use values into exchange values).[46] In economic politics, he said there are three continuous processes, namely: (1) commodification, (2) spatialization, and (3) structuration. First, commodification is divided into three, namely: (1) Content Commodification, which is related to the content of the media that will be disseminated to the audience; (2) Commodification of audiences related to ratings for the benefit of advertisers, and; (3) Commodification of workers which relates to how media stakeholders utilize workers.

Second, Spatialization discusses the distribution of products by the media to audiences or audiences without being hindered by space and time by utilizing advances in communication technology. This is related to the form or type of technology used, the network, the speed of distribution in various ways, and the integration that the business has both vertically and horizontally. Horizontal Spatialization is a concentration that unites the media industry by expanding media production and resources by buying shares or acquiring other media of the same type and equivalent. Vertical Spatialization is a concentration that describes the attention of companies in a business line that expands the company's control over the production process. Spatialization is carried out to expand media reach to a broad audience. Vertical Spatialization can occur between countries, where one company is the parent company and the other is a subsidiary. One of the impacts of the spatialization process is that there will be a monopoly on communication media.

Third, structuration discusses agents as forming a structure and structures comprising agents, giving rise to production and reproduction processes that mutually influence each other. In it, there is a social process between agents to exchange ideas. There is an interaction between structures and social agents that is dynamic and mutually influences each other.[47]

In Vincent Mosco's political economic theory of communication, structural processes can give rise to social actions and changes influenced by social structures such as class, gender, race, social movements, and hegemony. The political and economic structuration of communication is related to social activities in society. Today's social movements are no longer limited to natural movements but can also be supported or participated online via internet media. Structuration creates hegemony as a worldview that is taken for granted. Mosco uses Antonio Giddens' structuration theory to see how the interactions between agents and structures in the communication media industry influence and bind each other.[48]

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[46]Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication,* p. 57.

[47]Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication*. See also Vincent Mosco and Catherine McKercher, *The Laboring of Communication: Will Knowledge Workers of The World Unite?* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008).

[48]Zera Edenzwo Subandi & Teguh Priyo Sadono, "Komodifikasi Spasialisasi, dan Strukturasi dalam Media Baru di Indonesia (Ekonomi Politik Komunikasi Vincent Mosco Pada Line Webtoon)", *National Conference of Creative Industry: Sustainable Tourism Industry for Economic Development Universitas Bunda Mulia*, Jakarta, 5-6 September 2018.

Commodification occurs in this process; it does not stand alone but in an extensive process system that influences macroeconomics. Commodification is only the first step, which contains content, audiences, and workers as a commodity product; when this commodity product is created, then it can progress to a spatial process involving the process of distributing products by the media to a massive audience by utilizing various media, primarily electronic and social which have a network without boundaries of space and time. When the two processes above are created, structuration occurs regarding the agent forming the structure and the structure including the agent, resulting in continuous production and reproduction. It is in this extensive process that commodification needs to be understood.

Looking at the long process of economic politics above, which also involves commodification, Horkheimer & Adorno consider that commodification is indisputably a form of global capitalism, which for both of them has accumulated most of today's capital; commodification has also become quite dangerous because it has changed the value of use value as something purely natural, it becomes something that has exchange value effects that are both commercial and economic.[49] In this way, everything is seen through the lens of profit and loss, ultimately eroding the natural values within humans because they overthink everything from an economic perspective on the scale of profit and loss.

Karl Marx realized it when he introduced the term commodification. According to Karl Marx, commodification is a genuine transformation process in social relations that should be natural, non-commercial, and commercial. In this process of social relations, there is a massive reduction of human social links to the point that they become commercial. As a result, commodification has changed genuine human social relations into materialistic ones, where human connections are uprooted and become nothing more than mutually beneficial relations based on specific social, political, or economic interests. It is no exaggeration that Karl Marx emphasized more strongly that commodification is a cash payment with no feelings. Refers to the condition of the capitalist bourgeoisie, which controls society and converts personal values into exchange value. The bourgeoisie has negated family relations with trade relations firmly based on commercial matters, where everyone will be complacent in pursuing retail profits.[50]

Almost the same as Marx, Baudrillard also considers that a commodified society is a society that accepts social relations that are full of commodities, where material and non-material things are traded to obtain certain material benefits.[51] Baudrillard said that a society like this is a society entirely of consumerism. The next question that arises is: what is wrong with consumerism? This question is essential to explore because it invites modern humans to discuss consumerism, which further and more broadly reflects the term consumption.[52]

Consumerism, for Bauman, is an "attribute of society".[53] According to Lodziak, this refers to excessive actions in consuming goods and services; in fact, most of these actions are not carried out to meet life's needs as they should and adequately.[54] This condition occurs because consumerism has become the "way of

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[49]Horkheimer & Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* p. 94.

[50]Hakam, Dkk., "Komodifikasi Agama-agama di Korea Selatan", p. 160.

[51]See Hakam Dkk., "Komodifikasi Agama-agama di Korea Selatan".

[52]Indra Setia Bakti, Nirzalin, Alwi, "Konsumerisme dalam perspektif Jean Baudrillard", *Jurnal Sosiologi USK*, Vol. 13, No. 2, Desember 2019, p. 148.

[53]Zygmunt Bauman. *Consuming Life*. (Cambridge: Polity Press. 2007), p. 28.

[54]Conrad Lodziak, Conrad. *The Myth of Consumerism*, (London: Pluto Press, 2002), p. 2.

life" chosen by modern humans.[55] In this case, Robert G. Dunn revealed that the essence of consumerism is the principle that consumption is the goal of life itself and has its justification system.[56] The results of internalizing the structure of consumerism will make it a habitus or practical awareness within a person, which will be manifested as a habit through shopping activities and a wasteful lifestyle.[57] A lifestyle that is born reflexively but has a substantial negative side, primarily if the availability of adequate capital does not support it.

As mentioned in the previous discussion, when discussing the concept of consumerism in social sciences, Baudrillard's figure cannot be ignored, considering that he is the most diligent observer of consumption in the postmodern era. Baudrillard has produced dozens of books that are controversial but can inspire and encourage other social scientists to study, develop, and criticize various topics in social studies,[58]Like about commercialism.

In the latter half of the 60s, several figures consolidated in the Frankfurt School made studies on the development of mass consumerism, including Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), Max Horkheimer (1895-1973), and Herbert Marcuse (1898). -1979). They sharply criticized mass consumerism as the work or result of ideological institutional design. Mass consumerism is considered to transmit discursive meanings produced by groups in hegemonic positions of power, known as the "status quo." Marcuse even, with extraordinary courage, openly accused the mass media of being "agents of manipulation and indoctrination" that serve the interests of the ruling class by continuously creating "false needs" in modern society.[59]

Marcuse further, in his book "One Dimensional Man" (1968) emphasized that the "ideology of consumerism" had been promoted by capitalists through the work of the "culture industry". Apart from that, Marcuse also saw that acceptance of the consumerism ideology involved society in a "system of promoting false needs." This leads to "depoliticized conformity," which effectively limits our goals and actions to those that can be realized within the framework of capitalism. Marcuse even believed that in the same way as industrial capitalism, consumerism has regulated modern humans' working time in a culture industry that regulates modern humans' leisure.[60]Thus, Marcuse admits that the entire life of modern humans has been regulated by consumerism.

This consumerism phenomenon is not without facts; for Muslims, for example, moments like Eid al-Fitr can be seen as not only colored by contestation of worship but also by contestation of shopping, rituals of worship, and rituals of shopping. In the moments leading up to Eid, people flock to shopping centers, which Ritzer calls cathedrals of consumption. This shopping activity is simultaneous and almost comprehensive. Capitalists read holidays as an opportunity to make a profit. The method is to build conformity among religious communities so that they want to

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[55]See Steven Miles, *Consumerism as a Way of Life*, (London: SAGE Publications, 2006), pp. 3-4.

[56]Robert G. Dunn, *Identifying Consumption: Subjects and Objects in Consumer Society*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), p. 8.

[57]Nirzalin. "Mendamaikan Aktor dan Struktur dalam Analisis Sosial Perspektif Teori Strukturasi Antony Giddens". *Jurnal Sosiologi Universitas Syiah Kuala,* Vol. 3, No. 3, 2013, pp. 15-23.

[58]See Bakti, Nirzalin, Alwi, "Konsumerisme dalam perspektif Jean Baudrillard", pp. 148-149.

[59]Sharon Boden, *Consumerism, Romance, and the Wedding Experience*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 5.

[60]See Mark Paterson, *Consumption and Everyday Life*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 22–25.

make their bodies an arena of struggle for the circulation of trade commodities or even display cases for items produced and reproduced by the capitalist cultural order. This is not because religion requires its followers to shop on holidays, but because there is the power of ideological institutions to instill hidden norms that seem to force every family to go shopping before holidays. Planting the seeds of consumerism is almost without resistance from religious communities.[61]

From a different perspective, Adorno and Horkheimer reveal the existence of a tendency in mass culture towards homogeneity and predictability, where cultural products are marketed and sold in "standard forms" to "an undemanding public." The expansion of mass production leads to the commodification of culture and standardization, and it turns out that these products are consumed passively by consumers. So basically, the Frankfurt School perspective attributes consumers to a profoundly passive role, painting them as the result of manipulation or more as "mindless victims of fraud" rather than as "active and creative beings."[62]

The discussion space regarding consumerism is wide open; the Neo-Marxist figures above received a strong challenge from American academic and sociologist Colin Campbell through the book The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism (1987). Campbell wants to describe the relationship between consumption and emotion in this work.[63]Campbell's premise is the same as the Protestant ethic, which has encouraged production in the modern era; he wants to reveal that Romanticism encourages the birth of consumption."[64]

In this case, Campbell wanted to give birth to consumerist ethics, a thought inspired by Max Weber's Protestant ethic (1864–1920) in his work The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. Previously, Weber had conducted research that resulted in Protestantism and Calvinism having a "work ethic." Apart from working hard and being productive, Protestant religious values motivate people to build and invest in companies. Therefore, not consuming various products in a luxurious life is a noble recommendation. In this case, the Protestant ethic invites followers to postpone gratification to achieve a brighter future. The virtues of thrift, hard work, and productivity in this circle are valued over the wasteful behavior of wasting money on useless items for survival.[65]

As if receiving inspiration from Weber's work, Campbell produced a point of view almost the same as Weber's. He found the consumption of goods to be his own goal. Campbell said that the ethics of Romanticism had a significant role in the growth and development of consumerism. The Romantic element in forming consumerism began with the "cult of the individual".[66] If, for Weber, the development of capitalism is related to worldly asceticism and self-denying activities, then for Campbell, consumerism is related to consistent self-satisfaction activities.

Observing the above two ethics seems quite contradictory, but they work together to produce consumer capitalism as a way of life. Suppose Weber found an ethic that leads to capital accumulation for God's greater glory. In that case, it turns

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[61]See Triyono Lukmantoro, "Ritual Hari Raya Agama: Histeria Konsumsi Massa dan Khotbah Industri Budaya", *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi,* Vol. 1, No. 1, 2004, pp. 19-36.

[62]Paterson, *Consumption and Everyday Life*, p. 26.

[63]See Boden, *Consumerism,* p. 11.

[64]See Peter Corrigan, *The Sociology of Consumption: An Introduction*, (London: SAGE Publications, 1997), p. 2.

[65]Paterson, *Consumption and Everyday Life*, p. 18.

[66]*Ibid.,* p. 24.

out that Campbell found an ethic that leads to consumption for the greater recognition of the human individual.[67] At this stage, Campbell focuses his attention on the problem of consumer desires.[68] Campbell's contribution to the consumer culture literature, in this case, revolves around this particular problem, namely attempting to explain the "origin and nature of compulsion" to consume because, according to him, it is mainly independent of market manipulation and socio-cultural influences. In reality, desire is a common way of being. Consumers in his era were called "modern artists" by Campbell. Artists were quite happy overthrowing traditional society because it meant they could experiment independently.[69]

Amid the debate between two opposing poles, Campbell's perspective and Neo-Marxist figures, the French social theorist Jean Baudrillard, widely known as the postmodern "high priest," emerged. Baudrillard refused to be stuck in a position of frozen thinking. The flexibility of his ideas can be seen in how he views consumption phenomena dialectically. According to him, consumption is conceptualized as a process where the buyer of an item is actively involved in creating and maintaining a sense of identity through playing with the items purchased. So, consumption should not be seen as an activity only induced or produced by the advertising industry and commercial interests in passive modern consumers, as thought by the figures of the Fankfurt school. However, consumption has become an active process that involves the symbolic construction of a sense of collective and individual identity. Although it seems in line with Campbell, Baudrillard emphasizes that consumers do not buy goods to express their feelings about who they are. Instead, consumers create a sense of who they are through their beliefs.[70]

This means that Baudrillard believes consumers consume goods already available on the market, and consumer sovereignty seems to be just a myth. So, the construction of consumer identity is not in a vacuum or autonomous but is still within the scope of the capitalist cultural order. Suppose a new fashion emerges as a result of human creativity and innovation. In that case, it is inevitable that not long after that, it will soon be commodified. It also becomes a commodity sold to consumers, who follow trends to find and express their identity.

Ritzer discusses this phenomenon with the sentence: "When we consume objects, we consume signs, and in the process, we define ourselves." This situation leaves us doomed to continue desiring consumer goods and experiences in the kind of social formation that postmodern capitalism has developed.[71] To borrow Berger's term, this weapon of global capitalism is called a culture code. This secret structure shapes or influences our behavior, ultimately dictating human life by objects. How many millennials today seem unable to live without cell phones, the Internet, and its various application features?[72]

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[67]Corrigan, *The Sociology of Consumption,* pp. 10-13.

[68]Boden, *Consumerism,* p. 12.

[69]Collin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). pp. 288-289

[70]Robert Bocock, Consumption. (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 67.

[71]George Ritzer, *enchanting a Disenchanted World: Continuity and Change in the Cathedrals of Consumption*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2010), p. 69.

[72]Arthur Asa Berger, *Pengantar Semiotika: Tanda-Tanda dalam Kebudayaan Kontemporer*, (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2010), pp. 205-206.

Several studies also show that consumption has social meaning because it is "a way of marking social position"[73] In this regard, consumption can sometimes be a social act, not just an individual act.

B. Closing

Looking at the discussion above, the commodification of religion is a process or effort to make religion and its various attributes a commodity that can be bought and sold. From an ethical and philosophical perspective, this process is still debated by experts; some see it as a negative thing, and others see it as something positive. However, in this case, the author tries to be neutral by relying on the existing social reality that the commercialization of religion is not entirely negative, as believed by Horkheimer, Adorno, or Karl Marx, where the negative impact does not affect the shallowing of religious spirituality as concluded by Kitiarsa. In this case, the author finds several things that can be made positive from religious commodification, such as that it is a form of regulating religion with the times that require changes in understanding religion. Religion can no longer be seen as a mere basis for ideology, but it also needs to be placed as a basis for civilization, which should accommodate developments over time; in this way, religious spirituality can be introduced in the "modern" world.

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[73]Alan Warde, *Consumption: A Sociological Analysis*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 1.

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