

**DO HUMAN REALLY HAVE THE FREEDOM OF CHOICE: A CASUAL TALK ON RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY.** Oleh Makmor Tumin. 2022 Penerbit:Hikmah Publishing. Halaman: 148. No ISBN 978-629-97151-0-8

In his accessible and casual talk book, Makmor Tumin asks the key question - **Do Humans Really Have The Freedom of Choice?**

Tumin's casual talk is challenging yet comprehensively accessible. The authors claimed to use minimum jargon which makes it more practical and relatable. But I am in doubt about how religious and philosophical discussions can be discussed in layman's terms. Hence, I realized, Tumin invites the reader through a Socratic dialogue approach: through series of questions which will make you realize you are delving into a plethora of taboo topics. Currently, people are talking about gender-free, the existence of God, and the prevalent practice of religion.

In all, there are ten chapters planted to navigate in answering the title itself. As this book narratively explores of answering the subject, the readers will be exposed to a myriad of discussions on a series of philosophies, ideologies, religions, themes, issues, and personal experiences. In this way, the narrative mirrors the title itself. It is unavoidable to not include the discussion of faith on the table. Hence, indirectly the author will definitely begin on the matters of God's existence, the ancient Greek philosopher, the modern philosophers, spiritual practice, and yet his own voice at the end of each chapter. Readers indeed need to bare in the journey to the end of the book, because it is not about a solid answer. The information below provides an insight into this book.

### **Point 1: Socratic Approach**

Tumin's offers a set of thought-provoking questions through chapter development. This echoed through the beginning of every title with "*Did You...?*", "*Why Must We...?*", "*How can Humans...?*", "*Where Do Humans...?*" and "*Does Freedom of Choice Exist...?*". The style in which this book has been written interwoven with insights, perspectives, and new substances, which makes it compelling for reading. At over 148 pages, this book is not an afternoon read. Hence, I believe the strength of this book is the approach used in building independent, reflective, and critical thinking yet not losing the camaraderie with readers.

Compared to other philosophical-genre book, it may in the version of a thematic-text book style, while the other may see in heavy lingo approach or I have seen the unique approach by content creator named Matlutfhi on *20 Kisah Filsuf Barat* where the element of humoristic and dialect language being is used. This must be because the nature of this topic is heavy and can easily lose the reader's interest if it is not captivating.

### **Point 2: Casual Talk with Unstructured style**

As it usually is, my experience in reading philosophical materials usually is very structured. Typically, the book will start with an introduction and followed by timeline series of philosophical ideas from perennial figures of Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates to the modern western ideas of existentialism. However, through this book, there is an adventurous exploration of how these themes were casually developed, narratively not in chunks. These echoed from

chapter 2 on the topic of freedom of choice, the reader will be exposed to the perspectives of religion and diverted into the brief introduction to Nihilism and Existentialism.

Why this is important for the reader, especially for the student who is studying philosophy?

**First**, is to understand the philosophy in a comprehensive manner. Notably, it avoids the polemic and polarised discussion that often surrounds when comparing traditional and modern ideas. That said, I will point out from Chapter 3, in the subtopic of Nihilism and Existentialism (modern-western philosophy), correspondingly, he brings the discussion on Aristotle adding insight on the discussion of Tabula Rasa. He asserts through his anecdotes "I should say the philosopher of his (Aristotle) time already had the idea of what a full-human grown being is" (pg: 40).

This brings substance to the previous information where most textbook authors love to frame the ancient philosophers as conservative, orthodox, and unchanged. Especially in my discipline, education, where the style of teaching and learning always champions the modern freedom of thinking, and is explorative, and student-centered in referring to progressivism, existentialism, and others. In addition, the liberal curriculum is richer than ever, but it is no longer wrapped around any identifiable ideals (Lewis, 2007)

**Second**, philosophy is not an independent discipline per se, as it needs extensive knowledge of historical, political, cultural, and contextual scenarios to deeply understand in a comprehensive attitude.

Contrariwise, the unstructured theme will be quite chaotic for novice readers. Why? It is because at least, readers need to equip with the pre-existing knowledge of Western Christian Background: history and politics of western eras. Even though the author claimed to be less minimum in jargon, I find myself not in a cruising reading as I need to refer to and revised to other books to fully understand of the whole meaning. As an example, in chapter 5 the discussion brought on secularization in the 16th & 17th centuries by pointing out Rene Descartes's mantra '*The God Is Dead*' is indeed discussed in merely surface.

Al Attas (2020) asserts western philosophers, poets, and novelists have anticipated it coming and hailed preparing for an 'emancipated world' with no God and no religion at all during the respective time. Hence, to complete the reading, readers are advised to assist with other references and recognize the prominent authors of the particular field to dive into the core conversation.

### **Point 3: Personal Anecdotes**

The book is littered with notable anecdotes that give the reader pause for thought. Although, this is not the norm from academically rigorous sources. Tumin's narrative style includes theories, and a series of prominent names, in explaining his point. Personal experiences and anecdotes are often seen in illuminating and inexplicable subjects. Especially, in the questioning of God's Existence (Pg: 72). He used the anecdotal approach of a fresh apple in the basket in conveying the arguments of scientism. It is worth to include anecdotes in conversation as it will help to unclear the clouded jargon and lingo usually we are facing in this respective field. In my personal opinion, the anecdotes and his personal experiences sometimes successfully brought him to the closest point but sometimes vice versa.

**Point 4: Statistical Data as an Introduction**

*Did You Make Any Effort to Become Human?* – The author provides empirical data in response to the question mentioned. In his capacity as a lecturer and researcher, the data added value to his books. In chapter 1, the study indicates Students' Choice on five accidents of birth namely choosing to be born in – family, religion, ethnicity, gender, and country. The results of 96 respondents in Malaysia, shows the majority of the student would certainly want to be born in another country, meanwhile most of the students don't feel like choosing another religion. By portraying the positivist's stance at the beginning of the discussion, the author captivates readers that this topic is relevant to be discussed in thorough dialogue.

**Point 5: Religion and Philosophy**

The author provides an explanation of how Eastern Religions such as Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism are transforming from philosophy to religion, unlike the Abrahamic Faith (Islam, Christianity, and Judaism) in which is centered on the idea of God and religion. In Chapter 9, there is a lengthy critical discussion on the faith's perspective. The pinnacle point in this section as in touches heavily on faith theology perspectives. The debatable issue is “why we need to philosophize God?” and “isn't practicing religion is more meaningful than intellectualizing it?”.

It is crucial to point out, as the two connotations: religion and philosophy always shy away from critical arguments. The author emphasizes the west normally uses logic to rationalize day-to-day activities whilst Islam may seem to see 'philosophy' as improper as an intellectual quest towards God. In my view, philosophical discussions are vital in understanding religion as it strengthen faith and fulfilling the needs of humans in the faculty of reasoning and logic aspect.

**Point 5: The author's background**

Based on my information to-date, Tumin is fully groomed in local institutions. This is a significant work as I believe education significantly influences the author's way of thinking. Typically, the graduate product of the UK and the US do provide a different style of mental perspectives. As a reader, I am glad I can read a free-western product of writing yet be able to discuss it diligently. Though, I was a bit skeptical on how he in which I assumed is a Muslim, will be able to critically discuss matters of religion. The author takes a vigilant and cautious stance in discoursing on it whether it is about the Abrahamic religions, Buddhism, or Hinduism. Two assumptions: one, respect that that was not his forte, and second, respect other religions. Yet, chapter 9, is when the author approaches religions on the ground.

Henceforth, this is the book that discusses God and religion with scarce quotations from holy scriptures, perhaps to suit the nature discussion of the book philosophically.

**Point 6: The Thought on Liberal Ideas**

Of the Chapter 5, beginning in page 74 in the sub-topic of Unlived Lives, the authors way on explaining the liberal world is subtle. He begins with the strong triggered statement on how we examined the authenticity and utility in believing in the freedom of choice. Of course, the idea of liberalization will be brought into discussion. The idea of individual rights and equality being pushed today as it only liberal life is a livable live. Therefore, there is highlighted insight from authors draws from the precise argument in Chapter 5 where he echoed in his writing "people

tend to be liberal in earlier ages and become conservatives later on their lives" (pg.79). The statement was a draw after he introduces the reader to the perspective of eros, telos, the discussion on Buddhism, philosophical related to secularization and the liberalization is on the discussion.

Analogically, the act of drinking alcohol is individual freedom but what if the person drink and drive and it leads to a car accident. That said, there is good reason why many people resort to religion, as they strongly believe the 'Manual' descend to earth by Almighty God has made everything clear.

### **Conclusion**

Nevertheless, the book is a captivating read and there is distinctiveness about the way it has been written and portrayed in every chapter. Tumin who cares deeply on how readers may be confused or misunderstood upon his statement can be seen clearly through his casual approach. Anyone, with an interest in philosophy and religion will learn something from reading it and quite possibly find themselves reflecting on what they think they already knew about their pre-existing knowledge.

### **Reference**

Al Attas, M. (2020). *Islam and Secularism*. Kuala Lumpur: Ta'dib International Sdn. Bhd.

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Pensyarah

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