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INDONESIAN AND WESTERN SOCIAL IMAGINARIES

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Modernities and Social Imaginaries

Modernity is not singular but plural. Modernity in Yogyakarta is remarkably different from modernity in Kuala Lumpur, or Tokyo or New York. This chapter argues that we cannot understand how to deal with diversity without understanding how different modernities are shaped by different social imaginaries that are often grounded in religious faith (Taylor, 2004). Social imaginaries are not the same as social theory; nor can they be expressed as a defined set of ideas. Rather they include the imagination of a moral order that is grounded in a story about the meaning of human society in relation to a normative conception of reality. As Charles Taylor suggests, “The social imaginary is not a set of ideas; rather it is what enables, through making sense of, the practices of a society” (Taylor, 2004, 2). For example, certain attitudes to religious diversity make sense because of a particular imagination of what is a good society. Routine practices create their own social imaginary. It is futile to ask which came first, the social imaginary or a particular repertoire for dealing with diversity. A practice is impossible without a prior imagination of what it might mean. On the

other hand, the social imagination is constantly modified by changes in practices.

Considering the widely different practices of people from even the same religion, it is apparent that there is not a single social imaginary associated with each religion. Not all Muslims, for example, imagine the same moral order. The same is true of all Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, or any other religious group. There is a bewildering diversity of visions of society including convictions about how we should deal with diversity in society. Sometimes people from different religions share the same social imaginary about the moral order that should govern society, even though the religious convictions that legitimate their social imaginary may be different. On the other hand they may imagine a different moral order from other members of their own religious community even though they share the same faith. That is one reason why conflicts between people who profess the same religion is often more acute than conflicts between people of different religions. Even when people of the same religion share many of the core religious beliefs of their fellow believers, they may imagine sharply different ways in which those beliefs should be practiced in the modern world.

Social imaginaries include two aspects, hermeneutical and prescriptive, that are intertwined with each other. The hermeneutical aspect includes a vision of the moral order of what the world really is like. This aspect is more than just a world view that can be described in propositions. It includes feelings, emotions, stories about the past and visions of the future. For example, when Confucius talks about the Ancients and the ideal order that existed under Yao, Shun and Yu the Great, he was invoking a social imaginary of the Golden Age that should guide the present practices of a virtuous king (Waley, 1938, 18). The hermeneutical aspect of a social imaginary is not primarily a description of the way things work in the “real world” of the present. The present may be decadent and heading for disaster, as Confucius recognized

during the chaotic Warring States period in China. However neither is it just a utopian vision for an indefinite future. A powerful social imaginary is based on the conviction that there is a real moral order that guides the way humans are meant to live in societies. This imagined community (Anderson, 1991) includes a conception of the limits of diversity that should be tolerated in society. Often the present evils are assumed to result from failure to live in conformity with the moral order. Therefore a social imaginary is also prescriptive: it tells us how to live.¹ It condemns certain practices and justifies other practices on the basis of an overarching vision of social reality. Often it includes implicit repertoires for dealing with diversity.

Charles Taylor argues that Western modernity is characterized by a social imaginary that has spread out from particular influential theories, which are only understood by an intellectual elite, to become fundamental imaginations of social life that permeate whole societies. A social imaginary appears self-evident to those who hold it. It is hard to conceive of any other way to imagine the world. That may be one reason why people who hold different social imaginaries have such a hard time understanding each other. The things that seem obvious to one party seem irrational to the other (MacIntyre, 1981). Each is embedded in their own, inter-subjective² narrative about the world that encompasses a social imaginary grounded in a long history of traditions, practices and beliefs that gives rise to different conceptions of what is rational and just (MacIntyre, 1988).

¹ This roughly corresponds with Clifford Geertz's distinction between "symbol systems of" and "symbol systems for". See Geertz, 1973.

² "Intersubjective" is in contrast to the dichotomy between the objective and the subjective. An intersubjective narrative is not primarily based on individual subjectivity because it is held in common with many other subjects. It has an "objectivity" outside the subject. But neither is it objective in the sense of independence from human subjectivity. Rather it is a shared, intersubjective conception of the real. See Gadamer, 1975.

In the following sections of this chapter I will briefly consider Max Weber's thesis about how a fundamental change in social imaginary (which he calls an *ethos*) contributed to the conditions that enabled the rise of capitalism in Europe. Then we will examine the main elements in a Western modern social imaginary in comparison with Indonesian social imaginaries against the backdrop of two traditional social imaginaries, which Robert Heilbroner (over) simplified as ancient law and authoritarian command (Heilbroner 1980, cf. Taylor, 2004, 9). The next section discusses similarities and differences between Indonesian and Western, social imaginaries regarding "Disenchantment" or secularity. The final section examines how social imaginaries influence repertoires for dealing with diversity within Indonesian Islamic civilization³ (Hodgson, 1974).

Weber's Thesis on Protestantism and Capitalism

Max Weber is well known for his argument regarding "...the influence of certain religious ideas on the development of an economic spirit, or the *ethos* of an economic system" (Weber, 1958, 27). Contrary to a popular misconception, Weber never argued that capitalism derived from Christianity, only that certain influential ideas within the Puritan stream of the Protestant Reformation helped form a new *ethos* in Europe and North America that was conducive to capitalist economic structures. An *ethos* is not a theory but rather an atmospheric environment of moral imagination. It is a social imaginary. Weber may be credited as the first person to analyze the impact of a social imaginary on material life. This

³ "Islamicate civilization" is an awkward, albeit more accurate term, than Islamic civilization that was introduced by Marshall Hodgson in his three-volume *Venture of Islam*, 1974. It has been used by Bruce Lawrence and others to try to avoid the possible misunderstandings inherent in combining a normative theological term (Islam means surrendered to God) with a descriptive term that simply denotes a particular religious community and its teachings.

chapter suggests that the concept of social imaginaries can clarify how differently people deal with diversity.

Weber was not an idealist who believed that ideas alone shaped history. Neither was he a materialist who thought that social and economic change could be explained by material conditions alone. Rather he argued for the creative interplay of ideas, ethics, practices, material conditions and the complexity of unique histories. Weber's thesis on the Protestant ethos and the spirit of capitalism suggested that there was a sharp difference between the more feudalistic world-view entrenched in Catholic areas of Europe and a new perception of the meaning of our lives on earth engendered by the Protestant Reformation. In the 16th-17th centuries, Catholicism and Protestantism were considered completely different religions that competed for supremacy through a series of bloody wars such as the 30 Years War that ended in 1648. A particular social imaginary, sustained and stimulated ongoing conflict over diversity.

To simplify, Catholics believed that the clergy and monastic orders were called by God to the "counsels of perfection" that involved separation from the world, including vows of poverty and chastity. Lay people, on the other hand had no such calling. Instead they lived on a lower plane, required to fulfil their duty within the station in which they were born and obey their superiors. Society was ideally divided into three orders, *oratores*, *bellatores*, *laboratores*: those who pray (priests/monks/nuns), those who fight (kings and knights) and those who work (peasants, artisans and traders).⁴ Work, and especially trade or business was the lowest order of society, whose duty was to serve those above them in the hierarchy. While not as high as the spiritual calling of priests, monks and nuns, the order of *bellatores* (kings, knights and warriors) was a glorious profession that led to the greatest honours in

⁴ Women are apparently adjuncts to men in this early ideal type. Of course *oratores* includes nuns. Under the code of chivalry *bellatores* fight for the honor of their women. Everyone works in the *laboratores* class of peasants.

this world. Just wars were primarily to defend honour and religion against the aggression of others (Adeney, 1988).

In contrast, the reformers preached that all Christians were called by God, not to leave the world for a higher plane of spiritual life, but rather to serve God in and through their worldly professions. According to Weber, the Puritans practiced a “this worldly asceticism”, living simply and working hard within their secular professions, in hopes that their success might provide evidence of God’s blessing and ultimate predestination for salvation. Work was not considered a lower station, but rather a high calling of God. Business and trade were to be done for the glory of God, not for worldly wealth. But wealth was not evil, but rather a sign of God’s blessing. Weber argues persuasively that capitalism grew rapidly in Protestant parts of Europe and in America, in stark contrast with Catholic areas of Europe. The ethos of Protestantism imagined all people as equal before God and that anyone’s station in life could change through hard work and careful economic practices. Early economic thinkers believed that the “peaceable arts of commerce” would replace the aggressive arts of war and issue in a peaceful world of prosperity. A changing social imaginary stimulated the rise of capitalism, influenced democratic ideals and led to a waning of a feudalistic ethic of chivalry (Tocqueville, 1945). Weber himself was deeply ambivalent about this development, especially as capitalism quickly became alienated from its religious, ascetic roots (Weber, 1955, 155-183).⁵

The Protestantism Weber described, hardly exists in the 21st century. Not only has the world changed religiously, the political economy of a globalized world is very different from the world Weber considered. Weber pioneered ideal type social theory and simplified the complexity of the Western world into two types, Catholic, traditional feudalism and

⁵ I am indebted to John Raines for reminding me of Weber’s ambivalence (or even horror) towards what capitalism was becoming. See especially the last chapter of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

Protestant, modern capitalism. While his ideal types of traditional versus modern society are still influential, their religious contexts are hardly relevant for Southeast Asia. Even allowing for the simplifications inherent in ideal types, Indonesian society is far more religiously diverse than post Reformation Europe.

One of my students, a pastor from the island of Sumba in Eastern Indonesia, tried to use Weber's theory as the starting point for an analysis of social and economic change in Sumba. The basic question for his Master's thesis was, "Why is the Protestant Christian community in Sumba so poor, give the fact that they embraced Reformed, Calvinist Christianity over a hundred years ago. His reading of Weber led him to think that Calvinism should help eliminate poverty and bring prosperity. In fact, Sumbanese Christians are among the poorest people in Indonesia. His initial hypothesis was that Sumbanese were poor because, even after they became Christians, they retained the same social stratification and caste system that was rooted in their tribal religions and traditions. Modernization, capitalism, rationalization and prosperity were all stymied by ancient traditions (*adat*) rooted in their Merapu religion. For example, only people from the "king caste" could become pastors, while people in the "slave caste" stayed subordinate and bound to their "kings".

To his credit, in the process of research, the student abandoned his Weberian thesis as he came to realize that social and economic inequality were far greater under conditions of economic modernization than they had been under the old ways. Instead he found the Gramscian idea of cultural hegemony of elite classes under the transition to capitalism, as a more helpful theory for inequality in Sumba (Gramsci, 1971). Under the rule of Sumbanese *adat* (tradition), the kings owned all the land, but even the slaves had the right to work the land and reap the benefits. The king was obligated to share his wealth through many different rituals of exchange. As a result, the economic life style of the

king was only marginally higher than those of his slaves. In contrast, under capitalist development, the aristocratic classes were losing their social status and rebelled against their *adat* obligations to the people. Their social imaginary was changing. The breakdown of social stratification did not lead to increasing prosperity but rather to greater inequality. Some pastors from the king caste lived in abject poverty because their congregations forgot to pay their salaries. The people still imagined that the kings/pastors should give gifts to them, not vice versa. Meanwhile a few people, including “slaves”, became very rich while the great majority sunk into greater poverty.⁶ Land that had been formally owned by kings but in reality was used as communal land, came to be concentrated as private property in the hands of kings who no longer kept their ritual obligations to the people.

Certainly it is a misuse of Weber to assume his historical analysis of the influence of religion in Europe in the 17-19th centuries is a blueprint for understanding the relation between religion and social/economic change in other times and places. Nevertheless, Weber’s nuanced discussion of how a new imagination of a different moral order, influenced revolutionary changes in economic and political structures, provides a useful paradigm for interpreting new conceptions of moral order in dealing with diversity. However, to understand the influence of social imaginaries we must acknowledge that there are multiple social imaginaries at work in Southeast Asia that are producing multiple modernities, few of which are following the same historical development as the dominant social imaginary of Western modernity.

⁶ Slavery has long been illegal in Indonesia. On my last visit to Sumba, over 10 years ago, most people were still conscious of caste, even if they were Christians. Some people from the slave caste still retained their feelings of obligation to serve their king, even though they were not slaves in a legal sense. This was especially true among those who still follow the old religion (Merapu). However over the past 30 years there has been a mass exodus from Merapu, mostly through conversion to Christianity.

Indonesian perspectives on a Western Social Imaginary of Modernity

Charles Taylor traces the rise of the modern Western social imaginary and summarizes it in four main points (Taylor, 2004, 19-22). *First*, modern Western societies imagine themselves as formed by a social contract between individuals who are bound together in a society based on human rights and legitimate rule. Society is for the sake of the people. This is in contrast to the moral order of a hierarchical society that corresponds with a hierarchy in the cosmos. In the modern Western social imaginary, society is not structured by a chain of being in which each person's role is determined by to which station they are born, nor by the idea of a heroic or holy caste who deserve to be served by the others. Society should serve everyone. This should not be construed as based simply on individualism over against communalism. Although the foundation of society is imagined as a contract between individuals rather than, for example, as a family, nevertheless, the goal of this contract is communal. It involves an organic complementarity based on equality rather than hierarchy (Durkheim, 1933).

Secondly, "Political society enables these individuals to serve each other for mutual benefit, both in providing security and in fostering exchange and prosperity" (Taylor, 2004, 20). Society is imagined as made up of equals who cooperate with each other to achieve maximum freedom and the needs of everyday life. Thus the dominant institution within the modern, Western social imaginary is the economy, not the government. The government is meant to protect the freedom of individuals to work together for their own interests. A free market with minimum government intervention is the goal. Government may regulate and prevent abuses, but it is people, working together in a free marketplace, who are responsible for their own prosperity. The moral order is one in which society is meant to help everyone achieve prosperity through their own efforts. This is in contrast to a society in

which the main goal is to help the community become virtuous or obedient to God.⁷ It also contrasts with the idea of government as responsible for ensuring that everyone has enough.

Thirdly, political society is imagined as based on the consent of the governed, imagined as individuals. This consent is founded on the society's obligation to protect each person's individual human rights and provide justice. Fundamental to this idea is respect for the freedom of the individual to practice their religion and participate as equals in social, economic and political life. The background of this moral order is the sovereignty of the people, expressed in democratic institutions. Political authority does not come from supernatural power that is given by God but rather from the people who choose to be governed (cf. Anderson, 1990.)⁸ In a weaker version, this point implies that at some time in the past, at a founding moment, individuals and communities banded together and made an irrevocable commitment to be one nation together. In stronger versions, the consent of the governed is an ongoing necessity that implies that a particular segment of the nation has a right to withdraw if it feels it is no longer served by the state. This is what happened with the referendum in East Timor and is the basis of ongoing agitation in West Papua. This imagination is in contrast to the vision of a nation as a family, bound to each other by primordial ties that cannot be severed.

Fourthly, the modern Western social imaginary assumes that all the individuals within society should have equal freedom, equal rights and equal opportunities. Part of this imagination includes the idea of a rule

⁷ Of course there have always been exceptions to this moral imagination. Peter Maurin, the Catholic socialist, once commented to the effect that the proper goal of society was not to make people happy or prosperous but rather to make them good. See Dorothy Day, *Autobiography: A Long Loneliness* (1952). This is in keeping with Aristotelian ethics of virtue, but an exception to the dominant social imaginary.

⁸ Benedict Anderson's ideal typology of Western versus Javanese concepts of power could be further simplified into just two types: Western power based on contract versus Javanese power flowing from God or the supernatural.

of law that does not discriminate on the basis of race, wealth, class, gender, religion, ideology, culture or sexual preference.⁹ Law should be the result of consensus founded on free and rational deliberation or debate, based on a constitution that protects everyone's human rights. The state should be neutral regarding religion, culture and ideology, protecting the rights of all citizens without discrimination. This is in contrast to the imagination of a state that has the obligation to guide its citizens to a correct understanding of religion, morals or behaviour.

To Taylor's four elements, I would add a *fifth*, the imagination of progress, development or evolution. The theory of human evolution is now embedded in the popular social imaginary of the West and has spread out into almost every field of thought. Evolution is a metaphor implying progressive change from lower, simpler forms to higher, more complex forms of human life and organization. Even those who, for religious reasons, reject the theory of evolution of human beings from lower forms, are captured by the imagination of human societies as evolving from lower forms into higher, more progressive, more prosperous forms of society. Ever since Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Tönnies, social science has been dominated by the metaphor of societies evolving from traditional to modern. Social science seldom questions this evolutionary social imaginary, even though it is focused on learning how to address the alienation that results from it. The knowledge explosion and revolution in information technology has captured the Western imagination, spawning science fiction visions of the future in literature and film. Apocalyptic visions of destruction compete with utopian hopes. The social imaginary of progress and evolution is not always optimistic about the final outcome of evolution. Robert N. Bellah, for example, in his brilliant analysis of evolutionary cosmic

⁹ The last point, non-discrimination on the basis of sexual preference, is still hotly debated within Western societies, especially the USA.

history up to about 200 BCE, predicts that the human species is bound for extinction (Bellah, 2011).

All five of these elements of the modern social imaginary are influential in the social imagination of Indonesians. In fact, it is possible to argue that all five of them are enshrined in *Pancasila*,¹⁰ the national ideology and the Indonesian Constitution. The *first* point, human rights and legitimate rule based on a social contract, may be implied by the principles of sovereignty of the people and social justice for all. Human rights are also mentioned in the Constitution and Indonesia has ratified various international declarations of human rights. *Secondly*, the idea of mutual service for the good of all is a prominent idea, expressed in the concept of *gotong royong* or working together for common goals. The *third* principle of Sovereignty of the people, or government by consent, is prominent in the idea of rule by deliberation and consensus (*musyawarah, mufakat*) in which everyone's ideas are heard and government is through representative, democratic political institutions. The *fourth* principle of equality is addressed through repeated references to human rights and equality under the rule of law. The *fifth* principle of progress or evolution is implied in the idea of freedom (*merdeka*), and emancipation from colonialism.

Nevertheless, the social imaginary of many Indonesians is starkly different from the Western, modern, social imaginary traced above. Regarding the *first* point, most Indonesians do not conceive of Indonesian society as based on a social contract between individuals, but rather as a family nation that is bound together by God in a shared history that goes back thousands of years. In two classes of my undergraduate students at Muhammadiyah University Yogyakarta, all 70 of them preferred the metaphor of Indonesia as a family over the

¹⁰ Pancasila means five principles, which include: a. the great unity of deity; b. one just and civilized humanity; c. the unity of the nation of Indonesia; d. sovereignty of the people; e. social justice for all.

metaphor of a social contract.¹¹ This may be partially accounted for by former President Soeharto's frequent denouncement of social contract theory as an individualistic Western invention that was inappropriate for Indonesia.¹² Nor is society imagined as a community of equal individuals. Everyone in Indonesia is addressed using familial titles that indicate their relative age or social status. Even siblings who are very close in age refer to each other with titles that indicate whether they are older or younger. Not only language, but also social practices reflect a consciousness of social hierarchy.

Regarding the *second* point, many Indonesians view government in a patriarchal context as being responsible for both the prosperity and the virtue of its citizens. Even though Indonesia decisively rejected communism in the 1960s, socialist economic policies remain very popular. The government is not meant to just protect the freedom of the marketplace, so that people can work together for their own interests. Rather the state is responsible to own the most crucial means of production, protect the people from sharp rises in prices, provide subsidized or free services and goods to the poor and create conditions that will lead to the general prosperity of the people. Government is like a parent who should set a good example and teach the people to be good. In Indonesia this often comes under the rubric of government sponsored "character education", as well as required religious education and courses on *Pancasila* from kindergarten up to university. It also includes legislation to prevent immoral behaviour, such as the law passed against pornography and porno-action. Some Indonesians feel the government is insufficiently vigilant in protecting public morality. Therefore they form

¹¹ Their preference for the family metaphor was in spite of the fact that, for the sake of argument, I pointed out many negative aspects of the family metaphor and many positive aspects of the social contract metaphor.

¹² President Soeharto ruled Indonesia in an authoritarian manner for 32 years, from 1966 till 1998.

militias to attack places of vice or groups that they consider threats to Islamic values.

In contrast with the *third* point regarding consent of the governed, many Indonesians imagine their nation as a primordial unity that has existed for thousands of years. It was colonized for 350 years by the Netherlands and finally declared independence in 1945.¹³ Perhaps the modern nation state of Indonesia was established in 1945, but the nation of Indonesia is imagined as much older. Both Presidents Sukarno and Soeharto emphasized the ancient nature of Indonesia, symbolized by the great pre-colonial empires of Sri Vijaya and Majapahit, which ruled most of the archipelago. Indonesia is imagined as a family, tied together by blood and tears, culture and history, not a contract between individuals who chose to be together for their own self interests.

An illustration of this social imaginary, was revealed in a comment by former President Megawati Sukarnoputri concerning the secession of East Timor. Ibu Mega (Mother Mega) lamented that the secession of East Timor wounded her deeply because part of her own family was rejecting to be united with her. This explains the lack of sympathy on the part of most Indonesians, both for the secession of East Timor and for the demands for independence from West Papua. The almost obsessive emphasis on the Unity and Indivisibility of Indonesia (NKRI – *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia*), is based on this imagination of Indonesia as a primordial reality, established by God, rather than a recent political expediency. This does not mean that the “consent of the governed” has no place in the social imagination of Indonesians. But it

¹³ The “350 years of Dutch colonialism” is part of the social imaginary of most Indonesians but is of questionable facticity. Dutch trader-pirates (the Dutch East Indies Trading Company or VOC) first set up governmental structures in Ambon, the Molluccas, in 1605. The Dutch were finally expelled from Indonesia by the Japanese in 1942. But in 1605 the trading company did not even control all of the Mollucan Islands (the fabled Spice Islands), let alone all of Indonesia. Not until the 19th century did the Dutch government gain colonial control over most of Indonesia.

is applied almost exclusively to Indonesia's right of independence from Western colonialism and neo-colonialism, not the right of certain peoples to secede from Indonesia.

The *fourth* point in a Western social imaginary of modernity, freedom and equality, is hotly contested in Indonesia. Most Indonesians imagine Indonesia as a tolerant, religiously diverse society in which all Indonesians should enjoy equal protection under the law, no matter what their religion, race, gender or ideology. In principle, all religions and ideologies enjoy equal standing as long as they do not violate *Pancasila* or the Constitution. The first principle of *Pancasila* states that Indonesia is based on the great unity of Deity, which is broadly taken to imply monotheism. Six "world religions" are officially recognized as broadly monotheistic and worthy of state support: Islam, Protestant Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. Historically this has justified discrimination against atheists (especially communists), and the non-recognition of indigenous tribal religions (*agama suku*) as "religions".

Particularly contentious is the law against "blasphemy" that has been used to justify discrimination against minority groups who claim to belong to one of the recognized religions but who differ in some points from the orthodoxy asserted by the majority. The most prominent example is discrimination against the Ahmadiyah sect which claims to be part of Islam. In addition, based on the blasphemy law, some Sunni Muslims have advocated that Syi'a Islam should be banned in Indonesia. Recently, the blasphemy law underwent constitutional review and was upheld, much to the dismay of human rights activists. One reason the constitutional review did not strike down the law was that it was supported by main-stream Muslim organizations like Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, which claim around 70 million members between them. Evidently the social imaginary of many Indonesians includes the assumption that government should protect "religion" from deviant

interpretations and public morality from expressions that offend the sensibilities of the dominant Muslim majority.

The *fifth* element, a social imaginary of progress (*kemajuan*), development (*pembangunan*) and evolution, was a central part of the Indonesian social imaginary promoted by Soeharto. Indeed, it is still a major element that provides hope for many Indonesians. They imagine their country as getting better, richer, stronger and more honoured in the world. They imagine progress, not only economically, but also politically and socially. Recently the Sultan of Yogyakarta shared with me his dream that Indonesia could become the next civilizational centre of the world. No doubt he was inspired by memories of the glory of Javanese civilization 1,200 years ago. There is an older imaginary that sees history not as an ascent from lower to higher, but rather as a cycle of changes that keep turning back on themselves. In this vision, we are not progressing but rather repeating ourselves. Repeating ourselves does not necessarily imply we are about to enter a golden age. We may rather be stuck in an era of madness (*edan*). Indonesian literature and film are dominated by tragic themes in which all the striving, hope and conflict finally results in death and despair. This is in stark contrast with Western popular culture, which specializes in happy endings.

In summary then, it is possible to construct a (oversimplified) typology of the contrast between a Modern Western Social Imaginary and a Modern Indonesian Social Imaginary, which includes five contrasting ideal types as follows:

1. *Western*: Society is based on a rational, secular, social contract, between individuals, for their mutual benefit.

Indonesian: Society is a micro-cosmos modelled after an eternal macrocosmic reality of sacred Law, hierarchical relations and unseen power.

2. *Western*: Government is meant to protect maximum freedom for individuals in society to achieve prosperity through economic exchange.

Indonesian: Government is like a parent, entrusted with guiding its children into right beliefs and moral behaviour. Like a parent, government should ensure the prosperity of its citizens.

3. *Western:* Political society is based on the consent of the governed and the government is obligated to protect the freedom and human rights of all citizens.

Indonesian: Political society is like a family into which you are born and the government is obligated to punish those who violate community norms and achieve maximum harmony between its members.

4. *Western:* Society is based on an impartial, secular rule of law, founded on reason, which treats all citizens as equal without regard to religion, race, sex, culture or ideology.

Indonesian: Society is founded on just rule based on sacred law. All universal religions should be respected and their communities enjoy equal rights under divine and traditional law.

5. *Western:* Human progress is inevitable. Science and technology are transforming societies, which are becoming more sophisticated and prosperous, although there is a chance it will lead to apocalyptic disaster.

Indonesian: History repeats itself in cycles and the outcome in many cycles is often tragic. Fate is determinative and if God so wills, a golden age led by a righteous ruler (*ratu adil*) will return.

An ideal type is not a description, but rather a tool for understanding contrasts. It would be a serious mistake to think that all Indonesians are governed by the Indonesian types of social imaginary or that all westerners believe in the “Western” types. Benedict Anderson’s typology of Western and Javanese ideas of power uses a similar method for stimulating understanding. Anderson’s types are not meant to literally describe how all Javanese think (Anderson, 1990). In fact many modern Indonesians (and some Westerners) probably agree with both typologies of Western and Indonesian social imaginaries! Their

“imagined community” includes stories, dreams, practices and hopes from many different sources (cf. Anderson, 1991). The diversity of social imaginaries in Indonesia may be clarified if we understand, not only that the Western social imaginary is not a fundamental assumption for many Indonesians, but that many Indonesians combine elements from the two typologies in different ways and with different emphases.

Certainly one of the more startling contrasts between Indonesia and much of the Western world stems from a different understanding of rationality, the supernatural and the nature of the secular. The difference is readily apparent in the differences in the contrasting typologies outlined above. The next section will briefly explore these themes in Indonesian life.

Social Imaginaries, Disenchantment and Secularity in Indonesia

Max Weber, and most social theorists ever since, have assumed that a great difference between modernity and traditional societies lies in the growth of rationality and the progressive “disenchantment” of the world (Weber, 1958). Most classical social theorists assumed that modernity inevitably brought secularization as a result of growing rationality that marginalized religion from modern life. Thus the continuing power of religions in rapidly modernizing countries (including the USA) provoked a good deal of confusion. Apparently, modernity and secularism are not inevitably linked (Berger, 1999). The Protestant Reformation in Europe and North America, combined with the Enlightenment, brought belief in a rational order of society in which there was no room for magic or the supernatural world. Charles Taylor describes the “great disembedding” of modern secular societies as follows:

This society had no place for the ambivalent complementarities of the older enchanted world: between worldly life and monastic renunciation, between proper order and its periodic suspension

in Carnival, between the acknowledged power of spirits and forces and their relegation by divine power. The new order was coherent, uncompromising, all of a piece. Disenchantment brought a new uniformity of purpose and principle.

The progressive imposition of this order meant the end of the unstable postaxial equilibrium. The compromise between the individuated religion of devotion, obedience, or rationally understood virtue, on the one hand, and the collective, often cosmos-related rituals of whole societies, on the other, was broken, and in favor of the former. Disenchantment, reform, and personal religion went together. (Taylor, 2004, 49-50)

One of the mysteries of modernity is that this great disembedding no longer seems self-evident, even in modern Western societies. While this point may be debatable in the West, it is apparent that Southeast Asian societies never experienced “disenchantment” or disembedding in anything like the same way as in the West. The “ambivalent complementarities of the older enchanted world” are still an everyday lived reality in Indonesia. While the West gave unprecedented importance to the individual (and to individual human rights), in Indonesia, “individualism” is still a dirty word, sometimes used to label non-social, egocentric persons who refuse to conform to the needs and norms of the broader society. In part this is because, unlike in most Western countries, religious life is deeply linked to social harmony and social harmony is linked to the order of the cosmos.

For many Indonesians, there is no sharp separation between the outer and inner worlds that make up reality and are sometimes related to each other as macro cosmos to micro cosmos. The outer world (*lahir*), includes the physical, material, social, legal, economic, political, cultural and religious. It can be analyzed with rational, empirical methods. But it is also linked with the inner world (*batin*), which includes spirits, character, forces, conscience, authority, powers, obedience, jins, virtue

and miracles. This inner world cannot be understood by reason alone, but it is not in contrast to rationality, as in the Western dichotomy between rationality and irrationality, or objectivity and subjectivity. Most Indonesians highly value rationality, science and modern education. But they think its usefulness, however impressive, is limited. It can't teach us about how to be *ikhlas* [committed to giving of yourself], *pasrah* [submitted to the will of God], *tanpa pamrih* [without self-interest], *mengalah* [allowing yourself to be defeated in the consciousness that you are stronger than the other], *gotong royong* [working together for the good of all], or *rukun* [living in harmony with each other] (cf. Magnis-Suseno, 1984).

The inner and outer also cannot be equated with Western categories of the material and the spiritual. All things, both material and spiritual, have an inner and an outer dimension, which transcends the categories of spiritual and material. For example, a material thing, like soliciting bribes, may cause an inner corruption, that in turn makes you physically sick. Or maybe your inner corruption, caused by despair and poverty, leads you to accept bribes, which results in your becoming rich, powerful and honoured by your community. But the inner rot goes deeper. Or perhaps your inner rot and outer prosperity are caused by your having sacrificed someone you love to a malignant spirit (*tuyul*), who gives you great success in business in exchange for your soul. In that case, there will come a time of reckoning, in this world or the next. If everything has inner and outer aspects that are related to each other, then it makes no sense to dichotomize reality into a material, rational, objective, empirical world that is separated from a spiritual, irrational, subjective, imaginative world. The inner world is not less real, less objective, less rational or less material than the outer world. We just don't understand the inner world as well, unless we are highly trained in inner world disciplines (*kebatinan*).

Even if we are trained in inwardness (*kebatinan*), the word “understand” is misleading. What we need is *rasa*, which encompasses in one concept the ideas of feeling, understanding, sensing and taste. *Rasa* encompasses both the inner and outer worlds in one faculty of perception. In economic practices, this explains why sometimes an Indonesian business person will sell a product for a loss, not because of a rational calculation of profit, but because s/he feels *cocok* with the buyer. *Cocok* means comfortable with, compatible with or “in synch”. You are appropriate for each other; you fit; there is a common feeling that transcends profit or loss. The outer reality of a sale, is matched with an inner reality of common feeling such that the transaction is *pulung*. It is fated, not in a bad sense of being forced by an outer power, but in the positive sense of two halves finding their matching inner reality, to make a whole.

A social imaginary that sees all reality as having an inner and outer dimension is not necessarily comfortable. There may be serious tensions between what the outer world seems to demand, for example in business practices, and what feels right (*rasa cocok*) from within. A famous Javanese poet from the 19th century, Ronggowarsito, illustrated the tensions of the link between the inner and outer worlds (Florida, 1995, Ricklefs, 2007). He predicted that in the cycles of history there comes a period or era of *edan*, which literally means madness, or chaos. The moral order has broken down and the times are “out of joint”. During this period, those who are evil flourish in an outward sense (*lahir*), while those who are virtuous in their outward actions (also *lahir*) go hungry. His poignant question regards how to live with yourself and act in such a time. He concludes that even though it appears that those who are careless and follow the madness are happy, God wills that those who remember who they are, and are careful, will be happier in the end. If you act on your inner knowledge of virtue by following virtuous outward practices, then in an outward sense you may be destroyed. If

you don't succumb to the madness of the outer world, then you will not share in the spoils. On the other hand, if you give in to the madness, then you are in danger of destroying your inner life (*batin*). Ronggowarsito's poem runs something like this in my rather free translation:

*Witness the era of madness:
It is so difficult to act.
Can't stand to follow the madness,
But if you don't act crazy
You get nothing,
Hunger is waiting at the door.
Nevertheless, according to God's will,
No matter how happy are the careless,
Those who remember and guard themselves
Will be happier in the end.¹⁴*

Ronggowarsito's poem continues to exercise a strong influence on the social imaginary of Indonesians. This social imaginary includes a feeling (*rasa*) that the events of the outer world (*lahir*, macro cosmos),

¹⁴ In the original Javanese, the poem is as follows:

*amenangi zaman édan,
éwuhaya ing pambudi,
mélu ngédan nora tahan,
yén tan mélu anglakoni,
boya keduman mélik,
kaliren wekasanipun,
ndilalah kersa Allah,
begja-begjaning kang lali,
luwih begja kang éling klawan waspada.
The Indonesian translation is as follows:
menyaksikan zaman gila,
serba susah dalam bertindak,
ikut gila tidak akan tahan,
tapi kalau tidak mengikuti (gila),
tidak akan mendapat bagian,
kelaparan pada akhirnya,
namun telah menjadi kehendak Allah,
sebagia-bahagiannya orang yang lalai,
akan lebih bahagia orang yang tetap ingat dan waspada.*

including the physical world of nature, are linked with the political economy of the social order, which is in some sense the *batin* of the natural world.

I experienced this in a vivid fashion in 1996 when I attended a celebration of the 70th birthday of the famous Javanese Catholic architect, social activist, historian and novelist, Father Mangunwidjaya. It was a small gathering of leading Indonesian intellectuals at the home of Th. Sumarthana in Yogyakarta. The nearby volcano, Mt. Merapi, which Central Javanese consider a mystical mountain inhabited by great power, had just erupted with disastrous consequences to the nearby villagers. The main topic of the gathered Indonesian intellectuals, including Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur)¹⁵, was what was the meaning of the volcanic eruption? There seemed to be a consensus between these modern intellectuals, some of whom had PhDs from Western universities, that the eruption of Merapi was related to the immanent fall from power of President Soeharto. It was also suggested that Gus Dur was in some sense the reincarnation of Semar, the trickster high god, incarnated in the form of a comic servant. It was predicted that this new Semar would take a major role in the transition to a new order. The coming political upheaval was prefigured in the volcanic eruption. In fact Soeharto, who had ruled for 32 years, was forced out of power in May 1998 and shortly later Gus Dur became President of Indonesia.

However one might interpret this narrative, it is clear that many Indonesians do not live in a “disenchanted world”. While they may be attracted by many of the ideas, practices and narratives engendered by the Western social imaginary, they do not feel the radical secularity of the social and natural worlds, which is part of the air most people breathe in the Western world, especially in the world of secular universities. In fact many Indonesian’s feelings of alienation from “the

¹⁵ Gus Dur was at the time the head of Nahlatul Ulama (NU), which claims 40 million members.

West” may be caused by the radically secular, Western assumptions about the basis of society. Fundamentally, many Indonesians feel that the basis of society and nation is the will of God, not primarily the will of the people.

Indonesian Social Imaginaries and Repertoires for Dealing with Diversity

Indonesia is in a liminal space, poised between competing social imaginaries and different ways of responding to multiple modernities. Diversity is likely to increase in Indonesian society, rather than being resolved into a uniformity of vision. In the long term, Indonesian powers of synthesis and tolerance for diversity may yet produce a general consensus in society, at least about some things. But what that synthesis will look like, is still a mystery.

Social, political, economic, cultural and religious change is taking place at such a rapid pace that it is impossible to imagine what Indonesia will look like ten years from now. Fifteen years ago, no one could have predicted the present reality. In the past fifteen years we have seen the fall of Soeharto, economic collapse, decentralization, democratization, the rise of hard line Islamists, 9/11 and the Bali bombings, the “war on terror”, local level civil wars between religious communities, global warming, tsunamis, earthquakes, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the election of Barak Obama, international economic crises, a sharply increasing gap between rich and poor, the inconceivable growth of cyber communication, the “Arab Spring”, etc..

Nevertheless, in spite of mind numbing change, social imaginaries do not change quickly. The basic social imaginary of Indonesians, formed over hundreds of years, is likely to persist in spite of the tremendous influence of globalization. But of course it will be modified in varying degrees by bits of social imaginary from the Middle East,

America and other parts of the world. That may continue to increase the amount of diversity in Indonesian society.

How does the ideal typology of an Indonesian social imaginary affect ways of dealing with diversity? *Firstly, society is imagined as a micro-cosmos modelled after an eternal macrocosmic reality of sacred Law, hierarchical relations and unseen power.* On the positive side, many Indonesians believe that diversity is willed by God. It is not an accident, nor is it to be viewed negatively. The remarkable tolerance of Javanese society is related to belief in fate. People are fated to be born into different ethnic and religious groups. Therefore to try to wipe out diversity is akin to rebelling against the will of God. This is in contrast to a Western imagination of diversity as the result of a chance of history, mistaken beliefs or a rational, social contract between individuals for mutual benefit. Most Indonesians believe there is a macrocosmic reality of irresolvable diversity, symbolized in the shadow puppet (*wayang kulit*) stories in which the *Pandawa* and *Kurawa* clans cannot resolve their differences but neither can they decisively defeat each other. Neither side is definitively good or evil (Anderson, 1965). But they have different interests, beliefs and ways of seeing the world. The macrocosmic reality of diversity does not mean that there will not be conflict. But open expressions of conflict should be avoided for as long as possible. If the contradictions become too sharp, violent conflict may be fated too. This is what happened in 1965-66 when the Communists were construed as atheists who stepped outside the bounds of the God-ordained limits of diversity.

A belief in eternal sacred law implies that there are limits to the diversity ordained by God. Different Indonesians put the limit in different places, ranging from the most secularized and liberal Indonesians (who are a small minority), who advocate much greater individual freedoms, to the most literalistic, *syari'ah* oriented hard liners (who are also a small minority), who advocate far greater restrictions on

human behaviour. The great majority of Indonesians, lie somewhere in the middle. They are unlikely to be sympathetic to legalization of atheism, pornography or other kinds of behaviour that is widely considered in opposition to God's law. But neither are they likely to accept the demands for greater restrictions on diversity.

In fact, in spite of their high media profile, evidence suggests that support for hard line Islamist groups is declining. An opinion poll held in June 2012 by the National Survey Institute (LSN) suggests that popular support for explicitly Muslim, Indonesian political parties has slipped from 38.39% in 2004, to 29.14% in 2009 to a present low of 15.7%.¹⁶ Another example of Indonesian attitudes to diversity is the open toleration of transvestism in this relatively conservative society. Men dressed as sexy women are quite commonplace in Indonesian society and appear daily on TV as well as on street corners. Even if people do not approve of them, most Indonesians accept their sexual orientation as part of the diversity ordained by God.

Consciousness of a hierarchically ordered cosmos, also affects how Indonesians deal with diversity. A social imagination that assumes hierarchy in every aspect of social life, means that many conflicts relating to diversity of views and practices are resolved in a hierarchical manner. The classical way in which this is handled, as enshrined in *Pancasila*, is through negotiation between all parties (*musyawarah*), leading to consensus (*mufakat*). How is the consensus agreed upon? Almost always it is determined by the most respected and powerful leader present. In other words s/he listens to all opinions and then decides what the decision of the group is. Very seldom would anyone question the leader's interpretation of the consensus. But unless he is very powerful (like Soeharto), he must make a decision that can be accepted by most.

¹⁶ See, "Islamic Parties 'Must' form Coalition to Survive in 2014" in the *Jakarta Post*, August 2, 2012, p. 4 (paper edition). Note that these statistics include all explicitly Muslim parties, some of which are progressive or moderate.

The presence of unseen powers is also part of the social imaginary that influences how Indonesians deal with diversity and conflict. After the Bali bombing, I talked with a Balinese Christian leader who seemed to hold very similar views to his Hindu neighbours. He explained the terrorist bombing as the result social imbalance. Balinese society, in his view, was out of balance and needed introspection to see where Balinese were not living in accordance with cosmic law. In a sense he saw the tragedy as the result of bad karma (though he didn't use that word). While he didn't think the people who died, individually deserved their fate, he saw the bombing as a communal tragedy that resulted from Balinese failure to maintain harmony, and protect their natural environment perhaps because of excessive greed and the unrestrained growth of tourism. The many spirits and powers that inhabit this "island of the gods", were clearly upset. The Balinese call for introspection and ritual cleansing after the terrorist bombing was quite a contrast to the American response to the 9/11 attack. As a nation, the USA responded with outrage and immediately looked for an enemy to attack.¹⁷

Secondly, Government is like a parent, entrusted with guiding its children into right beliefs and moral behaviour. Like a parent, government should ensure the prosperity of its citizens. A paternalistic state is an inevitable result of this social imaginary, especially as it is linked with a belief in a hierarchically ordered cosmos. The government should take the lead in managing diversity and determining the limits of diversity that can be tolerated. However many Indonesians feel that the government is weak and unable to enforce proper moral boundaries. Widespread corruption and a weak judicial system exacerbates the perception that the government is a dysfunctional parent. However from another point of view, Indonesians also believe that good government should be by moral authority and mystical power, without aggressive

¹⁷ Of course this is oversimplified to heighten the contrast. Many Americans asked similar questions and the Indonesian police also looked for the enemy. In fact they captured and executed most of the terrorists.

action. Slowness is a virtue and non-action is preferable to hasty action. This is illustrated by the common Javanese sayings, “we always eat our rice after it is cold”, and “slowly does it, the basic thing is to get the job done” (*alon-alon waton kelakon*).¹⁸

Indonesians raise their children with great patience, seldom punishing them for anything, but expecting them to learn by the example of their elders on how to deal with conflict. The relative inactivity of the government in solving conflicts in the general society may be seen as part of this general strategy. The parental government must be patient. From a Western, human rights perspective, this slowness of action in addressing human rights abuses is frustrating. But it is part of the Indonesian repertoire for dealing with diversity. Wait... and hope that the parties sort themselves out. This social policy is in contrast with the highly activist and legalistic Singaporean government, which metes out punishments for the smallest infractions. According to a common joke, “Singapore is a fine city. There are fines for everything.” In contrast Indonesian strategies for dealing with diversity are sometimes maddeningly slow and inefficient.

Even though the government may be slow in tackling injustices, the social imaginary of Indonesians does not imagine the government as a neutral referee who takes no sides in arbitrating conflicts between diverse opponents. Rather a paternalistic government in a hierarchical cosmos should lead the people into good and moral behaviour. From this perspective, diversity should be permitted only up to certain limits. Every year the media shows graphic images of the government destroying illegally sold liquor to protect the public from drunkenness. Punishments for drug dealing are severe and deviant religious sects are more likely to be punished than have their rights protected. The social imaginary behind these strategies for dealing with diversity is of the

¹⁸ The following website has an interesting discussion (in Indonesian) of the philosophy behind this Javanese saying:

satufikr.wordpress.com/2010/03/26/alon-alon-waton-kelakon/

government, not playing the part of a neutral referee but of a concerned parent who must protect society from negative behaviour and wrong beliefs. This is in sharp contrast with Western views of government as the equal protector of maximum freedom for all citizens, as long as they don't interfere with the freedom of others.

Thirdly, political society is like a family into which you are born and the government is obliged to punish those who violate community norms and achieve maximum harmony between its members. In dealing with diversity, the goal of political society is not equal protection of all parties in a social contract, but rather harmony between all members of the family. In dealing with diversity, that means paying attention to what each member of the family needs. The primary way to address grievances is not the application of law but rather the negotiation of a compromise in a family manner (*cara kekeluargaan*). If possible, the leader of the negotiations should be a figure of power and authority, who is respected by all sides. Law and human rights are not the main issues, although they are among the factors to consider. The main value is maintenance of harmony (*rukun*).

A rather negative example of how this might work is the scandalous ongoing saga of the Indonesian Christian Church (GKI) Yasim in Bogor. The church building occupies a prime piece of real estate in the centre of the city of Bogor in Java. Since the land was wanted for development purposes, the Mayor ordered the church closed, with support from hard line Muslims, and offered the church an alternative site. The church appealed to the courts and after a long process, including appeals, in January 2012 the Supreme Court of Indonesia finally ruled that the church had a right to its building and ordered the church reopened. You might think this was the end of the case. But not in Indonesia. The Mayor of Bogor, backed by both business interests and religious hard liners, refused to accept the ruling of the court and ordered the police to keep the worshipers out of their building. He said he has a right to refuse

the building permit to maintain public order. The members of the church still refused the alternative site and met on the sidewalk outside the church, where they were occasionally harassed by hard line Muslims.

The point of citing this extreme case is not to suggest that there is no respect for law in Indonesia, but rather to illustrate that a strong local leader, backed by the threat of violence from hard line groups, may overrule law. In this case, the legitimacy of the Mayor's action is claimed to be based on appeals to guard public order and prevent violence. If the Mayor allows the worship to continue in that church building, it may cause hard line Muslims to resort to (more) violence. Left unstated is a religious appeal to stop the spread of Christianity and an economic motive for taking over valuable property. So far the national government has not intervened for fear of exacerbating the conflict.

A more positive example of negotiation between conflicting parties took place when a charismatic group obtained permission from Jakarta to hold a mass Easter celebration in the sports stadium of Yogyakarta.¹⁹ The permit was for an Easter celebration for Christians, but the group put up large banners all over the city, inviting everyone to come for a healing service led by a charismatic, Canadian, healer evangelist. Two days before the event, hard line groups staged protests against what they saw as a disguised evangelistic service targeted at Muslims. They brought in busloads of hard line Muslim cadre from outside Yogya and threatened to burn churches if the event was allowed to take place. The local government called upon my colleague, Prof. Dr Mursyidi, who is a highly revered and pious Muslim leader and the head of an umbrella organization of all Muslim organizations in Yogyakarta (including the hard line groups). Dr Mursyidi is a former university president (rector) and was also the head of the Centre for Religious and Cross-Cultural

¹⁹ The "Jogja Festival 2007" was held in Yogyakarta on May 30-June 2, 2007. For a more detailed analysis see Adeney-Risakotta, 2009.

Studies at UGM Prof. Mursyidi convened all the parties in the conflict. After intense negotiations that lasted through the night, a compromise was reached. The Christian group agreed to move their event to a large indoor auditorium, rather than the sports stadium. In return the hard liners agreed to withdraw their cadre without further demonstrations or violence.

In this case, a social imaginary that values harmony between members of the same family, higher than strict respect for human rights, led to a negotiated compromise. A strict enforcement of Indonesian laws on religious freedom might have led to violence and riots. Instead, the mediation of a revered religious leader led to grass-roots negotiations (*musyawarah*) between people who held different perceptions and interests. This might be seen as a failure of the state to defend the human rights of Christians and the rule of law. However this is a classic example of how a social imaginary, which values peace and harmony over individual freedom, deals with diversity.

Fourthly, society is founded on just rule based on sacred law. All universal religions should be respected and their communities enjoy equal rights under sacred law. In Indonesia there are three main types of law: 1. Sacred, traditional law, or *adat*, which is different for each ethnic or tribal group; 2. Sacred religious law, or *Syari'ah*, in the case of Islam, which is trans-ethnic but only acknowledged by the Muslim community; 3. Secular law, which is pragmatic, rational and in part inherited from Dutch colonialism. In some parts of Indonesia, especially away from big cities, *adat* traditional law is the strongest. However religious law has been gaining in influence. In strongly Islamic communities, *adat* and religious law are often fused or intertwined. Decisions on how to deal with diversity appeal to both *adat* and religious law, using reason and precedent to decide which is most appropriate (see Bowen, 1993).

Both *adat* and religious law are sacral in the sense of being related to transcendent, supernatural power. *Adat* is always related to the ancestors

and is often intertwined with stories of supernatural events. Violation of *adat* is believed to cause sickness or even death, because it offends the ancestors and various local spirits (see Aragorn, 2000). Religious law may not have the same immediacy of effect, but is no less sacred because it comes from God. God will be the ultimate judge.

In contrast, governmental law (both national and local)²⁰ is much weaker in Indonesia. One reason is that it doesn't have as much "sacred" weight behind it. Perhaps even more important is that the non-religious institutions for enforcing governmental law are weak. In spite of ongoing (and partially successful) attempts at reform, the legislatures, judiciary and police forces are still perceived as corrupt. Neither the ancestors nor God can be bribed. But corruption is rampant in governmental law making and law enforcement institutions.

Recently, high level police officers were accused of corruption by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK). According to the law governing the KPK, the police are required to subordinate their own investigations to the authority of KPK, in cases of corruption. However the police refused to allow KPK free access in investigating high level police officers. So far the executive branch (President) refuses to intervene on the grounds that it should not interfere in legal issues. True to the social imaginary discussed above, the President says the police and the KPK should cooperate and coordinate with each other. In other words they should seek a harmonious compromise that serves the interests of all.

Although religious and *adat* law are also subject to the ethic of compromise in seeking social harmony, especially in facing changing and complex new social conditions, they are not nearly as subject to

²⁰ In the following discussion I avoid using the term "secular law" because most Indonesians believe that governmental law should be influenced by and incorporate both local *adat* law and religious law. There is no strictly secular law, although all law should conform to Pancasila which accords equal recognition to six religions. Muslim conservatives have waged sometimes successful campaigns to incorporate sharia into government law.

subversion by corruption. No one wants to offend God or undermine the solidarity of the immediate *adat* community, let alone the ancestors, but the government doesn't have nearly the moral authority of either religion or *adat*. Many Indonesians are committed to reforming governmental institutions and see equality before the law as crucial for building a just and prosperous society. But there is still a long way to go.

This imbalance between the authority of non-religious governmental law and the sacred laws of religion and *adat* causes anomalies in the enforcement of governmental law. Non-Indonesian observers may be confused by the phenomena of militant Islamic groups using violence against allegedly heretical minorities, against churches accused of converting Muslims and against places accused of practicing vice, such as night clubs, bars, etc. Why doesn't the government, acting through the police, step in and arrest the hard liners, or at least protect the human rights of those attacked? One reason is that the hard liners act in the name of Islamic law. Even those who don't approve of their actions, hesitate to stand up against actions that seem to be based on sharia. Religious law trumps secular law in the eyes of many Muslims.

A social imaginary that views society as based on sacred law means that purely secular law will always be weak in protecting the rights those who seem to violate sacred law. Some Muslims believe that the answer to this problem is to fuse governmental law with sharia. Many Indonesians, Muslim and non-Muslim, are worried by this trend, especially if the interpretation of sharia is dominated by conservatives. However more progressive interpretations of sacred law, especially when backed by broad public opinion, can lead to much more effective protection of human rights. In Java, when churches receive threats from hard line groups, they often ask for protection, not from the police, but from the largest Muslim organization in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). NU also acts in the name of Islam and believes attacking religious places of worship is in violation of sharia. They have the numbers and

community organization needed to send groups of young Muslims to guard the threatened churches. Some years ago, during a period of heightened religious tension, KH Hasyim Muzadi, the Head of NU, jokingly complained to me that he spends more time protecting churches than he does building up NU!²¹

Fifthly, history repeats itself in cycles and the outcome in many cycles is often tragic. Fate is determinative and if God so wills, a golden age led by a righteous ruler (ratu adil) may return. During the 32 years of Soeharto's reign, the dominant imaginary propagated by the government was of development and progress, similar to the developmentalist ideology of the West. The social narrative of progress from traditional societies (*orang bodoh* – stupid, uneducated, poor people, especially farmers), to modernity (educated, sophisticated, technologically advanced and prosperous people), is firmly entrenched in the Indonesian psyche. Nevertheless, the older social imaginary of historical cycles and inexorable fate is still strong. Often the evolutionary imaginary is grafted onto to the older world view. While educated, urban elites may still view the peasants as *kurang maju* (undeveloped, less advanced), there is still broad consensus that the future lies in the hand of God. Many Indonesians long for a just ruler, who will have the divine power (*charisma*) necessary to lead Indonesia into a golden age that will equal or surpass the glories of the ancient past.

Some Indonesians believe that Islam is the key to Indonesia taking its place as a new centre of world civilization. Some conservative Muslims believe that only a return to the original texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah, and the kind of civilization built by the Prophet Muhammad, can restore both Islam and Indonesia to a position of world leadership. This viewpoint is sometimes used to justify extreme measures in wiping out diversity that threatens the purity of Islamic civilization. Abu Bakar

²¹ Private conversation in Jakarta, sometime around 2006.

Bashir and the Jemaah Islamiyah are extreme examples of a few who are willing to use all means necessary to build a pure Islamic civilization that will span Southeast Asia. However the great majority of conservative Muslims in Indonesia, repudiate violent methods and seek to build Islamic civilization by democratic and peaceful means.

Some progressive Muslims also dream of Indonesia returning to glory, not by returning to the literal precepts of the time of the prophet, but by demonstrating the substantial, peaceful and tolerant values of Islamicate practices that are suited for the modern world. It is likely that Gus Dur saw himself in the role of a just leader who would build a religiously tolerant, just and modern Islamicate civilization in Indonesia. Unfortunately his own illness and weak governmental structures following the fall of Soeharto silenced his dreams.

Some Indonesians dream of a return to a golden age, not primarily based on religious faithfulness, but on modern education, scientific development and a rapidly expanding economy. For them, Islam is compatible with progress and modernity, as long as it is not dominated by conservative, narrow minded dogmatists. They believe Islamicate civilization can be built to its former glory, not by returning to the past but by using all the tools of modern science that are compatible with Islam. However, like the others, they too may long for a strong enlightened leader who, in the providence of God, can lead the nation to greatness.

How does this fifth social imaginary affect how Indonesians deal with diversity? On the one hand, it can lead to a kind of passive resignation: in the absence of a just leader, while we are still caught in the age of madness (*edan*), there is not much hope for real change. This may lead to apathy about problems like corruption, environmental degradation, violence against the Timorese, injustice in West Papua or the expanding gap between the rich and the poor. In Gerry van Klinken's chapter in this volume, he expresses surprise that, according

to the World Values Survey, most Indonesians did not see reducing the gap between rich and poor as a priority. However this might be what you would expect from a social imaginary of a hierarchical micro-macro cosmos ruled by fate.

According to van Klinken's analysis of the world values survey, most Indonesians are not worried by a strong, authoritarian, military, leader, as long as s/he is elected democratically. Some people even yearn for the bad old days of authoritarian President Soeharto. In 2014, Indonesians will elect a new President. Unless a new, charismatic figure arises, there is a good chance the next President will be an authoritarian figure with a military background. However longing for the return of a righteous ruler means that Indonesians could flock to someone who fits that description. Unfortunately, or fortunately, there is no one on the horizon who seems to fit the bill. For a relatively brief period of time, the Justice and Prosperity Party (PKS) seemed to offer the option of a clean, righteous, sharia oriented party. But internal divisions and scandals have taken their toll and sharply eroded their support.

For the vast majority of Indonesians, a social imaginary that assumes that society's destiny is in God's hands and that history repeats itself, is reassuring. Even tragedy can be interpreted as meaningful as it is willed by God. Most Indonesians affirm that the tremendous diversity of Indonesia is God's will. This may be one of the foundations of Indonesian tolerance. According to Pancasila, Indonesians from all the different ethnic, religious, racial and ideological groupings are affirmed as fated by God to be one nation and one family. Even though Pancasila has lost some of its authority, this basic affirmation of a common nation and common humanity is still very strong.²²

²² This became more vivid for me when I visited Sri Lanka, where the division between Singhala, Tamil and Muslim is much more prominent. Not only do they lack a common language and religion, they are divided by competing narratives of enmity and threat that span over 2,000 years of history. In contrast with Sri Lanka, the Indonesian social imaginary of unity in diversity (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*) is truly remarkable.

Conclusion

Max Weber's theory concerned the influence of religious ethos on economic development. Charles Taylor, following Weber, examines the broader social imaginary in the West, which undergirds one of several versions of modernity. Modernity in Southeast Asia, and specifically in Indonesia, is strikingly different from the West. In this paper I have suggested that the differences between the modernities in Western countries and in Southeast Asia can be accounted for by differences in social imaginaries. Of course the social imaginaries and types of modernities in different Western countries are also different. Modernity in France, for example, is not the same as in the USA. However, Taylor's theory outlines some broad and deep uniformities in how many people in different Western countries imagine modern society.

If we can conceive of a single, unified, social imaginary in the West, which may be refined into more specific social imaginaries in different countries, then it seems possible also to conceive of a single, unified, social imaginary in Southeast Asia, which may then be differentiated according to the particularities of different countries. In this paper I have not tried to do that because just encompassing the complexity of Indonesia is already beyond my powers of synthesis, let alone trying to account for all the different ways people imagine the world in other countries in Southeast Asia. The influence of a Western social imaginary in Southeast Asia is very different in different societies.

Older social theories have followed Weber in conceiving of these differences as based on differences in stages of modernization or rationalization. If all societies were on a linear track of evolution from more simple, enchanted, primitive, traditional societies towards more complex, rational, advanced, modern societies, then it might make sense to account for different kinds of modernity based on different stages of rationalization in different segments of society. By that account, urban societies are likely to be much more modern than village societies.

However, Taylor's theory of social imaginaries helps us to see that there are multiple modernities and they are not all on the same track of linear evolution (which is itself part of the Western social imaginary). They are different in part because people imagine different realities and live in different worlds.

Differences in social imaginaries, even within the same country, are not likely to diminish within the foreseeable future. In fact, with the free flow of information on the internet, they are likely to become even more diverse. Powerful international structures decrease diversity and promote uniformity. These include global structures of religious orthodoxy, culturally hegemonic mass media, multinational corporations and the globalization of the market place. Nation states have very little control over these international structures, which are made real through millions of practices every minute of every day. In spite of these powerful forces, local resistance to hegemonic, global social imaginaries are seen everywhere. The overwhelming pace of social change leads many people to seek their identity through personalized and individuated religious, spiritual and cultural practices. But whole societies also retain their inter-subjective social imaginaries. After over a century of modernization, Indonesian social imaginaries are still remarkably different from those in the West. Globalization results in both homogenization and increasing diversity.

As we often have a different social imaginary from our neighbours, it is ever more urgent that we learn what Judith Butler calls "an ethic of co-habitation" (Mendieta & Vanantwerpen, 2011). We do not choose with whom we share this planet, but we need to learn to get along with those who are different from us, if we want to survive. Unique religious and cultural practices support different social imaginaries from the ones promoted by the cultural hegemony of the elite. Those who hold power may have strategies for hegemonic control of social imaginaries. But many people know how to resist. They employ tactics to preserve their

own social imaginary and secure the freedom of their own unique identities (Certeau, 1984).

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