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doi: <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/necv2>**THE SHIFT OF PARADIGM IN COMPREHENDING RELIGION:
FROM IDEALISM TO HISTORICITY****Tabrani ZA¹; Saifullah Idris² & Romi Siswanto³**¹Serambi Mekkah University, Indonesia²Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, Indonesia³Ministry of Education and Culture Republic of Indonesia, IndonesiaCorresponding Email: tabraniza@scadindependent.org

Abstract

Islam is a religion of revelation that demands authenticity and cannot be distorted. But in its function as a way of life, it is always faced with the progressiveness of the problems of human life that can accommodate the changes that occur. In this context, there are two approaches in Islamic studies; normative approach and historical approach, each of which has different implications. Normative approach, which is still a focus on respect for normative values and the sanctification of texts. The implication, understanding Islam becomes very legal-formal and rigid. Islamic scholarship becomes repetitive and involutive, which is often paradoxical to humanitarian problems. Whereas the historical approach focuses more on the substantial meaning behind religious symbols and texts. The implication, Islamic studies become more progressive and compatible with the progression of life. However, this approach is often criticized for making Islam lose its authenticity.

Keywords: *Paradigm, Islam, Religion, Normative, Historical*

A. Introduction

Social changes that occur today amidst the advancement of science and technology and globalization cannot be avoided by Muslims, like it or not, deliberately or not have to come into contact with the change, there are cultural contact and cultural mixing. With the development and advancement of science and technology it also inevitably changes the rules and order of values that have so far been considered firmly established and held. Values that have already been established are increasingly undermined by the authority of the current rapid social change.

The development of technology and science, which includes social sciences, relatively quickly shortens the distance of cultural differences between one region and another. In turn, this affects human consciousness about so-called religious phenomena. In this era, religion can no longer be approached and understood only through a theological-normative approach.

At the end of the 19th century, especially in the middle of the 20th century, there was a paradigm shift in understanding of "religion" from what was once limited to "Ideality" toward "historicity", from which only revolved around "doctrine" towards the entity "social logical ", from the discourse of" essence "towards" existence ".

One cannot be easily blamed for seeing religious phenomena in an intellectual, dimensional, and even multi-dimensional manner due to open and transparent world relations. In addition to religion having theological-normative doctrine, and indeed therein lies the hardcore rather than human diversity, one can also see it as a tradition. While tradition is difficult to separate from the human construction factor which was originally influenced by a very long socio-economic-political and cultural journey.

For a Muslim, a deep understanding and Kaaffah of Islam by reformulating the reinterpretation to fit the purpose of the religious soul is necessary so that he can become a broad-minded, thoughtful human being and be able to see the differences that arise in addressing problems in world life. To lead to a holistic understanding, there are two main types of approaches, namely normativity, and historicity. Normativity is a fixed rule, which cannot be separated from thoughts about it, whereas historicity is a form of history of how dogmatic it appears.

The difference between these two types of approaches often creates tension. The normativity approach accuses the second approach, historicity, as an approach that emphasizes religious understanding is limited to the outward aspects of human religiosity and lacks the understanding to dive into and touch with the inner aspects, and morality contained in the teachings themselves. This property is called "reductionist".

Whereas the historicity approach alleges that the first approach, normativity, is an absolute approach. Because the normativity approach synthesizes the written text, without trying to understand in advance what is behind the various religious texts that exist.

The normative understanding of Islam is doctrinaire, namely that the religion of Islam as an object of study is believed to be something sacred and its doctrines derived from the divine which have absolute, absolute, and universal values (truth). The doctrinaire approach also assumes that the true teachings of Islam are the teachings of Islam that developed during the Salaf period, which gave rise to various religious schools, both theological and legal or fiqh, which was fixed and standard. After that time, Islamic studies took place doctrinally. So that the teachings of Islam are permanent, which in the end become obsolete.

On the other side of the normative approach, in general, two theories can be used together with the normative-theological approach. The first theory is things that aim to find out the truth and can be proven empirically and experimentally. The second theory is things that are difficult to prove empirically and experimentally. For things that can be proven empirically, it is usually called a problem related to *ra'yi* (reasoning).

B. Transformation of Normative Islam into Empirical Sphere and Human Historicity

Normatively, Islam is absolute, sacred and universal whose trans-historical truth crosses the boundaries of space and time, so that in this region it is single. The singularity of Islam is represented by the Koran - although Islam has been expansive in the multi-linguistic and historical area of the multi-era - the source of the norm has never been distorted. As the words of Muhammad Iqbal (1981: 126): *"the prophet of Islam seems to stand between the ancient and the modern world. In so far as the source of his revelation is concerned he belongs to the ancient world, in for far as the spirit of his revelation is concerned, he belongs to the world"*.

Al-Qur'an is a source of norms that govern human life in a vertical relationship with God and horizontal relationships among

humans. It contains universal human values that are applied to all humans at the same level. In the treasures of Islamic thought, al-Qur'an has produced a series of derivative texts with various versions, properties, and approaches that are so broad and amazing. The derivative texts are the second texts - if the Koran is seen as the first text - which reveals and explains the meanings, norms, symbolization and substance contained in the Koran with tendencies and characteristics, vision, mission, and different orientations, perspectives and theories (Gusnian, 2003: 17).

However, when normative Islam is transformed into the realm of empirical and historical humanity, the truth is that it is profane, temporary, bound by time, therefore at this level, Islam becomes dynamic, relative, and plural. This happens because although the Qur'anic text is believed as if it were the incarnation and presence of God, yet once entering the realm of history, God's word was exposed to cultural restrictions that apply to the human world. In the early earthing period of the Koran when the hegemony of Muhammad SAW who had authoritative rights as a single interpreter still existed, the homogeneity of meaning towards the Qur'an was still relatively defensible (Hidayat, 1996: 9). But when Islam has experienced geographical and epoch development, the face of Islam has become increasingly diverse and heterogeneous.

The emergence of differences is because immanent humans only try to approach the truth of the Qur'an with their respective authorities so that the parameters of truth are also different. The implication, every human effort to understand the text is always done with a model that becomes a spectacle and also presuppositional standpoint; a previously held view; Preunderstandings that will have a major effect on any attempt to understand the text of the Qur'an.

This internalizing premonition is the fruit of its interactive relationship with the community, its experiences and life-settings and this shapes its vision and perception of how the world has been and should be organized and also develops certain impressions and judgments on the text. Al-Qur'an as an object and humans as subjects will always interact when an understanding of

it is to be produced, hence there will always be an aspect of subjectivity, and then the substance of religious understanding at this level is interpretation (Hidayat, 1996: 53). Therefore in the context of the understanding of Islamic normativity, polemics always arise which are built by the existence of a thesis-antithesis and synthesis cycle and so on which makes the historicity of understanding and interpretation of Islam increasingly diverse (Haryono, 2005: 76).

Al-Qur'an language does tend to be symbolic and the scope of the theme is also multi-dimensional so that it gives the possibility of different interpretations which is a convergent spectrum because it is determined by various variables according to the level of interpreter's praxis and intellectual understanding. So the message of revelation is wide open for humans to be interpreted according to the intellectual condition of society, the development of language, culture, and age.

Islam on a historical level will not always be single, it will not be static, and there will always be a new paradigm that adapts the dimensions of time-space and locality as history progresses. The understanding of diversity in the historicity of Islam continues to grow endlessly. The development itself - according to Almakin - is complex because it involves so many variables. This is not a simple thing, because every age produces historicity, discoveries, discourse, and understanding of normative texts that are different from other eras. Each space and time produces discourse, color, movement, its renewal that each point of criticism criticizes previous understanding while spawning a new theory (Mustaqim, 2002: 30). The logic and understanding of religion, according to Amin Abdullah, require a continuous process to answer the reality of different historical developments so that religious values can encourage the development of the process and enrich the concept of the formation of human civilization. Once again, heterogeneity of understanding of Islam occurs as a dialectical process between sacred texts, context, and profane human rationality. The diametric position between the text and the context - if observed in the history of Islamic thought - always raises creative tension between the normative understanding movement on the one hand and the movement of historical-liberal

understanding on the other side. The impact of these two approaches is very strong in understanding theology, law, political thought, and other fields.

In slightly different terms, Amin Abdullah (2004) states that the approach and understanding of religious phenomena that are normative - textual and critical-historical are not always getting along and the rhythm of the relationship between the two is often tinged with tension and tension both constructive and destructive. The normative-textual group often alleges that the understanding of contextual groups is the reductionist understanding of religion while the contextual claims the normative approach is correcting the written text without trying to understand the background of religious texts that are culturally psychological or sociological. For this reason, according to Amin, the most serious problem for Muslims that is hard to find is the solution of how to link the values of fundamental normativity that are absolute to the historicity and historical contexts of human life that are always changing civilization.

Although there is often a thick and concentrated mixing process between the dynamic dimensions of humanity and the normativity of universal and compatible *revelation (shalihun li kulli wa wa era)*, according to Amin Abdullah, the two can be distinguished but inseparable. Each cannot be alienated from the other, interconnected, blended, and interdependent. Both are automatically connected dialectically, without stopping on one side only, both are flowing (fluid) and fluid (liquid change) but not jammed on one side only. If this is not the case, there will be a process - in addition to a process of domination and hegemonism over one another, which neglects the side of humanity's historicity or vice versa - it will ignore the normativity that should be lived by followers of religion (Abdullah, 2004). Ontologically, according to Arkoun, understanding Islam can use the analogy of coins or coins which must have two sides of the surface. There is no and maybe there is a coin that has only one surface, as well as Islam, it is impossible to choose one between two sides, normativity, and historicity. Normativity becomes a necessity to maintain the

constancy/intensity so as not to experience distortion or deviation, while historicity is keeping the existence of religion to remain compatible, acceptable and functioning in human life.

The normative approach departs from the belief that Islam is a religion of revelation whose truth is absolute and universal so that it is impossible to draw conclusions that are contrary to the text of revelation. So the conclusion drawn is not based on the fact approach but based on the theological belief that truth is the extent to which facts are following the revelation. Thus reality must submit and become sub-ordination under the authority of religious texts (Mahmud, 2005: 8). Instead the second approach, historically, assumes that every religion is always born in a historical context. Because if without a historical context, then religion becomes absurd and meaningless. For religion to have significance, this requires a dialectical process with the empirical reality of society because with this religion is believed to be able to change the reality outside of itself and at the same time external reality influences religion. For this approach, the practice of religion does not have to be letter-by-letter from the word of God but rather it captures the universal spirit of religion. Religion is not an entity that transcends history but contains temporal-spatial status which is limited in space and time. Religion is not a product of God one hundred percent, but there is a historical intervention, because revelation is not descended in a vacuum of culture, but rather interconnected with human historicity.

If analogous to Islam like a snowball. The longer the more adherents, the more plural and multi-faces of religious faces, diverse and increasingly colorful both, synchronically and diachronically. From this the crucial question arises, if it is then is it possible to maintain Islamic authenticity. Which Islam is authentic, Arabic, Indonesian, or even European? Salaf period first, or precisely how, or which one? This is a matter of paradigm, which is more urgent between text/ scriptural - formal legal with substantial values, which of the two is more authentic? Indeed rather problematic-dilemma. If authenticity is left to the formal legal text, then it might one day be faced with the fact that not all

formal legal provisions are compatible with the conditions of the people. Therefore, authenticity must deal with functionality and progressivity (Tabrani ZA, 2011b).

In this process tension often occurs when the religious experience begins to change its content and complexity - not its essence - due to the development of science, technology, and others which all broaden and expand the horizons of the experience of human thought. Proponents of normative thinking are very worried if the re-interpretation deviates from the old intellectual history that has been established, taught, documented, and even guided. Bearers of normativity sometimes forget that the old intellectual treasures that are considered authentic and sacred are also the products and responses of their intellectual struggle with the history of their time. If the product of old thought cannot accept change, this will make the Islamic world closed (closed world view) because the truth in the metaphysical - ethical and normative region is often ignorant, uninterested, and does not consider at all the other dimensions of history/ historicity empirical humans. He is busy with absolute truth without wanting to specify what is called absolute, even though the absolute is always wrapped in relative human thought. This assertion and indifference will make religion seem antagonistic and authoritarian, which is feared to make Islamic teachings even drier from understanding the arguable-debatable social reality as a result of cultural and social dynamics. Historicity is indeed a reflection of normativity and vice versa normativity is built from the experience of historicity. There is always a dialogic process that never stops between the two spirits dynamically as long as the Muslim movement still exists. Finally, the religion which is a reflection of God's transcendent decree is indeed absolute, but in its earthing process, it becomes relative due to the influence of time-space.

According to Amin Abdullah (2003: 16), Islamic civilization is, in fact, nothing but a result of the accumulation of the struggle of Muslims when dealing with the dialectical process between the "normativity" of the teaching of permanent revelation and the "historicity" of the historical human experience on earth that is

always changing dynamically. Norms are transcendent while humans are *imannen*. Tensile relations sometimes affirm each other but also sometimes even negate each other, push aside, try to dominate the existence of others; between these two dimensions has always existed in the course of Islamic thought throughout history. The extent to which the moral ideal and the authority of normativity of revelation wrapped up in human empirical experience in a certain place and time can be captured and re-treated in another dimension of space and time. This is where crucial problems often arise because people are required to be creative in using their intelligence to map precisely between the normativity of universal revelation and dynamic human historicity to avoid lethal domination (Tabrani ZA, 2015b).

Said further by Abdullah (2003), historical facts prove that it is not easy to map the two domains. The relationship and dialectics of both are often colored by tension and even "anomaly". Sometimes immanent and profane Islamic historicity is forced to be treated absolutely and permanently and even sacred as a result there is *taqdis al-afkar aldiny* (the sacredness of religious thought) or orthodoxy according to Fazlurrahman which causes the starkness and even stagnation of Islam in the historical region, while the dynamics of historically demand travel, progress, and even run in the face of problems of human life. The irony according to M. Arkoun-quoted Amin Abdullah that there has been a geological coating process of Islamic thought since the 12th century until now, to override aspects of humanity historicity that always in the ongoing process and ongoing formation. For example when reading the QS 'Abasa which shows the dimensions of the historicity and immanence of Muhammad SAW when surly with Abdullah bin Umm Maktum (Abdullah, 2004).

The incident shows the immanence or humanity of Muhammad. But with the intellectual power and the ratio of humans are required to find the normative dimensions of the event that are universal, imperative, categorical and necessary. Historical events can be different but the dimensions of normativity and ethics of the Koran remain the same that the QS

'Abasa instructs that humans should be fair and egalitarian, democratic and polite should not discriminate against different stratification and social caste. The universality aspect of Islam lies in its categorical normativity (binding on all parties) while its historicity is particular cultural, lies in the empirical events faced by the Prophet (Amin Abdullah, 2003: 20).

C. Aspects of Normative Revelation and Human Historicity

Islam has been perfectly standardized so that its authenticity continues to be guaranteed amid the progression of space and time. This standardization includes; 1). Authentic documents the source of the highest norm, the Qur'an; 2). Provide an operational explanation in life, 3). It provides a way to develop Islamic norms in an integrated manner in life throughout human history through the process of *ijtihad*. With this step, Islam will remain authentic, plus dynamic in wading through the history of life. The first two steps are needed to maintain the authenticity of Islam, while the third step is needed so that Islam continues to run, grow and develop dynamically in the direction of human development (Muhaimin, 2012: 77-78).

Islamic diversity contains aspects of the normativity of revelation and human historicity. However, the study of orthodox Islam both jurisprudence, theology, interpretation, and *tasawuh* only uses the normativity approach and without involving historical approaches and insights that see religious phenomena because it is feared to shift the normative dimension that is often held by orthodox teachings as the mainstream of religious thought. The concern lies in Islam being tarnished and desacralized by human historical behavior to reduce human attachment to Islam (Idris & Tabrani ZA, 2017). However, this concern proves overlapping, overlapping, and the growth between normativity and historicity, even though the two are not different, they are very able to be distinguished. Therefore Islamic studies tend to distance themselves from scientific attitudes that are intellect, critical and objective, but instead, they are attached to subjective apology based on a scripturalist/ textual approach (Abdullah, 2003: 23-24). For Islam

to stay on its authentic and consistent principle, the Qur'an and Sunnah are translated into religious sciences such as interpretation, fiqh, and others. This is what has considered the most important part of religion and the substance of religion lies there in other words of the text (the Koran and Hadith are translated into commentary texts, fiqh, Sufism and others). But in addition to the positive nature of maintaining security, it also contains negative excesses, namely what is called Kuntowijoyo (2006: 4-7) as involutive and expansive. Involutive is a symptom of the "inward" development of science, so that science becomes a science that is increasingly microscopic and only repetitive. The development of science is only limited to writing *syarah*/ elaboration shows that the perfection of mastery of science is the development of the old text which is considered to have reached the standard so that there is no development of new knowledge. Appreciation of classical texts (*turats*) as an authoritative source results in involution and closure of the doors of *ijtihad*. The people are made not dare to think independently of the text, because the text is considered final so people must obey, act *sami'naa wa atha'naa*, and be taken for granted. The evolution of science is shown in the mastery of the book of *ad verbatim* (Tabrani ZA, 2014 & 2011b).

In this context, according to Fazlurrahman, the issue of Islamic studies has become very complicated. He sees Islamic scholarship as a repetitive discipline, always repeating, loaded with literature in the form of commentary, explanation of work; and of course very few products and produce new ideas. Expansive, to maintain its authenticity, Islamic studies are sometimes so expansive so that things that are not religious are considered as intrinsic parts of religion; and this is what often happens in Islamic religious traditions (Tabrani ZA, 2014 & Tabrani ZA, & Masbur, 2016).

According to Abdullah (2003), in studying one's religiosity, an objective rationale is required to be able to analyze fairly. Because without this attitude Islamic studies will only be repetitive, repeating those done in previous generations. As a result, the status quo, congestion, stagnation, sacralization, absolutism, authoritarianism, and hegemony of thought emerge

which eliminate progression and criticism in the face of empirical reality/historicity. A normative approach is a characteristic of the study of a Believer or Actor (player) (Sabro, 1999: 112-113). In the language of Trueblood (1994: 3) is an enjoyment approach that prioritizes truth claims and absolutism and monopolizes the truth by ignoring the historical aspects of "Right or Wrong Is My religion". This approach is often criticized when silent in the face of past religious texts (*turats*) which are constructed in certain historical situations. For him, the text is the commander and supreme judge of truth and the most authoritative reference. A believer thinks that the final problem is only if it is solved through faith and belief, especially in matters relating to religion, dogma, and teachings that are Ultimate. So it is difficult to distinguish between the domains of religion that are finality and universality with the relative dimensions of religion which are only expressions of a particular religion. The most crucial point of weakness of this normative approach will immediately appear to the surface if faced with the reality of empirical social reality which is very progressive developing and changing in line with the progress of science, technology, and civilization (Tabrani ZA, 2015b & 2014).

The fundamental characteristic of Islamic culture is its very strong dependence on texts or texts, even Islam is identical to the *hadarah* an-texts (text culture). Almost all human activities starting from creed, worship, and others must be based on text. Without any text, it is considered illegal and rejected. Unfortunately, religion is not merely a matter of faith and worship, but all dimensions of life. In addition to this creed and worship it seems difficult if everything must be based on the text because the text is limited while the dimension of reality is unlimited (*an-nushus mutanahiyah wal al-waqai ghairu mutanahiyah*). Reality is affected by the causal law of historical change because human culture and civilization continue to develop under history, the development of science, values, rationality, science, and technology, as well as that, must be mapped which ones are fixed and dynamic *mutaghayyirah* (Abdullah, 2014: 6-7).

D. Islamic Expression in the Dimension of Human History

Since its inception, Islam was not a religion revealed in a vacuum. He was descended in a culture-laden region, Arabic. In subsequent history, Islam is also always directly involved in the struggle; always dialogue with the dynamics of people's lives. Therefore in the history of the tradition of Islamic thought is always colored by various efforts of renewal and refreshment continuously. This is because the issue of space and time (time) to the emergence of a variety of cognition, actualization and social praxis is a consequence when Islam has experienced a dialogic process with the community that becomes the setting (Tabrani ZA, 2011b).

The logic and understanding of religion, according to Amin Abdullah, require a continuous process to answer the reality of different historical developments so that religious values can encourage the development of the process and enrich the concept of the formation of human civilization (Abdullah, 2004). This causes the development and expression of diversity in the community to be plural and distinctive which are different from each other. In the sense that when normative Islam enters the realm of human socio-historical/ historical context, one and the other expresses a variety of expressions. So it is not surprising that the face of Islam in the Middle East will certainly be different from the face of Indonesian Islam, and also the characteristics of medieval Islam are certainly different from the modern age.

This difference in the characteristics and expressions of Islam in the dimensions of human history will, in turn, open the discourse regarding the relationship between normative and historical matters of religion. Understanding the complexity and complexity of the relationship between the domains of normativity and historicity is very urgent to be mapped so that the essence and substance of the teachings of religion that have been institutionalized can be known. In addition to knowing the translation of basic, and fundamental values that are normative teachings in the context of historical socio (Tabrani ZA, 2014a, 2015a & 2015b).

Understanding of each new generation directly involved in the flow of change in their daily lives is a necessity that cannot be avoided because all the old intellectual treasures namely the historical experience of humanity in the previous century *qabilun li at taghyir and qabilun li an-niqas* means given a new meaning in accordance with the level of development of human intellect so that it can be understood by a new generation that tries to give a more conducive meaning to the development of the age that surrounds it (Tabrani ZA, 2009). The new meaning process is not intended to negate or push away the old intellectual treasures but rather to give the weight and continuity that is more touching to the development of contemporary human thought and experience.

It is also a necessity to do to avoid biased understanding which cannot clearly show which is the territory of religion and which is the area of tradition. If these two domains cannot be mapped, a distortive understanding of the truth of Islam will emerge between absolute and relative, profane and sacred, which is permanent and dynamic, universal and temporal/local. As a result, the sacralization of the text arises, all relating to religious discourse are considered as absolute and final things that cannot be criticized let alone deconstructed in the context of space and time. Islam will lose its adaptability to the historical problems of mankind, it is no longer compatible and is alienated with human history (Susanto, 2016: 4-5). This means that by prioritizing aspects of normativity, Islam can turn into a religion that is not transformative, not emancipatory, and not humanistic, because it is not directly involved in the real problems of its adherents.

The historical approach in the study of Islam is a necessity to face the speed (progressivity) of humanitarian problems. However, according to Matson (2013: 44), some Muslims do not want to apply any socio-historical context to the Qur'an when they try to understand its meaning. The reason is that epistemologically it is necessary to realize that any story that is used or positioned as a historical context for the message of the Koran becomes inadequate when used as a means to understand the Koran as a whole. The reason is in addition to the possibility of falsification / inauthentic or

inaccuracy of narratives, also because historical narratives or even the most powerful memories are selective, temporary. Finally, when faced with such a narrative, human understanding is ultimately limited by the attention and perspectives of people whose narratives have survived to the present day.

While al-Qur'an is a container that collects perfect Divine words, while history or history is only an imperfect human effort in understanding various events. So that a consistent methodology is needed to determine the extent to which a context is considered relevant for an interpretation and when the right time to prioritize general principles of special rules, because the risk of contextualizing the Koran is excessive and relies too much on the principle general principles of the Koran will also give birth to the attitude of relativity of the teachings of the Koran so that its explicit teaching applies only to one situation that is similar to the situation when revelation was revealed. However, efforts to distance the understanding of the Qur'an from the socio-historical context of this decline will not succeed, because it is semantically impossible to understand the vocabulary of Arabic revelation without involving its historical context (Mattson, 2013: 44). This is where the study of historicity found significance.

E. Conclusion

Approach and understanding of the phenomenon of religious normative and historical patterns do not always get along and synergy. The relationship between the two is often colored by tension (creative) both creative and destructive (damaging). A normative approach, on the one hand, is a pressure that always rests on the text written in the scriptures of each religion so that this approach tends to be literal, textualist, or scripturalist.

While on the other hand, the second approach, historicity, look at the scriptures and religious phenomena, not through textuality, but with a multi-conventional social and religious scientific perspective, both sociologically, philosophically, psychologically, historically, culturally, and anthropologically.

Whatever type of approach there are still shortcomings, weaknesses of each, and far from satisfying, because the phenomenon of religion is complex. Each cannot stand alone apart from the others. Religiosity or human religiosity, in general, is universal, infinite (not limited, not bounded), trans historical (past the boundaries of the historical fence-human history), but religiosity is so deep-abstract, in essence, it cannot be understood and cannot be understood enjoyed by humans without being fully involved in concrete, limited, isolated, historical, religiosity forms that are subjectively subject to certain space and time. The two dimensions of religiosity are dialectical in the sense of complementary, complementary strengthening, exploiting and even criticizing and controlling each other.

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