LIVING IMAGINARY LIFE: AN AMBIGOUS CORPOREALITY OF THE URBAN

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Abstract

To live into the fullest, as if, has became everyone's purpose in living the live. Each of them has different ways to achieve and make it happened, yet some of them—especially urban people—have a similarity due to an existence of high technology and wide covered internet accessed; the similarity is living in a digital reality. It is occurred when they are connecting to another reality and creating their digital life. A moment they are engaging lives in incorporeal reality, at the same time they are disconnecting—temporarily and/or permanently—and recreating themselves in the corporeal live. Such phenomenon may cause them to have an imaginary and ambiguous life; and affecting their corporeal world where the body exists. However, the urban also tends to have fragmented lives in their corporeal world by making particular spaces, such as private and public transportation—as an alternative reality. Related to that, Seno Gumira Ajidharma (SGA) has successfully depicted these realities on his works "Tiada Ojek di Paris: Obrolan Urban" (2015) and can be discussed by using several approaches in order to be aware and comprehend the phenomenon. Methods used in this discussion are naturalistic observation and descriptive analytics which are aimed to identify, and give suggestion in comprehending an ambiguous corporeality life of the urban, mostly the youth.

Keywords: ambiguous, corporeality, imaginary, urban

1. INTRODUCTION

Human beings are known as social creatures and depending on each other's existence in their lives. Their interdependent has caused them to have various groups with both simple—characterized through a strong bond of kinship—and complex structure—various individual and purposes without kinship ties—of society to keep them safe and organize. Related to that, Upadhyay and Pandey (1993) mention simple society as primitive society, while complex society is advanced society. In a modest thought, simple society does not develop its economic aspects such as monetary sector, manufacture of consents and division of labors, and it holds kinship strongly. Whereas, complex or advanced society has already fully developed due to its heterogeneous population which leads to diversified division of labors and productions (Upadhyay and Pandey, 1993:362).

Thus, each society grows various cultures and social values not only to help them in daily lives but also preserving their ancestor's heritages. Those living in cities—the urban—surely will develop their own culture and social values due to their contiguity with metropolis lifestyle and technology. The urban, next, tends to have partial lives leading to a possibility of ambiguous individual emergence by creating different personalities virtually. Virtual, in this case, has tight connection to digital hardware and software (Shields, 2003: 19). The usage of technology based information such as social media applications as main features of ICT (information communication technology) devices connected to internet endorses the spreading of 'virtual' life. As the result, the urban may have different and various descriptions about themselves to be displayed on their pages as their self-representative, which its accuracy is doubtful. It happened due to their tendencies to make a fake or miscellaneous ideas of their own

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personalities. The more they have and active in the social media, the more they creating self-images freely.

However, what if this virtual life does not need internet to be connected? I believe that it can be done, since virtual itself can be understood not only as graphical abstract space but also "objects which exist but not tangible, not 'concrete'" (Shields, 2003: 2). It means whatever and wherever as long as the existence of reality can be projected as the 'real' reality though it cannot be touched. Thus, virtuality is also about experience of others who have projected their reality both particular events and/or space. Such virtuality is undeniable, since a person may often recall his/her past memories or just imagine that at a time he/she is in certain places. They also have opportunity to be whoever they want, both in the concrete reality and virtual reality; by performing or dressed up like their idols will give them excitement. Unfortunately, a friction between their real life will occur and they will experience severe ambiguous corporeality in the concrete reality. Therefore, this issue can be approached by several criticisms such as sociology, Marxism, virtual reality, and surely psychoanalysis.

2. REVIEW OF REATED THEORIES

Sociology becomes a fundamental idea to define a relationship amongst humans and their natures. This paper used Herbert Spencer's ideas through Turner, Beeghley and Powers perceptions (2002) in understanding society, especially simple and complex societies. Actually Spencer as comprehended by three of them mentioned that there are at least five basic stages of societal evolution: (1) simple without head or leadership, (2) simple with head or leadership, (3) compound, (4) doubly compound, and (5) trebly compound (2002: 14). Those stages have different nature based on implemented regulation, operation, and distribution. It can be seen when the subject of observations is the urban, especially youth, living in a city. Youths have their own social values which may different with origin values they have been taught. They are also playing their roles either as a part of simple or complex society.

Such condition is also leading to an issue of division of labor since there is an exchange occurred during the interaction. The interaction itself does not have to be in monetary sector as long as it is happened in means of production aspects. Marx as transcribed by Kuhls (1999) mentions that

> Exchange does not create the differences between the spheres of production, but brings what are already different into relation, and thus converts them into more or less inter-dependent branches of the collective production of an enlarged society. In the latter case, the social division of labour arises from the exchange between spheres of production, that are originally distinct and independent of one another.

It means each of units has its own distinctions with others and exchange them to fulfill their own needs, though the need itself just in a form of psychological experience. Next, it causes them to slowly have ambiguous personalities and lives since they are exchanging so much without making limitation or strict on their main personality. Their ambiguous conditions are only happened when they are accepting the ideas, concepts or values which are assumed as better compared to theirs. It can be seen as a blessing or curse depends on how the individual accepts it. Kristeva in MacDonald (tahun) shows that there is an ambiguous border of corporeal self. She argues that the border is a condition of the subjects' integrity and stabil though such border is an invisible one (MacDonald, 1995: 96). The corporeal life means where the flesh and bones exist and the individuals has an ability to sense—touched and being touched.

However, by the existence of technology, the experience can be achieve without this touched-and-being-touched reality. An individual may have great excitement with the virtual experience and state that they are able to feel the experience as it is. It is as mentioned by MacDonald (1995: 74) that "Man appears in his ambiguous position as an object of knowledge and as subjects that knows; enslaved sovereign, observed spectator,...".

3. METHOD OF RESEARCH

This paper is written as a qualitative research, and I use one of behavioral research methods, naturalistic observation. Since during the data collecting statistics is not being used, this study is more appropriate to implement qualitative in order to be able to make validity and reliability of the data. The validity and reliability of data can only be gained by conducting 'details' which is found from precise particulars of such matters as people's understanding and interaction (Silverman, 2005: 9).

Since this research needs people's understanding and interaction, I assume that naturalistic observation is the most proper method to be implemented. Naturalistic observations study will demand an immerse observation in a particular natural setting (the field) over an extended period of time and using a variety of techniques to collect information (Cozby, 2005: 110). The data are taken from Tiada Ojek di Paris by Seno Gumira Ajidarma (SGA) and real-time activities for around three months. The data from SGA's book are written in Bahasa, thus, I also attach my personal translation. To analyze them, the data are collaborated and contrasted with observations results in their own nature several times. Such techniques are used in order to gain richer and closer description to the phenomenon being studied (Cozby, 2005: 111). Through such contestation, the data are validated by individuals' action in their own nature.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

An exchange can be done by anyone and anywhere because the exchangeable objects do not have to be particular concrete objects. It is also in a shape of ideas and meanings. SGA has captured phenomenon occurred in the urban life such as a 'meet up' event in a form of discussion in a coffee shop or café. Though to socialize in coffee shops is one of Indonesian's traditional culture—*warung kopi*, globalization has turned it into a part of civilization. Later then, those who were 'hanging out' in a coffee shop were older people talking about political and economic issues; yet, nowadays, the first place to find out where youths are swarming is a coffee shop and café.

> "*Di kafe, demokratisasi dan distribusi pengetahuan sedikit banyak lebih terjamin kemerataannya, mengingat campur aduknya pengunjung, dari yang akademis sampai non-akademis.*" (SGA, 2015: 71)

> "At the cafe, the evenness of democratization and distribution of knowledge is more guaranteed, since mingle of diversified costumers, the academic up to non-academic." (SGA, 2015: 71)

Based on SGA's quotation above, a café or merely a coffee shop is a place to spread and distribute any kind of ideology. "The evenness of democratization and distribution of knowledge is more guaranteed" can be comprehended as prove of stable process in distributing, sharing and spreading ideas. The stability of the process itself can be identified and maintained by every costumer in a coffee shop when he/she spends many hours not only to sip or have a cup of excellent coffee, but also to be a part of the civilization. However, to be a part of it, an individual should have particular commodities as an exchange. Money, knowledge, status or even lifestyle become commodities and exchange objects at the same time. It means, even though, an individual only has knowledge as his/her commodity, the exchange process is still happened; the most interesting part is to notice that the knowledge itself does not have to be a complicated one or scientifically proven.

On figure 4.1, for example, there is two young men inside a coffee shop. Both of them are senior year college students who are in the middle of their thesis writing. They chose to finish their revision in a coffee shop for very practical reasons: electrical plug, WiFi and affordable meals and drinks. The coffee shop itself is actually a coffee distribution office and selling only harvested coffee from its own coffee plantations around Indonesia. This causes

costumers, even students, to be able to enjoy high quality coffee with affordable price.   Both of them can spend hours every day, not because the reasons mentioned previously but also they can experience a homey environment which makes them remember their parents' houses.

Figure 4.1

Their homey experience is ambiguous since at that moment, they were not in their parents' house. This shows the ambiguous corporeal life, since in the reality, they were in a coffee shop and wrote their revision. Another ambiguous thing can be seen through the picture below which is showing how diversified are they not only on the appearances and performances but also attitudes and objects—laptops, clothes, shoes, drinks—they had. The exchange actually is not only occurred between them but also with the coffee shops itself. Thus, what SGA mention on the quotation "the academic up to non-academic" above can be validated.

Meanwhile, monetary sector, manufacture of consents and division of labors on their relationship cannot be denied since their existence is inevitable. The cash flows simultaneously from coffee shop or café's costumers to the coffee shop or café. This cash-flow is next received by the farmer in the plantations around Indonesia which help them to keep their excellent crops as manufacture of consent. Division of labor, in this case, is not only existed between the farmer, coffee shop or café's management but also amongst the costumer itself. Nonetheless, there is a medium to help those involved in division of labor play their roles, television.

Television is one of the greatest invention of modern time, and its improvemnet goes rapidly with the support of high-technology assembly. People tend to assume that television is a secondary or even a tersiery matter. Yet, in reality, a television can be found in every house in a city, though it is not the highest technology model. In Indonesia, when press and television broadcast was controlled by government, viewers may only able to watch selected programs to propagate. However, since the previous order has collapsed, press and television achieve their freedom and they are ablo to broadcast anything. News, sport, movies, and mostly entertainment become the top scorers. Nonetheless, certain regulations are implemented to control their operation; this becomes an opportunity for them to find a way in expanding their broadcast. They use cable TV with satellite connection so that they will not be bound with regulations.

"*Mungkinkah Homo Jakartensis melepaskan diri dari pesawat TV? Di antara fenomena urban yang berhubungan dengan*

televisi, saya kira TV kabel merupakan penanda globalisasi dan kosmopolitanisme." (SGA, 2015: 195)

"Could Homo Jakartensis break away from the TV? Among the urban phenomenon related to television, I think cable TV is a marker of globalization and cosmopolitanism" (SGA, 2015: 195)

Inexistence or less of regulations cause socio-political and cultural friction to the urban. They accept and absorb anything to be admitted as part of urban civilization. The urban life is common to noisy, disturbed and busy environment, in addition to individualism. Their massive disturbances in daily life force them to find proper method to cope themselves, and they find it in imagination, either triggered by media or merely psycological. Lots of them then are loosing themselves in the reality due to their imagination. The most remarkable phenomenon is the wide-spreading of South Korean culture in Indonesia, especialy in Bandung through an institution which allows anyone to learn South Korean language and culture freely. The spreading of the South Korean is started by Korean Pop (Kpop), Korean drama movies and known as Korean wave in early 2000's. The globalization is now inevitable, many people without considering age, gender, or profession are amazed by this culture. Next, we can find at least one of family member in every house is watching South Korean movie series and becoming its most fanatic fans. As a result, most of them are eager to learn everything about South Korea, and as the consequence, they choose to watch a lot of South Korean's TV programs.

Youths who learn about it argue that they need to learn the language so that they can understand songs and conversation in the movies. They imitate their idols style and post it in their social media pages to get admittance. Being admitted means get so many 'likes' on their postings, the more 'likes' they get the more satisfaction they feel. Such phenomenon can be noticed on Figure 4.2, eight Indonesian girls are dressed with hanbok and in the middle is their South Korean senior. It is not only the position and the pose of each girl which is intriguing, but also the caption on side part of the picture itself.

Figure 4.2

This picture is belonged to one of my respondent who is learning South Korean language for almost a year. She listens to Kpop since she was in senior high school, around nine years ago. Thus, she is very familiar with Kpop and its singers. In a sense of humour, she stated that the photo shoots are taken as if they are SNSD—South Korean girl band—members in their album promotion. In reality, this picture is taken after they held and performed a dance in welcoming event in Homey, South Korean language course. In their daily lives, most of them are collaborating Bahasa and Korean during conversation and writing messages. Experiencing themselves as South Korean girls through imagination has made them to

experience a corporeal life, because they can be South Korean girls only during conversation or performance.

As mentioned before that the effect of cable TV or globalization is ageless, genderless and seeing no profession, a male civil servant has an excitement when he dresses up as his idols—Spiderman and Ironman. This male is also my respondent who is eager to become a bodybuilder so that he can be like his idols. He explained that he takes routine weightlifting exercises at home and running twice a week to get the body he wants. Actually, it is beneficial to have routine exercise because it will help him to correct his posture, performance and stamina so that he can conduct his job nicely. However, the fact that he is dressing as Spiderman and, sometimes, mixing it with Ironman's armor suit (see figure 4.3a) or with his own uniform (see figure 4.3b) causes him to experience an ambiguous corporeal life. The more identities someone projecting himself means the more ambiguous his corporeal life. His reality can change when he dresses up as his idols, his profession and himself per se.

Figure 4.3a   Figure 4.3b

5. CONCLUSION

Making imagination or dream came true is a wonderful thing, but it can turn to be negative impact if a person has no restrictions in its efforts. Imagination and dreams can help someone to have life's purposes so that he/she knows what kind of attitude and decision need to be taken in life. For those who are not able to realize their dream or imagination, they can meet it by having another life in the virtual world or even in the real world itself. Virtual world through social media usage allows them to be anyone without any restriction, whereas the real-world limitations tied a form of social values and religion. These conditions encourage urban communities, in particular, to have an imaginary life. This imaginary life into a commodity can be exchanged so that it can be enjoyed by all parties. However, unconsciously, they have made themselves experience ambiguous imaginary life.

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