

Menanggapi Relativisme

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ONE, TRUE, GOOD and BEAUTIFUL Unity or Fragmentation of Truth?

Ramon Antonio Nadres

1. Introduction

The French philosopher-historian Etienne Gilson says in his book *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, “While so many men were trying to base philosophy on theological foundations, a very simple and modest man was putting everything in its place. His name was Thomas Aquinas.”¹ Gilson was one of those who believed that the High Medieval Age—especially in the philosophy developed by Thomas Aquinas—an admirable synthesis of the philosophical system started by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle found its expression. It offered an intellectual mooring for reasoning, thought and the pursuit of truth that the mind naturally looks for.

Relativism is the act of untying one’s thoughts from some of its moorings. If indeed, as Gilson says, we can find a recognizable reference point for human thought in the philosophy of the medieval period, then any essential dislodging from that orderly system can be potentially relativistic.

This paper was written to form part of a series of lectures on Relativism and Conscience at the Catholic University of Widya Mandala in Surabaya, Indonesia. This author was given the task to speak about relativism in the Middle Ages. It is hoped that reader may find some benefit in this essay and thus learn to look at relativism, at whatever age it may appear, from a deeper perspective.

2. What is Relativism?

According to Chris Swoyer in his entry on “Relativism” found in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy “relativism is not a single

¹ GILSON, ETIENNE, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1937, p. 49.