



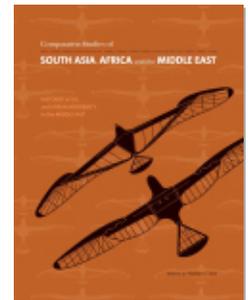
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Seductive Piety: Faith and Fashion through Lipovetsky and Heidegger

Muhammad Velji

Martin Heidegger broadened the meaning of art to a *truth*-disclosing event akin to seemingly disparate events such as the founding of a political state, Jesus's sacrifice for all humankind, and the questioning of a philosopher.¹ Art makes us pay attention to it by presenting the familiar in a new and unfamiliar context and unsettles our presuppositions and reconceptualizes our way of thinking. I argue that by themselves, the concept of veiling and the concept of fashion are very familiar concepts to Indonesians, but that the practice of combining these two ideas brings something unfamiliar to that society. This new practice reveals a way of Being that combines religious piety with our current, late-modern, consumer society. The combination of fashion and veiling for piety discloses, in the Heideggerian sense, a new "world."

I begin by explicating the Heideggerian interpretation of the nature of art by looking at the key concepts that make a work of art *work*. First, art can only disclose new "worlds" when the new world is in intimate and essential tension with "earth" and when this tension is resolved by preservers who take up and actualize the new way of Being so that a people can be placed on a new path together, as a community. First I expand the definition of fashion by theorist Gilles Lipovetsky to show that fashion is not just clothing but an entire perspective currently embraced by Western culture and through this understanding of art, I analyze the phenomenon in Indonesia of women veiling for fashion. Next, I explore the contemporary practice of veiling and contend that it is a response that religious individuals give to being thrown into an increasingly secular society: a worldview hostile to their ultimate goals in life. Only after exploring both categories of veiling and fashion separately do I explore veiling as fashion. I argue that those people who practice fashionable veiling are not just at the margins of practice but occupy an interstitial area bounded by veiling's political narrative, traditional conservative narrative, and the modern secular narrative. Using Heidegger's analysis of art, I analyze the veil as a piece of fashion to argue that it discloses a new way of Being, one that is inchoate in society but makes a "founding leap" into actuality when we consider the veil as a work of art.² I argue that this new way of Being breaks the secular narrative of the uneducated, backward, and oppressed veiled subject and breaks the dichotomy of piety and modernity by disclosing a way of Being that is both of these things. Finally, I look at this disclosure and argue that it is authentic, in the Heideggerian sense, as compared to the black chador, which has become the uniform of much more fundamentalist pietists.

1. Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Perennial Classics, 2001), 60. I use the Heideggerian terms *earth* and *world* throughout this essay. 2. *Ibid.*, 75.

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If we are to see the veil as an art piece capable of the disclosure of a new world where fashion and piety are not antithetical, we must first look at the Heideggerian concept of art put forward in his work “The Origin of the Work of Art.” Heidegger begins by stripping away our assumptions about modern art to get to a more primordial definition that is not tainted by the modern conception of the “aesthetic.” Contrary to the modern narrative, art is not the work of solitary genius, and neither is it a cultural achievement. What broadly defines a work of art, in more Heideggerian terms, is that it discloses a new world that conflicts with the earth that is concealing this new world. The work of art “*is* truth, not only something true, that is at *work*” (my emphasis).³ The truth that Heidegger refers to is not the normal positive definition of correct assertions about an object by a human subject. According to Heidegger, *truth* is the ancient Greek word *aletheia*, which translates as an “open region” or the “domain of what is unconcealed.” The work of art uncovers and brings into focus what had previously been obscured and presents it as a concrete option to the community. Defining truth as unconcealment changes the relation of untruth to truth. Rather than being its opposite, untruth becomes that which is “un-uncovered” (59). Truth is always potentially ready to be unconcealed through an unfolding process that is determined by historical context and cultural situatedness. The relationship between untruth and truth is that throughout history and cultures, what had been concealed will become unconcealed because contexts will change and people will change their perspective toward beings and Being as a response to this change in context. Heidegger claims that this tension of truth and untruth, history, and those that take up new unconcealments and turn them into practice are *all* contained *within* the work of art itself. The old world’s relationship with the new world is the medium from which the new world is formed. What this disclosure of a new world does is battle with the earth and put forth a decision to be taken up by preservers

who bring the new inchoate world into its full fruition. An art piece that has come to fruition sets beings into a new course in history and coordinates those that gain a new comportment to society through this new background of shared meaning and makes them a cohesive “people.”⁴ This is a dense conclusion, and so I will unpack key Heideggerian terms so that I can properly apply Heidegger’s definition of art to the practice of veiling in Indonesia. In the following paragraphs, I go through Heidegger’s framework of *world*, *earth*, and the battle between them and then show how this leads to a historical “people” through preservers.

I begin by fleshing out Heidegger’s idea of *world*. We are always already in a world, yet we are unaware of it since we are always already pre-theoretically skilled at functioning within our society. A world is the prereflective background of every *thing* we encounter: the world is invisible and so pervasive that it is like a pair of eyeglasses that we have on but have forgotten we are wearing. We are aware of practices and how they fit into our current context; we can even cope with other beings and coordinate activity already, because meaning is both already laid out for us inchoate to our noticing it in a manner not of our own choosing. World is the horizon of “disclosure of meaningful possibilities for action available to a people.”⁵ In other words, world represents the conditions that must be satisfied for a being to show up as a being. A world is basically the determinant factor for a historical culture on “what, for them, fundamentally, there *is*.”⁶ The inchoate, background intelligibility of our world only comes to the foreground when things go wrong and we have to step back from our situation and examine our pretheoretical assumptions. The work of art brings a new world “into the Open for the first time.”⁷ The work of art is the site where “those decisions of our history that relate to our very Being are made, are taken up and abandoned by us, go unrecognized and are discovered by new inquiry”⁸ But this only happens when the work is *vital*. When a work of art is vital, it makes expressly visible

3. *Ibid.*, 54.

4. Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Disclosing New Worlds* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 16.

5. Charles Guignon, “Meaning in the Work of Art: A Hermeneutic Perspective,” in *Meaning in the Arts*, ed. Peter A. French and Howard K. Wettstein (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 36.

6. Julian Young, *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 23.

7. Heidegger, “Origin of the Work of Art,” 73.

8. *Ibid.*, 43.

that which we are, in our everydayness, unaware of; it thematizes “a world *which is already in existence*.”⁹ Heidegger’s famous example of Vincent Van Gogh’s painting of a peasant woman’s shoes is a good example of what happens when a work of art is *not vital*. This art piece is withdrawn from its own historical context and instead establishes “not so much the world of the peasant woman as it reveals the distance that separates the artist’s and even more Heidegger’s and our world from a world we can no longer claim as our own.”¹⁰ In Heideggerian terms, this work of art’s ability to disclose has receded into the obscuring gloam of the earth.

The new term I have introduced, *earth*, is connected, according to Heidegger, with *world* by the vitality of the work. More generally, the world and earth are connected to the ability of the work of art to unconceal that which has always already been in the piece of art’s materiality: that which has been un-uncovered. Earth is the infinite reserve of potential disclosures of *all* beings. As its name suggests, earth is like a fertile soil where, depending on the seeds one plants, any number of disclosures can be grown. In the work of art, this infinite reserve becomes visible in the materiality of what makes up the artwork. Heidegger uses the example of a rock. In looking at it scientifically, in examining its properties, while not seeing it in its contextual totality, the rock “does not display in its fragments anything inward that has been disclosed. The stone has instantly withdrawn again into the same dull pressure and bulk of its fragments.”¹¹ The rock is completely concealed to me if I can say nothing meaningful about it except that it *is*. Even in the context of human use, the rock remains concealed and within the earth. The rock can be skipped across some water, used in a temple, used to make a sculpture, or used as a paperweight. In its use as a paperweight or skipped across the water, only one way of the rock’s Being is disclosed. In the case of being skipped across the water, the rock even disappears from disclosure into the work that

the agent throwing the rock is doing. While as a paperweight, all the rock discloses is its weight. When used in a sculpture, there is an infinite meaning within the rock as a rock. It could become a sculpture of anything! The horizon of disclosure becomes limitless and constrained only by the very Being of the rock and what can be carved into the materiality of rock. In this basic way, the materiality of the rock opens an infinite reserve of potential meaning but also conceals an infinity of meanings. Of course, what is possible to sculpt is also dictated by the context, the history, the mood, and other ontological constraints. There is never complete unconcealment since “earth is the spontaneous forthcoming of that which is *continually* self-secluding.”¹²

A complete unconcealment would be incoherent because it would be without context and would hold no meaning. Without an intelligible context, whatever was revealed by the art piece could never be taken up by people in everyday practice. When a work of art is vital, a contextual perspective comes to the foreground while other possibilities recede in order that what is put in the foreground can gain a foothold in actuality from out of its murky inchoateness and be illuminated for a society to take up in practice. The tension within history as well as in art is always the question of what will stand out and matter for a community. Through defamiliarization with the current status quo, a new disclosure of Being rises to the surface to be actualized in the work of art. The work of art therefore opens up its own proper context. It makes manifest the multifacetedness of what is.

Finally, we come to the role of preserver of the work of art. The preserver is the most important part of the Heideggerian conception of art and will have the main role in giving meaning to the new practice of veiling as fashion. Once a new world is created by a work of art, it becomes the status quo and begins to die out. But the vitality of a work of art can be renewed through its reappropriation by a new generation

9. Young, *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Art*, 33.

10. Karsten Harries, *Art Matters: A Critical Commentary on Heidegger’s “The Origin of the Work of Art”* (Netherlands: Springer, 2009), 95. On the withdrawal of the art piece from its historical context, see Heidegger, “Origin of the Work of Art,” 39.

11. Heidegger, “Origin of the Work of Art,” 45.

12. *Ibid.*, 47.

of preservers. Reinvigoration of an old way of being in a completely new context is one of the main types of disclosure that a work of art can unconceal.¹³ This type of unconcealment relies heavily on the relationship between the work of art and its preservers. What is disclosed in the work of art is taken up by its preservers and put into the everyday practice by their “affiliation with the truth happening in the work.”¹⁴ They concretize the disclosure so that it can again become pretheoretical since a new world is only in tension with a previous world if the old world still stands out as a problem. In some way, the preservers make the decision and release the tension between earth and world by either taking up into practice or not what is disclosed by the new world. It is not the creator that makes the work vital, nor is it its reception; it is instead reappropriation by the preservers. This means the role of preservers are “essentiality equal to that of the creators” in making sure a work of art *works*.¹⁵

We must not think of the creator and preservers as people in a museum, as we would normally when we think of preservers and creators. This aestheticization destroys a work’s vitality. We must also not think of creators and preservers as the exclusive origin of the work of art. Throughout his essay, Heidegger has another purpose in talking about art and that is to decenter the subject. It must be clear that what causes the work of art to be rather than not-be is Being itself. Being gifts through the course of history new disclosures because a new perspective on how to be builds up in the stagnation and the falling into inauthenticity of an old way of Being. The rift is only created by the work when there is a tension within the current world, which has stagnated and needs to be radically reinterpreted. Some parts of the way the world was remain because the new world is not simply a suspension created from this mixture where the old world can be separated from the new one like water and oil: there is a violence. A new disclosure “contains strife with the familiar and ordinary,” and so both worlds change in being reappropriated by the creators and pre-

servers.¹⁶ This is because a new world is never just accepted as true; changes in perspective and practice take time.

The work of art changes from a static, aesthetic object into a dynamic event when it gives a people the task of breaking the tension between the old and the new by taking up the new world, thus making a decision on the overall telos of the community. The work achieves this by putting people at a critical distance from what is pretheoretically assumed as true. In achieving this critical distance and actualizing the inchoate zeitgeist by taking up new practices, the work of art also points toward a community’s authentic historical task. This is done by appropriating the culture’s heritage and determining “in conjunction with the current situation . . . the outline ‘shape’ of its proper future, its ‘destiny.’”¹⁷

Now that I have set the background for how a work of art discloses new worlds and how they are taken up and why this is important for a culture, in this section I describe the new world opened up by the veil as an art piece. I start with the disclosure of the modern world as a world of fashion and then describe the reappropriation of the practice of veiling from medieval Islam to train oneself in piety.

Lipovetsky in his book *The Empire of Fashion* defines fashion not only as the clothes people wear but as a disclosure of how people now comport themselves in contemporary society. For Lipovetsky, fashion is a specific form of social change that is first and foremost a social mechanism characterized by “fanciful shifts that enable it to affect quite diverse spheres of collective life.”¹⁸ When fashion affects many spheres of life in modernity, it gives an opportunity for people to exhibit themselves to a larger audience. In turn, Lipovetsky argues, human beings are then socialized to observe one another endlessly, appreciate one another’s looks by evaluating cut, color, and pattern in appearance. Lipovetsky argues that fashion’s role in modern society is empowering individuality through the investment in one’s self because of the inherent pleasure in the aesthetic of self-observation, of being seen, and of exhibiting oneself to the gaze of others

13. Dreyfus, *Disclosing New Worlds*, 25.

14. Heidegger, “Origin of the Work of Art,” 66.

15. *Ibid.*, 69.

16. *Ibid.*, 74.

17. Young, *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Art*, 55.

18. Gilles Lipovetsky, *The Empire of Fashion: Dressing Modern Democracy*, trans. Catherine Porter (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 16.

(29). In this way, the diffusion of fashion can be seen less as a form of social constraint than as an instrument of social representation and affirmation (30). Fashion goes hand in hand with a relative devaluing of the past. This is because it always implies the attribution of prestige and superiority to new models and a downgrading of the old order. What novelty offers, Lipovetsky argues, is the experience of personal liberation as an “experiment to be undertaken, an experience to be lived: a little adventure of the self” (155).

Fashion changes an entire culture’s habits because it seeps into the three major categories of the modern social imaginary: the economic sphere, the public sphere, and the political sphere. The old coercive imposition of discipline by the state has been replaced by socialization through choice and image: the idea of social revolution has given way to infatuation with personal meaning. Little is not directly influenced by fashion: the ephemeral governs the totality of objects, culture, and meaningful discourse, while seduction has profoundly reorganized the everyday environment, news, information, and the way we understand politics. As I argue in my next section, the fashion process succeeds in annexing even those spheres, such as religion, that are most resistant to its play. We are not living through the end of ideologies; instead, we are ushering in the era of ideologies reappropriated as fashion (203). I will go further into the artistic aspects of fashion in the practice of veiling after I explain the practice of veiling and the background context of the recent reinvigoration of religion.

In conceptualizing the practice of veiling as fashion, I concentrate specifically on Indonesia because it is an Islamic country outside the periphery of Middle Eastern countries and is as well a country that is just beginning to adjust to modernity. Being on the periphery of what is traditionally considered the Islamic world, the heritage of Indonesia does not include the fundamentalist veil associated with Saudi Ara-

bia. This generation is actually only the second generation that has begun wearing head coverings. This is because during the Suharto regime, these types of clothes were discouraged for young people. Suharto, following the lead of Turkey, was attempting to liberalize the Islamic society as well as open up the country “to large inflows of foreign investment and push the development of modern industrial, resource and financial sectors.”¹⁹ I emphasize the specific context of Indonesia, because only under these conditions could one say that women are practicing veiling freely since most do it against the wishes of their family and modern society.²⁰ The population of Indonesia is just coming to terms with mass culture, and yet the presence of Islam has not diminished, counter to many secular narratives. Indonesia has instead had an increase in the number of mosques and in the congregation size of these mosques.²¹ Women wearing chadors (the completely black, conservative coverings taken from Saudi Arabia) in universities were a small but politically radical 3 percent minority of all women in the late 1970s. These women used the veil to signify that they did not support the dictatorship of Suharto. By 2007 those wearing some kind of religious covering on campuses rose to an astonishing 60 percent.²² After the dictatorship, the movement to veil in Indonesia was no longer a political movement; instead it was a reappropriation of the medieval Islamic practice of transforming oneself into a pious subject through “the Aristotelian model of ethical pedagogy.”²³ This embodied critique of the secularization of everyday life taking place in Indonesia treats “Islam as a system of abstract values” and prevents people from infusing Islamic principles into the practices of everyday life (45). The practice of the veil is an integral part of an entire manner of existence through which “one learns to cultivate the virtue of modesty in all aspects of one’s life” and so encompasses an entire way of being and acting (51). This way of veiling takes up the

19. Greg Fealy, “Consuming Islam: Commodified Religion,” in *Expressing Islam: Islamic Life and Politics in Indonesia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2007), 27.

20. See Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 31.

21. See Fealy “Consuming Islam,” 15.

22. See Carla Jones, “Fashion and Faith in Urban Indonesia,” *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* 11 (2007): 221.

23. Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 135.

ancient Greek practice that was taken up by both Christians and Muslims: *habitus*. *Habitus* is concerned with ethical formation and is understood to be an acquired excellence learned through “human industry, assiduous practice, and discipline, such that it becomes a permanent feature of a person’s character” (136).

Looking at the larger picture, veiling as a practice is just another signal among others of what might be termed as a new reinvigoration of religion. This retrieval of past practices is not just a return to an imagined past of pre-modern religion. It comes directly from the historical situation of the erosion and decline of social and religious authority within Islam. Erosion of authority is a product of the modern disclosure of the world as fashion and is a cause of the reappropriation of veiling. What must be emphasized is that Islam has never had a centralized religious authority or single spokesperson. Power over interpretation of religion has been scattered among a handful of competing clerics and institutions of religious law. Regardless of the fact of the inherent decentralization of interpretation in Islam, a handful of scholars called *ulema* and schools have had an iron-fisted monopoly over religious practice and formal religious education for more than fourteen centuries. Reza Aslan has pinpointed three major catalysts to explain the erosion of traditional religious authority away from the *ulema*. The first is the globalization of Islam. The deterritorialization and deculturalization of Muslims have meant that they are not tied to a cultural or state community that would link them to a traditional school and have instead put the impetus of constructing their religion on themselves. The second catalyst is the influx of Muslims into the West that has exposed these Muslims to new ways of living, to a plurality of religious ideas, and to the media. All of this new exposure has allowed individuals to choose many unorthodox practices from the spiritual marketplace. The third catalyst in the erosion of authority is access to the Internet. This empowered individuals to have not only

unmediated access to religious knowledge but also an equal platform to show off and be an exemplar of any innovative practice they chose to broadcast via a website.²⁴ Therefore, the circulation and direction of religious knowledge is no longer vertical and hierarchical but horizontal and democratized. Private interpretation opens up the formerly religiously esoteric and “private spheres of discussion to a public debating space.”²⁵ Contestation of interpretation is no longer done within religious institutions or arbitrated by state power; it is happening outside these domains, in the streets. As Olivier Roy puts it, “religious debate everywhere is in everyone’s hands,” even in the hands of women in traditionally patriarchal societies.²⁶

I begin my Heideggerian analysis of fashionable veiling as art by first looking at how fashion is art and is therefore a disclosive practice. The way that fashion works is exactly a microcosm of the way worlds are disclosed through reappropriative practices. As a practice, fashion has always emphasized that the reserve of different ideas in and outside a culture can combine to form new ideas. As Charles Taylor explains in his book *A Secular Age*, fashion is one of the “typically modern, ‘horizontal’ forms of social imaginary” that functions by mutual display rather than as the social driving force of common action.²⁷ Instead of coordination, what matters when we act within the sphere of fashion is that others are there “as witness of what we are doing, and thus as co-determiners of the meaning of our action.”²⁸ Fashion attracts the eye not only to the exhibition of one’s personality but also to the shared background of the viewer and dresser. For example, hair worn as a side ponytail is a referential nod to the 1980s. If one were to wear this side ponytail with bell-bottoms, signifying an intimacy with the 1960s, it would suggest a new disclosure of the spirit of both decades. Fashion is a communicable language that can only be intelligible because others take it up and it becomes a shared background. The essence of modern fashion is the tension between mimesis and originality of style. If the

24. Reza Aslan, *Welcome to the Islamic Reformation*, Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies, podcast audio program, 2006, itunes.stanford.edu.

25. Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 169.

26. *Ibid.*, 161.

27. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 481.

28. *Ibid.*

style is too outrageous or avant-garde, as on the catwalks of the fashion industry, it becomes too out of touch with current style to be taken up by others and worn. Yet just copying another's style without adding something of your own becomes too utilitarian. Without originality, the material becomes a uniform. Uniformity is no longer noticed and observed by the other's gaze and taken up because, as Heidegger argues, "it disappears into usefulness."²⁹

We have looked at the practice of veiling, but what does veiling as fashion mean? Muslim head coverings are not just the black, Saudi-associated styles with face coverings. There is a diversity of styles that move into the territory of very colorful, "patterned, and often fitted styles less frequently associated with foreign origins, which might involve modest Western style."³⁰ This colorful innovation in Indonesia is a loose but fitted headscarf and body covering called the *jilbab*. The *jilbab* has extended the meaning of pious head covering in Indonesia and is now consistent with the cyclical pattern of fashion in general. Many feminist scholars in Indonesia are concerned about the commodification of Islamic dress and worry that the political potential of Islamic visual identities is diluted when such dress becomes trendy and fashionable.³¹ But this argument seems to rely on the mistaken oppositional binary that the practice of veiling is antithetical to fashion. It assumes that the women who veil are locating themselves in the category of "Muslim," but if they dress fashionably, they are instead putting themselves in the category of "Western."

I argue that faith and fashion are not mutually exclusive but can be melded to create a unique but faithful form of religiosity. Women, with their personal self-expression through fashion, bring the individualization and democratization of religious authority back into the political and public spheres. Moreover, the ability for self-creation is skillfully negotiated by women who engage how they dress within the liminality of religious, aesthetic, and political pressures. Women in Indonesia who fashionably wear the veil act within the interstices of two critiques, one by conservative traditionalists, who express

that making fashion out of a symbol of modesty weakens its religious impact, and the other by more politically minded, critical theorists, who accuse them of depoliticizing a charged Islamic symbol. For these critical theorists, the allure of the commodified aspect of fashionable veiling "tempts women to make primarily consumer rather than religious choices, suggesting that the two qualities must be mutually exclusive."³²

As an actor within the public sphere, the woman who wears the veil as fashion plays a big role not only as a creator but as a preserver of a new perspective of Being. Fashion as a horizontal and democratized disclosure of worlds makes the person who wears the veil a *phronimos*, a person whom one emulates. But the veil is not just an unchanging artwork that others continually take up. The dynamic of fashion is that the wearer of the veil will also take up other styles to add to her own style, and so there is a hyperdynamic cycle of creator and preserver going on in society. To see the initial disclosive potential of the veil as fashion, one must understand that if the veil were *only* a religious material and had nothing to do with fashion, any plain headscarf would do. The point of the black veil in a purely religious practice is to efface the material into the purely utilitarian equipmentality of a uniform. Veiling is not a goal in itself; it is used instrumentally, as a tool toward the goal of piety. The black chador discloses only one meaning, as the rock used as a paperweight does, and the materiality of the veil falls into a self-concealing "earthly" character so that a pious way of being can become unconcealed. This of course is *not* what happens in Indonesia. Instead, it is particularly the exhibitionism inherent in fashion that makes women who wear headscarves models for the public to emulate. The materiality of the veil is unconcealed and put to the foreground, just as in the artwork, so that others gazing upon its style and beauty are faced with a decision on whether to take up that person's style of veiling or not.

The stylized, eye-catching veil is also a walking question mark in the public sphere and confronts the public with two things. One is that religion has not disappeared into the private

29. Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art," 44.

31. *Ibid.*, 219.

30. Jones, "Fashion and Faith," 213.

32. *Ibid.*, 222.

sphere and is still relevant in the lives of many. The other is that it is not *just* a black veil but a stylized garment that puts the modern attitude of the individual to the foreground. The message to those not practicing veiling as fashion is that this way of veiling presents a tension of how a modern way of practicing piety is possible. This essential strife between the two concepts of piety and modernity destroys the human construct of the separate category of the religious from the category of the modern and undermines the pretheoretical assumption embedded in the modern narrative of secularism that educated modern people cannot be religious. When one sees in a fashion magazine a model who is veiled but is wearing a conservative pencil skirt and carrying a fashionable but pragmatic briefcase, the idea of a pious and religious working woman does not seem so outlandish. This fashion model becomes an art piece and discloses a world embroiled in the battle of the loss of traditional religious authority. The art piece captures the moment where this practice could either fall into the worst habits of fashion or be reappropriated as a liberating movement where women take the truly Protestant underpinnings of Islam that were inchoate and show them in what they wear. It can show the compatibility of the modern subject who chooses her own telos because of the power of modern emancipatory movements and at the same time critique this same modernity by taking up the tenth-century idea of habitus. By showing her piety in the public sphere, she affirms that all teloi in modern society do not have to be for endless freedom; she can now choose to be free for something larger than herself. The modern and enlightened message that fashion communicates is that in this moment in Indonesia, when a woman has more emancipatory possibilities available to her, the woman who veils is not an agent of dangerous irrationality. She is not a pawn “in a grand patriarchal plan, who, if freed from [her] bondage, would naturally express [her] instinctual abhorrence for the traditional Islamic mores used to enchain” her.³³

In my Heideggerian interpretation, earth holds all the meanings of the veil: all the disclosures of status, piety, fashion, politics, and

identity. For the veil to exclusively disclose piety and fashion, the disclosures of status and politics must recede into the ambivalence and unappropriatedness of the earth. In embracing fashion, the critical theorists are correct that the veil cannot stand for a political critique of modern capitalism *and* be a source of fashion. The veil in Indonesia is a symbol in transition of its meaning and significance. In losing the force of its political appeal, the veil opens the destruction of the idea of the opposition between modernity and religion. This disclosure makes apparent that secularism was a category made in a differently disclosed world of meanings and is beginning to lose its relevance. In this way, the veil as fashion discloses the new world of piety and consumer culture as not inherently antithetical. It discloses a moment in history where a culture is at a crossway. One road leads to a coordination of a Muslim people toward a destiny of authentic pious living even in a late-capitalist system. The other is a frivolous nihilism where the telos of the community becomes uncoordinated competition among members toward insatiable novelty. What will *actually* happen in Indonesia will not be as extreme as described, but I argue that this is the grand narrative that the veil as fashion throws to the future of Indonesian society.

I argue that veiling as fashion throws out the possibility of authentic living to a people because veiling as fashion is a truly chthonic Indonesian piece of art. I flesh out this argument by contrasting the fashionable veil to the chador, which I claim is an inauthentic “fashion.” Wearing various fashionable *jilbabs* rather than the austere, Arabized chador cannot be explained by regional origins or handed-down tradition. The reversion to Islamic dress as a sign of piety from completely Western dress only began in the 1980s at the end of the Suharto regime in Indonesia. What is remarkable about these women’s sartorial inventiveness is that it is born not out of an overriding preoccupation with fashion as such, or out of a desire to promote particular cultural, religious, or political views. Rather, the creativity comes from biographical experiences in which religion, politics, fashion, memory, environmental concerns, aesthetic

33. Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 2.

preoccupations, and a sense of global awareness are all enmeshed.³⁴

When questioned on the tensions they face in dressing, many Indonesian women argue that the Koran never specifies what a woman should wear. This means that it certainly does not specify the black chador that Muslim fundamentalists insist should be uniformly worn. In fact, the Indonesian women questioned emphasize that the only requirement seems to be not to expose oneself too much or to draw too much attention to oneself. This fleshes out my counterintuitive argument that the chador is not a dress of piety or modesty since in Indonesian society, the chador is particularly distinctive and its distinctiveness undermines the purpose of wearing it for modesty.³⁵ It attracts the gaze not because it exudes piety but because of its charged political symbolism within Indonesian society. In the Middle East, the chador would be part of the background fabric of society, but in Indonesia, this type of veil represents a very foreign type of ideology. Veiling as fashion has a great impact on Indonesian society; for example, “photo spreads that placed a woman in [the headscarf] in the same frame as a woman in generic corporate dress suggested that either option was equally fashionable.”³⁶ In this way, the woman who veils for fashion runs in concord with society because Indonesians recognize the beautifully patterned *jilbab* as a product of their very own culture. She is a vital force in society, whereas the chador is anachronistic, alien (originating from Saudi Arabia), and fundamentalist. The chador is like art hung in a museum. It would be as if an ancient Greek temple were to be placed in Indonesia. It would be incoherent, out of place, as its holiness and relevance will have fled the object since the world of that work has perished.

In conclusion, the notion of authenticity is not necessarily a conservative or a straight retrieval from the past; it is instead a reappro-

priation of one’s heritage in response to a task that is brought to a people. The veil as fashion is authentic in that it is a response to the call in Indonesia to resolve the tension of late modernity with the need to live a religious life. The pre-Islamic practice of the veil was the status symbol of the wives of a king, and it was in this way that Prophet Muhammad dictated his wives wear them. But in the tenth century, the meaning of this practice was changed to the cultivation of piety in response to the perceived decadence of the Abbasid empire.³⁷ In modern times, the problem is of the abstraction, marginalization, and compartmentalization of religion to the private sphere and the need to put religion back into everyday life that raise the tension to bring about a new telos. Without the character of fashion in the veil, its place within the shared background of modernity would not be recognized. Veiling as fashion is not just a trendy practice that can be ignored or marginalized as superficial but, as I have shown, is a Heideggerian work of art. S

34. See Emma Tarlo, “Islamic Cosmopolitanism: The Sartorial Biographies of Three Muslim Women in London,” *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* 11 (2007): 144.

35. See Ozlem Sandikci, “Aesthetics, Ethics, and Politics of the Turkish Headscarf,” in *Clothing as Material Culture*, ed. Susanne Küchler and Daniel Miller (Oxford, UK: Berg, 2005), 65.

36. Jones, “Fashion and Faith,” 225.

37. See Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: The Classical Age of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 1:359.