

Building Religious Dialogue for Peace in the Context of Plural Society in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT : Plurality tends to be neglected in the practice of religious social life, even though differences are an inevitable condition in human life. This study aims to explain the importance of building religious dialogue in realizing a peaceful life in religion in public society. This paper is based on observations of several cases that occurred in Indonesia with a critical review approach. This study shows that the pluralism approach is fundamental in building interreligious dialogue. Public understanding of plural conditions can facilitate dialogue. In the context of the society in Indonesia, religious pluralism is a practical offering and is considered effective in resolving differences of opinion through dialogue. This is also supported by the openness of society in accepting differences as a necessity that cannot be avoided. However, the dialogue process still faces various challenges, such as social, economic, political and cultural challenges. Thus, this study suggests the need for an intensity of dialogue in a pluralistic society, especially in Indonesia so that conflicts between religions can be minimized as early as possible.

KEYWORDS: religious, dialogue, plural, society, Indonesia.

I. INTRODUCTION

Religious plurality has been surely and urgently for all religions. The history of religions shows that several prophet or religious leaders bringing in religion come from marginalized and oppressed circles of the community (Black, 2011; Steinberg & Steinberg, 2019). Prophets such as Moses, Jesus/Isa, and Muhammad SAW widely known in Abrahamic traditions are the main poles for defense movement for the oppressed people, defamed tribes, and marginalized groups (Şentürk, 2006; Steinberg & Steinberg, 2019). They no longer sacrifice their wealth, but also their body and soul.

The mission of religion is passed down from generation to humanity, and thus, it is logical that religion has a high spirit and attention for all sufferings of human beings. Religion in its ethical prophetic spirit which is always pro-life is present and it exists as a response towards all life's suffering. There is no religion present as an expression towards fun and enjoyment or power. For this, religions especially the so-called main religions are the strictest criticism movement towards various actions of human stigmatization (Pabbajah et al., 2019). Within the context of human suffering, religions then present teaching of love and compassion as a foundation to fight bitterness, violence, and life suffering. Teachings and dogmas on love and compassion in every religion are forms of sympathy to free the oppressed. Religious pluralism is sometimes used as a synonym for inter-faith dialogue. Inter-faith dialogue refers to dialogue between members of different religions for the goal of reducing conflicts between their religions and to achieve agreed upon mutually desirable goals. Inter-religious dialogue is difficult if the partners adopt of position of particularism, for example when they only care about the concerns of their own group, but is favored by the opposite attitude of universalism, where care is taken for the concerns of others. Interfaith dialogue is easier if a religion's adherents have some form of inclusivism, the belief that people in other religions may also have a way to salvation, even though the fullness of salvation can be achieved only in one's own religion. Conversely, believers with an exclusivist mindset will rather tend to proselytize followers of other religions, than seek an open dialogue with them.

II. PLURALISM AS A SOURCE OF DIALOGUE

Plural means many. The term pluralism could be used at once to refer to diversity in the legal sphere (legal pluralism), language sphere (language pluralism, etc. However, more specifically, pluralism is related a lot to religious diversity (Ellis, 2015; Foster & Kekes, 1997; Mar & Tamanaha, 2018). In Indonesia, the polemic of pluralism refers more to theological and philosophical arguments. The concept developing the fastest for this term indeed is the one in the philosophical-theological sphere. For example, John Hick interprets pluralism as two understandings: first, the fact that religious tradition plurality and second, there is a philosophical concept that more and fewer states "Diverse religions are the conception, perception, and response of a divine reality" so that in the end all religions are valid ways to God (Hick, 2010; Rowe, 1999). Then, a new example comes from

Diana L. Eck. She provides a more operational understanding of daily life. In her opinion, pluralism is not merely another term of diversity, but more interpreted as participation and self-adjustment to life and the different spirit of others. Pluralism is not just relativism, as it does not encourage us to substitute our religious commitments. Pluralism means a struggle with not running away from differences and specific religious characteristics which are widely varied indeed (Eck, 2007, 2013). It seems that in this context, pluralism is more alienated from a theological debate of "right" or "wrong" but directed more to how to build a collective commitment that appreciates differences.

Religious pluralism as a framework for inter-religious dialogue and peaceful co-existence is a recent phenomenon, inspired by modern secular humanism rather than the theologies of the major religious tradition (Pabbajah, 2020). True religious pluralism, however, which is the recognition of the particularity of every religious tradition, as well as the theological, social, and political equality of all faiths and faith communities, is an ideal that may never be fully realized (Ammerman, 2010; Banchoff, 2009). The position of pluralism is an important thing to begin and do inter-religious dialogue also as social capital to build community. Pluralism is closely associated as well with how we as a community build awareness to build on our point of view on a plurality (Giordan & Pace, 2014; King, 2008). As it links to the effort of turning differences as a grace for justice, as the maturity of the society that needs to be fought ceaselessly.

Building dialogue and peace relationship as a collective life platform in a plural society require a more inter-pluralist theology that is always ready to greet empirical problem in the community, as at times in the history of human beings, numerous violent actions inflicting quite grave social and spiritual wounds because they are triggered by non-pluralist theological understanding (Keaten & Soukup, 2009). Thus, to gain a pluralist and composed theological understanding as well as to decline all forms of violence upon human beings, one must have an idea of parallelism; one that views every religion and faith to have the same distance to God as the center of existence and truth (Huang, 1995). All religions serve and are protected by him. Here, therefore, the equality between embracers is upheld highly. Nevertheless, pluralism does not only aim to achieve "uniformity forms of religions", as the idea is not only absurd but also historical. Thus, as we need is a situation where religions "greet each other" and provide a positive contribution for the solutions of the common problems of society from the perspective of each religion (Siregar, 2016; Yunus, 2014).

Despite the complexity of the idea of pluralism, this attitude of parallelism supports the notion of pluralism, even though we must admit that it is not easy to understand this point. Therefore, numerous experts are using some metaphors, such as the metaphor of rainbow, geometry, or language. The multicultural discourse referred to in this article mostly in its 'strong' form. The discourse of the more mobile concept of 'cultural complexity' (Holliday, 2010; Morris, 2009). The latter challenges the first regarding the presupposition of the stability of cultures and their boundaries. With the metaphor of "rainbow" for example, we can explain paradigm is that in principle, all religions have the same basic color, unseen from their outer color. This basic color is white. Every color emerges from white through "refraction", or viewed from another side, each color has a white color (Hooykaas, 2013; Oglan & Verona, 2014). So, for example, Islam is green, and Christian is blue. All these colors originally come from white. And this white color is often referred to as the color of "primordial religion" (Shapiro, 2012). The followers of perennial philosophy usually refer to it as the "primordial truth".

This attitude parallelism expresses the phenomenon of "One God, many religions" or in the book of "One Earth Many Religions" (Knitter, 2005, 2010) meaning a tolerant attitude towards the existence of another way to God like a concept in Islamic tradition "al subulu as salam". Therefore, what is most important is not the form or frame (exoteric), but the substance and transcendental values (esoteric). The followers of perennial philosophy believe that in the heart of all religions and authentic traditions, there is the same message of truth; one that they called the heart of religions. Therefore, every religion and faith have the same distance to the center of consciousness and truth, i.e. God. With such an attitude for diversity, it is expected that more pluralist and serene thinking could be produced, where between "basudara Salam" (Muslim Brothers) and "basudara Sarane" (Christian brothers), despite their different religions, they are still one; they can live side by side in peace spirit of brotherhood, not some immature religious notion. A pluralist diversity serves as ethical-prophetic power that is the bequest for universal humanity (rahmatan lil 'alamin). Having a religion in this context will be able to accommodate a multicultural life, since the concept of religion as a gift for the universe is recognizing the multicultural reality as a God's design or gift, and not the choice of people (Q.S. Alhujarat 13) "People, God has created you from a man and woman, and has made you as tribes and nations so that you get to know one another". Interaction among human societies and individuals must lead to cooperation and mutual respect and acceptance. It is a divine test of our humanity, as the verse just quoted continues, "but that he may test you with that which had bestowed upon you. Compete therefore with one another in the performance of righteous deeds; to God shall be your return and he will inform you of the things in which you have differed. Religion recognizing and accepting a plural reality will be able to create and encourage life's harmony, whereas those

declining plural realities will turn into destructive power. The recognition and acceptance of multiculturalism are not merely limited to the plurality of existing ethnicities and religions, but in a wider context that is acknowledging and receive cultural identities growing and attached to the community as the work of the individual's intelligence itself (Abdullah et al., 2019). If the religions are transformable at the action level of recognition and acceptance of the aforementioned reality of pluralism, cultures, and ethnics local which have different will get the spirit from religions, changing religions and cultures from power of a vis a vis nature to a integrate one for transformation to a plural community for doing dialogue.

All in all, there is several important agenda that have to be done by religious to the future, among others. First, opening a space for dialog in an honest, open, and critical manner with all components of religious communities in the form of discussion and collective study, in building an objective understanding towards one's religion as well as others. Second, intensifying meetings in socio-cultural and theological spheres in breaking down stereotypes, suspicions, vengeance, and tensions over past conflicts and violence. The dialogs and meetings held should not only be of formal and mechanic nature, but also of informal one with the utilization of local wisdom which culturally touches the spirit of real brotherhood and peace, Since so far dialogs and meetings are mostly wrapped in the room of formality, power, and politic (Prasojo & Pabbajah, 2020). Third, building a real tie of unity in diversity in the binds of civilization, and not merely solidarity in the spheres of politics and power. By giving faith to existing plurality as God's given design, the social solidarity built could be developed to the level of mutual "pro existence".

Fourth, religions need to build the collaboration tradition in the social spheres encouraged by the spirit of interfaith. In this context, religions could critically correct each other, discussing problems faced collectively. Fifth, religions have to do reorientation from a more elite and bureaucratic work to more focused work on program and community focus, in specific when dealing with various social communal issues which serve as the basic needs of the community, such as social-economic problems and post-conflict which up to date still have not been handless well. Sixth, religions need to guard critically and play the role in determining more communal policies of development, as they have quite wide and varied coverage and networking and responsibility to the society.

III. THE CHALLENGES OF INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOG IN THE CONTEXT OF PLURAL SOCIETY

Religious pluralism is also a critical civic issue for the citizen of increasingly diverse societies, raising a fundamental question about the nature of civic polity, the "we" of our civic life. And, to be sure, religious pluralism is a critical theological issue for people of faith, raising fundamental questions about one's faith about the religious other (Eck, 2007: 745).

The spirit of liberation towards universal human values roots in all religions. And even Islam, tauhid as the essence of Islam teaches very radical liberating values (radical monotheism) that is liberating a human being from various sorts of false godliness that could repress human beings' dignity. For this objective, religion are identical with the work of advocacy for unfortunate people "the Mustadh'afin" this is relevant to a hadits qudsi which in its essence state that "Don't seek God in the sky, but seek Him on the earth; God is always with those who are hungry". This hadits clearly states that religion is not a nebula in the sky separated from the life on earth, but the water that becomes the spirit of life on earth. Religion does not only contain the formula for divine salvation, but also earthly salvation. Even, the main concerns of religion are the upholding of justice and the world's welfare, and then in the second place the divine justice and welfare.

However, various crises of humanity due to violence, injustice, oppression, and global warming due to people's greed such as through illegal logging activities is a phenomenon of the pulling out of the spirit of religion emancipation for humanity as the historical root and the initial basis of the presence of religion itself. In such a reality of the humanitarian crisis, the role of religion is more contra-productive (Jubba et al., 2019). First, religions are getting more elite instead of being more inclusive. The holy book of each religion no longer becomes the reading of people's conscience for the problems they have to face, but more dominated by the "guardians of the doctrine" and for the interests of the authority. The reading and interpretation of religious doctrines also become more biased. They seem not to be liberating, but instead of oppressing one. The fatwa that Ahmadiyah is a heresy is the most contemporary example in Indonesia, many Muslims feel that the stipulations regarding Ahmadiyah, pluralism, and inter-religious prayer are harmful not only to inter-religious relation in Indonesia but also to equal, horizontal relations among ethnic groups and relations between Muslims themselves (Jubba et al., 2020). Whereas Christianity in the era of Jesus and Islam in the era of Prophet Muhammad are religions taking side with the *Mustadh'afin*. Jesus and Muhammad never said that Islam and Christianity are their private property, but they belong to all 'Godsend' religious communities in the whole universe. (Rahmatan lil 'Alamin).

Second, religions are busy taking care of and guarding their power. As a consequence, we are busier in bringing up religious bureaucracy like the essence of religion themselves lie on religious symbols and their bureaucracy, and not at the level of how to live one's religion. Here, we witness how religions lost their prophetic élan, the one encouraging the presence of prophets the banner of religions. The phenomenon of religious bureaucratization feels more disruptive to every religious community to create and innovate. The creative role of religions in my opinion is only feasible when we bring back the spirit of enlightenment brought by the prophets creatively in the contemporary context.

Third, the politicization of religions for personal or group interests. Such behavior does not only label human beings based on their religions and faiths but also has initiated violence and blood feud in the life of human beings, where religions are utilized as legitimate tools. Within this context, we find that religions no longer serve as an integrating power; instead, become disintegrating and even segregating power. In such a long period some places in Indonesia like Ambon and Poso have experienced disasters due to this politicization of religions.

Forth, the phenomenon of the development of fundamentalism and puritanism of religions. The modern perspective of fundamentalism, obviously initiates a big problem, in specific if one religion comes face to face with another. The problem that may appear is the war on the truth claim and next to the war of salvation claim. In the time being, from the sociological point of view, these claims of truth and claim of salvation have caused various social-political conflicts and in turn, initiated violence and inter-religious war. Conflicts in Maluku and Poso are some of the examples that the exclusive pattern of religion contributed significantly to the occurrence of conflicts (Prasojo & Pabbajah, 2020). More tragic is the development of religious fundamentalism is in line with the massive purification movement. The desire to cleanse religions from elements other than those of religions makes them lost their social-cultural context instead. Whereas there are many values of local wisdom that are relevant and significant in the roles of brotherhood and peace. However, with this post-conflict development of religion Puritanism movement, the values of the local wisdom start to be set aside by another more exclusive values of brotherhood based on the bind of one religion only, whereas the values of the aforementioned local wisdom are more of an inclusive nature as they cover a wider relationship, comprising that of inter-religion.

Fifth, the existence of collective and stereotypical stigma as well as excessive suspicion. Islam is identical to terrorism and Christianity with separatist movement is an example of a built stereotyping. Such stereotyping causes worsened the relationship between these two religions, as they are suspicious of each other. Such a problem then could cause the attitude of religion in a vis a vis situation and encourage a double standard. Hugh Goddard, a Christian and a lecturer of Islam theology at Nottingham University in England for example, wrote quite an appealing book: *Christians and Muslims, from Double Standards to Mutual Understanding* (Jubba et al., 2020). The describes that in the whole history of the Christianity-Islam relationship, what makes this relationship develop into a misunderstanding and even initiate the situation of "threat" one another is no other the "double standard".

In other words, Christians, as well as Moslems, always apply a different standard for themselves which is common of an ideal normative nature, while the assessment they make of another religion uses another standard, which is more of a real historical one. It is through this double standard that there emerge prejudices and claims which are unfair sociologically as well as theologically, which in turn worsens inter-religion relationship.

IV CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation above on inter-religious dialog, peace, and religious life in Plural Society, I conclude that pluralism is a medium for inter-religious dialog where all people without any enforcement can communicate freely and politely. In pluralism, they are open to one another and look for their similarities and differences of one another honestly. I think it is clear that exclusivism and fanaticism can destroy brotherhood and peace in a plural religious society. The function of pluralists at least to respect the differences of overview and faiths. Inter-religion and pluralism are two things that cannot be separated and do not contradict each other. Pluralism is a concept that cannot stand alone and survive without any support of the social and moral vision of religion. Indeed, pluralism can support religion in two ways. The first is we can cooperate with others who have different religious beliefs to defend the concept of civil society such as cross-cultural and inter-faith religion. Secondly, we can explain social visions which coming from their own religious belief. Finally, I would say that there should also be a concomitant or simultaneous understanding that pluralism requires religion. They desperately need the injection of moral judgment as a crucial component of the democratic crucible. Without it, you emerge in an antiseptic and immoral world in which democracy becomes the equivalent of license. Effective democracies and truly free societies are strongest when they have citizens who have a strong internal moral compass. This is the best guarantee of keeping the state out of what should be the proper preserve of culture,

belief, religion, and individual choice. Thus, if those have been facts, we would understand the real meaning of religiosity as mention by Jalaluddin Rumi in his masterpiece on *the lamps are different but their shines are the same*.

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An acknowledgment section may be presented after the conclusion if desired.

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