



RELIGIOUS PLURALISM, MULTI-ETHNIC NATIONALIST IDENTITY, AND THE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION OF ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES

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Abstract:

Religious pluralism is a new form of religious consciousness, and a potential for renewing theology, especially since it is based on the principle of interreligious dialogue. In this article, we will discuss the definition of religion, Western views on religion, multi-ethnic nationalist identities, and Islamic attitudes towards religion. We will also discuss the principles and fundamentals underlying this Islamic stance. The method used in this research is qualitative research through library research.

Keywords: *Religious pluralism, multi-ethnic nationalist identities, Islamic*

INTRODUCTION

The Israeli-Palestinian and Russian-Ukrainian conflicts are two global events that are complex and have far-reaching impacts. Both have deep historical roots and involve regional, religious and political issues. The escalation of violence in both regions has led to significant loss of life, humanitarian crises and global instability. The Russo-Ukrainian war, which began in 2022, has triggered a global energy and food crisis, while the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been going on for decades with varying intensity. Despite differences in scale and duration, these two conflicts highlight the challenges of global security in the 21st century and ongoing efforts to achieve peace.

In response to this, we will present a discussion about religious pluralism and the contribution of Islamic principles in pluralism to maintaining global security stability. A discussion of religious pluralism in relation to nationalist and ethnic identities, with a certain degree of methodological clarity, requires placing it in the cultural and political context that characterizes our time. This context is manifested in the culture and thought of post-modernity, as well as in the economics and politics of globalization.

If globalization expresses the economic, social and cultural transformation experienced by the world, then post-modernity expresses the transformation experienced by the basic ideas of modernity. One of the most important signs of this transformation is what is known as the 'return of religion' in its various manifestations, both in the form of religious movements and in the recognition

of the value of religious knowledge. This has provided a constructive foundation for post-modernity to overcome its nihilistic character and form a firm critique of modernity as a promise of religious decline.

Pluralism in its various forms, and especially religious pluralism, is a manifestation of the transformation that the contemporary world is experiencing

It cannot be denied that pluralism in general has many meanings, but three main meanings can be distinguished:

Ontological, metaphysical, or theological meaning: This is the opposite meaning to monism. Pluralism in this context states that reality cannot be reduced to a single element, but rather consists of many elements or elements. Many philosophical schools, especially empiricism and pragmatism, support this view.

Epistemological or scientific meaning: This view argues that some theories can be true and correspond to reality. It is based on the belief that there are many paths to truth, or that theories can provide multiple perspectives on reality. Different theories, even conflicting ones, can illuminate different aspects of reality, because theories are essentially conceptual interpretations of knowledge built on various criteria.

Methodological meaning: Especially in the social sciences and humanities, methodological pluralism refers to the use of a variety of methods and approaches in research. This view is influenced by the thinking of Max Weber and his school.

The most relevant meaning for us is the meaning of pluralism in the context of values and ethics. Pluralism in this context is closely related to democracy, where democracy cannot function without diversity. Apart from that, pluralism is also related to tolerance, namely acceptance of a diversity of ethical values.

In this context, it needs to be emphasized that pluralism does not only refer to the diversity that already exists in reality, such as the diversity of religions, sects and sects in the world, such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism with their various sects. This is a historical fact related to the emergence of different religions and cultures. Pluralism goes further by offering a view or attitude towards this diversity. In this sense, pluralism refers to standards that determine the foundations of a just society.

This means that we must differentiate in our discussion of pluralism between descriptions of pluralism that relate to reality - be it physical, social reality, or the reality of ideas, sects and religions - - and pluralism as a value and standard.

And our attitude towards it, whether it is related to pluralism at the level of existence, knowledge, or values such as religious pluralism. And it is known that this epistemological and logical distinction was introduced by the philosopher David Hume in the history of philosophy, when he classified propositions into two types: propositions that describe what is, and propositions that describe what should be. Although this difference raises several problems, the question that concerns us is: what standards of justice should be used as a reference in dealing with the reality of pluralism in general, including religious pluralism? Be it in a particular society or in the world as a whole? And what theological and philosophical views have contributed to analyzing the phenomenon of pluralism in modern society?

Meanwhile, there is no doubt that the current religious reality of the world is religious pluralism. And this reality, although new to some people, has actually

existed since ancient times. We see it in the history of various civilizations. And this reality is becoming clearer with the continuous interaction between various religions and beliefs.

In the Islamic context, this religion has accepted and even respected diversity. Islam has a long history of accommodating various differences within the framework of unity. However, it cannot be denied that there are some extreme views that emerge in the name of Islam and reject diversity and pluralism. These views call for purifying Islamic territories of non-Muslims, which is clearly contrary to the true spirit and principles of Islam.

In this article, we will discuss the definition of religious pluralism, Western views on pluralism, multi-ethnic nationalist identities, and Islamic attitudes towards pluralism. We will also discuss the principles and basics that underlie this Islamic attitude.

METODOLOGI PENELITIAN

The method used in this research is qualitative research through library research. The nature of this research is descriptive analysis. Analysis focuses on data in the form of documents, such as books, journals, papers. The primary data used in this research are of course writings about religious pluralism which have been published in the form of books and papers including, Problems of Religious Pluralism, Multiculturalism. Différence et démocratie, and Religious Pluralism: Islamic Perspective.

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

Pluralisme Agama: Makna dan Konteks Historis

The term pluralism in Arabic roots refers to the verb "عد" which means many. Modern researchers agree that the origins of the term "religious pluralism" come from the West, and this meaning became popular in the mid-20th century. This term comes from the English phrase "Religious Pluralism" which refers to social, political and cultural meanings. This term is often used in humanities and religious studies with various connotations, including the coexistence and mixing of various religious beliefs in a broad sense with the aim of accepting diversity and difference, or doctrines that tend towards plurality and diversity, as stated in the al-Maurid Dictionary for the meaning of the word "Pluralism".

In modern times, discussions about religious pluralism are increasingly widespread, as are various points of view and sects. Religious pluralism is considered a major factor in reducing the intensity of conflict and war, especially those with a doctrinal background. This term is used to bring various schools of thought, culture and religion closer together, as expressed by Haidar Habballah. However, we cannot talk about pluralism without mentioning that the concept of pluralism often causes confusion. This was emphasized by Mahrus Sayyuni who argued that the word pluralism has two meanings which are closely related to the concept of this term. One of them [the meaning of pluralism] is philosophical, and the other is socio-political, centered on the diversity of types in principles and beliefs, as well as the coexistence between this diversity while maintaining the characteristics of each. Meanwhile, the word "religion", in the country of origin of this term, has given rise to great debate regarding its meaning in the context of religious law, theology, anthropology, sociology and comparative religion. These huge differences have led some researchers to argue that it is almost impossible to reach a definition that everyone agrees on. There is a strong tendency in the fields of humanities and social studies, comparative religion, and philosophy of

religion, to include in the meaning of religion everything that is considered sacred by humans, whether this includes belief in the existence of God and His worship, or not."

In the term "religious pluralism", Haidar Habballah said: "(Religious pluralism is) a necessity to recognize, and not only socially and ethically, all religions and sects, and to grant forgiveness to their adherents. Thus, the previous concept of salvation means salvation in one religion alone, has been modified to be more inclusive and broad, covering most adherents of religions and sects. Likewise, the word 'coexistence' is no longer only considered a temporary need, but rather a permanent human need.

Thus, the meaning of pluralism expands to focus on recognizing others, justifying differences, accepting those who are different, and affirming that other people can achieve salvation regardless of their religious differences. In this sense, Islam and other religions have the same essence, originate from one divine source, and all agree on monotheism and returning to God, but differ in their laws and other teachings. This is the opinion expressed by John Hick, who concluded that all religions and sects maintain a religious essence, and different religious teachings serve and embody this essence in human life to varying degrees.

John Hick, one of the main thinkers of religious pluralism in the modern West, argued: "It is inappropriate to speak of religion as false, heretical, or true, or to speak of it as competing systems, ideas, and meanings. Rather, religion is religious traditions and relationships that develop within the framework of human life, and within the historical context of human groups to express the diversity of forms of thought and the diversity of human nature."

John Hick's definition most widely accepted in the West among those interested in the study of religion is that "the world's great religions differ in men's view of one supreme divine truth and their perception of this truth and their response to it."

Anies Thaha believes that Western dictionaries discuss the meaning of plurality in three aspects: "the ecclesiastical meaning, which refers to someone who holds two church positions at once, the philosophical meaning which refers to a method of thinking that recognizes more than one highest principle, and the socio-political meaning which refers to a system that recognizes the coexistence of different races, groups, parties and views while maintaining their respective characteristics."¹

Here, it is necessary to distinguish between the context of the meaning of plurality in the West, with the theological and intellectual debates that gave rise to it, and its differences with the concept of Islam. John Hick wanted to avoid breaking with Christian tradition. Rather, he [John Hick] attempted to mobilize dialectics from within the center of the Christian tradition with the aim of interpreting many theological concepts to suit the demands of the times and the reality of pluralism. He emphasized that the rejection of Jesus' divinity in no way means the loss of the essence of Christianity, but rather remains the path to the salvation of humanity, and the driving force towards a higher good. And the essence of Christianity is not theological or doctrinal, but a way of life. Meanwhile, the meaning of pluralism in Islam appears in a different context, namely freedom of religion, which comes from the Creator's grace towards His servants, to guarantee the rights to religion, coexistence and knowing each other.

¹ Thaha, Anas, "*Arah Pluralisme Agama dan Sikap Islam terhadapnya*," Disertasi Doktoral, Universitas Islam, Hyderabad, Pakistan, 2000 M, hlm. 3.

In the Meaning of Religious Pluralism

The term religious pluralism in a general sense refers to two basic levels: the theological level (kalam) which is included in the philosophy of religion, and raises the issue of freedom and belief in religion. The second level is the social, political and ethical level which is the main topic in political, social and ethical issues. This level raises the issue of the position of religion in society in general, and in particular in the public sphere.

In fact, it goes without saying that religion has not left the public sphere despite the massive process of secularization in Western society. Religion still exists in the form of social and cultural institutions, and religious affiliation still exists in modern society. Religion in its various manifestations, including religious pluralism, has imposed itself on liberal democracy as one of the main topics of dialogue in society. Countries are also forced to determine the position they want to give to religious expressions in the public sphere. Likewise, at the same time, the humanities were forced to refocus their attention on this relatively important phenomenon from the perspective of modern thought.

Before discussing the relationship between religious pluralism and liberal democracy, it is important to understand some general characteristics of religious pluralism despite the many differences among theologians. Among these characteristics, we can mention the following:

Religious pluralism is a modern concept that was first introduced by a number of Christian theologians such as Paul Tillich, Karl Barth, Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, John Hick, and others, who utilized the results of the Second Vatican Council in 1965. This shows that religious pluralism in was originally a theological topic proposed by Christian theology, as a result of awareness of the existence of religious realities outside of Christianity. Then, this topic became a global issue involving scientists and thinkers from various religions in the world, whether Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism or others. They participated in various discussions held in the form of meetings and seminars under the title "interfaith dialogue", including Islamic-Christian dialogue.

Religious pluralism emphasizes a number of values, such as participation, cooperation, solidarity, and especially dialogue, which are the main values and common demands among supporters of religious pluralism.

Religious pluralism is not based on the idea of equality between religions and beliefs, but on equality between adherents of religions and beliefs. In this sense, religious adherents as partners in dialogue, conversation and discussion, must have the same rights so that dialogue can occur.

Religious pluralism begins when religions recognize each other as equal members in dialogue. Any religion, belief or sect that is unable to communicate with other religions or sects on an equal basis is at the pre-pluralism level. This means that no religion has absolute truth. This is based on the assumption that religious truth is one, but its manifestations vary according to cultural diversity.

The specific religious identity of each religion, belief and sect must be maintained. The aim of dialogue is not to eradicate religion and belief in favor of one religion or belief alone, nor should it try to eliminate the diversity of religious manifestations within one religion. Instead, it should be emphasized that the individual's spiritual path must remain clear.

Recognition of the existential nature of every religious revelation. This revelation is addressed to humans as humans, which leads to a rethinking of the concept of religion itself, the concept of religious truth, and human religious

freedom. On this basis, Christian theologian John Hick defines religious pluralism by saying: "There is a plurality in the forms of divine revelation, which produces a plurality in the answers to salvation for humans."²

Discussions regarding religious pluralism are not only limited to the Christian sphere. There are many studies, including those related to Islamic thought, which directly discuss this. It cannot be denied that the relationship between religious pluralism - as understood in contemporary Christian thought - and Islamic thought is similar to the general relationship between Western thought as a whole and Islamic thought, both in terms of influence, basis, criticism and rejection. In this context, it is worth noting that Islamic thought has been engaged in dialogue with Christian thought in what is known as Christian-Islamic dialogue for a long time. There are also theoretical efforts regarding religious pluralism in Islam that require special study, which is not possible in this research. However, it is worth mentioning at least two important efforts:

First, by the Tunisian thinker Muhammad al-Talbi in several of his works, especially those expressed at interreligious dialogue and Christian-Islamic dialogue conferences; in which he emphasizes a number of important principles, the most important of which are dialogue, the search for commonality between various religions, and the recognition of a plural world that shapes the future of humanity, and is based on a three-dimensional identity consisting of personal, national and global. Al-Talbi defines identity as a 'continuous development process', and that interreligious dialogue will not work well...Except by emphasizing different identities, or as he says, 'As for me as a Muslim, the final revelation is The Koran, God's word for humanity... but that does not prevent me at all from viewing all holy books with respect and sympathy, without having to sacrifice my inner beliefs. Likewise, this does not prevent me from working together with all believers to build a world civilization that does not isolate the Creator from His creatures'."

"With a different approach, the Iranian thinker Abdul Karim Soroush proposed a theoretical effort about religious pluralism or what he called (pluralism) which was divided into religious and cultural pluralism, as well as social pluralism. He emphasized the connection between the two. Even though he acknowledged that pluralism is a modern phenomenon or has a modern nature, he also emphasized that pluralism has historical roots that appear in Islamic history."

"According to him, religious pluralism is based on two main pillars: (one of which is diversity in understanding religious texts, and the other is diversity in interpreting our religious experiences)."

This view is related to what he conveys in his other works, especially in his book: 'بسط التجربة النبوية' (Explaining Prophetic Experience), where he adopted Karl Popper's method in studying Islam in general and the experience of Sufis in particular, especially Jalaluddin Rumi.

In fact, religious pluralism cannot be separated from the pluralist tendencies that mark our time, and its value lies in what it offers in terms of opening up a space for discussion about the position of religion in society, and its role in the public sphere, which brings it into line—in terms of goals and objectives—with several political and social currents that make the topic of

² John Hick, **Problems of religious Pluralism**, New York, St-Martin Press, 1985, p. 34. Jean Richard, **Thèses pour une théologie pluralistes religieuse**, in, Laval théologique et philosophique, Vol. 58, N°1, 2002, p. 27-42.

plurality and diversity their main focus. Several contemporary political philosophers have contributed to discussing this topic, and the most prominent are the German-Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor in his book: (The Time of Secularism), as well as the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas in several of his works, especially in his articles; (From Tolerance to Cultural Rights), and his dialogue with Joseph Ratzinger in his book (Pope Benedict XVI), and the French philosopher Marcel Gauchet in his book (Religion in Democracy)."

While it is impossible to discuss all philosophical, ethical, and social theories related to pluralism, there are at least three interrelated issues that we need to pay attention to:

The first relates to identity, the second to the policy of tolerance, and the third to secularism. This is seen from the perspective of recognition theory, which is a liberal political theory that pays attention to the problem of pluralism and how to manage this pluralism in order to achieve justice. Justice here does not only mean the fair distribution of material goods, but also the recognition of fair demands, both material and symbolic demands, especially recognition of different cultural identities.

From Tolerance to a Policy of Cultural Pluralism

It is well known that the classical liberal legacy has responded to the issue of religious pluralism by defending the principle of tolerance. Many philosophers, such as Locke, Pierre Bayle, Voltaire, and John Stuart Mill, have advanced arguments for toleration. Its aim is twofold: to protect religious minorities from the arbitrary actions of the majority, and to protect society and individuals from the domination of religious groups. Therefore, it can be said with the American philosopher John Rawls that religious freedom is a key concept for understanding classical liberalism. And from this concept of tolerance a new idea has emerged about the relationship between religion and the state, namely the principle of secularism.

In general, it can be said that Western society and the liberal system have followed two ways in realizing secularism. Both of these methods are in accordance with the cultural traditions and religious beliefs of these peoples and countries. The first way that is often mentioned is 'recognition of existing religions', which means that a particular religion, or more precisely a particular religious sect, is recognized as the dominant sect and part of national identity. As a result, this religion or school of thought has a special position in the country. This is generally characteristic of Northern European countries such as Germany, England and Scandinavian countries where Protestantism occupies a central position. However, it should be noted that this religious school has experienced the influence of the values of liberalism, both through religious and political reform.

In contrast, there is a second way that views secularism as a strict separation between state and church. This method is divided into two main branches: rigid, hostile secularism, and nationalism in the narrow sense, characterized by an intolerant attitude towards religion, especially towards the Catholic Church. And liberal secularism which aims to protect equality and religious freedom, but still seeks to limit the influence of religion in the public sphere, as demonstrated by the French model.

Tolerance and the accompanying policies of secularism, although they have achieved progress in terms of social and economic policies of Western societies, now face many problems. This is due to the developments experienced by Western society since the end of the Second World War until now, especially

related to the phenomenon of migration, and the economic, social and cultural problems that accompany it, especially attitudes towards religion, especially non-Christian religions and especially Islam. This phenomenon is generally referred to as a 'return to religion' in the political and philosophical literature.

Islamic Attitude towards Pluralism

Researchers in Islamic thought emphasize that "religious pluralism is a Western idea that spread after being theorized by John Hick (1922-2012), whose thesis is considered the greatest philosophical work that promotes religious pluralism. It is considered a philosophical development of Western thought and political liberalism as well as a rejection of religious oppression. However, there are also those who argue that the scope of Islam has been open to religious pluralism and has been practiced since the beginning of Islam."

John Hick argues that the best interpretation of religious pluralism in our world today is to unequivocally recognize that all religions crystallize around one and the same divine truth, namely "Truth" itself which is hidden from view and beyond all nature or description. Each religion has a history, a specific response to God, and a pure spiritual heritage. Through this inheritance, humans express their conjecture about God's truth, their understanding of the nature of perfection in Him, and their experience of connection with Him. Hick sees religious experience as a spontaneous and free response to absolute truth, through the translation of both internal and external data.

Meanwhile, *رضوان السيد* argues that "according to the logic of the Qur'an, religion is one in its main creed which means faith in the oneness of God, faith in the books and messengers, carrying out worship only for God, and faith in the last day, a day of reckoning with reward and punishment, based on the sanctity of belief and pious deeds. From the perspective of the Koran and history, Islam recognizes pluralism, and since the formation of the first Islamic society and throughout history, there has been religious pluralism in Islamic thought and reality."

If we return to the study of Islamic attitudes towards pluralism, we will return to the commonly used meaning, namely rejection of fanaticism and acceptance of others. Because the belief in the oneness of the Creator has been established, namely that God is One and Only, then everything other than Him, namely His creation, becomes plural. However, the "all-pervading" Divine grace leaves no gap between these two levels. Religion can spread in various forms, because it is based on a solid foundation, namely monotheism.

Divine Discernment and the Plurality of Creation

And in the opening of the holy book Al-Qur'an. The holy verses emphasize that Allah is "Rabb al-'Alamin" (Ruler of the entire universe), not just Muslims. The diversity of created creatures shows the oneness of Allah, the Most High, and everything returns to Him. Although God's essence in His unity is difficult to understand, Allah introduces Himself in various manifestations through His perfect names and attributes, enabling humans to recognize Him. The concept of tawhid (the oneness of God) and His attributes are realized in faith in what Allah confirms about Himself in His book.

According to *رضوان السيد*, the meaning of "right" has many meanings in kalam literature. Al-Damghani stated that "rights" in the Qur'an have 12 meanings, including: Allah himself, the Qur'an, Islam, justice, monotheism, truth, wealth, first rights, luck and needs.

Tolerance and Religious Freedom in the Qur'anic Perspective

Muhammad al-Muntar highlighted the verse that affirms freedom of religion, namely: "If your Lord willed, everyone on earth would believe. So will you force people so that they become believers?" (Surah Yunus: 99) The main principles in the Qur'an related to differences are: monotheism, justice, respect for humans, cooperation in goodness and piety, repaying evil with goodness, competing in goodness, dialogue and getting to know each other, and upholding the goals of the Shari'a. If differences cause division among the people, then they must be avoided." The Qur'an always links faith with pious deeds without limiting it to a particular religion.

Hasan Hanafi believes that pluralism has appeared in our intellectual heritage since ancient times in all sciences. In natural science, the concepts of unity and diversity are the basic premises for understanding the universe, including cause and effect, necessity and possibility, substance and accident. Likewise, in Islam, there are various schools of thought such as schools of jurisprudence (Maliki, Hanafi, Syafi'i, Hanbali), schools of philosophy (rational and illumination), and Sufi orders. Even the hadith about the "group of survivors" implies diversity within unity. Pluralism is also seen in ijtiḥād, where each mujtahid has his own opinion. Hanafi, together with Rasyid Ghannushi, believes that the hadith about the surviving group is weak and does not conflict with the concept of coexistence and Islam's recognition of pluralism and unity of the Ummah. Hanafi offers a way out of tension and believes in pluralism accompanied by social justice as a way to liberate humans and the earth.

Ammareh sees pluralism as sunnatullah (natural law) that cannot be changed. In Islam, pluralism based on differences in human nature reaches a very basic level. This pluralism may be suppressed or forced, but it cannot be eliminated.

Jadallah Saleh believes that religious pluralism is a modern philosophical understanding that discusses religious issues, and there has not been sufficient research to explain the position of the Qur'an on this matter.

CONCLUSION

A study of the Islamic perspective on pluralism reveals that pluralism is a fundamental aspect of the religion, which has its roots in the teachings of John Hick. Hick argues that all religions are rooted in one single pillar, namely the "Truth" of Islam, which is the divine response to humanity. Every religion has teachings, spiritual beliefs, and a spiritual connection to the divine. Hick also emphasizes the importance of understanding the concept of pluralism as a spontaneous and useful response to the absolute pillar.

Islam recognizes pluralism, and as it develops, pluralism will continue to shape the religion and reality of Islam. The concept of "rights" in the Koran is based on the belief that Allah is "Rabb al-'Alamin" and that the Koran contains 12 main concepts. The Koran emphasizes tolerance and acceptance of differences, stating that the Koran is the ultimate guide to understanding religion.

Pluralism, a concept proposed by John Hick, argues that most of the world's religions are influenced by how humans understand the world. It distinguishes between "katsroh" (number) and "تعددية" (pluralism), with "katsroh" being higher in number than "تعددية" (diversity). Pluralism allows each element to have unique characteristics and provides space for individuality, making it an internal concept that encourages variety and diversity.

Islam in its principles and teachings in plurality refers to the way people live together in the Islamic world, as shown by Jouffroy, رضوان السيد, and others. Islam outlines its mission to build a pluralist state in which the Prophet Muhammad SAW plays the role of leader and protector.

Islam's mission is to build a pluralist state where the Prophet Muhammad SAW acts as a ruler as well as an observer of the law. All residents of Medina, whether they were Muslims, Christians or Jews, had the right to practice their respective religions. Prophet Muhammad SAW's observations of religion, culture and nation in Medina allow us to choose between two paths: conflict and peace.

Islam has established a set of rules of life characterized by diversity and friendship. The principle of plurality in religion states that there will be differences or differences in origins.

Pluralism in Islam is not only an internal religious issue, but also has broad implications for social life. In the context of an increasingly global and diverse world, a deep understanding of pluralism becomes increasingly important. Islam, with its long history of interacting with various cultures and religions, can make a significant contribution to building a more tolerant and peaceful civilization.

This study has revealed an interesting dimension of pluralism in Islam. However, there are still many aspects that can be explored and discussed further. How can we apply the values of pluralism in everyday life? How can we build a more inclusive interfaith dialogue? These questions invite us to continue to dig deeper into the meaning of pluralism in the Islamic context.

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