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# Social Ethics in Inter-Religious Interaction

Editors: Nina Mariani Noor/ Ferry Muhammadsyah Siregar

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Editors

Nina Mariani Noor and Ferry Muhammadsyah Siregar

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## **PREFACE**

*Machasin<sup>1</sup>*

### **1.1 Contributing to Development of Social Ethics through Religion**

It seems impossible to think of religion's contribution to the development of social ethics when religion is practiced in a space and time where it is in its ostensibly exclusive form. In the last few years, the Indonesian space has been letting out an ambiance of presenting a closed understanding of religious guidance to followers who adhere to it with minimum wiggle space for the "goodness" of God's guidance to embrace the people out there. Generosity to contribute a part of religious tradition to another group, on the one hand, is held back by the spirit of differentness and history of enmity, while on the other, the willingness to acquire from the neighbouring treasure-trove is obstructed by the concern of tainting the "holy" teaching of religion itself.

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In addition to that, how shared living spaces – which overlaps in various issues with an individual and/ or religious followers living spaces – is established so that all the people in a diverse society as Indonesia can live life freely, safely, and peacefully, as well as advance their self-potential without fear or prejudice from other members. Notions of this matter can be obtained from religious sources, although this is achieved sometimes by developing a certain exegesis of religious principles, that is through the creation of a wholly new exegesis or acquiring a dated source aged by history. Aside from technical knowledge in reading of religious text, this effort takes courage.

The writings provided to the reader of this book, although collected under the title “Social Ethics in Inter Religious Interaction”, consist of nine articles which could be further specified into three categories: five writings regarding religious theme of particular traditions, three writings referring to social theme which take on thoughts from religious traditions, and one writing discussing public space where religion plays a role as a quite determining factor. The following paragraphs will elaborate on the above topics based on the three categories respectively.

## **1.2 Religious Ethics in a Plural Society**

As obviously construed from the title, “Ethics in the Profession of Spiritual Figure: a Protestant Perspective”, Yahya Wijaya’s writing brings forth a religious theme based on Christian ethics. In answering the question “Is spiritual figure a profession?”, the writer who is a priest attempts to provide a kind of ethical basis to this very important religious office. Profession is different to career which means “an occupation undertaken in order to reach a goal and one’s desire”. Meanwhile, profession “is an occupation that is undertaken based on a particular belief and for the sake of the wider community”. The word originates from the base ‘to profess’ which means ‘confess’ or ‘swear on’ which is closely related to priesthood, and consequently used in a

wider understanding. It is very interesting to follow the writer's discussion on how a term that has ventured everywhere is retracted to "develop" ethics of spiritual figures in a diverse Indonesian society in today's age of open information. The message in the writing which implies to spiritual figures could actually apply to all religious "workers", be it teachers of religion in schools or leaders of religious communities.

Martino Sardi's title, "Fostering Family Life in the Teaching of the Catholic Church", portrays the theme discussed in its content. In marriage, it is not merely the undertaking of faithful matrimonial vows exchanged by the bride and groom, God is also present in uniting both parties. Thus, the vow cannot be broken by man. Consequently, the couple who has been bound in holy matrimony must foster a family with unwavering faith and courage in upholding the glory of God. The holy family of Nazareth, Maria and Joseph who nurtured Jesus is regarded as an ideal mirror to how a Catholic family should be fostered. Family life should be a tribute to God. This offering is not a mere one time act, but it is a struggle throughout one's life. Although this writing could be regarded to wholly be written by and for Catholics, the moral messages within could provide tenacity for marriage and family nurture of other religious followers. Loyalty in marriage and nurturing younger generation through a family devoted to the glory of God are two things which can be utilised as basis by men and women bound in holy matrimony.

In a different light, Hamim Ilyas discusses the theme of marriage in Islam in the writing under the title, "Al-Qur'an and Marriage Ethics". The writer frequently uses Al-Qur'an as a source of reference and discusses a lot of issues pertaining to marriage in Islam in which partly is a review of what is typically acceptable in Islamic tradition regarding the relationship of man and woman. The issues of which among others are regarding equal standing, fairness in "sharing" family duties,

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honesty, love, etc. including the assumption that women are tempters of faith. It is written, for instance, that “Al-Qur’an does not provide prerogative rights to man to educate, command, and forbid woman. *Amar-ma’ruf* and *nahi-munkar* and mutual reminder of truth and patience ... must be undertaken together by man and woman.”

Not unlike Martino Sardi’s writing, this one refers to marriage as *mitsaq ghalidh*, a strong vow, between two parties conducting the marriage. The goal is to protect the honour of husband, wife and children; foster a loving family, a peaceful family, based on love and affection. It is interesting to read the writer’s opinion on interreligious marriage which he seemingly does not reject firmly. This is different to his opinion on same sex marriage and that marriage should not be included as a means to release sexual desires.

Tabita Kartika Christiani’s writing, “Christian Education in a Diverse Society”, delivers a message clearly observed in its title. Beginning with a discussion on the understanding of multicultural education, this writing arrived at the statement that one of the consequences of multicultural Christian education is the abandonment of exclusivity in theology of religions. Its goal – one of the main ones – is to get instructors/ teachers to understand and accept differences, to be able to respect others who are religiously and culturally different from themselves, as well as to emphasize adaptive differences and assist in developing cross-cultural familiarity.

Any doubt on how this is done in order for this education to be in a “character against religious purity”, or “character which dispels uniqueness of religions by considering all religions as the same”, is answered with a true dialog in which uniqueness of every religion is respected and placed on a levelled plane. The “wall” metaphor is used to explain how this education is to be executed: Christian education behind the wall, at the wall, and beyond the wall. Christian education “behind the wall” refers to contextually reading and learning the Bible; “at the

wall” pertains to learning other religions and conducting dialogues with followers of other religions; “beyond the wall” concerns true effort in realizing peace and justice in the scope of society which is continued with reflections on the conducted actions.

Siti Syamsiyatun, in the writing under the title “Neighbour Ethics in Islam”, attempts to connect the old concept of neighbour with the modern age reality of rapid resident mobility which in the old concept is no longer applicable. Then, a number of neighbour principles were taken from Al-Qur’an and Al-Hadis without conducting much novel explanations or discussions regarding its connection with change of context. As an example, the attention provided by the Koran which she mentioned to be quite substantial in regards to neighbour through the guidance of doing good to “close neighbour” and “far away neighbour” in the verse which discusses the command to adhere to Allah the One God, to behave kindly towards your parents, close friends and family, orphans, the poor, colleagues, ibn sabil, and serfs. The Prophet Muhammad even associated respect to neighbours with the perfection of one’s faith. It is not mentioned whether the neighbour is of the same religion or not, but the respect afforded to him/ her is a consequence of faith.

### **1.3 Social Ethics Based on Religion**

Tjahjono Soerjodibroto, in his writing titled “Ethics in Humanitarian Aid” showcases the peculiar reality of an act which seems to bear high ethical value: the provision of humanitarian aid. This act, particularly in the event of a natural disaster, is quite often abused by certain groups to gather funds from donors for self-interest profit. Aid recipient often goes unacknowledged as the party whose voice is to be listened to and whose honour and psychological condition is to be understood, this is contrary to the ideal that those who suffer from disaster should be the focus of aid provision, not the desire or interest of aid providers.

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The writer then discusses the positive and negative impact of aid provision. Instances of positive impact are: providing basic life support (food, water, medicine, and shelter), empowering the poor and supporting reconciliation. Among its negative impacts are: conditions where aid does not fully reach the society, donor organisation's disappointment, and intrusion upon well-established customs/culture/religion. The writer subsequently suggested a way for these unethical realities of aid provision to be corrected so that people in need of aid would be capable of getting out of their tribulation without losing honour of humanity.

As noticeable in its title, Alois A. Nugroho's writing, "Media Ethics in Inter Religious Communication" discusses the existing global paradox which among others is supported by the media which simultaneously unite and diversify, bring closer and separate farther. What consequently needs to be done is provide an ethical basis for reality containing the said paradox. Two principles are proposed by the writer: (1) Ahimsa in communication ethics to avoid hate, and (2) "linguistic civilities" to understand each other. It is quite clear in the writing how these principles are elaborated although there aren't enough applicative measures given regarding global mass communication which is substantially mediated by the media. Even though the writer does not firmly say that the communication discussed in the writing is one happening among religious communities, it is perceived as so. This is boldly obvious from its title. The understanding of "Inter Religions" is self-explanatory without the need of further elaboration by the writer. I think that the word religion here also means sects, denominations, and such kinds that assemble followers on the basis of mutual faith.

Zuly Qodir's writing, "Social Ethics and Interreligious Dialogue in the Contestation of Public Sphere in Indonesia", seems to attempt to provide an ethical basis in public sphere engagement among various show of faith from differing religions. Mutual respect and tolerance as

well as fairness towards followers of the same religion is of utmost necessity as is respect and understanding towards others of differing faith in Indonesia. The writer mentions that unfortunately, Islam which showed this characteristic is currently under pressure by a particular group of Moslems who waves around their banner of “inadequacy with the teachings of Islam” as a reason to behave in opposition to the aforementioned ethical characteristic. “Will Indonesia be lead into becoming a state based solely on one religion that is Islam as the religion followed by the majority of Indonesia’s population?”. Thus questioned the writer.

Subsequently, social ethics as a basis in religious conduct is proposed, which is an extraordinarily bold act keeping in mind of it being confronted by tendencies of the worrisome groups above. The way of dialogue is said to be an alternative to religious life. Dialogue is already a part of the duties of religious followers in Indonesia. Interreligious dialogue will in turn absolutely become a necessity of all religious followers who are situated in a state of social diversity and heterogeneity in Indonesia. What about the dialogue with the worrisome little group then?

## **1.4 Public Sphere**

Bernard Adeney-Risakotta, in the writing titled “Indonesia’s Public Sphere: Politics, Economy, and Religion in Public Sphere”, takes a different road from other writers. Although religious behaviours are discussed in this writing, religion is only a part of it and it is not the main topic. This writing reminds the reader in the issue of defining the term public sphere, which by the writer is defined as the middle sphere between government and private sphere. Then, the writer discusses whether public sphere in Indonesia should be free of value and neutral towards morality and religion. Although the answer is yes, the reality is the presence of the three powers mentioned in the title. Regarding religion, he said, “in a society where 99% admit that religion is

personally important to them, it is difficult to imagine religion being driven away from public spheres.”

Many Indonesians view the influence of religion, economy, and politics in Indonesia’s public sphere as something good and natural, and nothing bad. Symbols of religion, money, and political influence cannot be driven away from public spheres because that is not what the people of Indonesia hope for. However, many are also aware that a lot of problems have risen due to these three things. The writer then proposes his opinion in how to reduce these problems after discussing the matter.

One writing is categorized under the topic public sphere although not a word of it discusses the term. Fatimah Husein, with the title “Developing Ethics of Interaction among Religious Communities in Higher Education”, discusses relation ethics among religious communities based on her experience in teaching “religion” in higher education institutions. Initiating her discussion from the issue of religious education in Indonesia’s education system, she talks about the paradigm of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism in their relationship among religious followers. The writer arrived at an important conclusion that a pluralist character in religious conduct is a character that needs to be promoted. However, the possibility of absolute observance to religious pluralism and denying other point of views is to be a point of caution since this character is in fact a form of religious exclusivism.

How this character is to be developed heavily depends on lecturers attitudes in responding to mischievous questions posed by students. The mischief of these questions frequently begins from an erroneously formed outlook in the introduction of other religions. These situations should not be avoided by lecturers, they should on the contrary be utilized to provide an appreciative understanding of other religions and develop relation ethics among religious communities. The role of higher education institution in developing pluralist relation must be actualized

in providing religious education which stresses more on the historical aspect and not constantly on religious normativity.

## **1.5 Conclusion**

Ethics is based on faith, habit, and self-will, not outside coercion, while the spread of ideas is one of its means in establishing itself. Religion contains many things which can be utilized to strengthen social ethics, some are beneficial for the sake of communal life in public space, but there are also a number of issues which must be reviewed due to its influence which is in opposition to the provision of sphere where each resident can develop their characters and reveal themselves freely without fear or worry. Religion should also be presented to organise public sphere, but its possibility to supersede public sphere under any reason, including faith of universality of teaching, must be hindered.

Please enjoy these inspiring writings.

*Mecca,*

10<sup>th</sup> of October, 2013



## **ETHICS OF THE PROFESSION OF SPIRITUAL FIGURE: A PROTESTANT PERSPECTIVE**

*Yahya Wijaya*

According to news in the media, upon his invitation to Hong Kong by the Indonesian community, *Ustad* Solmed requested a religious sermon fee of up to one hundred million rupiah along with luxury hotel accommodation and first class tickets for his group. Critical opinions sprung throughout the media concerning the popular *ustad*. The same actually holds true in the Christian circle, particularly regarding popular priests who are often called televangelists due to their fame through their television programs. These televangelists are known as people living in luxury originating from the expensive fee given for their services. Many people think it is unworthy for an *ustad* or priest to set a fee for their services, especially if it is an exorbitant amount.

As spiritual figures, they are expected to be an ideal figure of unmaterialistic life, they should even be an ideal figure of life in simplicity and sacrifice. On the other hand, these spiritual figures consider the demands unfair and inconsistent. Why would people pay highly to secular speakers and not to their spiritual figures, when in fact religious followers profess to prioritize spiritual more than worldly matters. The spiritual figures claim to possess equal professionalism to

motivator psychologists and business management experts, which makes it legible for them to be appraised as highly.

The cases above show how important a study on professional ethics of spiritual figures is. How should spiritual figures define their services? How should they build their personal lives? How should they conduct relationships with their followers, with followers of other religions, and with culturally and religiously diverse circles of society? However, the essential question prior to all those questions is: is spiritual figure a profession? If so, what are its implications?

## **2.1 Spiritual Figure as a Profession**

The word ‘profession’ and ‘professional’ is currently used for different intentions. ‘Profession’ often merely means ‘occupation’. Whatever occupation, be it a *Becak* peddler or celebrity it is called a ‘profession’. ‘Professional’ is often associated with particular skills but sometimes with payment or fee. Hence, there is a professional killer and professional footballer. The term ‘professional’ is frequently contrasted to ‘amateur’. For instance, a commercial sex worker is often called a professional, while those who sell themselves for mere pleasure are called amateurs. Such understanding surely does not help us to answer the questions above. In this writing, the word ‘profession’ and ‘professional’ is understood in their more specific meanings.

Paul F. Camenish defines ‘profession’ as an organised group whose members (a) have skills and specific knowledge, believed to be useful even important in achieving a highly regarded condition, such as justice, health, and spiritual affluence; (b) have control over their professional occupation; and (c) usually claim or expect their motivation in executing their professional duties to be more than just self-benefit (1991:116). It is clear that the matter of payment does not define a person’s professional character.

Although there are clear differences between spiritual figure and other occupation with irrefutable professionalism, such as doctor and legal expert, Camenisch is of the opinion that spiritual figure is included in the professional category. Consequently, an ethics of profession approach can be used to study the issue spiritual figures moral and quality (1991:131). Joe E. Trull and James E. Carter (204:25 – 29) also agree to consider spiritual figure as a profession. In this case, they differentiate between career and profession. Career is an occupation undertaken to achieve a goal and self-desire, while profession is an occupation undertaken based on a particular belief and for the good of the wider community. This is obvious from the word ‘profession’ itself which is rooted in the word ‘to profess’ meaning ‘to confess’ or ‘to swear on’. Historically the term ‘professional’ had its origin referring to the work of spiritual figure, particularly in connection to the ecclesiastic vow taken by Christian monks.

In the middle ages, a monk’s duty covers various fields of public services including health, law, education, even arts and politics. Those who are involved in the public service but do not live in the monastery are called ‘laymen’. In its following development, the monastery services specialized in three issues: health, law, and spirit. In the end of the middle ages, health and legal services was no longer monopolized by monasteries, they were also fully practiced by experts who did not bind themselves to religious vow, although spiritual services was still limited to those who took the ecclesiastic vow. It is clear that following the Reform the monastery’s role was no longer as decisive. The Protestant Church even abolished the monastery tradition, which consequently means priests were not monks anymore. The Protestant Church also put an end to substantial difference between professional and lay clerics. Even so, the Protestant Church still instructs specific requirements for priests, which made Protestant priest to be included in the modern term of profession stipulated by Camenish.

What basic elements define an occupation to be included into professional category? Referring to Camenish's definition above, it is obvious that professionalism does not only require knowledge and skills in a particular field, which is more than possessed by most people, but it also demands moral responsibility with a clear basis and source. Trull and Carter (2004:30 – 31) briefly explain that 'profession is meant as a combination between *techne* and *ethos* – or between knowledge and technical skill with responsible behaviour; a combination of knowledge and character'. Both aspects are certainly nothing extraordinary to spiritual figures. Since their schooling in theology, Protestant spiritual figures have been afforded with both: theology and spirituality, knowledge and skills on the one hand, and commitment, humility, submission to God on the other. Nevertheless, criticism forwarded to spiritual figures concerns the issues above. Where did it go wrong? In an attempt for self-evaluation, three aspects mentioned in Camenish's definition is worth observing.

## **2.2 Knowledge and Special Skills**

Spiritual figures usually would have undergone specific religious education. In the case of Protestant priests, undergraduate level of education in theology is the minimum prerequisite in mainstream churches. Therefore, theoretically, a priest has adequate competency in the field of theology. This means that a priest should be an engine to the development of theology at the very least within the scope of the parish she/he serves in. If in reality there were more parish members who constantly behave conservatively (no development in theology) which consequently lead to not being able to zestfully respond to the challenges of time, the first question which should be tackled is: whether the priest in the parish shows adequate competence in theology, or merely functions as a continuation of former tradition?

The parishes' dogmatic and conservative attitude often becomes object of complain by the priests themselves. These criticising priests presumably have quite a developed theological knowledge, however when attempting to apply their knowledge in the parishes, they faced resistance from parish figures who tend to be conservative. To avoid conflict, the priests choose to practice 'self-restrain' and follow whatever is accepted by their parishes without trouble. Hence the theological knowledge the priests acquired remains as mere discourse. Competence does not only mean having knowledge but also the art to actualize that knowledge into practice without having to cause a commotion. In developing theology of the parish, conflict is sometimes unavoidable, but in a lot of situations it is not the only available choice. A professional priest does not stop developing the theology of her/his parish while simultaneously minimizing the possibility of detrimental conflict from happening.

Making theological competence as one of the aspects of a spiritual figure's professionalism also means not making communication techniques or management as a main ability in executing their services. Although it is important for a spiritual figure to make use of communication techniques (as in sermons), and management techniques (as in leading the church board/council), as well as psychology techniques (as in pastoral services), the function of such techniques in ecclesiastic service is instrumental. For a spiritual figure, it is unethical to conceal indolence or fear of theological dialogue by overusing the said techniques. For instance, a priest needs to convey his/her messages communicatively through sermon, so he/she needs to use good public communications technique. However, his/her main function on the podium is not as an orator, let alone a comedian or other types of entertainer. He/she is a servant of the Word of God. His/her competence does not reside in his/her ingenuity in utilizing communication techniques, but it is in his/her deep understanding of the Word he/she is

preaching and of the actual situation confronted by listeners of his/her sermons.

How do we nurture theological competence? Walter Wiest and Elwyn Smith (1990:74) suggest: continuous learning and reflection. Wiest and Smith observed a lot of Protestant priests failed to maintain theological competence due to not seriously continue learning after graduating from school of theology. Many of them consider theology is too abstract and irrelevant to church services. They feel quite 'successful' by counting on techniques of communication, psychology, or management. That is why a lot of priests are no longer interested in reading theology books. The only type of readings that remains favoured are merely collections of sermon illustrations and collective sermons of other preachers. Indeed, as Wiest and Smith mention, theology that has no connection to practice will not be of much use for a priest's duty, however '*a practicalism divorced from theology may carry the church away from Christ*'.

### **2.3 Spiritual Figure's Independence**

One of the issues discussed in professionalism of spiritual figures is autonomy. As obviously understood in Camenish's definition, a professional have control over his/her occupation. It means he/she has a high level of independence. A doctor, for example, has full independence to decide the result of diagnosis and therapy for patients. The hospital where he/she works in may decide on administrative aspects of the doctor's job, but it does not have the right to meddle in his/her professional decision. What limits the freedom of doctors and advocates in making their professional decisions are codes of ethics made, revised, and legitimized by associations of their peers.

Moslem spiritual figures may possess significant independence since many of them are not bound by a permanent organisation. In this case, the position of Christian spiritual figures differs. Except for the

previously mentioned *televangelists*, who generally establish their own service organisation, most Protestant priests work in a team and are responsible to the organisation that requested for him/her, that is the church represented by its board/council. If proven to have deviated from moral values highly regarded by the church, a priest can be penalized and even dismissed from his/her office by the organisation that requested him/her. Some churches also have periodical evaluation mechanisms for their priests.

Even so, it does not mean that priests basically do not have independence. It is in fact excessive independence which is claimed by other professionals to have caused what is currently dubbed 'professionalism crises'. With reason of professional autonomy, doctors and advocates tend to be authoritarian in providing their services. They feel more responsible to their professional association than to their clients (Wiest and Smith, 1990:74). Professional associations to spiritual figures are not yet common. Because of that spiritual figures do not have to deal with tensions among responsibility to the parish and the association. However, in the case of priests, if the position of the church organisation were too dominant, its interest can be in opposition to the interest of the parish.

Priests are often conditioned to be mere operators of the churches' regulations. Those who follow that pattern will not be able to enhance their creativity. They tend to seek safety by hiding behind obedience to rules/regulations while portraying themselves as a good boy/girl. But in fact rules/regulations generalize matters. In certain situations, rules can be counter-productive. In many cases, rules need to be reinterpreted. In these kinds of situations, a priest's professionalism is tested. As a professional, a priest should have the autonomy to take creative and decisive measures which can be accountable to the church. Jesus' independent attitude towards the laws of Torah should be a rich inspiration to the independence of priests.

Spiritual figures independence is also often sacrificed for the interest of economy, politics, and popularity. Many spiritual figures are forced to adjust religious messages with the taste of sponsors or influential figures in the community for the sake of upholding constancy. Hence they distance themselves from the parishes' lower tier who is usually the ones mostly in need of spiritual service. Near the time of national and regional election, many spiritual figures are approached by political parties to utilize their influence and authority. Many spiritual figures consequently welcome these kinds of approaches happily. By becoming tools for political parties, these spiritual figures sacrifice their independence making it difficult to behave objectively in front of parishes who believe in them.

In addition, many spiritual figures choose popularity as their priority. Making it a priority also jeopardizes professional independence because true religious messages are not always popular. Spiritual figures who seek popularity usually avoid delivering critical messages challenging stability and condemning common hypocrisy. Messages with tone of tolerance towards other followers of religions are normally less popular as well. Religious communities prefer messages that nurture fanaticism and narcissism. Consequently, spiritual figures prioritizing popularity are usually trapped into becoming '*religiotainer*' by conveying light messages providing mundane entertainment, or becoming provocateurs igniting group fanaticism.

## **2.4 Spiritual Figures Motivation and Commitment**

The professionalism crisis I mentioned above is mainly in the form of shift of professional motivation. Since services of professionals such as doctors and lawyers are highly regarded in society, the income they acquire is also very high. This could be an ordeal in itself for professionals to indicate amount of pay as a yardstick for quality of service. The principle of professionalism, that is providing service for

the good of the society or community is becoming neglected more and more. Trull and Carter mentioned three dangers of present time faced by professionals, that is becoming too dependent on oneself, too much orientation towards success, and too confident of self-worth (2004:33).

Spiritual figures are not free from such temptations. The root of many conflict and difficulty in cooperating among fellow priests lies on those three things. Being too focused on strength, success, and self-worth, a number of priests view their colleagues not as partners but as competitors. Some priests also make the amount of fee received from the parish as a sign of their success. Others boast the large amount of invitation to preach out of their parishes as proof of their gaining popularity. This kind of focus on one's own success present a bad influence devastating to the religious community. These spiritual figures consider the religious community as mere consumers or objects of exploitation. Their commitment to the community's religious faith is no longer clear, let alone their spirit to sacrifice for the sake of the community. It is unclear what these religious figures 'profess' to as a basis for executing their job.

Trull and Carter (2004:40) view the diminishing sense of calling by Allah as an essential factor in relegating the professionalism level of priests into mere discourse for self-success. Prospective students of theology are sometimes laughed at when claiming to have enrolled to school of theology with reason of 'God's calling'. Perhaps the people mocking only do so to convince the prospective student not to make that sort of substantial claim too easily. But this experience of being mocked, to some, becomes a sort of trauma which would make them no longer convinced of God's calling. Since the calling is no longer taken into consideration, they must seek other motivation, both for their study or future job.

Ambiguity in spiritual and moral motivation renders spiritual figures lacking true visions. Hence, they find it difficult to devise service

missions oriented toward the good of the serviced community. The result is clear that these spiritual figures become prone to various types of personal crises, both spiritual, moral, and cultural. In turn, they will also tend to spread their personal crises to the community they serve.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

Spiritual figures are essentially professionals in the understanding that they possess competence, independence, and moral-spiritual commitment. In practice, professionalism of spiritual figures is often eroded due to inadequately updated competence, independence sacrificed for personal or group interests, and weak moral-spiritual commitment. Thus, in order to keep their professionalism, a spiritual figure must always be replenished in those three aspects. A professional spiritual figure will foster their community in attaining moral and spiritual wellbeing, so he/she is able to participate in developing a creative, tolerant, and dignified society.

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## **FOSTERING FAMILY LIFE IN THE TEACHING OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

*Martino Sardi*

### **3.1 Introduction**

Fostering family life in the teaching of the Catholic Church is the theme that we will uncover together in this opportunity. How is it that our respective families become a joyful one which truly brings joy both to its members and to all the people we meet? In this opportunity, we will discuss three important matters pertaining to our main theme, “Fostering Family Life in the Teaching of the Catholic Church. Firstly, we will focus on marriage vow, secondly, marriage vow in the challenges of time, thirdly fostering a true Christian family by reflecting on the holy family of Nazareth. This issue is very real in this current age and it begs special attention and profound study. May our family remain faithful and always joyful.

### **3.2 Wedding Vow**

I remember my friend’s marriage several years ago in a very simple old church. In that holy matrimony, Pietro and Anita respectively

exchanged marriage vows which could not be taken back, because what God has joined, men must not divide.

Firmly Pietro said his promise:

*“In the presence of priest and witnesses, I, Pietro Grande, do solemnly swear, that Anita Dolce, present here, as of this moment to be my wedded wife. I promise to be true to her in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love her and honour her all the days of my life. Thus is my vow, in the name of God and this Holy Bible”.*

Anita consequently responded:

*“In the presence of priest and witnesses, I, Anita Dolce, do solemnly swear, that Pietro Grande, present here, as of this moment to be my wedded husband. I promise to be true to him in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love him and honour him all the days of my life. Thus is my vow, in the name of God and this Holy Bible”.*

Then the priest or other official steward of the Catholic Church said the confirmation:

*“In the name of God’s Church and in the presence of witnesses and the audience, I affirm that this initiation of marriage is a legitimate Christian marriage. May this sacrament become a source of power and happiness to you”.*

While giving holy blessing, the priest or other official steward of the Catholic Church continued with the words: *“What God has joined”*, the audience answered: *“men must not divide”*. Once the Catholic marriage ceremony is finished, usually they would immediately hold a civil registry so that their marriage is legitimate according to Indonesian law, as stipulated in the Marriage Law. The legitimate religious marriage would then be registered officially according to the acting law and

registered in the civil registry. From this marriage vow, we can see how noble and glorious the vow is. Both party are willing to sincerely accept each other as husband and wife, to love and honour each other all the days in their lives in any condition, portrayed in the vow to be in good times and bad, in sickness and health, and all is promised for the glory of God and their happiness. It is truly a noble vow emanating a longed happiness.

In the vow, aside from the efforts of both parties (husband and wife), the role of God is of utmost importance. Both parties with all their lives are willing to accept to be an eternal couple, whole and inseparable, as husband and wife. Both persons bear free will, without pressure from anyone, willing to be of one heart, blessed by God to form a union of Christian family. This union of husband and wife is exclusive, solely applicable to them unable to be shared. In its legal term there is unity and monogamy. Hence the will of the two parties is strengthened by the act of mutual love and respect in any conditions. Conditions nor situations may not influence the bond made. Both in good times or bad, in sickness or in health, they remain a union of family. Favourable conditions of health, happiness or joy, undoubtedly will support this unity of husband and wife. But in unfavourable conditions, sickness or bad times, even sufferance, there must be an inseparable unity.

The later condition is truly a challenge in life as well as a struggle to remain as one heart and soul in a family union. In fact, it is in these challenges that the eternal vow to live together as husband and wife is tested and confronted with real life of this world. Aside from the desired happiness, there also exist the cross of life which must also be confronted. The inseparable union and monogamy remain steadfastly held in the teachings of the Catholic Church because what has been joined by God men must not divide. Men must obey to the will of God.

### **3.3 Wedding Vow against the Challenges of Time**

When a person contemplates the wedding vow at present, he is constantly confronted by the challenges of time. Faith in vowing to always bravely surrender oneself, to love and honour their partner throughout life in any conditions is a never ending struggle. The vow so easily said in its reality is always confronted by other will and desires, tempting and offering other propositions that may bring more pleasure though it does not certainly bring happiness.

The vow is based on free will and cannot be taken back to be divided. This is because what has been joined by God, men cannot divide. This is also the challenge in this current age. Wedding ceremony in the form of the faithful vow is viewed as an act of God uniting the couple, not as a mere man made ritual. The ceremony is believed to have gotten its sacred value from God's part in it. This is taught by the Catholic Church and believed as an act which cannot be annulled by men, given any reason whatsoever. God acts, then men must believe, have faith and obey. If we do not obey, then we will violate what has been ordained by God. Hence in the Catholic teaching, divorce is unrecognized. A temporary separation is recognized, but divorce is never allowed. Divorce is viewed as a violation of God's command and an imperfection of social life in the Catholic Church. Of course this is an ideal situation, where in reality there are many divorces in Catholic family, but the Catholic Church does not recognize them as divorce.

The pillars of marriage, especially the marriage vow, in today's highly developed age must provide a convincing answer that can be accounted for. If both parties could no longer be united, are they forced to stay as one? The unity of love and affection has been shattered, and civil divorce has happened, must the union of Christian marriage still be carried out with all means so as not to divorce? Human weakness often becomes a challenge in achieving the ideal goal. The manner of bearing mutual faith exclusively for all life and to love and honour each other,

making it not two existing individuals but one whole inseparable union, which is definitely an ideal standard in the teaching of the Catholic Church. However, this is not something that happens automatically without effort and struggle to foster that bond.

The challenge to doubt the vow among Catholics is quite numerous, although the challenge is not right according to the teaching of the Catholic Church. At this time and age there are people who start to question: is there still a need of a faithful vow for all of life? Is there a possibility for a temporary faithful vow which is used as a trial? Is there a possibility for a vow which acknowledges the limitation of man and the free will to change and develop? If it is compatible and presumably capable of eternal bondage then it should be continued, but if it is impossible to unite, may it be limited by time, until the union can be upheld. Is it possible that in today's age there will emerge a particular teaching: marriage vow is limited by time, until there is compatibility, and when there is none then that marks the end of the union? These are questions that will definitely shake the foundations of family life. One marriage, it lasts for life and is an exclusive relationship. This teaching is believed to be final and obeys the teaching of Jesus. Marriage must be monogamous, divorce and polygamy is not allowed, let alone polyandry.

If polygamy and polyandry were prohibited, what of the lives of Catholics who have divorced in reality and then married again? The first marriage could no longer be maintained, a solution is no possible anymore, and the tragedy of divorce has been done. They did not actually want to divorce and are very regretful of it, but they were also not able to be united again. Whatever efforts were taken had always failed. The last resort taken was none other than civil divorce through court. There are also couples who deliberately want divorce, with no intention of restoring their family life. After they have lived on their own, in time each would have found their respective companions and succeed in performing marriage acceptable by the law of our nation.

There are those who have left the Catholic Church and take a different path of life, but there are also those who remain a Catholic, educating their children in a Catholic manner, constantly attend Church and prayer services in their community, but they realize their circumstances of not being allowed to accept other sacraments of the Church. The second marriage is considered illegitimate and is not recognized by the Catholic Church.

The Pope in his teachings, particularly *Familiaris Consortio* instruct families in this situation to be continuously accompanied by the Church, they are advised to keep attending Church, pray, etc., but they are not allowed to receive sacraments of the Church. They are to remain obedience and loyal, willing to sort out their marriage, but cannot and may not do so unless the first marriage has been sorted out. There are those who have tried to go into the process of acquiring a *declaratio nullitatis matrimonii* (a statement declaring that the first marriage is null and void), but it was not a smooth ride. It is unknown who is idle in its process, is it the parties involved or people working at the Church court who are reluctant to process it until reaching the Vatican Holy See. What is clear is that both couple are prohibited to receive other sacraments of the Church.

In one of the diocese in Indonesia, there is a new breakthrough attempt for the divorce to not be processed in acquiring *declaratio nullitatis matrimonii*, but to be processed communally in the parochial council until the diocese agrees to the matter. If the family members of their community or the parochial community do not mind, and the pastoral team agrees, they could receive sacraments of the Church. A church practice which is logical, not knotty, but goes against the teaching of the Church, and it also portrays the image that the Church court does not want to be bothered to juridical process the case right. There are indeed several cases of family life, especially marriage. The challenge of family life does not only involve the marriage vow, but

there are various challenges that could shake family life, from simple to complicated ones. Nevertheless, a Christian family must be fostered to become an ideal family fitting to the will of Christ. This is what must be defended and fostered to its maximum by Catholic family because it does not recognize divorce.

### **3.4 Fostering a True Christian Family**

When people talk about true Christian family, their views usually points directly towards the holy family of Nazareth, Joseph, Maria, and Jesus. The family is centred in Jesus, who blessed the Nazareth family. In fostering the holy family of Nazareth, Maria and Joseph struggled immensely. Thus it began with Maria receiving good news from God's angel, informing her capacity to be the mother of God until the time Maria laid under the feet of crucified Jesus. The struggle of Maria and Joseph in fostering the holy family was executed through many sacrifices all their life. Their life was dedicated to God, only for the sake of Jesus. No other motives were intended by Maria and Joseph. People can feel the tremble of Maria's heart upon receiving news from the Angel. At first Maria was shocked, then curious to know its meaning, consequently the hand of God determined all matters and all her life. Maria was prepared to be the mother of God. Then there was her meeting with Joseph, the sincere-heart, which provided a very deep meaning. Maria, who had just turned 14 that year, was bestowed by God a man of age, Joseph who was more than 70 years old (more than meaning he may have been in his 80s). Maria visited Elizabeth through perilous journey, climbing mountains while in labour and leading Joseph who was already old. It was an arduous journey, but she had taken it as a journey of solidarity towards Elizabeth, who in her elderly age, was bearing John the Baptist in her womb. Maria's life journey for the sake of Jesus was real when she had to give birth. There were no houses and lodgings willing to welcome them. Only a manger in an empty barn was

ready to receive Jesus. It was really a struggle to foster a family in which Jesus was the centre of attention. It was not easy, demanding and challenging.

Soon after Jesus' birth in an empty shed, they must immediately leave and take shelter in Egypt. The life of Jesus the baby was under threat of murder by Herod. Maria and Joseph protected him until they returned to the city of Nazareth. The holy family centred on Jesus really portrayed the ideal family. They relentlessly surrender their heart and whole lives only to God. He is made to be their saviour. No other saviour is able to be their guarantor in life.

Maria and Joseph's struggle is clearly obvious through their path in life when they had to find Jesus who was left in the House of God. Jesus was not just left in the House of God, but he was held hostage, unable to go about freely at will. When Jesus was 12 years old, he followed a Jewish Passover ceremony. Jesus was held hostage by leaders of his people for at least five days in the House of God. He was surrounded by wise men of his people (priests, head priests, elders, Torah experts, Pharisees, people of the book, holy priest). They were engaged in sessions of questioning and debate, but Jesus was unbeatable during the conversation. They, who bore high ranks and titles, were silenced by the young 12 years old Jesus. Maria came forward as the liberator.

Maria dared to enter a place solely reserved for men, she dared shout in front of wise men of her people and others. All of that was done for the sake of Jesus. Maria freed Jesus from the hostage of wise men of her people.

Maria and Joseph's journey is genuine in building a strong solid faith to surrender oneself more to the will of God alone. People can learn from their actions when they attended the wedding in Cana, Galilee. Their solidarity to those who were impoverished was also executed with true heart. So was Maria's journey in following the path of Jesus on his way to his crucifixion, it is a challenge in life to dare face various

challenges in family life with patience, determination, and courage. Maybe the last word of Jesus on the cross, “it is finished”, opens a new perspective for Catholics to afford a new pattern in facing the challenge of family life. Maria who was beneath Jesus’ cross heard those words. Those words are actually full of beautiful messages. It is as Jesus had spoken: “I have done everything good, and all of you must continue this throughout your life, especially in your family”.

It is from this way of life and unending struggle that Catholics can learn from the holy family of Nazareth. People must be patience, determined, and courageous in facing various challenges in life in order to foster a true Christian family. The existing challenge is usually viewed as the cross of life and Catholics have the duty or bearing their respective crosses. The cross carried is fitting and people may not drag or throw their crosses let alone let others carry it for them. Thus is family life in the teaching of the Catholic Church.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

Family in the teaching of the Catholic Church has always confronted challenges year by year. The vow of marriage which is the official initiation of fostering a Catholic family is currently under a new challenge, namely loyalty. Loyalty to the vow of marriage challenges to be contemplated and executed whole-heartedly so that a Catholic marriage with a character of *unitas et indissolubilitas* (unity and inseparability) will remain to bring joy to the family and the entire human race.

The Catholic Church is very observant of family life. The official teaching of the Church regarding marriage remains to keep marriage united and immaculate, taking example of the holy family of Nazareth, namely Jesus, Maria, and Joseph. The Catholic Church leads its community to always be faithful to the vow of marriage, which symbolizes the unity of Jesus and the Church. May Catholic families be

able to always be faithful to this vow of marriage and enjoy happiness as aspired and taught officially by the Catholic Church.

# **AL-QUR'AN AND MARRIAGE ETHICS IN ISLAM**

*Hamim Ilyas*

## **4.1 Foreword**

Humans, both man or woman, are individual and social creatures. As an individual she/he is a unique creature unlike others. Then as a social creature, she/he is unable to live alone and has to live with others in a family or society. Al-Qur'an pays attention to that nature and provides guidelines for the good of man as an individual and social creature, including in keeping good social relations. The guidelines provided by Islam's holy book are general as well as specific in nature. The former is in the form of ethical principles of which the relations are based on; and the latter is in the form of specific guidelines or rules on how the relations should be conducted. This writing analyses the guidelines and its implementations in marriage which is the main union in forming a family.

## **4.2 Marriage Ethics Principles**

Marriage is one of the oldest unions in history. Its union in religion is inseparable to the faith in the creation of man with its nature, of which aside the two natures mentioned above there are still many, among them are being in pairs and bound by rules. Marriage union is conducted to actualize these natures which will be good for her/his personal and societal life. To fulfil these requirements, Al-Qur'an instructs five principles as the basis of marriage:

Firstly, autonomy. Marriage is a part of human being's effort in deciding her/his own faith. Thus, ethically she/he must do it based on autonomy without imposition from others. This autonomy is inherent in her/him as an actualization of human equality and free will. Regarding the equality which becomes the basis of autonomy, it must be affirmed that what is meant here is the equality of man – woman in their humanity. As humans, man and woman both possess equal standing in front of Allah. They are both glorified by God as the descendants of Adam (al-Isra', 17:70); created to worship Him (az-Zariyat, 51:56) by being a servant that must submit to Him and the leaders who represent Him in commanding life on earth (al-Baqarah, 2:30). With that position in mind, they will be afforded with a good life and the best reward if they bear faith and good deeds (an-Nahl, 16:97); and one's gain over another is determined by her/his piety (al-Hujurat, 49:13) and achievement (al-An'am, 6:165).

In regards to this equality, there is a verse in al-Qur'an which literal meaning shows that man has a higher degree compared to woman (al-Baqarah, 2:228); and in the Hadith there is a saying by the Prophet which literally shows that women are inferior to men in terms of religion and mind (HR Imam Bukhari and Muslim). However, when it is understood in its internal and external context, it is known that the superior standing men have shown a bigger socio-economic responsibility of being a *qawwam* (head of family) which is to balance

women's reproductive role of pregnancy, birth, and breastfeeding (an-Nisa', 4:34); and it is known that the Hadith points to a case when the Islamic community at the time of the Prophet celebrated the holy day by conducting 'Id prayer while a group of women were gathering to chatter at the side of the street and disturbing or teasing passer-by.

As for the freedom which becomes a basis for autonomy, al-Qur'an states that God gave the Trust to man. The Trust had been offered to the heaven, earth and mountains, but it was refused (al-Ahzab, 33:72). The Trust is free will which man must be held accountable for in the face of God. In executing free will, man is given a burden in accordance to his capability (al-Baqarah, 2:286); accountability will be requested individually under the condition that no man would bear the sin of others (al-An'am, 6:164). Thus, man and woman will respectively be accounted for whatever deeds have been done. The request for accountability is rightful as long as they possess the freedom to choose and act. Hence each person without regards to gender possesses freedom, since if only man were to have freedom, then woman who do not have it will not be accountable for every deed she has done. Concerning this freedom, al-Qur'an does not afford prerogative rights for man to educate, command, and forbid woman. Both man and woman must engage in *amar-ma'ruf* and *nahi-munkar* as well as mutually reminding of the truth and bearing patience which are moral-social duties taught by book.

Secondly, honesty. Marriage must be conducted in honesty of all parties involved, particularly the bride and groom. Without honesty, marriage becomes deceit with bad implications to its victims, and also perpetrators. Al-Qur'an advises in honesty by commanding people to be together with honest people. This command shows that honesty must be conducted entirely in its meaning of the accordance of one's heart with one's words and actions in all kinds of situations and necessities. This

kind of honesty, according to a hadith, brings forth righteousness which will in turn bring one's self to heaven.

Thirdly, fairness. Marriage must be conducted in fairness in the meaning that proportional and non-discriminative treatment be given to all parties involved. Without fairness a marriage can turn into oppression which would horribly burden the parties who are victim to it. Regarding fairness, al-Qur'an states that fairness is a good deed that is closest to piety and it is commanded to be upheld by anyone (al-Maidah, 5:8), both in government (an-Nisa', 4:58) and in family (an-Nisa', 4:3). Thus the book commands that fairness be a basis for the relationship of man-woman in public and domestic domain.

Fourthly, affection. Marriage must be carried out with affection in its meaning to bring happiness, particularly for the bride and groom who will undertake it. In regards to affection, al-Qur'an affirms that God obligates Himself to bear the character *rahma*, love affection (al-An'am, 6:12) this character is the core or basis of all His characters, *asma* and actions. This character is actualized in the name *Rahman* which shows His unlimited love and affection as well as the name *Rahim* which shows that as a quality *Rahman* is always affixed to and unattached from Him not even for a blink of an eye. Rasulallah advised Moslems to bear good characters as God does. This means that they must possess love and affection as a basic character in which all characters and actions are rooted upon. Consequently, it is affirmed in another hadith that the love and affection bore by man will afford him God's love and affection.

Fifthly, brotherhood. Marriage must be conducted under the principle of brotherhood by not prioritizing loss and gain conducted in business. Regarding brotherhood al-Qur'an stipulates that man is of one nation (al-Baqarah, 2:213). This verse shows man's nature as a social being, where in they are mutually in need of each other. Their life necessities vary and differ. Hence in order to avoid collisions and deviations, they are directed to help one another in righteousness and

piety and to avoid helping one another in sin and rancour (al-Maidah, 5:2). Concerning this issue, al-Qur'an does not portray woman as a tempter of faith (*fitnah*) who can obstruct the achievement of piety. Al-Qur'an does not lay blame on woman (Hawa) as the cause of man's dramatic cosmic fall to earth (al-Baqarah, 2:36). Indeed there are stories of women tempting men found in the Holy Book, such as a prominent Egyptian's wife effort in tempting Joseph, but there is also the story of the Pharaoh's pious wife and Jethro's bashful daughter.

### **4.3 Essence and Goal of Marriage**

Al-Qur'an affirms marriage to be the only acceptable procedure taken by man and woman to foster a family by becoming husband and wife (an-Nisa', 4:24). This specification henceforth eliminated the custom of *Arab Jahiliyah* which allowed the procedure of inheriting women to form a family (an-Nisa', 4:19) and the procedure of living together out of wedlock which is known as *ittikhadz akhdan* (an-Nisa', 4:25). Al-Qur'an mentions marriage as *mitsaq ghalidh*, a strong agreement. The strength of marriage as an agreement is definitely in relation to its execution of procedures which involve many parties beginning from its guardian and witness up to the public who attends the wedding reception. Not merely an agreement, a marriage must also be conducted by fulfilling the ethical principles discussed above so it does not simply become a social contract but it is also a physical and psychological bond of love and affection. This is the essence of marriage which makes it more valuable than other social institutions. Marriage as a physical and psychological bond of love and affection is institutionalized with certain goals.

Firstly, there is a goal to keep one's honour (an-Nisa', 4:24 and al-Maidah, 5:5). Whose honour is kept through marriage? Both verses do not explain. Based on exegesis principles which state that general understanding is prioritized to specific understanding of a matter, then

the honour kept through marriage are the honours of the husband, wife, and children, not just the honour of the husband or the husband and wife, as stipulated in classical and modern exegesis. This is why *Mut'ah* or contractual marriage and illegal marriage in Indonesia do not fulfil this particular goal of marriage as taught by al-Qur'an. This is due to the fact that the wife gotten and the children bore from those kinds of marriages are viewed to have legal defects which consequently make them ineligible to obtain rights as afforded to legitimate wife and children.

Secondly, there is a goal to foster a family of tranquillity, a family of peace, based on love and affection (ar-Rum, 30:21). Love and affection as the basis to realize family peace shows that there is undoubtedly no violence in the family. Violence must be avoided both as behaviour and as a method in problem solving, however heavy and complex the problem in the family is.

#### **4.4 Interreligious Marriage**

Reading of al-Qur'an pertaining to interreligious marriage is found in three chapters. Firstly, al-Baqarah, 2:221 discusses the prohibition of Muslim men to marry unbelieving women and Muslim women to be married to unbelieving men. Secondly, al-Maidah, 5:5 allows Muslim men to marry women of the book. Thirdly, al-Mumtahanah, 60:10 affirms non permissibility of Muslim women to marry infidel men and vice versa. In regards to the exegesis of al-Baqarah, 2:221, in the orthodox faction there is the view that unbelieving women who are not allowed to be married by Muslim men include: women followers of Arabic paganism who worships idols; women followers of non-heavenly religions who worship stars, fire and animals; and women followers of atheism and materialism (Wahbah az-Zuhaili, 1989:VII, 151).

Concerning the exegesis of al-Maidah, 5:5, in the orthodox faction there is the view that women of the book who are allowed to be married

by Muslim men are Jewish and Christian women who fulfil the conditions of authenticity or purity of religion and ancestry. This means the women are followers of the two religions before it underwent *tahrif* (alteration) so it is still authentic as taught by the prophet Moses and Jesus and they are descendants of original followers of the religion before the advent of Islam (Ibn Qudamah, 1984:VI, 592 and Khathib asy-Syarbini, 1955:III, 187-188). If they were followers of Judaism and Christianity which have developed recently and are of Netherland or Indonesian ancestry, as an example, then according to that view, they are not allowed to be married by Muslim men.

Subsequently, in the exegesis of the verse which forbids Muslim women to marry or be married to non-Muslim men, there is an agreement among ulama that a Muslim women is not allowed to marry or be married to non-Muslim men whatever the religion. This agreement exists despite al-Baqarah, 2:221 only emphasizes the prohibition of marriage to unbelieving men and al-Mumtahanah, 60:10 affirms prohibition of marriage to infidel men in which context refers to unbelieving men as well (MTPPI PP Muhammadiyah, 200:8-211).

Al-Baqarah, 2:221 mentions the reason for prohibition of interreligious marriage by stating "Unbelievers do (but) beckon you to the Fire. But Allah beckons by His Grace to the Garden (of bliss) and forgiveness". Ath-Thabari explains that non-Muslim followers beckon their partners to hell by beckoning to do things that cause them to go there which is infidelity to God and Muhammad (at-Thabari, t.t.:224). However, al-Jashash opines that beckoning to the Fire is not the deciding cause (*'illah mujibah*), but it is a signifying cause (*'alam*) of interreligious marriage. In his opinion, the reason for the prohibition of marriage is the incredulity that the unbelievers adhere to (al-Jashshash, t.t.:I, 335).

Aside from the debate on the condition of the *illah* "beckoning to the Fire", ulama agree that the reason to forbid interreligious marriage is

religion. However, the policy of Umar bin Khathab is capable of showing yet another reason. It is said that the caliph forbid Thalhab ibn Ubaidillah and Hudzifah ibn al-Yaman to marry women of the book, both Jewish and Christian. According to ath-Thabari, the prohibition was given with the reason so that the Muslim community does not follow these two close companions of the Prophet in which it would become a trend and the community would prefer marriage to women of the book than Muslim women, or there were also other reasoning which is only known by the caliph (at-Thabari, 2005:II, 464-465). This understanding shows that the prohibition of interreligious marriage was political, in this case it was demography politics. If this understanding is broadened, then prohibition of marriages to unbelieving men and women were also political keeping in mind that when al-Baqarah, 2:221 was revealed in the second year of Hijrah, the Islamic community in Medina were engaged in war with the Quraysh unbelievers of Mecca.

W.M. Watt is of the same view above, so that the verse in al-Maidah, 5:5 which allows marriage between Muslim men with women of the book is understood as a reconciliation effort of Muslims with Jews and Christians after experiencing several conflicts of war (Watt, 1972:200). Long after the revelation of al-Qur'an, political reasoning seems to still be used in the prohibition of interreligious marriage which is ordained and decreed by religious institutions and the state in Indonesia. In the case of Indonesian Council of Ulema (MUI) and Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah, this reasoning is obvious in their use of *sadd adzdzari'ah* as a basis in issuing fatwa. *Sadd adz-adzari'ah* is one of the methods in determining a legal view by closing the door of demerit (*mudhorat*). Interreligious marriage could cause religious controversy which has the potential to incite conflict since it could alter the composition of the number of religious followers in demographic maps. For that reason both organizations forbid it in order to shut the door of

conflict and its impact which is considered as demerit to the Indonesian nation.

Therefore, it can be said that interreligious marriage, aside from being a religious issue, can also be a political one. As a religious issue, on an individual level it can be overcome through faith. While as a political issue, it can be resolved through legislation which could disregard differing faith as an obstacle to marriage. Presently, such legislation is unable to be carried out in Indonesia. This is why people who believe that interreligious marriage is allowed in their religion can carry out interreligious marriage by listing their marriage in the Public Records Office. If the office requires recommendation from an institution or organization, in which case well-established religious institutions or organizations most likely do not intend to give one, then institutions or organizations active in interreligious harmony should provide one and its authority be accepted to issue a recommendation. This policy could be accepted ethically as it guarantees citizen's right to have a family and descendants.

#### **4.5 Same Sex Marriage**

The view on same sex marriage, man with man and woman with woman, is connected to the view on the right sexual orientation. In Islam orthodoxy there is a standard view proposed by all ulema. The view of same sex marriage is considered in opposition to the belief that human nature is created in pairs (51:49; 35:11), as mentioned in previous passages. A pair consists of man and woman (53:54). In connection to sexual orientation, the standard view believes that among human potentials afforded by God to mankind in its creation is sexual potential, that is the power to engage in sexual relation, including sexual desires. Al-Qur'an names sexual desire *syahwah* which root meaning is the souls interest in what it desires (ar-Raghib al-Asfahani, t.t.:277). In the story of Sodom and Gomorra, it is revealed *inna kum la ta'tunar rijal*

*syahwatan min dunin nisa'*, for ye practise your lusts on men in preference to women (al-A'raf, 7:81).

Because sexual desire was given upon human creation, then it is believed that it is something natural and instinctive to human. Instinct in al-Qur'an is called *wahyu*, as a mother's instinct to nurse her new born child (al-Qashash, 28:7). Consequently, as instinct can direct man's life and behaviour, Abduh calls it *hidayah*. He states that to undergo life, man is given four guidance: instinct (*alhidayah al-fitriah*), senses (*hidayah al-hawass*), mind (*hidayah al-'aql*), and religion (*hidayah al-din*) (Ridha, 1975:I, 62:63). As an instinct, sexual desire undoubtedly drives its bearer to possess sexual behaviour and orientation. There are two sexual behaviours and orientations mentioned in al-Qur'an.

Firstly, heterosexuality. This orientation is mentioned in Ali Imran, 3:14 which states *zuyyina lin nasi hubbus syahawati minan nisa...* (Fair in the eyes of men is the love of things they covet: women...).

Secondly, homosexuality as mentioned in the story of the prophet Lot in the previous passage.

Heterosexuality in that verse is stated as something deemed fair and good by man. It cannot be known through this statement alone whether al-Qur'an views this sexual orientation as good or bad, since the wording "deemed fair" does not show the view of the holy book, but shows the views of people. However, if the wording is understood based on its usage in other verses, such as *zuyyina lil kafirina ma kanu ya'malun* (al-An'am, 6:122) and *zuyyina lahum su'u a'malihim* (at-Taubah, 9:37), then it can be understood that heterosexuality is bad. Meanwhile, homosexuality in al-Qur'an is boldly stated as *fahisyah*, something very bad (al-A'raf, 7:80) and the people who did it massively together are told to have received very heavy punishment (al-A'raf, 7:84 and others).

The view of al-Qur'an on homosexuality indirectly (*mafhum mukhalafah*) shows its view on heterosexuality. Heterosexuality is good

and righteous. This view is proven by the suggestions of a number of verses and hadith that sexual relations be done in a mutually satisfying way between husband and wife. Where the verse in Ali Imran, 3:14 seems to condemn heterosexuality, then it is due to the means of sexual satisfaction among Arabs which could not be tolerated at the time of the verse's revelation. It is known from al-Qur'an that among the Arabs there were marriages with numerous wife and irresponsible husbands, prostitution (*bigha'*) and mistresses or lovers (*akhan*) were common practices. The verse seems to be forwarded to those who were irresponsible and deviant as well as committers of adultery.

Proponents of the standard view believe that axiologically speaking goodness and righteousness of heterosexuality has been proven through history. Axiological proof states that defiance to the truth would bring about destruction. Ancient history has proven that Sodom and Gomorra experienced destruction due to their practice of homosexuality and contemporary history shows that gay communities have a high risk of contracting the deadly AIDS disease. Nature surrounding mankind also supports this truth. Animals and plants that do not know culture and are created in pairs as human do reproduce heterosexually. These two things show that sexuality (read: heterosexuality) is something natural, not a social construct. If it were unnatural, surely its disobedience would not bring about chaos to human life. Although sexual desire is something natural, al-Qur'an does not let its satisfaction go unregulated. He commands that the impulse must be channelled through marriage, not prostitution and mistresses or lovers (*an-Nisa'*, 4:24-25). The ideal marriage is one which can achieve the goal of marriage that is to keep one's honour and provide tranquillity based on love and affection as explained above.

In accordance to the understanding of pair (*zauj*) which differs in sexuality and natural sexuality, al-Qur'an only allows marriage between man and woman. Same sex marriage is not allowed, between man and

man or woman and woman. Hence, if gay *mutakhannits* and *mutarajjil* were to marry, they must marry their opposite sex. If someone were to engage in *liwath* (sodomy, anal sex between men) and *sihaq* (navel sex between women which in a hadith is mentioned as women to women adultery), then in a number of popular traditions from the classic period they would be punished heavily (as-Shan'ani, t.t.:IV, pages 13-14). As to hermaphrodites (*khuntsa*) intending to marry, according to that tradition, there must be confirmation whether the person is male or female. When it has been confirmed he is a man, then he can marry someone who is a woman or someone who has been confirmed to be a woman. This applies vice versa for a woman. To confirm the sexuality of a hermaphrodite is male or female, ulema (Abu Hanifah, as-Syafi'I and Ahmad bin Hanbal) in the past used anatomical size and function, and also what is presently called gender and psychological considerations. They categorized *khuntsa* into two groups, *khuntsa ghair musykil* and *khuntsa musykil*.

*Khuntsa ghair musykil* is a person who possesses two sexual organs with one dominant over the other. The sexuality is determined based on the dominant sexual organ (the one with bigger or more perfect shape). Meanwhile, *khuntsa musykil* is a person who does not possess a sexual organ (deformed sexual organ) or possesses two sexual organs without dominance. For those who do not possess sexual organ, the ruling of male sexuality is based on the growth of facial hair and interest in woman (for those old enough). Meanwhile for woman, it is based on the presence of breasts and menstruation. As to those who possess both sexual organs, then the sexuality is based on the active sexual organ. If the person urinates using the penis, then he is male; and if the person urinates using the vagina then she is female. If the person were to urinate through both, then the sexuality is decided based on which of the two becomes active first. If none were active first, then the same method

is used as to those who do not possess sexual organ (ad-Dimasyqi, t.t.:197).

Aside from the standard view of the orthodox, a number of contemporary Muslim scholars proposed a view unpopular among Muslim community. One of them is Faris Malik who stated that al-Qur'an explicitly acknowledges the third sexuality, neither male nor female. This explicit acknowledgement in his opinion is found in asy-Syura, 42:49-50 which he translated as follows: "Only to God belongs all that is in Heaven and Earth. God creates what He wills. He plans what He wills to become female and plans what He wills to become male. Or He unites (characteristic of) male and female and He also creates what He wills to be barren of descent." He also strengthened his view by using plant analogies that are created by God in pairs in which some of them do not have pairs (Alimi, 2004: xv-xvi).

Subsequently, in relation to homosexuality and lesbianism, Scott Siraj al-Haqq Kugle, Omar Nahas and Amreen Jamal, declared that the story of the prophet Lot is not specifically related to same sex relationship. The story in their view is in connection to a community punished for engaging in various types of forbidden sexual behaviours, including free sex and paedophilia; unrighteous act towards guests; abuse of power; rape and intimidation. Aside from that, they also referred same sex relationship to al-Qur'an's depiction of life after death. Some verses mention the promise to pious worshippers that in heaven they will be accompanied by beautiful women and handsome men. In their opinion, these verses can be interpreted as leading to same sex relation in heaven (Ibid:xxiv).

Until recently, the standard orthodox view still and perhaps will remain dominant among Muslim community. This view finds it difficult not to say impossible to accept transsexuality, homosexuality and lesbianism as a normal reality. However, it must be realized that religion today is not afforded the right to stifle sexual orientation through means

of force and violence. If this unpopular view is unacceptable, then the Muslim community must take action on that reality with reference of Islam as a religion of love and affection. The Prophet had shown through practice that Islam is a caring religion, inclusive to those who are less fortunate, with moral standards based on the conscience. In all clarity, the reality must be acted upon with heart not base desire.

#### **4.6 Rights and Obligations of Husband and Wife**

Aside from emphasizing several rights of the wife which must be fulfilled by the husband (living allowance, *mu'asyarah bilma'ruf* and not made to suffer), al-Qur'an teaches the rights and obligations of husband and wife by proposing a fair and universal rule in the short statement saying "They (wives) shall have rights equal to their obligations in *ma'ruf*" (al-Baqarah, 2:228). As a standard in determining the equality of rights and obligations of husband and wife, according to Muhammad Abduh, *ma'ruf* involves four criteria, namely natural law, religion, custom, and righteous character. Based on these criteria, the rights and obligations of a wife in a certain region and time, even social tier, could differ to rights and obligations of a wife in another region, time, and social tier due to the difference in their customs. In this case, what needs attention is that the custom which is allowed in the criteria is a custom which does not allow what is forbidden and forbid what is allowed.

The principle of rights and obligations al-Qur'an proposes is very different to the one proposed by mid-century ulema. In general, they stated that the wife is not obligated to nurse the baby, cook, wash, and do other household chores. Her obligation is only one, that is fulfilling the sexual desire of the husband, unless there is a probable reason provided by religion or '*uzur syar'i*', such as menstruation; and her rights are to receive allowance, living quarters, and a number of other rights. Their principle can be defined to possess certain theological and

cultural context. In al-Qur'an, there is a verse which mentions that the wife is a "*harts*", a field which can be approached as the husband desires (al-Baqarah, 2:223) and there is a hadith from Abu Hurairah which states that the Prophet said: "If a husband calls his wife to bed and the wife refuses, then the husband is irritated through the night, the angels condemn the wife until morning" (*muttafaq 'alaih*).

The literal meaning of the verse and hadith above shows that fulfilling the husband's sexual desire is an obligation which must be executed by the wife anytime it is willed. However, al-Qur'an states that the obligation of the wife is determined by *ma'ruf*, which involves the four criteria. "Fulfilling desire" of the husband, as the wife's obligation, should also be determined under those criteria as well. This is why verses and hadith need to be understood by paying attention to its context.

Imam Bukhari and Muslim affirmed from Jabir, a close companion of the Prophet, who said that the verse was revealed in reference to the belief among Jews that having sexual intercourse with the wife from behind will cause the child born to be cross-eyed. This belief is followed by people of Medina who converted to Islam. When they found out that the Muhajereens conduct intercourse in that manner, they asked the Prophet about it and the verse was revealed as a response. So, the verse was revealed to disprove the myth, not to legalize sexual exploitation of the wife. The term field which is used to call a wife, does not in any way mean to degrade her, it is on the contrary to show respect. A flourishing field in the barren Arab land is considered as a very valuable wealth. Hence the verse implies the understanding that the wife is a very valuable "wealth" which must be treated full of love and affection, courteously and righteously, not brashly without considerations. This is shown in other verses in al-Qur'an which mentions the husband and wife being each other's garments (al-Baqarah, 2:187).

As for the hadith, it may refer to the custom of being against *ghilah* which was evident in the pre-Islamic Arab community. *Ghilah* is the act of having sexual intercourse with a pregnant or nursing wife. They viewed *ghilah* as a taboo (Hamid al-Faqi, t.t.:214). The custom seemed extremely strong in that the Prophet had intended to prohibit it. He then held his intent upon finding out that the *ghilah* done by the Persians and Romans did not actually bear terrible impact on their children (HR Muslim from Judzamah binti Wahb). Being against *ghilah* to people in the *Jahiliyah* age did not cause trouble because they were allowed polygamy without limitation on the number of wives they could marry. The rule and practice of such polygamy is then altered by Islam. In an-Nisa', 4:3 it is affirmed that polygamy is allowed with a maximum number of four wives, and in its execution the husband is required to be capable of being fair to all his wives. Upon this limitation on polygamy, it could be the case that being against *ghilah* be deemed difficult by Muslims at the time.

An-Nisa' which regulates the limit of polygamy is a *Madaniyah* chapter revealed in the early 4<sup>th</sup> *Hijriyah* year. Ignoring the possibility of the hadith above as a *mursal shahabi*, the saying of the Prophet is at the earliest said in the 7<sup>th</sup> *Hijriyah* year. This is because Abu Hurairah, the authenticator of the hadith, just converted to Islam on that year, that is between the Hudaibiyah Agreement and the Battle of Khaibar (M. as-Siba'I, 1978:292). Through his words, the Prophet at that time intended to overcome the "difficulty" felt by male Arab Muslims and to eradicate the culture of being against *ghilah* which was still followed by Arab women.

Aside from that, there is also the possibility that the hadith is linked with the wife's refusal to "fulfil the desire" of the husband which could result in the loss of one of the goals of marriage that is to keep one's honour, as mentioned in an-Nisa', 4:24 and al-Maidah, 5:5. Therefore, the Prophet said so in order for husband and wife to mutually assist each

other in good deeds and piety. Consequently, ulema's view of not obligating wives to nurse their birth child was highly likely to be influenced by Arab traditions, particularly the Quraish tribe who did not nurse their babies to their own mother, but to their baby sitter who were usually sought in remote areas. If that is the case, in other societies which do not recognize this custom, including Indonesia, mother can be obligated to nurse their baby as a part of the reproductive tasks they must carry out.

#### **4.7 Leadership in the Family**

An-Nisa', 4:34 usually becomes the basis of affording the right of the husband to become head of the household. This understanding is based on one of the definitions of the word *qawwamun*, plural for *qawwam*, found in that verse which is *al-amir* meaning leader. In most mid-century exegesis literatures, such as al-Kasysyaf, it is explained that the husband as a leader holds the same position as a government to its people, who has the right to order and forbid and to be obeyed. Modern exegesis literatures still use this definition for that word, as do al-Manar, which provided explanations close to basic principles of man woman relations as explained above. It is stated in this exegesis that leadership of the husband to his wife bears functions of *himayah* (to defend), *ri'ayah* (to protect), *wilayah* (to guard), and *kifayah* (to afford).

In Arabic the term *qawwam* also has another meaning, which is *al-qawy 'ala qiyam bi al-amr* (a person with strength to carry out the task). Based on this definition, the verse shows that the husband must take care of his wife who must carry out reproductive tasks. Therefore, if it were to be understood based on this definition, the verse does not appoint the husband's right of leadership but his responsibility to provide welfare to a wife who is pregnant, in labour, and nursing. This responsibility and task becomes the merit of husband and wife respectively as bestowed by God and implied in the phrases of the two verses.

## **4.8 The Ideal Wife**

A discussion on the ideal wife in al-Qur'an is also found in an-Nisa' 4:34. This verse does not explicitly state how the ideal wife is. It compliments pious wife with certain attributes. These compliments can be understood to refer to criteria of the ideal wife, namely: (1) *Qanitah* which means obedient to norms of religion, morality, and law along with subservient; (2) *Hafidhah* which means capable of self-care and trustworthy. The verse does not state what actions may and may not be taken against such ideal wife. This shows that wives fulfilling these criteria should be allowed to develop her full potential as humble servant and leader. Therefore, from the perspective of al-Qur'an, it is not an issue whether the wife works outside the home or not. The important thing is that a wife must be *qanitah* and *hafidah* regardless of her being a career woman or not.

## **4.9 Polygamy and Domestic Violence**

Al-Qur'an discusses polygamy in an-Nisa', 4:3, 20, and 129. The first verse talks about the conditions behind the ruling, requirements of fairness, and maximum limit of polygamy up to four wives; the second verse is in regards to prohibition in taking assets which have already been given to the wife, however many, for the cost of polygamy; and the third one is regarding the impossibility for a husband to be fair to all his wives in polygamy. An-Nisa', 4:3 relates the rule of polygamy to unfairness of the orphan. Elaboration on this issue can be done through historical reconstruction when the verse was revealed in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of *Hijriyah*. At the time, the Muslim community had just experienced a crushing defeat in the Battle of Uhud which took the lives of 70 adult male. This was a significant amount since the number of adult male at the time was merely 700. During that period, men were the backbone of the family. Due to the fall of 10% of Muslim men, many women became

widows and many children became fatherless in families which lost their bread winners. In other words, there was a boom in widows and fatherless children with potential to be strays in Madina, the newly developing centre of Islamic government at the time.

In a period when tribalism was still the social structure of the Arab communities, this did not pose as a problem since the head of tribe who has the obligation of providing social security to his people would provide them with sustenance. However, the situation changed along with the development of Hijaz into a trade route from Yemen to Syria, the urban Arab community were pressured to change into a trade community with all its consequences, such as individualism, exploitation of the weak and competition. Islam did not turn their historical clock counter clockwise back to ancient ages, but it sorted out the existing situation by emphasizing the application of social ethics with principles of equality, fraternity, and justice. That is why when there was a social crisis due to the large number of casualties of war, the Prophet did not play the role of a tribal leader providing sustenance for widows and fatherless children who were left behind, but he acted as a head of state who must guarantee the welfare of his people. Since the state treasury was limited or even non-existent, consequently, citizens who had mental and material competence were suggested to resolve the crisis by conducting polygamy as a social security measure.

From this brief explanation, it is known that polygamy in Islam is actually a principle which applies in times of social emergency, not in normal situations and individual "emergency", as formulated in books of Islamic laws and marriage laws in some Muslim countries. Although it was an emergency ruling, polygamy at the time remained under very strict requirements as mentioned above. That is why the regulation and application of polygamy in the Muslim community should refer to those ideal terms and conditions stipulated in al-Qur'an. Based on that reference, consequently the polygamy conducted with absence of the

said social emergency can be prohibited. Currently, the prohibition of polygamy seems to be a historical certainty since humanitarian awareness, in which Islam has a role in initiating, has become stronger. The cultural background of polygamy among others is the view that women are subordinate to men. In developed culture this view no longer exists. That is the reason why although there are proponents of polygamy, the process of disallowing the institution remains on going. This process is undoubtedly inseparable to the intrinsic values of developed culture which views violence against women not only in the form of physical violence, but also psychological and sexual as well. Nowadays people assess polygamy as a form of psychological violence towards the wife (woman).

This value is not something completely new in Islam. This can be seen from eradication of violence against women agendas at the time of the Prophet which are found in al-Qur'an as follows: (1) female infanticide by burying them alive (at-Takwir, 81:8-9); (2) beating (an-Nisa', 4:30); (3) divorcing a wife due to old age (al-Mujadilah, 58:2); (4) evicting the wife from home (at-Thalaq, 65:1); (5) causing suffering and misery (at-Thalaq, 65:6); (6) complicating the life of women (al-Baqarah, 2:236).

#### **4.10 Conclusion**

This writing attempts to elaborate on the implementation of Qur'anic teachings in marriage ethics by analysing human nature. This effort is in line with al-A'la, 87:3 which affirms that in the creation of man, God bestowed human nature (form, existence, and potential), then provided guidance. This affirmation, on the one hand, shows that for its own good man must actualize his human nature in line to God's guidance. On the other hand, the affirmation also means that the formulation of the teachings of al-Qur'an must be in line with human nature so that it can be executed well. It is already known that al-Qur'an was revealed as a

guide (al-Baqarah, 2:2 and 185). Its elaboration with the pattern above is expected to have fulfilled the second intention of the affirmation found in al-A'la, 87:3.

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## **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN A DIVERSE SOCIETY**

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### **5.1 Introduction**

Recently the term “multicultural” is often used in discussions on education and diversity. However, this term is relatively new, while a more well-known term is “plurality” and “pluralism”. Multiculturalism is different to pluralism. Pluralism emphasizes reverence of difference and varieties, while multiculturalism emphasizes on equality of rights for all parties. Hence, there is no attitude of the majority protecting the minority in multiculturalism because both are regarded as equals and are afforded the same rights. Aside from that there is also the term interculturalism which emphasizes that each culture learns from each other. In this writing, the term and concept used is multiculturalism, namely multicultural Christian education. Firstly, an understanding of multicultural Christian education is explained, then a discussion on what is happening in Indonesia follows.

## **5.2 Multicultural Education**

In order to understand multicultural Christian education, we will initially study the theory of multicultural education proposed by James A. Banks, a renowned expert on multicultural education in the United States. Banks (2001:25) said that multicultural education began from the idea that “all students, whatever their background of ethnicity, race, culture, social class, religion, or its exceptions are, must experience equal education in schools”. Hence, “culture” is not only related to traditional culture (rules of behaviour, language, rituals, art, fashion, ways of producing and processing food), but it also refers to social construct, of which among others are social class, economic and political systems, technology, and particularly religion. This broad understanding is a newer understanding which enhanced the old understanding that multiculturalism only refers to ethnic diversity. In the sphere of general education, multicultural education promoted by James Banks (2001:230-236) shows four levels of integrating multicultural understanding into the curriculum.

The first level, named the contribution approach, only complements elements of traditional culture such as food, dance, music, and handcraft without paying attention to the importance and meanings of those elements in their ethnic communities. This level is merely integration on the surface. As a result, pupils could perceive these cultural elements as a foreign experience exclusive of their own groups.

At the second level, named the additive approach, teachers add various contents, concepts, themes and perspectives into the curriculum without altering basic structure, goal, and characteristic. This is, for instance, done by adding a book, unit, or subject into the curriculum. Indeed this additive level delves deeper than the first, nevertheless, both levels do not restructure the main curriculum which possesses several bias.

At the third level, named the transformation approach, basic assumptions from the curriculum is altered so that they enable pupils to observe concepts, issues, themes, and problems from various perspectives and vantage points.

Ultimately, the fourth level, named the social action approach, aims to empower pupils and assist them in achieving political awareness. Pupils are enabled to become reflective social critics and skilful participants in executing social change.

Although Banks himself states that the fourth level could be fused in learning situations, I think level 3 and 4 are more effective in deepening understanding of multicultural Christian education. Veneration and celebration of diversity does not suffice by holding festivals or carnivals, or liturgies with music and customs from a particular region, it is done through critical attitude and way of thinking, openness to differences and varieties which in the end leads to social change.

If Banks concept is applied in religious education, several possibilities are bound to arise in relation to the integration of the understanding of multiculturalism in the curriculum. At level 1, the pupils know other religions plainly: names of places of worship, holy book, prophets, religious holidays, religious leaders etc. At level 2, pupils study other religious more deeply as a knowledge separate of their own religion. Visitations to other religions' place of worship can be conducted to enhance their knowledge. Consequently, at level 3 a change would take place in the curriculum; that is a dialog of one's own religion with another. This dialog enables rejuvenation and change of understanding towards other religions and their own. Intertextual explanation is included at this third level. Meanwhile, at level 4, the open understanding achieved earlier leads to social change, namely by taking actions together with followers of other religions. The joint statement of inter religious figures in Indonesia on the nine lies of the government in January 2011 is an example of level 4.

Jack Seymour (1977:18) defines Christian education as “a dialog for life, a search to utilize sources of faith and cultural traditions, to move into a future open to justice and hope.” This definition shows a continuous search in order to engage the Christian faith tradition with a broad meaning of culture in dialog which leads to justice and hope. However, Seymour did not specifically mention religious diversity since he was conducting a mapping of Christian education practices in United States which was less aware of the existence of religious diversity. Therefore, if this definition were to be utilized in Indonesia, the emphasis on “culture” must include religion as one of the most important issue.

If religion is a part of culture, then there is a great consequence in the church’s view towards other religions. Even though Christians easily mingle with non-Christians, do they really appreciate the companionship equally, or does triumphalist attitude still remain? One of the consequences of multicultural Christian education is the abandonment of exclusivist attitude in theology of religions.

Paul Knitter (2008) separates theology of religions into four models, namely the replacement model (only one religion is true), the fulfilment model (one religion fulfils the many), the mutuality model (many religions engage in dialog), and the acceptance model (many religions are true: let it be). This division is a development from the classical categorization of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. The replacement model is in line with exclusivism; the fulfilment model is in line with inclusivism; while the mutuality and acceptance model are a development of pluralism. The mutuality and acceptance model both emphasize dialog, but the acceptance model is more radical since it truly respects and accepts differences radically; this is where true dialog happens.

If Paul Knitter’s division of theology of religions is combined with James Banks theory, mutuality and acceptance model are necessary to

achieve level 3 and 4 in curriculum integration. Without dialog and true appreciation of diversity, the undertaking of transformation in the Christian education curriculum would be an arduous task.

### **5.3 Knitter**

	Banks	Replacement	Fulfilment	Mutuality	Acceptance
1.	Contributions	x			
2.	Additive		x		
3.	Transformative			x	x
4.	Social Action			x	x

One of the main goals of multicultural Christian education is for pupils to understand and accept differences, capable of respecting others who are culturally and religiously different from themselves, and emphasize adaptive differences as well as help to build a cross cultural affinity. This begs the question, how far should appreciation to those differences go to realize a cross cultural affinity? This last issue brings us to the notion that multicultural Christian education in Indonesia is inseparable from politics. In the Dutch colonial era, diversity in Indonesia was utilized to uphold colonial power through politics of divide and conquer. It seems to have similarly happened during the New Order era when racial and religious groups are opposed against each other under unhealthy competitive conditions (local vs non-local and Muslims vs Christians). In order to understand these political dynamics, multicultural Christian education needs to accustom pupils to think critically about the abuse of diversity which could lead to interracial and interreligious conflicts. It is hoped that pupils will bring about social change with this awareness.

Furthermore, a critical way of thinking is also related to what is called connected knowing, an understanding connected to experience.

John Dewey has established the foundations of education using experience as a starting point. According to Dewey, education reflects life experience. In line with Dewey, Banks also appreciates life experience of the pupil as a starting point in education. As a consequence, Banks believes that knowledge is not neutral, objective, and universal, but constructed under assumptions, frame of thoughts, and particular perspectives. This is where the processes of knowledge construction supports racism, gender discrimination, colonialism, and interreligious conflict. It can be said positively that connected knowing beliefs personal experience to be the basis of knowledge (Brelsford, 1999:65). The question is whether this knowledge which is connected to experience is valid. It is, in fact, this subjective knowledge which is more meaningful in man's life experience. Orlando Fals-Borda and Mohammad Rahman (1991:14) said, "People cannot be liberated by a consciousness and knowledge other than their own."

There are Christians who associate multiculturalism to an attitude of anti-religious purity, or an attitude of eliminating uniqueness of religions by rendering them all to be identical, so that truth becomes relative in nature. This concern is actually unnecessary since it is through a true dialog that the uniqueness of each religion is venerated and they acquire equally levelled positions. The concern of Christians is actually rooted in an attitude intending to conquer followers of other religions so that they convert to Christianity. This narrow understanding of the mission causes a lot of Christians to feel uncomfortable with multicultural Christian education.

## **5.4 Implementation of Multicultural Christian Education**

In order to carry out multicultural Christian education, I utilize the "wall" metaphor, which is behind the wall, at the wall, and beyond the wall. Christian education behind the wall is a contextual reading and

study of the Bible which directly relates to the reality of life, and it utilizes new eyes, namely the eyes of those who are not afforded equal rights in the social construct: women, children, the poor, and victims of violence. Thus, this reading of the Bible is able to support the birth of a contextual theology. Christian education at the wall refers to studying other religions and conducting dialog with followers of other religions. In other words, in Christian education participants not only study the Christian faith but other religions through dialog. This dialog could enrich their understanding of Christian faith as well as their appreciation towards other religions. As an example, a dialog of texts from the Bible and al-Qur'an of the same figures can be carried out: Abraham/Ibrahim; Jacob/Yaqub; Moses/Musa; Jesus/Isa (van Overbeeke-Rippen, 2006).

Meanwhile, Christian education beyond the wall is conducted by real acts in realizing peace and justice in the community, which is continued by reflection on its undertaking. The real acts/efforts carried out to assist and alleviate those in need in the Indonesian community, which struggles with issues of poverty and injustice as well as being in an environment that is prone to disaster and ecological degradation, are mutual efforts of everyone from various religious and cultural backgrounds. Diaconia done by the church should be followed by reflection of the social work that was undertaken in order to enrich and ripen the faith.

In order to support Christian education which includes the three models, a social transformation approach is the most appropriate. This approach aims to sponsor human emergence in the light of the reign of God (Seymour, 1997:26). Sponsoring here means strengthening, enabling, and guiding (not authoritarian, paternalistic, and manipulative). Human emergence is the process of becoming more humane which includes the formation (gradual development) and transformation (radical change, social atonement, preferential option for the poor). The reign of God is an alternative term to the Kingdom of

God which is considered more authoritarian and paternalistic. The reign of God has been realized on earth but it is not complete. The church education service strives for the vision of the reign of God ethically, politically, and eschatologically. Therefore, education for social transformation promotes independence, justice, and peace amidst a situation of injustice and oppression.

## **5.5 Christian Education in Indonesia**

Christian Education in Indonesia is conducted in church, family, and school. It must be admitted that up till today Christian education remains behind the wall, in which it only provides Christian teachings. If non-Christians or other religions were mentioned, it is limited merely to a little knowledge or a suggestion to be respectful. The church conducts various Christian education activities aside from prayers: Sunday School for children (0-12 years old); teenage service (13-18 years old); young adult service (19-25 years old); adult (26-55 years old) and elderly (56 years old and over) service. There are churches which have an open attitude to respect and study other religions, for example by visiting Islamic Boarding schools, inviting *ustad* to explain about Islam, saying happy fasting and *Idul Fitri*. However, these venerations are limited to level 1 in Banks theory, which is the contributions model; or level 2, additive model (adding knowledge of other religions in the curriculum).

Christian education in the family is the same as Christian education in church. There are families that teach their children to respect people of other religions, but there are also those that do not. There are even families that turn the television off when the Islamic call to prayer is aired. There are families that allow their children to make friends of different religions, and even marry with a person of different religion, but there are also families that prohibit their children to be acquainted to others, let alone marry one of different religion. Actually, families that live with various neighbours have a lot of opportunities to engage in

inter religion/faith dialog. However, what usually happens is mere chit-chat or not discuss about religion at all. So it seems or feels like people know other religions because they are living together with people of different religions, but in reality they do not know what others believe in.

Christian school is one of the forms of church service and testimony which has been existent since the initial establishment and development of church in Indonesia. Initially, Christian schools (and hospitals) were means to spread the Word so that many people belief in Jesus. As an example, in the early beginning of the spread of the Word in the Central Java regions, which was around 1920-1930, Bible preaching institutions from the Netherlands (Zending) established Christian schools (HCS met de Bijbel primary school, MCS) as one of the means to spread the word of the Bible. These Christian schools generally are of high quality so that many people want to send their children there.

However, subsequently there was a shift of the church understanding on the role of Christian schools which is in line with the independence of our country, the Republic of Indonesia, which demanded the active participation of the entire nation in development. Christian schools were no longer facilities to merely preach the Bible, but they have now become a means of testimony and service to show Christian care and participation in the effort of developing the field of education. There was also a shift in the understanding of the preaching of the Bible/church mission, which do not only put emphasis on spiritual aspects, but encompasses the entire aspects of human life. Henceforth, testimony is no longer separable from service, and Christian school was no longer seen as a means of preaching the Bible, but it's regarded as testimony and service. Soetjitpto Wirowidjojo (1978:72-73) portrayed the role of Christian school as follows: (1) as a means of church testimony, Christian school witnesses the Bible Glorifying the Kingdom of God; (2) Christian school as a means of service in the field of

education to the Christian community and to the general public of the nation; (3) Christian school as a means of communications between church and community.

Unexpectedly, a problem came to surface with the issuance of a Letter of Joint Agreement (SKB) of the Minister of Education and Culture and Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia number 4/U/SKB/1999 number 570 year 1999 on the Application of Religious Education on Primary and Intermediate Education Unit under the Scope of Supervision of the Department of Education and Culture, in which it stated that students are to receive religious education in line with the religion they follow. This means Christian schools are obligated to carry out religious education other than Christianity (if there were more than 10 students in the class).

Subsequently, this SKB became a part of the National Education System (Sisdiknas) Law of 2003. Hence, since 1999 up to 2003, tensions among Christian schools were heavily felt, in which it culminated into a demonstration rejecting the issuance of the Law Proposal into the Sisdiknas Law. The reason for rejection is that if Christian schools were to provide education of other religions, then it would lose its defining character. In other words, the defining character of Christian schools lies on the implementation of the subject Education on Christianity (PAK). This is actually a narrow view. Shouldn't the defining character of these Christian schools show throughout all the school aspects which reflect the values of Christianity: a relationship of honest care and attention between the teacher and student, among teachers, among students, among teachers, students and other employees; this relationship of love and care is also founded on responsibility, discipline, redemption and peace.

An expert on Christian education, N.K. Atmadja Hadinoto (190:166-167), showed there are three kinds of attitude in regards to religious education in Christian schools: (1) Schools with apostolic emphasis,

which emphasize PAK to students of Christian families, and evangelization/salvation for non-Christian students; (2) Schools as means of assembly among religions, in which dialog and testimonies are emphasized. The tradition of the Christian faith is highlighted, but there are attitudes of reverence and appreciation of other religions; (3) Schools with open system towards other religions, in accordance to the religious belief of the students.

Under the understanding of the first model, it is certainly impossible to conduct subject of other religions, while under the second and third model it is possible. It seems that most of Christian schools in Indonesia bear the first model attitude. While in fact, in reference to testimony, schools can become means of encounter and dialog with followers of other religions. It is through these dialogs that each follower will be able to enrich their own faith. Christian teachers and students must also deepen their faith in order to be able to answer questions proposed by non-Christian students.

The effort in realizing the second and third model occurs in some Christian and Catholic schools which carry out religiosity education. The origin of religiosity education is Romo Mangunwijaya's idea to develop communication of faith at Kanisius Primary in Mangunan, Kalasan. The basis of his thought was the difference between religion and religiosity. Religion refers to external matters, rituals, regulations, rites, laws, customs, external symbols, sociological and political aspects; while religiosity involves faith, piety, hope, and love and affection which touches the deepest issues, which defines the base attitude, which urges people to conduct good deeds, to be merciful, to feel the longing to be close to God, and which urges people to be faithful in hope, to submit oneself to the Divine Architect, to be full of love and care, kind hearted, forgiving, and shining in their conduct for the sake of justice and the alleviation of the sorrow of fellow humans (Mangunwijaya, 1994:55).

It is not religion which is taught in communication of faith, but religiosity. Communication of faith will not alienate students from the current world reality because what is learned are things that are experiential, based on real experiences. That is why the faith is nurtured, not merely studied cognitively. The deepest values of religiosity also avert students from the feeling of superiority to friends who are of other religions, in fact with openness to dialog, a meeting point of similarity in religious values can be found to face the challenges of life. Religiosity education which is developed today is a combination of Romo Mangun's idea with the paradigm of reflective pedagogy. Religiosity education is a communication of faith, both among pupils of the same religion and among those of different religions and beliefs in order to help pupils to become a religious, moral, and open human being who is capable of becoming an agent of social change for the sake of realizing a society of material and immaterial prosperity, based on universal values of love, harmony, peace, justice, honesty, sacrifice, care, and brotherhood (Catechetical Commission of the Holy Bishop of Semarang, Education Commission of the Holy Bishop of Semarang, 2009:17-18).

The goals of religiosity education are: (1) To nurture a mental attitude for pupils to be able to see the goodness of God in one's self, others, and their living surroundings so that they could bear concern over community life; (2) To assist pupils in finding and realizing universal values revered by all religions and beliefs; (3) To develop inter religious and belief cooperation with true spirit of brotherhood (Catechetical Commission of the Holy Bishop of Semarang, Education Commission of the Holy Bishop of Semarang, 2009:29).

Religiosity education pays close attention to the context of pupils, hence its process consists of: experience, reflection, and evaluation and action. Experience could be in the form of folklore, life story, an event directly experienced and in accordance to the discussion theme/topic; the media used can be in the form of movies, articles, comics, or

pictures. Reflection on experiences is conducted by: 1) critically finding experience values; 2) communicating the reflection results with values of faith and teachings of religion/belief it is grounded upon; 3) conducting dialog on the wealth of views of religious teachings/belief among pupils. Meanwhile, evaluation and action can be divided into: pre-action and action. Pre-action is the class activity to express findings of reflection values through statement or symbols, in the form of writing, movement, or showcase exhibition done individually or in groups. Action is an individual/group activity following up on reflection done outside of the learning process in class which has a concrete social impact (Catechetic Commission of the Holy Bishop of Semarang, Education Commission of the Holy Bishop of Semarang, 2009:32-33).

An interfaith dialog among pupils is obvious from the process of reflection. In this case, pupils learn what is taught in various religions in Indonesia. This understanding of religions is written in the religiosity education study book, but it is also expected of the pupils to question religious figures to complete the book. In these dialog, pupils learn to understand and respect various religions and beliefs in Indonesia. Subsequently, in the action part, pupils conduct various activities in the community to practice what they have learned in class. If this religiosity education were to be assessed using James Banks' theory above, then it would be in the category of level 3 (curriculum change) and level 4 (social action).

Religiosity education is necessary in Indonesia in order for interfaith dialog to be realized in schools. Unfortunately, not all parties are accepting of religiosity education. There are people who do not understand it correctly and hesitant of carrying it out. For example, a teacher is afraid of providing knowledge on teachings of religions due to insufficient mastery of the subject. Whereas, in fact, teachers are mere facilitators who do not need to master everything. Teachers task students to seek information from various religious leaders. There are also

concerns of parents and teachers regarding the students' own mastery in their own religious teaching. For example, there is the case of a Catholic student learning in a Catholic school and he/she lacks knowledge in Catholic teaching. Religiosity education does not actually negate Catholic education which should remain to be conducted specifically for Catholic students outside of the school schedule. The biggest obstacle in the implementation of religiosity education particularly in Yogyakarta is that it is not recognized as education of Catholic religion by the education board, so that more and more Catholic schools abandon using it.

Multicultural Christian education founded on social transformation is much needed in plural Indonesia. There have been efforts carried out, such as religiosity education, but it still confronts many obstacles. If all parties are indeed committed to develop multicultural Christian education, it is time to change the understanding of Christian education in church, family, and school. This change involves deep issues, namely views of other religions including theology of religions.

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## NEIGHBOR ETHICS IN ISLAM

*Siti Syamsiyatun, Ph.D*

### 6.1 Introduction

The Indonesian society has undergone through many rapid social changes in the last decade. These social changes actually indicate the change of orientation and ethical values developed in the society. Ethical values are values of wisdom aspired by the society from time to time in accordance to the development of time and conditions. The concrete and practical form of wisdom certainly is not permanent, but it is relative and changing in line to the change of conditions of its subject that is the people of Indonesia. Since the political regime change of the New Order into the Reform Era at the end of the millennium, there has been no lack of new laws and regulations organizing the conduct of state and nation issued by the government. There are laws and regulations concerning formal politics (e.g. Law 12, 2008 on Regional Autonomy, Law 2, 2011 on Political Party) and eradication of domestic violence (Law 23, 2004), laws on issues of economy (e.g. Law 13, 2003 on Labour, and Law 20, 2008 on Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise), education (Law 20, 2003 on National Education System), and even interreligious relation (e.g. SKB 3 Ministers No 3, 2008 on Ahmadiyah). New norms in conducting nation life and citizenship initiated and implemented by the

government in the form of laws and other regulations, on the one hand, is an ethical reflection of the change in vision, situation, and condition present in the society, on the other, it becomes a mirror of the formation of an aspired ethical Indonesian society.

On a factual empirical level, the changes and regulations above enable changes of life patterns in economy, politics, education, and also neighbourliness in many cities and regions. Mobility of the community in seeking education, a new place to study, a job, or in carrying out tasks, as examples, are important factors in demographic change which ultimately impacts the shift of the neighbour order. Other significant factor is population growth which causes rising demand on land availability for residential areas on one hand, and fulfilling various livelihoods on the other.

In the last few years, we have witnessed rapid and large scale land conversion in almost every city, from agricultural ground into something else. Data from research conducted by the Centre for Research and Development of Social Economy of Agriculture, Bogor showed that in the island of Java between 1980 – 1990's there was an average land conversion from agricultural terrain as much as 50,000 hectare/year. From that figure, 35% was converted into industrial ground, 39% into residential areas, and the rest were utilized for other infrastructural necessities. The growth of new residential areas as well as people mobility to find livelihood in places outside their origin has caused the formation of new communities which in the process also changes the pattern of neighbourliness.

In old residential kampongs where the communities are still relatively homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, familiarity, religion, and occupation, they generally have neighbouring rules and ethics which have been agreed on as a legacy of their ancestors. Since the community are still homogeneous then agreements to continue the order of a fixed neighbourly value and behaviour is more easily achieved and

implemented. Due to factors such as population growth and need for residential land, people's high mobility to work and learn, and so on as mentioned above, it is now more and more difficult to find old kampongs inhabited by homogeneous community capable of surviving on agreed old ethics. Almost every kampong in urban areas are always crowded with newcomer groups, or the kampong residents have moved to another place.

Encounters of people with varying backgrounds of ethnicity, religion, age, occupation and other things in a neighbourhood space have the potential of turning into tensions and conflicts. As an example, in a kampong where all of its inhabitants are Javanese Muslims who have been upholding and exercising certain ethical values in neighbourliness, arrived a non-Muslim newcomer of different ethnic origin with an occupation dissimilar to that of most of the kampong inhabitants and possessing differing ethical values. If both parties – the old kampong inhabitants and the newcomer do not actively attempt to learn, assimilate, and make new pacts, it is highly probable that existing tensions turn to a deeper and wider conflict.

Since the process of population mobility and dynamics is unstoppable, change in the pattern of neighbourliness is also unavoidable. In order to anticipate and avoid conflict of values, we should all begin to strengthen analysis on neighbour ethics and values promoted by religions which are sources of rules and guidance for the lives of its followers. This short writing attempts to contribute in the development of discussions on neighbour norms in Islam as well as supports efforts of its implementation by the Muslim community in their neighbouring life with anyone.

## **6.2 Who are our Neighbours?**

Who do we call neighbours? Our daily life experience traditionally refers to the meaning of neighbour physically as a person or family

living in proximity to our house, in which we would always pass around their house – to the front, back, or beside it, at the time we get out of the house going to another location. Javanese often says there are four neighbours who are closest to us with the term *pat-jupat*, which is the neighbours who live in the four cardinal directions around our house: in the front, in the back, to the right and to the left. These close neighbours are ones whose house yard we pass the most, and generally they are the ones we often ask and give assistance to; for instance, at times of urgent emergencies, such as fire, flood, robbery, death in the family, and lack of space for us to hold an event et cetera.

The rapidly rising number of population causes high increase in density of residential kampong areas. Proximity of space limiting one house to another sharply declines; even in large urban areas, in middle and lower class housing compounds we often find houses without yards, some of the houses are even wedged between each other. Under these conditions the discourse on neighbourliness certainly needs strengthening, including in its ethical values which could become basic values in developing neighbourhood life.

On the other hand, with rising mobility and demands from work or school, the opportunity to socialize, visit, and mingle in person with neighbours tends to decrease. The intensity of interpersonal relations occurs more in the study and work places. Due to this development, there is an extension of the meaning of neighbour, from those who initially mingle and live in proximity, to include those who are in close work and study environments with each other. Neighbourliness today experiences a semantic expansion; the presence of neighbours is not only defined by our physical and residential proximity but also by closeness of relational and communicational relations happening in spaces outside the household circle, as well as at places of work, hang out, study, and a place which does not lack importance that is the virtual world/ internet.

The semantic extension of neighbour does not only undergo change in physical space and virtual proximity that individuals and families have, but also by a certain group that is imagined as one nation (Anderson, 2006). We know the concept of neighbouring states, that is an imagined entity of space and power restricted by other entities. To name an example, neighbouring countries of Indonesia with joint boundaries are Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, and Australia.

In the context of this paper, the concept of neighbourliness discussed mainly refers to the traditional definition connotative to the presence of close physical empirical personal and familial relations. However, the proposed discussion of ethical principles does not avoid the possibility of becoming a foundational argument for the semantic expansion of neighbour ethics in a deeper meaning, for instance one that is virtual and nation wide.

### **6.3 Neighbour Ethics: Delving into Qur'anic Values and the Prophet's Exemplar**

Religions rooted to the Prophet Abraham, that is Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, possesses strong theological and ethical doctrines on neighbour. One of the basic moral values developed by the Holy Bible is to love God and 'love thy neighbour as thyself'. Even so, Gabriella Meloni found that Jewish intellectual history recorded a different argument in regards to the above doctrine, in which among them is the question on 'does love to the neighbour also flows to those who are not Jewish? Must our love to the neighbour be exactly the same between one and the other? Is preferential love possible and why?' (Meloni, 2011:26-28). In the Muslim community there are a number of regulations on neighbourly life in regards to issues of differing religion and kin, in which rights of the neighbour is inherent in them in accordance to its standing as follows:

Firstly, Muslim neighbours and kinsfolk, they are afforded three rights, namely the right of a Muslim, right of family, and right of neighbour.

Secondly, Muslim neighbours with no ties of kin, they are afforded two rights, namely the right of a Muslim and right of neighbour.

Thirdly, non-Muslim neighbours, they are afforded only one right that is the right of neighbour. Other religions, rooted to the teachings of Abraham the Prophet or not, also bear moral principles regulating neighbour relations, however the discussion in this paper will only be focussed on observing the ethical values of Islam.

As a religious group that quantitatively speaking has the largest followers in Indonesia, the Muslim community has a big responsibility to articulate and apply ethical values embedded in al-Qur'an and al-Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW into daily life, in establishing social rules regulating communal life of fellow citizens. In this context, values of neighbour ethics, both in its traditional and broadened meanings which are dug from the sources of Islamic teaching needs to be revisited and upheld so that these ethical values become an inseparable part of the society's behaviour and life.

#### **6.4 Neighbour Ethics Principles of Al-Qur'an**

Al-Qur'an, the holy book that is the guidance of Muslims, resolutely confirms the importance of neighbour. In Arabic neighbour is called *jaar*, sometimes it is adapted into the Malay *jiran*. A number of verses in al-Qur'an command pious people to worship God is followed by the order to conduct good deeds to both parents, kinsfolk, and neighbour, along with the command to mutually help one another in righteousness and prevent conspiring in acts of lies and enmity, of which among others are written in an-Nisa' verse 36 with the following meaning:

*“Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hands possess; For Allah loveth not the arrogant, the vainglorious.”*

Al-Qur’an, Ali Imran:104 states: “Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity”.

Al-Qur’an, al-Maidah:2 states: “Help ye one another in righteousness and piety, but help ye not one another in sin and rancour, fear Allah. for Allah is strict in punishment.”

In the tradition of *ulumul Qur’an* (knowledge pertaining to al-Qur’an), and *ushul fiqh* (basic logic in establishing/developing Islamic laws), the word *amar*/command in a verse or revelation basically means to show importance and obligation in executing the acts mentioned in the command. In verse 36, an-Nisa’ above, clearly God revealed that doing good to neighbours who are near and who are strangers is of utmost importance since that command is written in the same verse as the command to worship God, not to join any partners with God, to do good to mother and father, to do good to orphans, to companion by your side, to *ibn sabil* (wayfarer).

## **6.5 Neighbour Ethics Principles from the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW**

Aside from al-Qur’an, the other source of ethical teaching is the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad SAW (Farid, 1997) who in the holy book is called a man with gracious character, as revealed in al-Qur’an, al-Ahzab: 21 “Ye have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day, and who engages much in the Praise of Allah”. Meanwhile in al-

Qalam:4 it is stated that “And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character”.

Compared to al-Qur’an, the degree of authenticity and authority of the Prophet Muhammad SAW Hadith is considered inferior; meaning that it has been scholarly found that not all *Sunnah* associated to the Messenger of Allah truly originated from him. To the lay Muslim community in general, the word *Sunnah* is equal to that of hadith – which means saying, act, and agreement/decision of the Messenger of Allah. In the discussion of *ulumul hadith* there are various degrees of authenticity and authority of hadith, there are *hadith mutawatir* and *hadith ahad*; subsequently, *hadith ahad* itself is still divided into many classes and categories based on its connectivity to the Prophet, degree of quality of the *rawi* (narrators of hadith) and *matan* (the content of hadith) (Ilyas, 1996).

This short passage will not test the degree of authenticity and authority of hadith referred here, and it will not engage in lengthy discussion on the degree of value of the hadith referred. This passage only elaborates on hadith that are in connection with neighbour ethics values written in what the Indonesian Muslim community deems as canonical scriptures of hadith. Among the seven scriptures of hadith compilation considered canonical is the hadith scripture written by Imam Bukhori and Imam Muslim, which particularly is considered by most Sunni Muslims to be positioned in the highest class of hadith scriptures in terms of testing the quality of its narrators. The search on hadith related to neighbour ethics shows strong evidence that Islamic teaching deeply emphasizes the importance of Muslims to do good to neighbours. The assertions of al-Qur’an on neighbour as stated above are strengthened by concrete examples from the saying and actions of the Prophet Muhammad SAW in neighbourliness. Some of these concrete instances of the Prophet’s behaviour towards his neighbour should be considered based on its ethical and spiritual values instead of

its concrete actions in the case that there have been changes in their social context. Hence, it is the relevance of the moral ethical values that must remain to be upheld and explored.

In the following, there are a number of quotes from the hadith of the Prophet regarding neighbour ethics. The Messenger of God SAW as narrated by Abu Hurairah and agreed by Imam Bukhori and Imam Muslim has spoken, which means: “Whoever has faith in Allah and the Final Day so he shall say only good things or keep silence. And whoever has faith in Allah and the Final Day so he shall revere his neighbour. And whoever has faith in Allah and the Final Day so he shall revere his guest”. In another narration written by Imam Bukhori, the Prophet had spoken: “Whoever has faith in Allah SWT and the Final Day so he shall praise his neighbour”. Agreed by Imam Bukhori and Imam Muslim (*muttafaq ‘alaih*), it is narrated that the Prophet SAW had spoken: “In the name of Allah, he has no faith; In the name of Allah, he has no faith; In the name of Allah, he has no faith! The Prophet was asked: Who, o Messenger of Allah? The Prophet answered: He whose neighbour does not feel safe because of his conducts”. From Imam Bukhori, Aisyah RA, the wife of the Prophet, *ummul mukminin*, narrated that the Prophet had spoken: “Gabriel (the angel) has always reminded me to be good to neighbours to the point that I consider they will receive my inheritance”. From Imam Muslim, narrated by Abu Hurairah that the Prophet had spoken: “No entry to Heaven for the person whose neighbour does not feel safe from his/her trouble”.

The hadith above obviously show the importance of revering and doing good to neighbours. The Prophet created a symmetrical relationship between the quality of someone’s faith to Allah, faith to the Final Day, and the reward of Heaven with the feeling of safety and security of the neighbours. Aside from its connection to the dimension of faith/spirituality, neighbourliness is also important in its social dimension, such as the feeling of safety. The better quality of faith a

person has will as a consequence result in the betterment of his conducts with his neighbour, not vice versa. Even the Prophet threatened that if our neighbours do not feel safe living close to us, then it is our faith that needs to be questioned; the Prophet even firmly stated that a person essentially “has no faith” if his neighbours feel unsafe.

In another hadith, the Prophet provided a concrete example of doing good to the neighbour, as narrated by Imam Muslim: the Prophet SAW had spoken to Abu Dzarr: “O Abu Dzarr, when you are cooking broth of meat, use a lot of water and share with your neighbour”. Imam Bukhori and Imam Muslim narrated from Abu Hurairah that the Prophet had spoken: “O Muslim women, don’t ever a neighbour consider trifle to present gifts to his/her neighbours even if it is merely a leg of goat”. Another example of doing good deed to neighbours is presenting gift, as spoken by the Prophet in the narration of Imam Bukhori: “Mutually present each other with gifts, then you all will mutually love each other”. From Abu Dzarr, as narrated by Imam Muslim, the Prophet had stated: “Do not you consider trifle doing even only a little good, although it is merely showing a joyful face when meeting your brothers”.

Several real good deeds to the neighbour advised by the Prophet such as presenting meat broth, or gifts, and showing joyful face to the neighbour are certainly very relevant to our present conditions. In regards to presenting a leg of goat or broth of goat meat stated above, obviously in reality it can be adjusted to conform to today’s situation, as an example, if we knew that our neighbour has high blood pressure, surely presenting goat meat or broth of goat meat would not be desirable. Nevertheless, the clear ethical message is sharing what we have/eat/enjoy with our neighbours. Don’t enjoy food or anything that we don’t share with our neighbours.

Other ethical values spoken by the Prophet concerning neighbour can be observed from the following hadith. In the narration of Imam

Tirmidzi and Imam Ahmad, the Prophet had spoken: “The best companions next to Allah are those who are best to their companions, and the best neighbours next to Allah are those who are best to their neighbours”. In a hadith narrated by Ibu Hibban, the Prophet was reported to have spoken: “There are four things included in happiness: a pious wife, a spacious residence, a pious neighbour, and a comfortable ride (vehicle). And there are four things included in misery: a bad neighbour, a wicked wife (not pious), a bad ride, and narrow residence”. From Imam Ahmad, the Prophet had spoken, “there are three groups of men loved by God; mentioned among them is: Someone who has a neighbour, he is always hurt (harassed) by his neighbour, but he is patient from the harassment until they are both separated by death or parting”. Narrated by Imam Bukhori that Aisyah, *ummul mukminin*, had spoken: “O Messenger of Allah, I have two neighbours, which do I prioritize to present a gift?” The Prophet answered: “The one closer to your door”.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

This paper discussed ethics not merely as a speculative, theoretical knowledge, but also as a knowledge with a practical goal which could be implemented in daily life of the society. Messages of religious morality, social ethics, laws, regulations, and other rules agreed upon and developed in the society essentially leads to the intent of organizing mutual life in fairness and good will. The smallest social life component after the household is the neighbour unit. This paper specifically explained basic ethical values of Islam which regulates what is good and fair in neighbour relations.

Qur’anic verses and hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW which were quoted clearly show the importance of neighbour to the life of a Muslim. The value of good deeds to neighbours is levelled with the value of faith in Allah and the Final Day, and the reward of Heaven. The

absence of good deed or safety enjoyed by our neighbour could diminish our claim of faith to Allah. This is truly a very strong Islamic assertion of how necessary it is to be ethical with neighbours. *Wallahu a'lam bisshawab.*

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# **MEDIA ETHICS IN INTER-RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION**

*Alois A. Nugroho*

## **7.1 Introduction**

In the opinion of many social researchers, the age we are currently living in is often referred to as an “informational era” (Castells, 2004:28-76). In this informational era, communication technology plays an important role. More and more communications between human, cultures, civilizations, and religions are conducted through communication technology. Our communications are often times in a form of communication which is technically called mediated communication. There are many forms of communications which had to be done face to face are now conducted through a media by utilizing communication technology. Communication technology offers various communication media which grows sophisticated more and more. Transistor radio which was a trendy medium in Indonesia in the 1960s had been accompanied by television in the 1970s, and now people could chat through the internet with their cellular phone that is light and handheld or pocketable.

Each medium has their own characters, and consequently, communicators select whatever media suits the messages they would

like to convey to the public. An expert in communication named Marshall McLuhan stated “the medium is the message” (McLuhan, 1964: Federman, 2004). Media have an effect on interpersonal human relations and collective human relations. While television is already a product owned by people from all levels of society, a concern arises that children now spend more time sitting in front of the television and less time mingling, playing, and running around with their peers. Cellular phones and the internet are currently under concerning eyes regarded as a tool that “brings closer things that are distant”, but “distances things that are close”. Human, both young and old, does not have time to socialize with close neighbours or even people at home because they are busy communicating, be it sending text messages or emails to their distant friends.

Advancement in communication technology does not only “bring distances closer” or overcome distances, but it overcomes the difference of time as well. The tsunami disasters which happened in Aceh in 2004 and in Japan in 2011 could be followed second by second live as it unfolded in Aceh and in Sendai, Japan. We could follow these incidents through the radio, television, or internet in real time at the exact second where the real incident is happening. Even more, news story of this real time tsunami disaster is commonly repeated by television stations throughout the world and it could even be accessed through their websites years later after the real event has passed.

In short, the capacity of technology in overcoming space and time has rendered the world to be deemed small. An occurrence which happened on the other side of the globe has the impression of happening in the “neighbouring kampong”. McLuhan defines this impression with the term “global village” (McLuhan, 1964). The world with a circumference of 40,076 kilometres along the equator is experienced as a village whenever we watch international news on television or the internet. Labour demonstrations in Bekasi and labour demonstrations in

Athens, Greece, are equally distant, they are merely the distance of your television set to the sofa or mat that we are sitting and watching it on.

## **7.2 Global Paradox**

Nevertheless, the unification of the world into one global village in the arms of communication technology, which gives the impression that intercultural distances are decreasing gradually, does not alter mankind to show more likeness between one another. In fact it is on the contrary, in which striking differences and diversity arise. This is what John Naisbitt calls the “Global Paradox” (Naisbitt, 1994). On the one hand, the world is unified by communication technology into a global village. On the other, diversity becomes more emphasized. Differences that did not arise in the past are now stepping more into the spotlight. Communication technology which unifies, in reality, also drives the strengthening of differences. These differences indeed beautify the world which could be likened to a flower garden. Diversity in the world is as the growth of various flowers, in various forms, various colours, various scents, and possibly various uses. Not too long ago, names of streets in Yogyakarta were written solely in the alphabet, however today, aside from the Greek alphabet, those street signs are also written in the Javanese script. This step is followed by Surakarta where offices and schools also write their names in the Javanese script. In Jakarta, there is a television station that has a special program in Mandarin. Even in remote areas of Central Java there is a radio station broadcasting in Mandarin. In Surabaya, a Portuguese speaking soap opera is voiced over with the East Java dialect. In the Purwokerto area, there is a social movement called “Serulingemas” (an acronym for Seruan Eling karo Banyumasane which means a call to remember using the Banyumas dialect). These are just symptoms of what is occurring in Java and they are just to name a few. It is similar in the expressions of the various existing religions, as in Muslim attires, Shariah banking system, DAAI

TV (Buddhism) or “Family Channel” (Christianity), and Bali TV (Hinduism is an important identity in Bali). However, these varieties are also a cause for concern when these differing symbols do not bring people closer. In a global village, where a distant incident occurring is as though it is happening in the neighbouring village, these differing symbols sometimes create distances instead, they even lead to physical conflict. Taken to a global scale of conflict, Samuel Huntington has shocked the world with his book better known as the Clash of Civilizations (1993).

Many experts consider Huntington’s analysis to be unjustified. However, the most important issue is whether diversity of culture and religion would be beautiful as flowers in a garden, or would it turn into a clash of civilizations, is not the iron law of history something which must be accepted be it willingly or not? Both of the above are possibilities which could happen on the global chessboard. It depends on us, do we want to live in a beautiful garden or do we want to drench ourselves into a “global street fight”, a fight at regional, national, and local level (which is increasingly showing in media report). Communication is one of the important factors in creating conditions of peace or, contrarily, conditions of conflict.

### **7.3 Communication in Diversity**

The lively diversity found in societal life today, be it locally, nationally, regionally, or internationally, must be supported by social communications based on morals or ethics in accordance with the aspiration to create peaceful relations among communities with various religious and cultural backgrounds, an aspiration which by the founding fathers of Indonesia is formulated as “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” (unity in diversity). Hence, social ethics serving as foundation to interreligious and intercultural communications is gaining importance to be revisited and practiced in actual daily life. The advancement of communication

technology causes disability in seriously pondering upon our culture or religion “in closure”. An “in closure” attitude means, firstly, an attitude which observes as if there were no other cultures or religions. This kind of closed attitude is related to “closed condition”. This attitude can arise out of their up-bringing which are relatively experienced in a more-less homogeneous or uniformed culture, without exposure to other cultures, and lacking in social contacts with people possessing different cultural backgrounds. However, the advance of communication technology cause these closed conditions to be less and less observed.

Although we live in a remote village, as long as our residential place is connected to mass media network or mass communications, then we willingly or not would be a part of McLuhan’s global village. Through the television we could feel and understand preparedness of the American nation in facing disasters through storms and floods in the United States brought about by hurricane Irene, Katrina, or Sandy. We were able to follow in grief and awe the devastation of the tsunami in Japan and the strength of the soul of the Japanese nation in bearing their post disaster misery. We follow in awe and mutually glorify the name of Allah upon witnessing the hajj groups carrying out *wukuf* in Arafah while we are sitting in a place distantly removed from the holy land. We also engage in the global village every time we clap our hands because a footballer from a Latin American or European team scores a goal, as well as witness how the players usually gestures the cross on their forehead and chest.

Nevertheless, changes to this closed condition do not instantly bring change to closed attitude. There are people who have entered into opened conditions, have been using sophisticated communications technology and have entered the global village, could still keep and preserve their closed attitude as well. The way it is done is by acting as if their culture does not have to share the world we live in, or this global village of ours, with other cultures or other religions. In short, closed

attitude is an attitude which ignores the existence of diversity or even rejects the existence of various flowers in this global village garden.

This closed attitude can be a passive or indifferent closed attitude and an active closed attitude. An indifferent closed attitude is an attitude which acts as though we are still in closed conditions no matter how exposed to technology, particularly communications technology, we are. An indifferent closed attitude is reflected when a person acts as if there are no other cultures and religions in the world, even though that person rides a Japanese made motor cycle, wears an American made t-shirt, uses Korean made cellular phone, and may as well wear a pair of sandals made in China (which has communist ideology). Commonly, this indifferent closed attitude is observed in communities that in daily life almost never have to engage in intercultural communications. Although it does not venture far from being in a closed condition, this indifferent closed attitude will not disturb the peace of the society.

On the contrary, an active closed attitude attempts actively to stunt the growth of diversity in a world which has taken the form of global village. This active closed attitude is reflected in communications using violence through words, pictures, movies, and often through physical violence. The goal is to annihilate diversity, in order to achieve a state where those who possess different religious and cultural backgrounds will discard their diverse customs and beliefs and replace it with custom and belief followed by and familiar to people who have this active closed attitude. In other words, the aim of this active closed attitude is a homogeneous, uniformed state of society that is not different to a garden with one type of flower, or in short a closed condition. This active closed attitude, therefore, disturbs the peace in its various aspects.

Meanwhile, what we need, in fact, is an open attitude, that is an attitude based on the confession that, in reality, we live with people of various religious and cultural backgrounds, and moreover, we must share the world we live in with these people of various religious and

cultural backgrounds. We can have a passive or indifferent open attitude or, oppositely, an active open attitude. By having an indifferent open attitude, we acknowledge the fact that we live together among people of various religious and cultural backgrounds, but we find it suffices to busy ourselves with our own community, conducting obligations of mutual assistance, spreading love and affection, and creating a sense of mutual trust among brothers and sisters of the same faith and culture. The problem occurring in other culture or religion is their problem, as long as it doesn't bother our community and religion. Peaceful coexistence is of the utmost importance, being together peacefully. This open attitude of indifference provides sufficient guarantee of peaceful life together based on a realistic attitude on current social and global realities. However, an indifferent open attitude sometimes is not enough. We share the same location and world with people of various religious and cultural backgrounds that we often have to participate together in solving problems we confront together as well. When Bantul Regency (in Yogyakarta) experienced a devastating earthquake, mount Merapi erupted violently, Jakarta overwhelmed by flooding, people from various religious backgrounds were confronted with the same disasters. They must mutually help each other shoulder to shoulder. During the first Bali bombing incident on October the 12<sup>th</sup>, 2002, a volunteer, who is a Muslim named Haji Agus Bambang Priyanto, immediately helped the victims (BeritaBali.com, accessed on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October, 2012 at 11.30).

On a global scale, humans from a variety of religious and cultural backgrounds nowadays experience various problems which must be solved together. As examples are global warming, energy crisis, financial crisis, global unemployment, and the rift between the very rich and the very poor. An active open attitude is currently very much needed to be able to overcome shoulder to shoulder together the various global issues. Solution recipes from experiences of various religious and

cultural backgrounds could be considered without turning one into a dominant recipe.

## **7.4 Avoiding Hate Speech: Ahimsa in Communication Ethics**

Anti-violence ethics or ahimsa as practiced by Mahatma Gandhi and a lot of other figures is an essential norm in a world inhabited by communities of various culture and religion. People who possess passive (indifferent) open attitude have already considered the importance of the attitude which Richard Rorty calls non-cruelty (Rorty, 1989; Nugroho, 2003). The importance is in not disturbing others, particularly others meaning those originating from different religious or cultural backgrounds.

This practice of non-violence is in accordance to the principle of non-maleficence (do no harm) in ethics: do not hurt each other, do not disturb each other, do not offend each other's feelings, do not humiliate others, do not dishonour others. We are kept busy by our own businesses, but we do not disturb each other, so that we can live side by side in peace and harmony in one world. The essence of the word tolerance in a multicultural world is a situation free from conducting acts of disturbance and free from insinuating such acts.

An active open attitude will consider these norms of non-violence or spirit of tolerance as the minimum norms in a world inhabited by multicultural communities. However, tolerance alone will not suffice. An active open attitude realizes the need of at least two other norms, namely the obligation to conduct linguistic hospitality and the obligation to work together, collaborate, in fostering a better, fairer, more sustainable life together.

In the practice of communication, keeping the existence of hate speech at bay as far as possible is imperative in order to execute norms of non-violence. Hate speech is communication with no other intent than

an expression of hate towards other groups, particularly in situations where such messages could trigger violent actions. Hate speeches would ignite hatred of other parties who possess different backgrounds to their purveyors, specifically in terms of race, ethnicity, nationality, territory, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and others (uslegal.com, 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2012, 06:35). Hate speeches could originate from anywhere, either the majority or the minority, either the party discriminated upon or the discriminating party, either the impoverished or the well-to-do, either the less educated or the highly educated, either the opposition party or the party in power.

In communication ethics, what is categorized as hate speech is generally considered unethical. Hate speeches are considered to be one of the forms of symbolic violence through language driven by intent to annihilate the “others”. In Rita Kirk Whillock’s term, hate speeches are “rhetorical annihilation” of the “others”. It is “rhetorical” due to it being a series of words, and “annihilation” due to the essence of the message in annihilating or obliterating the “others” (Whillock, 2000). In the words of Erich Fromm, hate speech manifests necrophilia tendency or “interests towards death/corpses”, because hate speech essentially kills the opponent and kills oneself in the process. It kills the opponent because it does not respect and listen to the opposing interlocutor. It also kills oneself because it causes oneself to become closed-minded, unchanged, and devoid of process.

In a face to face communication with audiences originating from the same background, hate speeches would ignite the spirit and awoken a strong feeling of unity due to the rise in the level of emotion towards a “common enemy”. The scope of influence that hate speeches have through such face to face communication is indeed limited, however, it must be remembered that, firstly, the audiences would be compelled to conduct violence towards the “common enemy” which became the target of the hate speech, and secondly, the audiences could spread the

hate speech by words of mouth to other people in their communities. In mediated communication, the impact of such hate speech is usually much greater. It would increase exponentially if the media used is mass communication read or watched by a wider audience.

In mass media, communications containing hate speech would trigger hate in the wider public, including reactions from parties who are its target of hate. Therefore, in intercultural communication, either face to face or mediated by media, we could formulate an ethical norm stating: “We are obligated not to carry out hate speech”. The obligation to constrain oneself from hate speech is related to the attitude that does not negate the variety of flowers in the garden. The ethical obligation in not carrying out hate speech is connected to ethics of “non-violence” or ethics based on open attitude, both passive and active. The obligation to not express oneself in the form of hate speech is a minimum requirement in intercultural communication based on multicultural ethics.

Open attitude in multicultural communication obligates us to avoid expression of hate speeches. However, to reserve oneself from these hate speeches is not easy. Often, our emotions erupt uncontrollably and our aggressive emotion directed at the “others” manifests itself in hate speeches that invigorate the spirit and unity in “us” and it contrarily gives rise to reactions of mutual fear or hate from the “other” side. Nevertheless, even the obligation to avoid these problematic matters is not enough for an active open attitude. An active open attitude also begs the willingness to apply “linguistic hospitality” (Ricoeur, 2007:106-120).

## **7.5 Linguistic Hospitality: Effort in Mutual Understanding**

Linguistic hospitality is the willingness to communicate using symbols or language understandable by the speech partner. That is why in intercultural communication, when two parties speak in different

languages meet and communicate, then they will start to use “tarzan language”, that is a way of communicating by body gestures. Finger pointing to the speaker’s chest, or to the listener’s, finger pointing up, down, to the back, to the front, in general we know their meanings. However, communicating like this is not always easy because codes of communication are often not alike. Nodding the head does not always mean “yes”, and shaking the head does not always mean “no”.

In the example of the “Tarzan language” above, it is obvious that not one of both parties force another to speak in a language understood only by one of them. The first party does not force the second party to listen to the first party speak in the first party’s own language. Meanwhile, the second party also does not force the first party to listen to the second party, speak in the second party’s own language. Both parties try to understand each other. If there is a third language that they could both understand, they may communicate in that third language. “Tarzan language” is considered to be the third language for both parties.

Referring to the philosophical teaching of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Algis Mickunas opined that body gesture language presents something universal necessary to link intercultural communication due to the fact that humans from all religious and cultural backgrounds possess a body. Cultural communication (language) is even based on bodily existence (which is particular) containing element of universality. Bodily existence creates width (horizontal, lateral) and depth (vertical, depth): right-left, front-back, forward-backward, near-far, here-there; width-depth, above-below, high-low, up-down, soft-rough, and others (Arneson, 2007:139-158).

“Tarzan language” is proposed as an example merely in cases where both parties do not find a common language mutually mastered, or mastered with more or less the same fluency. There are many other examples where intercultural communication takes place not using the mother tongue of both parties, but using a third language instead. An

Indonesian speaking to a Norwegian in English is an example. It is not rare that there are people who possess mastery over other languages besides their mother tongue or first language. These people could become the first party capable of speaking in the language of the second party. Translators play this role and thus ease many others in understanding messages written in a language they do not understand. Interpreters assist in easing matters of people who must communicate with foreigners.

Linguistic hospitality is not only driven by pragmatic intent solely in order for communication to work well, it is also respect to interlocutors invited to communicate. Ethical obligation to possess linguistic hospitality is also called the duty of civility (Rawls, 1993:217). An active open attitude requires the obligation to respect interlocutor as an egalitarian partner. To an active open attitude, interlocutors are considered and treated as partners capable of conveying meaningful messages and understanding meaningful messages, as the first party sees oneself to be with the same capability. The ability to actively listen and speak full of care and compassion to the speech partner is an important ability that needs to be honed in an active open attitude.

What occurs in a meeting among these language users is a paradigm to intercultural and interreligious communication based on active open attitude, which Ricoeur calls “the paradigm of translation” (Ricoeur, 207:106-120). A translator does not find a “language of reference” or a third language in doing the job. A translator does not use “Tarzan language” as well, instead she/he would think “back and forth” from the “source language” to the “target language”, and never finding the exact translation. Translating from English to Indonesian for example, she and he are two different words in English. However, in Indonesian, she and he are translated into one word, “ia” or “dia”. It is unreasonable to differentiate “dia” and “ia” in meaning as English differentiates between she and he. Likewise, in Indonesian there is no one word which

translates to brother and sister, as there is no one exact word in English to translate “kakak” and “adik”. As another example, the translation of “I didn’t go” and “I don’t go” into Indonesian is the same, which is “saya tidak pergi”, while the two English sentences tell of two different occurrences. How would we translate “house” and “home” into Indonesian?

The examples given above are only a few examples. However, from these examples, a translator can realize that the English language (and culture) horizon is different to the Indonesian language (and culture). Within the cultural perspective settings of the English language, gender differences matter, as evident in the obligation of a British gentleman in protecting women (older or younger is irrelevant). Within the cultural perspective settings of Indonesian language, gender does not come first, it is seniority. An older sibling (male or female it is the same) is obligated to protect his/her younger siblings (male or female it is the same). A younger sibling is obligated to respect his/her older sibling, it is not important whether the older siblings are male or female.

It is also possible that the cultural perspective settings of the Indonesian language observe time as a range of presentness that is almost without end, unlimited, abundant (polychronic culture). Meanwhile, the cultural background of the English language observes time as compartmentalized into the past, the present, and the future, moving on a linear path, one way from the back to the front. The present that is not productively being used would disappear into the past, frozen, and no longer changeable. The future is highly determined by what we do in the present. The present time spent and wasted carelessly would make us work much harder in the future. Time is a limited source, hence it must be used to its maximum (monochronic culture).

Therefore, the translator, a person who does not close oneself in his/her own culture and open oneself actively to “understand” other culture, could broaden his culture. The translator need not change

his/her identity as an Indonesian learning English. On the contrary, if she/he were English, the translator need not change her/his identity as an English person learning Indonesian. People who learn foreign languages and achieve true mastery would broaden their cultural perspective with the cultural perspective they've learned without abandoning and changing the former cultural perspective. In the language of Rorty, they are capable of "redescription" of their own culture (Rorty, 1989). Even in our own linguistic and cultural environment we often have to translate our same thoughts or opinions several times through various different formulations. Therefore we use the phrase, "thus", "it can be concluded", "in short", "it can be said that", "meaning...", "this means that", and so on and so forth.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

In today's informational era, most of our acts of communication are those utilizing mediated communication. Even mediated communication has huge social impact because a single act of communication could reach a wide audience, through the spread of printed media (as newspapers or magazines), broadcast of electronic media (radio and television) and new media (internet and smart phone). With the advancement of media technology, it is almost impossible for us to be in a natural "enclosed situation". Media technology will get us closer to "other" cultures, that is "different" to culture and customs we've lived in all our life. Media technology will present a "foreign" way of life into our living room. One of the ways in protecting ourselves from these "foreign" exposures is by not using any media at all or by considering it as "non-reality". Thus, we do not violate the ethical obligation to be non-violent. However, this method is still based on a closed attitude, even if it is passive.

A closed attitude can also be expressed in a more active way where "hate speech" is the main method to ultimately annihilate diversity

through the path of violence. Therefore, in every community action, we are obligated to not conduct in what is called “hate speech”. On the one hand, hate speech is a result or expression of an active closed attitude, which is a closed attitude driven to consider other groups of community which are “different” to us as non-existent. Hate speech is born out of the instinct to annihilate variety or diversity. On the other hand, hate speech will also infect the active closed attitude and spread violence towards community groups or nations that are “different” to us.

A passive open attitude also fulfils the obligation of non-violence towards groups that are “different” to us. However, this obligation is the minimum for an active open attitude. In an active open attitude, we are also obligated to execute “linguistic hospitality”, by attempting to understand “vocabularies” and “grammar” of the other group, so as to be able to “converse” or communicate with them, without losing our own language and cultural perspective.

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## ETHICS IN HUMANITARIAN AID

*Tjahjono Soerjodibroto*

### 8.1 Introduction

Communities in need of humanitarian aid, particularly in times of disaster, are sometimes considered as objects of a program; there are even those that are abused by certain parties in order to pool funds from donors for their own benefit. When the tsunami hit Aceh at the end of 2004, for instance, there were a lot of humanitarian organizations emerging at the time of aid provision to the victims. However, the number of organizations which ran unaccountable activities was not few. There were those that do not actually understand how to conduct humanitarian aid. They merely channelled aid both in the form of funds or goods without concern whether it would be on target or not, without concern whether it would have a positive or negative impact instead. In the aftermath of the Yogyakarta earthquake, a group of communities in Bantul also had the opportunity to express their anger by putting up canvas signs stating that they are not tourist object for sheer display.

Humanitarian aid is quiet a complex activity in that it involves a lot of parties who usually have their respective agendas. To name a few, there are donors who have their own expectations regardless of whether

they realize the complexity of its execution or not. The government, both central and local, also have their own programs which have or have not been arranged so that every humanitarian aid programs are always fit into their bigger programs. Communities that receive aid are those who bear direct impact as well as negative excesses that might happen. It is possible that values of daily habit, customs, or followed religion must be put at stake; and it might also be extremely difficult for the parties involved to change or accept forced changes. Humanitarian institutions assisting generally already have their aimed targets or their own respective ethical norms that must be applied on the field.

## **8.2 Ethics in Execution of Humanitarian Aid**

Humanitarian aid is an effort in providing aid from donors to communities which life conditions are considered less fortunate due to various circumstances. It could be caused by natural conditions or disasters, it could be man-made such as conflict among residents, terrorism, or tyranny by a group of irresponsible rulers. Humanitarian aid can be in the form of direct funds, basic necessities, house renovation, health services, education, and other aid provided to fulfil immediate needs. Aid could also be in the form of long term community empowerment program carried out in stages, such as in the field of health (concerning health against diseases and/or hygienic way of life), education, food sustainability, development of community's economic capacity, building of supportive infrastructure, disaster risk reduction in disaster prone areas, preparation in climate change adaptation, and so on.

An article in the BBC mentioned that the meaning of ethics concerns 'the other'. It can be said that ethics refers to our attention towards other's interest outside of us, be it an individual or a community group. Therefore, when we discuss ethics in the provision of humanitarian aid, it means how to provide humanitarian aid in the interest of others, which

is the receiver in need. The main focus is not the intent/interest of the parties providing and distributing aid. It is undoubted that there are certain interests from the provider of aid, however, the main attention in ethics of humanitarian aid is thinking about the best interest of the aid receiver community.

### **8.3 The Impact of Humanitarian Aid**

Various humanitarian aids do not always have positive impacts although their initial aims were generally very noble. The lack of understanding in several connecting factors could have an effect on the actual result/impact; aid at times does not bring about optimum result or in fact it could be far from the desired target. Humanitarian aid which can be regarded as positive ones are as follows:

1. Assisting in providing the most urgent need

A community group could be affected by disaster due to natural factors (flood, earthquake, tsunami, prolonged dry season, etc.) or man-made factors (conflict, war, terrorism, etc.). As a result, life of the community is disrupted and it could even endanger their life stability. The community stricken by disaster would not be able to fulfil its needs (food, water, medicine, and shelter) so it would require urgent form of aid. Humanitarian aid could respond to fulfil such immediate needs when natural disasters strike such as the Aceh earthquake and tsunami, Nias earthquake, Yogyakarta earthquake, Mt. Merapi eruption, earthquakes in West Java and West Sumatera as well as intercommunity conflicts in: West Kalimantan, North Maluku, Central Sulawesi, and Ambon.

2. Assisting to people lacking capacities

Among the impacts of disasters experienced by the community are people losing their livelihood (in agriculture, farming, trade, etc.), inability to rebuild their homes, and damages to basic facilities

such as schools, health clinic, traditional market, etc. humanitarian aid could assist the community in rebuilding education and health facilities or even assist in the possibility of repossessing homes (as in Aceh) and the opportunity to improve their livelihood through rehabilitation and reopening of agricultural land.

### 3. Empowering poor communities

Humanitarian aid to alleviate poverty is commonly long term since it relates to more thorough and integrated effort to empower the assisted community. This refers to the joint effort of the community to enhance education services and facilities, awareness on the importance of good education for children, improvement in basic hygiene and nutrition, utilization of resources to increase income, building of supportive infrastructures, capacity building of human resources, etc.

### 4. Endorsing reconciliation

Specifically for areas struck by conflict, humanitarian aid could help alleviate suffering of the local community in order to help create conducive environment for efforts of reconciliation. Post conflict humanitarian aid delivered in North Maluku, for instance, was given equally to all victims of conflict in which it became a capital for building reconciliation. Edible and non-edible aid from donors delivered through our organization, for example, began by supplying aid to refugees in the Ternate region. Through explanations and openness, the same aid was also delivered to victims in the regions of Malifut, Kao, Tobelo, and Galela in North Halmahera. Ultimately, provision of edible and non-edible aid was executed for 100,000 refugees. After aid in the form of basic needs was deployed to both sides involved in conflict, efforts in reconciliation were able to be easily facilitated.

5. Advocating policies in favour of the communities

In executing humanitarian aid programs, supportive government policies are at times necessary in order for the aid program to be applied with maximum impact. Some examples of supportive policies are 'City for Children', policy on 'Convention on the Rights of Children', 'Law on Child Protection' policy, 'Independent Community Empowerment Program (PPM Mandiri)' policy, 'community involvement in Village Development Planning Council (Musrembangdes)' policy, etc. Advocacy needs to be enhanced so that more useful policies for children and community are made and issued by the government.

Meanwhile, if provision of humanitarian aid were not conducted accurately/ethically then it would bring about negative impacts as follow:

1. Aid does not entirely reach the community

Due to lack of responsibility and accountability of the parties involved, humanitarian aid prepared by donors sometimes does not reach the community at all or it may not be entirely delivered to the targeted community. This could happen intentionally (abused/corrupted) or because of other unanticipated impediments (such as unavailability of logistical facilities, damage sustained upon purchase such as past expiry date or below standard quality, or there could be damages incurred upon delivery).

2. Disappointment of donor organizations

We often find organizations carrying out humanitarian aid program lack order in its execution causing ineffective and insufficient provision of aid, or they might not report their activities truthfully to donor institutions. Disappointment of donors could affect in their loss of trust and consequently their loss of interest in

continuous funding of aid. As a result, it is the community who are ultimately at loss of not receiving continued assistance.

3. Aid programs affiliated to activities in politics/religion/particular interest

Humanitarian aid could also be steered by activities in politics/religion/particular interest, either from the donors or the aid delivery organization. Consequently, the aid program is merely directed at certain groups (discriminative) and it lacks independence and impartiality.

4. Program inadequacy due to lack of learning from past experiences

Humanitarian aid programs are usually repetitions from one region/incident to another. That is why previous experiences – both success and failure – need to be observed in order to be more effective in mitigation of similar future disasters. In many cases, where past experiences were not well documented or not documented at all, several mistakes in humanitarian aid provision were repeated when similar incidents happen. As a result, aid programs do not run to its maximum capacity. For instance, there was much inefficiency in the disaster mitigation efforts in Haiti that could actually have taken lessons learned from the disaster mitigation efforts in Aceh.

5. Pampered community

Humanitarian aid unmindful of psychological impact could cause the community to become spoilt and dependent on external donations. In a number of natural disaster cases, humanitarian organizations competed in channelling aid in tremendous amount which eliminated community initiatives. The case of earthquake victims in Bantul could be set as an example, when the government announced that each family would receive a compensation of 50

million rupiahs to restore houses destroyed. Subsequently, the community did not want to clear out their house rubbles upon fear of not receiving compensation fee. This complaint was mentioned by university students who were volunteers in clearing post-quake rubbles and debris. Generally, humanitarian aid lacking involvement of recipient community is perceived as gift resulting in the lack of ownership. It would end differently if the community were initially involved in programs such as building clean water facility, restoration/improvement of houses, farmland, and roads, so that a sense of ownership grows along with a greater responsibility to build and nurture them well.

#### 6. Degradation of human dignity

Aid donors and providers sometimes treat aid recipients with less dignity. They are considered as second class citizens who have to obey/receive whatever is distributed without regards to their actual needs or opinions. As is the case in Bantul, the community felt they had become a showcase and promotional object since several aid organizations only chose villages that were easily accessible and made them into facilities to promote their company or institution. The amount of aid given was actually insignificant but they invited mass media excessively to cover the story. They did not care that the villages had become targets of many aid organizations. They only prioritized their own interest and did not care of the fact that there were still many remote villages which had not received aid.

#### 7. Abuse on women and children

In an emergency situation, due to several attention required by victims, women and children could experience abuse or negative impact from arrival of other people. Children who were separated from or lost their parents could endure unwanted impacts being brought out of their villages by people with vague credibility. Their goal might be admirable in finding foster parents, however, the long

term impact is frequently very grave. Since everything is intended to be done as quickly as possible, it is often the case that verification of the foster parent to be is not done thoroughly so the children would experience difficulty in their growth instead. That is also the case for teenage girls who could be deceived by offers from irresponsible parties that would ultimately exploit them for the benefit of the outside party.

8. Aid program disruptive to well established habit/custom/religion

At times there are also humanitarian organizations that use their activities as a pretence to force messages that could disrupt unity and harmony of the community (such as spreading a different religion). These kinds of practice could trigger conflict with the community which would put aid programs that have been executed properly and responsibly by other organizations at a disadvantage. On the other hand, there are organizations that truly strive to improve insensible or obstructive customs (such as exorbitant dowry, excessive burial ceremony, etc.) in the community. These organizations need to be appreciated for wanting to improve and amend traditions obstructive to the community's rise of prosperity.

9. Humanitarian organizations competing in providing service to community in the same region

Due to lack of coordination or intent of the program running on target, there is the possibility that two or more humanitarian organizations operate on the same region providing almost the same services. This situation can be used by the community to compare or even put organizations in contest which would result in an unhealthy situation. As an example, Organization A provides stipend to the first child of a family, while Organization B provides stipend to the second child of the same family with a slightly different amount resulting in their parents complaining over difference in the services

they received. This kind of occurrence has happened in a region of service.

#### 10. Triggering a deeper rift in areas of conflict

Humanitarian aid in recent areas of conflict could unnoticeably worsen/trigger a deeper rift instead. Humanitarian aid provided to only one of the groups would easily be perceived as being proponents of that group. As a result, the group which did not enjoy aid provision would become more agitated and conflict could worsen.

## **8.4 Socialization of Ethically Conducting Humanitarian Aid Program**

All parties involved in conducting humanitarian aid need to understand several negative impacts that might surface if it were not carried out properly, namely the donors/sponsors, government/regulators, humanitarian social organizations (including NGOs), and the recipient community itself. All shareholders need to understand how humanitarian aid could be carried out responsibly, be it aid in case of emergency, reconstruction, or long term empowerment. Hence, an intensive socialization effort is necessary to all parties concerned in carrying out their roles and responsibilities ethically.

### ***8.4.1 Socialization for Emergency Humanitarian Aid***

Emergency aid prioritizes speed in execution with optimal impact. The process of conducting this type of aid must be organized as simple and effective as possible. This is necessary because delay in provision of aid could have direct consequences to the lives of the victims. Several guidelines for emergency aid have been issued by several humanitarian organizations which generally include essential issues as references. One of the guidelines which can be used as a reference is the 'Good Enough' Guide book published by the Emergency Capacity Building (ECB)

association with the joint effort of CARE International, Catholic Relief Services, the International Rescue Committee, Mercy Corps, Oxfam GB, Save the Children, and World Vision International. Another humanitarian aid operational guide or standard referred by humanitarian organizations is the 'Sphere Standard' which explains minimum standards in humanitarian response.

Meanwhile, basic principles of humanitarian aid is summarized in a document named 'The Code of Conduct for The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief' jointly published by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies with several international NGOs. These principles are adopted and signed by most organizations carrying out humanitarian aid missions. A number of important points mentioned in this humanitarian code of ethics, among others are:

- The humanitarian imperative comes first;
- Aid is given regardless of race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone;
- Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint.

The community bearing impact of the disaster is the main focus of attention as the recipient of aid and benefit of the aid program, and every men, women and children under impact are the main priority without prejudice. Therefore, as a form of aid programs executor accountability, the community must be involved in every stages of its execution, including disclosure of information regarding what is to be done through the aid program, who will be involved, what results are expected, and obstacles that might happen. They are given the opportunity to voice their opinion on possibilities of changes that they will experience, on mechanism of feedback from the community throughout the program, and on assessment of the achieved results from the aid program.

Particularly for areas of conflict, it is important to understand the concept of 'Do No Harm' in conducting humanitarian aid so that it does not worsen the already difficult situation. In order to better understand the concept of 'Do No Harm', the book under the same title written by Mary B. Anderson and published by Lynne Rienner Publishers can be studied.

Of equal importance is the coordination among all parties involved, such as BNPB, BPBD, SKPD, I-NGO, local NGO, UN-OCHA, etc., so that management of aid provision does not overlap, and would mutually fill each other instead. Coordination of international NGOs is usually executed by UNOCHA, while local NGOs by local BNPB/BPBD governmental bodies. Therefore, delivery of aid could be done equally and optimally with mutually concerted efforts. A number of disaster response humanitarian aid associations such as the ECB (for international NGO) and HFI (for international NGO and Indonesian NGO) have implemented standard coordination in which among others are the use of the same standard quality of aid, the mutual sharing of analysis result in order to hasten provision of aid.

#### ***8.4.2 Socialization for Long Term Humanitarian Aid/Community Empowerment***

Community empowerment aid has a far more complex character and a longer time span in order to achieve the desired outcome. This type of aid is very much connected to the change in mind-set of the assisted community group, policy patterns of the central and local government, rules and regulations carried out by the local traditional community, and the intensity of desire and participation from the community to change their way of life. Generally, humanitarian organizations conducting empowerment counselling have relatively limited resources and fund. Subsequently, community participation in the program determines its success. If cooperation is fostered from the start until its execution, the

impact would be more optimal and in time would bring the community towards more independence.

The process of community empowerment counselling usually lasts between 10 to 15 years to ensure the transfer of values and skills to live productively and independently. Support of experts in various fields, provision of supporting facilities, seeds, capital, trainings, and support of field studies, including market demand, highly determines the increase in the capacity and income of the community. Ethically speaking, long term empowerment aid also holds firmly to guidelines stipulated for emergency aid, such as main priority to the community interest, disregard to the program participants' community backgrounds, and so forth.

A critical challenge to long term community empowerment program lies in the end term of the program instead. Executing organizations must ascertain its smooth transition of values and skills to the community so that there is no failure which could destroy their social structure. As an example, if aid were not prepared thoroughly it could lead to a mentality of dependence towards external assistance, bring about horizontal conflict caused by acquisition of assets left by aid providers, or discontinuation of aid program due to community's unpreparedness/ lack of skills in managing the program.

Therefore, it is very important to involve the community from the start of the program/project until its execution, namely since the planning of strategy in the aid program. Empowerment and strengthening of community institutions/groups/organisations are a part of the transitional and continual process in every phase of humanitarian aid in a service area. Continual funding must also be planned thoroughly and informed to all stakeholders, is continual funding raised by accessing governmental budget or is it to be acquired and managed independently by the community itself. As an example: the Posyandu and Early Childhood Education (PAUD) programs funding could be

acquired through the village budget, while clean water committee could be managed independently through monthly payment acquired from community members who make use of it. The goal of the payment is not to make profit but to ensure that funding is available in maintenance and upkeep of facilities in order to sustain its usage.

The main priority of empowerment is the interest of aid recipient community. This is why their role is of utmost importance and it highly determines the success of the aid program, both in its initial planning and execution. Keeping in mind its long term of execution (10 – 15 years), there is enough time to prepare the community in order for them to be able to participate in providing input on what is needed, what is expected, which part can they participate and contribute in, and how they can take over the responsibility to manage, maintain, and ensure the continuity of the program after the aid program has ended. Program planning needs to be in accordance to the long term plans of the government, both central and regional, so there is synchronicity, coordination, and synergy that will guarantee effectiveness and optimum beneficial achievement of the programs applied. Therefore, it is important to involve advocacy programs providing input to the government so that the regulations, policies, and programs executed are truly prepared properly and responsive to the community's needs on the field.

Ethical understanding to seriously consider the positive and negative impacts that could happen in conducting long term humanitarian aid needs to be socialized to all parties involved, namely the government, legislative institutions, donor organizations, humanitarian aid providing/executing organizations, and aid recipient communities as partners who will enjoy and continue the result of the program. Through intensive mutual socialization, long term humanitarian aid programs of better quality and synergy could be created so that the community

acquires optimum benefit and enjoys the empowerment process in its entirety.

# **SOCIAL ETHICS AND INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN THE CONTESTATION OF PUBLIC SPHERE IN INDONESIA**

*Zuly Qodir*

## **9.1 Introduction**

In Indonesia no one denies the need to mutually understand, to mutually respect and to be tolerant and fair to fellow followers of religion. Fellow followers of religion would not be comfortable if there were constant fighting and conflict among them, let alone killing and condemning in the name of religion. Hate among fellow followers of religion will only forsake religion on the face of the earth even more, it will not enlighten and provide shelter to its followers. Therefore, respect and understanding of other people's different religion are an imperative that must not be forgotten by any religious followers in Indonesia. Based on that, we can expect good relationship among religious followers, one that is harmonious and without mutual suspicion let alone mutual hate and killing.

The multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multi-social class reality is a given irrefutable presence in Indonesia. Such condition is not merely a diversity that must be acknowledged in its state and existence, but it is an eternal prerequisite willed by God. The same condition is happening

to Indonesia as a structure of State united in the frame that is Indonesia. There have been many analyses on the real conditions of Indonesia which is very sublime and multi-religious. It feels difficult to say that there will only be one type of belief in religion present in Indonesia. It is well understood that Indonesia is seen as a miniature of the world since several recognised and non-recognised religions are spread throughout the nation from Sabang in Aceh to Merauke in Papua. Of course this is authentic proof if Indonesia were indeed multi-religious as well as multi-cultural. What is left to do is to understand such conditions and not extinguish it which will result in mutual enmity among them.

Pluralism and multiculturalism are the most representative terms to portray Indonesia. There is no better fitting term in describing the real conditions of Indonesia other than by calling it as a plural state in its true meaning. Thus, borrowing the statement of writers such as Farid Esack, Abdul Aziz Sachedina, and Syed Hasyim Ali that pluralism has initially been shown by Islam and its existence is irrefutable. The question is: will such real condition be eradicated merely because there is pressure from a group of Muslim in Indonesia who threaten the state and proposed to the Constitutional Court to dissolve a number of religious groups that by a part of the Muslim community is said to be unsuitable with the teachings of Islam? The next question is: will Indonesia be driven into becoming a state based on one of its recognized religion namely Islam as the religion adhered the majority of Indonesians? These issues certainly demands attention since a few of the Muslim community wish to see Indonesia become a country with an Islamic state basis while remotely removing the country's foundation of Pancasila and other state pillars; 1945 Constitution, and Diversity.

It seems that we must notice Farid Esack's statement on pluralism:

*“Pluralism is a personal condition that could accept (acceptance) and acknowledge (acknowledgement) otherness and diversity. Pluralism exceeds tolerance of otherness since*

*pluralism is present in a sincere self and in actions toward others who are different” (Farid Esack, 1997).”*

This firm statement never mentions that Islam rejects other religions, nor does it urge Muslims to keep changing religions (beliefs) as accused by several groups on those who insist on fair understanding of other people’s belief.

Hence, we should also consider Syed Hasyim Ali’s statement that pluralism is: “a condition of the community where cultural, religious, and ethnic groups live side by side in one nation (country). Pluralism also means that reality consists of many basic substances. Pluralism is also the belief that there is no single explanation (understanding) system or view on reality which could explain the entire reality of life” (Ali, 1999:49). In this statement, Hasyim never entertained a single understanding of Qur’anic or Islamic texts, because so far it is urged by some Muslims that an understanding of text may not be different, it has to fulfil one single authority, not two. While in reality, understanding of Islamic text has always been diverse. This is the importance of understanding the Islamic message that in the understanding of Islam, it highly respects differing opinions, as long as they do not deviate from the principles of Islam, and it concerns issues of *muamalah* even with issues of *ibadah* there are always many opinions in Islam. This is the grace of Islam for all its followers.

We could also pay attention to Abdul Aziz Sachedina’s statement on pluralism and multiculturalism that: “Pluralism is a short term or word to name a new world order where cultural differences, belief systems and values evoke passions of various unlimited human expressions as well as inspire irreconcilable discord and conflict” (Sachedina, 2001:34). Sachedina’s statement truly provides affirmation and thrust in the existence of diversity in understanding Islamic texts. The obstacle is no different in text understanding, the most important issue is how

differences in understanding the texts could keep the peace among brethren of faith and among followers of religions.

Based on several opinions stated by Muslim scholars above, it can possibly be said that pluralism and multiculturalism is to be a part of our lives existent in a region of state on the face of the earth. The existence of pluralism and multiculturalism which so far are given the impression as destroyer and corroder of faith to persons or community in piety is an ungrounded and inaccurate opinion. This is because pluralism and multiculturalism contain a strengthening of faith in religion for persons and community, not a weakening let alone a fusion of the community's faith. Pluralism and multiculturalism in fact have good intentions so that every followers of religion remain faithful to their own creed in which in them exist varying spiritual vigour and uniqueness between one religion and another. It is appreciation of these differences that becomes the basis of the pluralism and multiculturalism assertion.

Such explanation must be enforced from the start because so far it is often heard that pluralism and multiculturalism are ideologies that weaken the community and dissolve the faith in religions and beliefs adhered to. Pluralism and multiculturalism have been accused of attempting to render institutions of faith unstable, unrefined, and unsubstantiated. While contrarily, pluralism and multiculturalism can be regarded as ideologies that strengthen an individual's faith based on uniqueness and characteristic of the adhered belief. In pluralism and multiculturalism a person's sole obligation is to honour, respect, and affirm diversity and safeguard the preservation and survival of heterogeneity in the nation and society. The existence of groups with intent of eradicating heterogeneity willed by God is not permissible.

Thus is the signifying character of pluralism and multiculturalism that is often misconstrued in that they seem to regard all religions the same and urge the community to convert to another religion or weaken their faith due to the vast amount of beliefs in the society. This is why

ambiguity in the understanding of pluralism and multiculturalism must be resolved since it is detrimental to the development of the activities of the faithful. Such opinion is obviously unjustified based on the views of the three Muslim scholars above. Therefore, it is evidently an erroneous point of view, if not a view baseless of sufficient argument stating pluralism and multiculturalism are ideologies that consider all religions the same and urge people to become weaker in piety!

As a country where the majority of its population are Muslims (88.7% according to BPS, 2010), Indonesia a country with the most Muslim population on the face of the earth could provide valuable lessons when we are able to enhance the view that diversity in religion and culture can live side by side in peace, safely and mutually cooperating amongst the diversity. Therefore, we must be willing to expand our religious perspective placing religious and cultural diversity as the will of God and the grace of the diverse religious community.

Hence, our religious perspective must head to a positive perspective on diversity and difference, not a negative one on diversity (pluralism and multiculturalism). Positive perspective of religion and culture would lead us to a true diversity, not an obstinate diversity, full of suspicions, negative suppositions, and reluctance to respect heterogeneity willed by God on the face of the Indonesian land. From a positive perspective of pluralism and multiculturalism, interreligious dialogues, discussions, and cooperation which could truly contribute to resolve issues of humanity in Indonesia can be developed, instead of sharpening differences in beliefs and uniqueness of religions and cultures.

Firmly speaking, positive perspective on pluralism and multiculturalism could lead to a new diversity from the Indonesian people which in actuality is diverse and will remain diverse, for God has willed so. This is where social ethics (social virtue) matters in religion, aside from individual virtue which must be in accordance with life diversity in Indonesia. Without social virtue, we find it a bit precarious

to develop a perspective of dialog theology let alone inclusive and pluralistic theologies. Therefore, we need to develop cooperatively with various religious communities in Indonesia the notion to possess conviction that pluralism and multiculturalism would never lead religious followers to uniformity of faith, weakening of belief let alone lead individuals and groups to convert religion.

A sociological perspective on pluralism and multiculturalism which becomes the basis of this writing has provided an analysis as a closing of the writings in this book. The sociological perspective I mean is that multi-religious and multicultural awareness are irrefutable realities in Indonesia. It is an objective condition that must become a principle in the development of interreligious dialogues, development of views on religions and interreligious cooperation in which everyone has social obligations and responsibilities to resolve humanitarian issues that continue to overwhelm this nation for years on such as poverty, ignorance, and corruption. Putting it firmly, the sociological perspective I meant in the writing of this book is a social ethics perspective not a doctrinal-normative perspective which seems to be a collision between one religion and another.

As we all know, Indonesia is often portrayed as the country with the largest population of Muslims on the face of the earth but its contributions are considered to be very little, even almost unheard of in the context of peace-keeping in the Muslim world in particular, and the world in general. Indonesia has indeed succeeded in holding Post Old Order Elections (Post 1998) through direct election which had run without any fatal casualties and horrifying sacrifice of political ideology as was the case in countries where the majority of the population were Muslims such as Syria, Algeria, Sudan, Morocco, and Egypt. Indonesia was far more honourable and peaceful in conducting its direct transfer of power. This is why Indonesia as the country with the largest Muslim population is named as the CHAMPION OF ISLAMIC DEMOCRACY.

## **9.2 Social Ethics as a Basis in Religious Conduct**

A philosopher and post structuralism sociologist from Germany, Jürgen Habermas, has written a topic on public sphere discourse in which it is conceived that there is contestation among the numerous interests and values existing in it. Anyone in contest intends to win it by offering various kinds of values and ethics they promote (Habermas, 2001). Public ethics is another word for social ethics, which is another word for social virtue as an extension of individual virtue. We are expected to be able to enhance social ethics since a person's virtue will not be given true meaning if it is devoid of social virtue. Individual virtue will only bear fruit when it brings impact to social virtue because it relates with others who may be of different religion, or even of different school of thought.

A question immediately arises, what is the connection of social ethics (social virtue) to religious community and interreligious dialog? It is here that matters related to issues of coexistence, and issues of the presence of various groups and interests in the community must be given consideration. From there we will consequently grasp that social ethics is of utmost importance in relating to diverse groups of people, groups which mutually possess political and other social interests.

Subsequently, what is it that we call the practice of social ethics? What is meant by practice of social ethics in this writing can be summed up in short that the condition of our surroundings is in need of foundation or focus and behaviour which can be accepted and is accepting from real situations appearing in front of us. Hence, there is a state of acceptance and being accepted between us and others, and vice versa in which others accept us as we are. We do not consider people as others but as part of us. Likewise, people do not consider us as others as well. The principle developed is not mere existentialism; it is more inclined towards substantialism and materialism. Social ethics relates to one's behaviour towards another in socializing, discussions, and

cooperation regardless of differences between one another. Differences of religion, ethnicity, gender, and social status may not interfere in or discontinue social reflection and struggle as reality of the world in front of us. Diversity is even expected to be the guidance in triggering the rise of social ethics so that humankind would mutually cooperate.

Once we are of the understanding that social ethics is a part of life which could be a basis when we confront diversity obstructing our way throughout our lives, then the next important task at hand is the presence of social responsibility, social sensitivity, and social emotion besides spiritual emotion which leads to a Sufistic attitude and open to knowledge, to world reality and empirical reality, even though it may materially be in a place far from its existence. It is also here that social sensitivity and empathy must be preserved properly in order for emotional and spiritual intelligence to become part of the wider life of the community, both individually and socially. Social and spiritual sensitivity will surface when an individual or group is willing to respect and appreciate the presence of others different to us as humans. Sensitivity must be exercised so that it ultimately becomes a habit in life. That habit in life will raise consciousness in the individual self which would consequently become a collective consciousness which will lead to the consciousness to be together in sorrow as well as together in joy. Egoism is not the main goal in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multicultural life.

Social intelligence must ultimately become the foundation for all people of faith in every situation and in any field. It is there that social ethics would drive a pious individual in the framework of understanding, respecting, and placing diversity as an issue which does not intrude upon her/his religious life. Her/his religious life is interrupted even when the surrounding reality is homogenous, united, and lacking dynamics. These realities actually disrupt life that is always dynamic, full of changes, even turbulence for the sake of development. Therefore, development is

a part of the natural will of God which occurs as a part of the dynamics in a multicultural and multi-religious society. Such consciousness would really help individuals and social groups who intend to explore development of faith and development of social communication. Social communication is established on the collective consciousness that society is basically not homogeneous, but it remains heterogeneous in a lot of matters. Thus, communication must also be based on the belief that multicultural and multi-religious consciousness is necessary which would then lead to the need of inter cultural and inter religious communication in social life.

Then, what is social intelligence? Social intelligence is intelligence that must be possessed by individuals as members of society to adapt oneself with a new environment which is different to the initial condition where he was present or psychological condition of being able to adapt to the diverse surroundings in terms of culture, ethnicity, religion, and social class. Social intelligence also refers to the ability to empathize others who are suffering, in trouble, and even in a state of grace. Social intelligence also refers to individual ability in appreciating and respecting physical expressions and visual language of others because of differences and similarities gotten throughout his/her life (Coleman, 2007:123, *Social Intelligence*, 2007).

It is at that point that the idea of public ethics, which is proposed by the sociologist Jürgen Habermas as a political idea bearing morality, ultimately finds relevance for our case in Indonesia. Public ethics will relate to all followers of religions on the face of the earth since every religion has its own uniqueness as a part of the objective reality which existence must be praised. Public ethics becomes a guideline for every faithful individual amidst religious plurality and cultural plurality to mutually grow and share spiritual and emotional experiences to its followers. Without collective consciousness that fellow religious community is a part of faith bearing notion that commands obedience

solely to the divine, then diverse religious followers will find it difficult to live together. The question: how are multicultural and multi-religious communities willing to establish social intelligence and spirituality, becomes a demanding issue. This relates to the current condition that is more affected by an all-too-instant world and the very dominant web media in the life of the society. We certainly expect the birth of the society called the post secular society, a society centred on spiritual irrational dimension (in formal term) that is belief in the immortal or God or a being who created the universe and all its matter.

### **9.3 Dialog as an Alternative in Religious Practice**

This world will ultimately be in perpetual contestation and dispute (conflict full of violence) caused by religion if there is no interreligious (followers) peace. World and religious peace would never be achieved if there is no interreligious dialog! Thus is the most popular statement asserted by Hans Kung, a theologian, philosopher and expert of religions from Germany. Hans Kung surely wasn't careless in expressing a stunning statement to the religious community, since in reality throughout the world, the religious community were indeed engaging in violent conflict either among its followers or with other various religious followers. While we are in fact of the understanding that any religions originate from what can be said as the ONE, the almighty and just with names such as GOD, Yahweh, Allah, and Sang Hyang Widi, *sangkan parning dumadi*, the immortal, and omnipresent. That is the Immortal who has created religions or bring them to existence on earth. However, it is true that there are issues in religions as Rodney Stark mentioned, One God many religions, and that is the most expensive price that must be paid when followers of religions do not understand each other (Stark, 207).

In his work on Islam, *Islam Past, Present and Future* (2010), Hans Kung stated that Islam is a religion that will be very influential on earth

along with Christianity since these two religions are adhered by more than half the earth population which has reached 5 billion lives. Without awareness from both followers of these two major religions on earth then there is the probability that the world will constantly be in a state of violent conflict that will cost millions of lives. And the issues which cause conflict are actually not of “religious substance” but issues of symbols, rituals, and claim on the existence of heaven-hell which is not in the authority of man, but seemingly becomes the obligation of man to claim and “possess” it. These are serious issues of heavenly religions often contested upon in multi-religious and multicultural life. Man appears to have eternal obligation to claim the presence of God in life as well as the right to judge the religions of others while it is God alone who will judge whether one is a deviant or is on the path of real truth.

Based on the reality that Indonesia is a part of the largest Abrahamic religious followers on earth, then consciousness and willingness in conducting dialog in its true meaning must be carried out with actual consciousness. The religious community in Indonesia must carry out two dialogs simultaneously namely theological dialog and constructive dialog. Theological dialog is actually more appropriately done by those who truly have the capability in “understanding the language of God” or capable of acquiring religious language which is complex and full of insight but also full of metaphors to its followers. Meanwhile, constructive dialog is a more real dialog relating to real lives of the religious community. In short, constructive dialog is dialog activity which pays attention to the existence of social and religious phenomena faced by all religious communities throughout the world. The issue of poverty, ignorance, and other disasters need to be addressed here (Hidayat et al, 2010).

When the religious community are willing to engage in these two dialog activities, there is a possibility that interreligious relations in Indonesia will not be so bleak. Although religious life in Indonesia is far

better than the conditions in other countries such as in the Middle East and Africa, in the last few years, the condition of interreligious relation, particularly in connection to the minority groups still receives negative assessment. This is reported by institutions such as Centre for Religious and Cross-Cultural Studies (CRCS UGM), Setara Institute, the Wahid Institute, and even the Indonesian Board of Survey (LSI) reported that from 2009 – 2012 the religious condition in Indonesia experienced a decline in religious freedom due to annual increase in the number of violence. The amount of violence reached 294 cases from its previous number of 172 cases in 2011 (*Kompas*, 29 Desember, 2012).

Considering the amount of violence cases there is indeed interest and compulsion of religious community to shift its paradigm in religious conduct. Conducting religion is no longer limited to thinking of one's own life through the oppression of others, but it is no less important to conduct religion with consideration to making others feel comfortable and at peace. This interest indicates personal piety and social piety which is translated into *hablun min Allah wa hablun min an nas* in life. Constructive dialog is in reality easily implemented in the Indonesian context, even more so now as we know Indonesia suffers from numerous chronic diseases such as natural disasters which constantly loom all day; the issue of acute poverty; the very dangerous issue of backwardness with the increasing social economic gap of the society; and a number of other actual issues which beg the joint attention of the religious community. However, if the religious community is reluctant in carrying out concrete actions or constructive dialog, it will be difficult to achieve our expectation of growth in interreligious dialog which truly creates more conducive conditions for interreligious relations in Indonesia. Indonesia would ultimately become a mere jungle of violence among religious communities due to their reluctance in engaging in cooperative interreligious dialog constructively.

As an alternative in religious life, dialog is therefore a very concrete and necessary matter to the religious community in Indonesia. If the religious community is reluctant in conducting interreligious dialog (theological dialog) which in my opinion is better suited to religious figures (religious elites), while constructive dialog is “grounded” from theological dialog so that it is more suitable with the real conditions of Indonesia. Dialog, thus, becomes a necessity for religious community. Dialog, thus, will truly not be the cause of religious poverty and spiritual aridity. In fact, it is through interreligious dialog that followers of religion will be more enriched by listening to stories or spiritual experiences that are different to our own.

We do not need to convert religion to understand a different religion let alone ridicule different religions. Dialog is therefore not a mere obligation of religious community, but it is a life necessity of diverse religious community. Dialog will tighten the interreligious bond between one another, however, dialog in its true meaning is not merely a series of monolog which only considers disadvantages and weaknesses of other religions differing to the one adhered to by the followers. This kind of dialog is in actuality a series of monolog among religious communities, it is not a dialog but it is often carried out due to theological and paradigmatic closed-mindedness regarding dialog itself.

Thus, the need for interreligious dialog in Indonesia is a part of the obligations of its religious community. Interreligious dialog will therefore be a necessity for all religious communities which exist amidst the differences and heterogeneity of society in Indonesia. If there is no intent to conduct constructive dialog or theological dialog of the religious elite, then it is quite difficult to expect peace and harmony in the religious community as advised by Hans Kung which I quoted freely in the initial writings of this passage. Religious dialog, therefore, becomes a basic necessity for the religious community particularly in Indonesia, and the world community in general. Dialog could connect

sensitivity of religious community to social conditions appearing in front of us as religious community. Religious dialog could also be said as a part of the dialog of humanity which is a defining characteristic of civilized religious community possessing care towards others (Kesley, 1992).

The intent in building interreligious dialog in Indonesia which is recently being carried out by various parties, although it still leaves a number of problems such as the excess of violence based on theological (religious) background as reported by survey institutions surely becomes a mutual point of concern. As reported by the Setara Institute for instance state that there were more than 156 cases of interreligious violence in Indonesia between 2010 – 2012, which is phenomenal since this is an era where religious and political freedom becomes a part of our lives. Therefore, if we intend to create conducive conditions for today and the future in regards to religious life, then the need for religious dialog must be executed without hypocrisy and suspicion.

#### **9.4 A New Consciousness in Conducting Religion**

We often hear the term passing over coming back. This term originally developed in Sufistic communities in regards to those who have “passed over formal boundaries”. Nevertheless, it does not mean that Sufis leave formal matters such as prayer of worship to the Creator, daily prayers, alms and its sort in the Islamic Sufi tradition. Sufis even become highly spiritual and religious since they no longer “think” about what is done as something that has to be done, but as a “life necessity” of which its assessment is wholly afforded to God without any intent on self-assessment. However, it must be admitted that there is often the misunderstanding in the spirituality of Sufis by some lay followers that they abandon shariah laws, where in fact the Sufis become so due to their being deeply and closely pious in nature so that formalistic matters have been conducted with all kinds of informal dedication. The

dimension of shariah is the start of one's path to becoming a grand Sufi as Ibn Arabi and al-Ghozali or al-Maturidi, which often is truly misunderstood by the religious community.

Let us recall the statement of Rabbiah al-Adawiyah, a woman Sufi who developed the *mahabbah* (the LOVE school of thought) to God. Rabbiah Adawiyah stated: "If my prayers are for expectation of your heaven, then put me in your damnation. And if I pray for fear of hell, then do not judge my prayers! But if my prayers are solely for my love to You, o Allah, the possessor of LOVE, then judge my prayers! Do not cast Your Face away from me". This is her deep spirituality which is often misunderstood by some who consider the importance of formal matters. Formal matter is not the same as matters full of formalities, this is what needs to be understood further. Formal matters such as obligatory and preferential rituals of worship, and even rituals that are *ghoiru mahdah*, are means leading to one's spiritual faith, so that it is sensible to say that one would not become a grand Sufi as Rabbiah, Ghozali, Maturidi, Ibn Arabi, and Hasan Asyari were one not to pass the dimension of shariah in their faith! Thus, religious community is surely not immune to the realities of life.

Once we are aware that our presence is not without social-historical and sociological context, it would be strange if these contexts were to be eliminated. It is impossible to eliminate the social context of where we live, what is possible is that reality must become a part of the lives of the faithful wherever they are. If they are incapable of understanding and placing the context, we will consequently be in a room that appears to be empty, void and hidden. While in fact we exist in the public sphere which is full of contestations. Contestation could be in the form of various religious activities and political formations. However, the contestation in connection to the community of the faithful is the contestation in righteousness (*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*) and competition in righteousness (*fastabiqul khairat*), because the

community of the faithful is the chosen community in the face of God (*khaira ummatin*). Chosen not because of its quantity, not because of its bad conducts, chosen not because of its anger and ferocity. The community of the faithful is chosen because of its competition in conducting good deeds. They are chosen because of their peace and patience (*tawasaq watawa sabil sabru*). This must be the basis in the faith to God, regardless of whether God would later judge us to go to heaven or hell, but conducting good deeds becomes its main duty.

Consider the following statement by Sayyed Hosen Nasher: “We in faith must be brave to go beyond the boundaries of the fortress of exclusivism”. The fortress of exclusivism is a religious model which corners others by saying that they are the most righteous and noble in front of others. We must declare exclusively the religion we acknowledge and adhere to (personally exclusive) but we must place other religions as we acknowledge and adhere to ours. “We are personally exclusive but socially inclusive”. Remember this message of S.H. Nasr, a Muslim intellectual and spiritualist from Iran and an influential expert in contemporary Islamic philosophy (Nasr, 1992).

A “theological jump” as suggested by Hosen Nasher above is indeed very difficult to be carried out by most of the faithful communities. Nevertheless, if the faithful communities are able to step out of formalistic and materialistic piety, it appears that the idea in developing a new form of piety will find its place as desired by some of them. Faith which “passes over” is a very relevant idea in the current condition where we are no longer able to life “alienated” from social context. In reality, the presence of religions on earth had always began with and referred to the social historical and sociological contexts as elaborated above. God revealed religions on earth not for the sake of God, but for humans, for humanity and prosperity not for conflict and bloodshed. This is why religion refers to humanity not others. Religion answers

problems which arise on earth, it is an asset in facing the creator God the Omnipresent and the Just (Rahman et.al, 2007).

Surely we will question why some faithful communities are reluctant to “go beyond the fortress” which up till now serves as an obstacle in life of coexistence? This is where matters that are related to the delivery of religion to the public (community) must receive serious attention from religious figures specifically to Muslim orators, missionaries, religious teachers, or priests who are duty bound to deliver religious speeches as well as counsel to the public. If these counsellors to the public were the “wrong” type of people and do not have the professional aptitude in delivering their messages, conducting religion will subsequently become dismal, disorderly, complicated, and horrendous! It is extremely dangerous if religion were to fall into the hands of unprofessional people, let alone those that are full of short term political interests. These kinds of people would be happier to see interreligious discord and disharmony because it is difficult to reap benefit if there were harmony while religions are being pitted against each other.

Who are professional proliferators of religion? They are those who at the very least possess an equal mastery over “the language of heaven and of earth”, not simply those who memorize heavenly language but are illiterate of earthly one. Such things will be very dangerous to the public that is present amidst diversity of public faith and culture. A proliferator or counsellor of religion must also bear genuine intent in providing counsel so that the community of the faithful would compete in conducting good deeds. Conducting good deeds for himself, for his group or another group who mutually are of faith and live in the same community is equally righteous. A professional counsellor is not emotionally bound to political parties but only “bound to the will of God” to conduct good deeds. There are no ulterior motives or seeking of praise and elevation to be regarded as the best among fellow community of faith, as the advice of Rabiah Adawiyah above. Only God is the

rightful judge by doing as much good as possible for the love of God. The deed is good because there is a need to do good to oneself and to others. That is the main principle in competing in righteousness (*fastabiqul khairat*), and enjoin in what is right and prevent from doing wrong (*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*) to all mankind without political interest tendencies.

That is the importance of the presence of professional religious counsellor which cannot be refused to lead the community of the faithful towards novel religiosity in the context of multi-religious and multicultural society, because diversity of ethnicity, race, religion, social class, and historical context of religion's existence particularly in the Indonesian land. Without our joint notion in the presence of professional religion proliferators, expecting the arrival of new diversity is impossible because what will come instead are diverse performances which are instantaneous, full of formalities, and without substance. In other words, we will conduct religion rich in formalities but deprived of substance in piety! The presence of professional religion proliferators does not mean they are paid religion proliferators, since currently the word professional is identical to "pay" which are in exorbitant amount at times. Hence, the pun states that paid demonstration is paid demonstration! Of course this is not what we meant with professional religion proliferators.

We must recall that the language of religion, which is the language of heaven, is far more complex than what we understand as of today! Our understanding on the language of religion (language of heaven) is the understanding we possess and it is "extremely limited", unable to "delve" into all the richness of the language of religion (language of heaven) which is full of symbols, full of hidden expressions, full of wisdom, full of insight and so forth. In short, the language of religion will be impossible for us to understand exactly as the will of the creator of the language itself that we call GOD. Analyse the language of

religion thoroughly in detail, do not read it carelessly. We do not claim to be capable of exactly understanding the language of religion due to its own complexities as is the complexities of its creator who created the earth and all its contents (Hidayat, 1997).

By understanding our limit to “understand” the language of religion, we would be distanced from a haughty form of piety. We would be far from a monopolistic form of piety. We would be far from piety that endangers others. We would also be far from piety that is condescending to others. However, by understanding the limit in understanding our language of religion we will be wiser, more open, more attentive to mutual problems, more obedient and genuine in delivering good deeds for the sake of GOD, not good deeds for the sake of fellow humans. The address is GOD, although it is through the channel of fellow human beings. This is the diversity we mutually desire in connection to multi-religious and multicultural society as we experience together in Indonesia.

## **9.5 Conclusion**

Some of the notes above portray there’s immediate need in religious life in Indonesia. The need to take a “theological jump” is not to be delayed much longer, since theological jump is not the same as converting to a different religion, but it enriches spiritual life of individuals and the religious community. We can no longer say that our religiousness is “exclusive” because the others are all wrong. What is possible is to be “exclusive” personally but inclusive socially. We have to dare doing what in the Sufi realm is known as “going over the boundaries of formalities” in religion by prioritizing religious spirituality which does not mean leaving formal matters.

In order to move towards a diversity which is said to be novel, we must present and approach religion in the public context or public sphere which is full of contestation as conveyed by sociologists like Jürgen

Habermas. We must also recall that the language of religion is exceedingly complex compared to the understanding we have. Hence, if we were to follow Peter Berger, then our understanding on the language of religion is actually an understanding which “we construct ourselves” based on knowledge which has been the basis of our knowledge and beliefs in understanding things including the language of religion. Therefore, the understanding of the language of religion becomes subjective even though ultimately it could become objective due to most people subsequently stating what we said as objectively true (acknowledged by many people).

Thus, social ethics and interreligious dialog in the contestation of public sphere in Indonesia is not merely a necessity to the religious community, but it is an obligation which must be conducted by all communities of faith, particularly to followers of the heavenly religions or religions from the descendants of Abraham which historically is often mired in violent conflicts resulting in significant amount of fatal casualties. Could we not develop interreligious dialog within the context of interreligious social ethics in Indonesia? Let us join our efforts to achieve this together.

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## **PUBLIC SPHERE IN INDONESIA: POLITICS, ECONOMY AND RELIGION IN PUBLIC SPHERES**

*Bernard Adeney-Risakotta*

### **10.1 Introduction**

It appears that public sphere in Indonesia is controlled by three incredibly strong titans, namely the power of money, the power of violence, and the power of religious symbols. Money, violence, and religious symbols are a natural part of the society. Modern society would not function without these three powers. Money, violence, and religious symbols can be viewed as basic needs of Indonesian society. However, these three things also bring about a lot of problems. Money is the root of corruption. Violence is the root of tyranny and religious symbols are often used to legitimate oppression.

Undoubtedly, money is a necessary tool of economy to eat and live in the modern world. Money regulates the meaning of work, values of products, social status and economic relations which make it possible for “organic” society (Durkheim) to seek daily necessities. Distribution and diversity of profession in modern society is regulated through money. However, the power of money in Indonesia is viewed as corruptions, big or small, which are happening everywhere. Everything is valued with

money and everything is for sale. The public sphere in Indonesia is formed and dominated by money.

Violence is the coercive tool of state which is needed if we are to live under the authority of law. Politics must use coercion to regulate the relations among communities under the law. If government did not use violence in accordance to the structure of law, we will live in anarchy where the law of the jungle applies, that is only the strongest survive. Violence as a political tool to uphold the law could create a safe and peaceful society. However, in Indonesia's public sphere, violence is often utilized outside the rule of law. Not only criminals use violence to extort, intimidate and kill anyone who opposes them. Even more, militias involved with various public institutions use violence openly. The worst is that police and military institutions also use violence for their own interests and not to uphold the law.

In religious societies, religious symbols regulate the relationship between micro cosmos and macro cosmos, between human and God, and between fellow human beings. Religious symbols give legitimation and meaning to human relations which are regulated by money and coercion. However, in the public sphere in Indonesia, religious symbols are often used to oppress people or other groups. Religious symbols are used to legitimize violence and authorize corruption. Religious symbols are used to extort, attack, burn, and kill divergent groups.

This writing will discuss: what is the relation between politics, economy, and religion in the public sphere in Indonesia. This main question can be distributed into three minor questions:

1. What is the role of politics in public sphere? Is public sphere a political sphere which should be regulated and controlled by the government?
2. What is the role of economics in public sphere? How can the dominance of capitalism be avoided in the public sphere in Indonesia?

3. What is the role of religions in public sphere? Should public sphere be regulated through religious symbols, or should religion be separated from public sphere? How should interreligious relations be conducted in public sphere?

## **10.2 What is the Understanding of Public Sphere in Indonesia?**

### ***10.2.1 Open Space Including Media, Places, Institutions, and Activities/Actions***

“Public Sphere” means communal space open to all society. There are no doors, keys, or signage prohibiting certain people to enter, as long as they follow the existing rules in that space. The public sphere is not a particular physical place, but an idea or concept on the entire social interaction where various people communicate between one another. According to Charles Taylor, the public sphere can be imagined as a huge communal space where everyone can speak to each other although they have never assembled together (*one larger space of non-assembly*) (Taylor, 2004:86).

The public sphere includes media, places, institutions, and activities/actions. For instance, public sphere as media includes: newspaper, television, radio, internet, mobile phone, journals, books, movies, magazines, social media (such as twitter), advertising boards and so on. Public sphere as places include: sports stadium, places of worship, university campus, schools, town squares, shops, malls, beaches, public parks, public road, theatre, art exhibitions, jail, and so forth. Public sphere as institutions includes: religious communities, religious organizations (Muhammadiyah for example), NGOs, interest groups, hospitals, education institutions, sports clubs, and so on. Public sphere as activities or actions includes: demonstrations, neighbourhood assembly, sounds from the mosque, campaign to preserve the environment, mutual neighbourhood manual labour, festivals, and so

forth. Due to advances in technology, the public sphere is expanding more and more.

### ***10.2.2 Middle Sphere between Government and Private***

The public sphere is understood as a middle sphere between governmental and private sphere. Indeed, public sphere is often regulated by the government and political messages always enter into public sphere. However, in democratic society, public sphere is not controlled by the government, it is instead imagined as a sort of “place” owned by society and keeps its distance from the government. The public sphere functions as public social control over the government. The government frequently attempts to control public sphere, but it can't, moreover in the internet era. In the public sphere, the people are free to criticize the government, as long as they do not break the law.

Therefore, the public sphere is related to the concept of civil society. Civil society consists of institutions placed in between and in the middle of the government and individuals (intermediate organizations). Civil society institution is not just assembly of individuals nor is it government. Civil society institutions exist in the public sphere. They are not tools of the government. They must obey the law, but are also free to issue regulations and organize themselves. In the period of President Soeharto, all institutions must possess one single principle, namely Pancasila. That is currently not so. The public sphere must be regulated by law, but there is freedom under the law.

The public sphere is not a private sphere. All citizens and also the government can enter the public sphere, but every private individual also keeps their private spheres closed to others. The most private space, such as the bathroom, is obviously closed to neighbours, or the government. The private sphere is not only physical places, it also includes things such as private opinions, conscience, choice in election, belief and practice (or non-practice) of religion, personal tastes, daily habit, husband/wife relationship, and so forth.

The breadth of private sphere is understood differently in different nations. In Indonesia, private sphere tends to be narrower than the West. Not all people in Indonesia even experience a clear distinction between private and public spheres. There are still villages in Indonesia where there is no lock and key and people do not knock before entering. The bedroom is also not private since many people sleep there and whoever may enter. The bathroom is a river. Morality is regulated for all through religion, customs, and positive law. Morality is not a personal choice in the private sphere but it is a result of mutual agreement in the community.

In the case of America, a person's home is very personal. Others are not allowed to enter without an invitation. Usually neighbours do not drop by in fear of intruding. If you were to come, you must be invited first or have a prior appointment via telephone. That is not the case in Indonesia. Anyone can drop by. I know someone who was the first person in the village to have a television set. Initially his house was always jam-packed because everyone would come in to watch it. In the end, he put the television in front of a window so that more people can watch from outside. Where is the private space? Our niece moved to Yogya from his hometown Manado. As a young lady, she wrote a note on her door: "Please open slowly or knock before entering." How polite. Maybe she did not dare to make a statement that this room is private. Compare it to American teens who often write on their doors: "Private: Keep out!!!"

The first time I came to Indonesia, I was a bit offended when a person I wasn't acquainted with asked what my monthly salary was. In western culture that is part of the private sphere. My feelings (although left unsaid) was, "It's none of your business!" My salary is a part of my private sphere, not public information. But at the time, such question was not viewed as a private matter in Indonesia.

Different culture will always understand private and public sphere differently. There are differences in the West as well. Italy is unlike England. France is unlike Germany. Even in Indonesia, people from Papua won't be the same as people from Jakarta. People of Yogya are unlike people of Toraja and so forth. However, although there are differences, the process of globalization, industrialization, urbanization, division of work and higher education is currently driving the process of individuation where people tend to differentiate oneself from the society. Individual awareness is not necessarily the same as "individualism" which is understood negatively (egoism). Positive individual awareness drives one to become responsible, critical, mature, and accountable for one's own actions.

### ***10.2.3 Public Sphere as Foundation of Democracy***

The public sphere has strong connection to the concept of democracy and human rights. Where the government is of the people, by the people, and for the people, then the public sphere is where people voice their opinions. General election is a merely a small part of public sphere since every day, everywhere, people speak up. By speaking up, they have the power (demo-cracy = people power). This is part of the "sovereignty of the people" concept that is immortalized in the state Constitution and Pancasila. Human rights authorized by Indonesian law also guarantees freedom of speech, opinion, assembly, union, and association in accordance to respective opinions and consciences. Since reform was initiated in 1998, the public sphere gains importance because democracy and human rights became a part of the political reform agenda. Unless there is relatively free public sphere, civil society is not possible.

### ***10.2.4 Should Public Sphere be Free of Values and Neutral to Morality and Religion?***

In the Western world, the public sphere is imagined as a neutral sphere where everyone is free to voice their opinions and express

oneself without fear of assault. Everyone has equal rights to voice an opinion, as long as it does not break the law. Freedom of public sphere is viewed as part of human rights. All groups of religion, non-religion, ideology, culture, belief, and interest have the same right to express themselves in the public sphere. However, this ideal freedom is far from reality, both in the West and in Indonesia. In the West, the freedom to opine in the public sphere is for sale. There is very expensive and tight competition to dominate mass media. In Indonesia as well, mass media are owned by conglomerates with certain interests. Moreover, public sphere in Indonesia is not viewed as “free” but as a sphere regulated for the sake of the people, in accordance to the goal of the government.

According to Charles Taylor, the public sphere is meant to empower the voices of all citizens so that a kind of consensus can appear. In other words, the public sphere is a realm of assembly that is as wide as the entire society in order to reach a mutual agreement. An assembly that is free, ethical and based on conscience is hoped to establish unity and unitedness of diverse communities. Consensus of the people will be the mandate of a democratic government. As government is established upon the sovereignty of the people, the public sphere is the space that accepts or rejects government legitimacy. The public sphere is extremely influential on the results of general elections.

Certainly such concept of public sphere is very ideal and it is not an empirical reality. Actually, both in the West and Indonesia, the voices of marginalized groups are rarely heard in the public sphere. Voices of oppressed groups are forcibly silenced or ignored. In Middle Eastern countries, people who have long been oppressed rose up through protests in public spheres. The government and military confronted the so called “Arab Spring” by attempting to control public spheres through violence. In Indonesia and the West, the public sphere is controlled by capital and political power. Both in Indonesia and the West, elections become exorbitantly expensive. Every candidate to a political position

must be prepared to spend very substantial amount of funds in order to win the election. Nevertheless, the voice of the people in the public sphere can still bring about change. As an example, Jokowi and Ahok won by a landslide in the Jakarta Governor and Vice Governor election although unsupported by most political parties. Assembly in the public sphere results in a kind of consensus to elect them.

Jürgen Habermas analysed the rise of public sphere in the West and affirmed that the public sphere should be a truly secular place (Habermas, 1989). Habermas views the public sphere as an ideal place for rational discourse free from domination of religious dogma, free from political pressure which coercively threatens (violence), and free from manipulation of capitalistic economy that is full of interests. The public sphere should be a “place” where everyone is free to seek the truth without pressure from irrational matters. Not unlike John Rawls, Habermas envisioned a universal rationality which does not belong to a particular culture, particular class, or particular ideology, but one that is open to all human beings. Indeed Habermas realized that conscience rarely functions freely. There will always be pressure from tradition, politics, economy, and religion. However, we can still fight for the ideal society and a public sphere where pressures from irrational matters (such as religious dogma, political pressure, and manipulation of money) are minimized.

According to Habermas, a highly pluralistic and fragmented society in terms of culture, social tiers, economy, religion, race, education, and so on should seek a common rational “language” for all. Such discourse should remain neutral towards religion and all dogmas of tradition/culture. Assembly in a plural society could only happen when we communicate rationally without using differences in religion, teachings of holy book or dogma to attack one another. Hence, the public sphere should be secular, meaning free from distortions of irrational beliefs. In his most novel writing, Habermas has slightly

changed and admitted that religious people may also voice their opinions and arguments based on their faith which of course are comparatively less rational than secular-atheists (Habermas in Mendieta and Vanatwerpen, eds. 2011). However, he still feels that religious individuals should translate the “language of religion” and dogmas of the holy books into the universal rational language which can be accepted by people of differing religions or no religion.

In my opinion, Habermas and Rawls overvalue secular rationality and ignore the fact that secular-atheists also do not mutually agree on what is rational. Everybody has assumptions and beliefs that may not be rational. There is no universal scientific rational thought. All methods of thinking is formed through the process of history (Hans Gadamer). For instance, what is rational according to a Marxist is different to what is rational according to a liberal democrat which also differs to the views of a neo-conservative. The differences in opinions of secularists are no less than the differences between a Muslim, a Hindu, a Christian, or a Buddhist (see: Charles Taylor in Mendieta and Vanantwerpen, eds. 2011). Even something that is rational to a follower of NU may not certainly be what a follower of Muhammadiyah view as rational! As Alastair MacIntyre said on the title of his book: *Whose Justice, Which Rationality?* (MacIntyre, 1988). These rational methods of thinking are no more universal that methods of thinking based on faith.

### **10.3 Religion, Politics and Economy in the Public Sphere**

#### ***10.3.1 Religion, Politics and Economy as Empirical and Normative Realities in the Public Sphere***

In the Indonesian context, it is almost impossible to imagine a public sphere free from the influences of religion, politics and money. Not only is the Indonesian public sphere empirically already full of influences from money, political interests, and religious dogmas, most Indonesians are just not too interested in the secular rational discourse world

Habermas expected. In a society where 99% admitted that religion is personally important, it is difficult to imagine religion being thrown out of the public sphere. The foundation of the state is belief in the one and only God. The majority, who are Muslims, believe that Islam is relevant throughout all aspects of social life not limited to individual private spheres. The Hindu community in Bali, Christians in Toraja or Catholics in Flores would also disapprove if religion were cast out of the public sphere.

Thus is the case with public sphere that is free from the influence of money. In gift exchange culture, it is difficult to imagine a public sphere unaffected by “envelopes” (filled with money) and other gifts. “Where’s the gift?” The current structure of economy has an enormous impact on money. Low pay and salary means many people, including university lecturers, sustain the lives of their family through envelopes. The impact of money can’t always be speculated. During political campaigns, people would reap gifts from all sides. A friend of mine told a story about the head of district election in his village. From the two candidates, one gave everyone in the village Rp 75,000 respectively. Consequently, the opponent gave everyone in the village Rp 150,000. Hence, everyone received Rp 225,000. Since the former candidate was more popular, he won the election although he only gave Rp 75,000 per person. The latter candidate was furious. All his money was spent and he got nothing.

Moreover, is it possible for Indonesian public sphere to be free from political influence? Indonesia still upholds a hierarchical culture of patron-client which highly values loyalty to superiors. The influence of politics is part of the “I scratch your back, you scratch mine” culture. Political cleavages mean there are numerous people participating in the public sphere, not as thinking individuals seeking their own truth, but as a person who is already part of a particular ethnicity, particular religion, particular ideology, and is loyal to particular figures. The public sphere

is a place of negotiation and bargaining between groups possessing communal identity.

The influence of religion, economy, and politics in the Indonesian public sphere is considered by a lot of Indonesians as natural and proper, not terrible. Religious symbols, money and political influence cannot be driven away from the public sphere because that is not expected by the people of Indonesia. However, everyone is aware that many problems happen because of these three things. What are the problems and can they be reduced?

### ***10.3.2 Mixture of Religion, Politics and Economy in the Public Sphere***

In my opinion, the root of the problem is in the mixture of these three things. Religious symbol, the power of money, and political influence (including violence) are intertwined until it is difficult to differentiate. These three things are indeed always related to one another. Politics influences economy and religion. For example, politics will determine whether the price of fuel rises and whether a certain product for sale is forbidden by religion. Economy affects religion and politics. For instance, a religious school would close down if there weren't enough income. Politicians would lose their positions if economic conditions worsened. Religion influences politics and economy. As an example, public policy violating religious norms would not be accepted by the public. Meanwhile, religious trends and perceptions affect products and business to sell or go bankrupt. However, not acknowledging differences in the norms and regulations of each field would bring about disastrous result.

An interesting example is the conflict related to the church called Christian Church of Indonesia (GKI) Yasmin. The church building is located in a highly valuable area in the centre of the city of Bogor (economic aspect). Although it was built with legal permit (political aspect) and certificate of ownership, the land was intended for use of economic development. Aside from that, there were many members of

the church who were of Chinese ethnicity (social/racial aspect). The Islamic hard liner (militant) group (religious aspect) threatened to attack and burn the church (violence). Subsequently, the city mayor (political aspect), pressurized by economic interest and the religious radical group, revoked the permit to use the church building (religious aspect) and urged them to move to another location. The church leader did not agree and brought the case to court (political/legal aspect). After a lengthy and expensive (economic aspect) legal process, the case was finally brought to the Supreme Court where GKI Yasmin won and was afforded the right to use the building. However, the Mayor of Bogor does not agree and still, to this day, utilize the police (political violence) to close down the church building. This case shows how religion, economy, and politics are mixed in the public sphere.

### ***10.3.3 Public Spheres as Locations to Distribute Social Goods***

According to Michael Walzer, the public sphere consists of many spaces (Walzer, 1983). There isn't just one sphere but many. Every sphere is a location where social goods are distributed in accordance to differing rules. As an example, in the public sphere of university, the social goods distributed include among other things: academic positions, registration of accepted students, academic titles and knowledge. These proper social goods are distributed based on scientific proof and accountability in fulfilling academic obligations, such as: taking exams, present in lectures, writing articles/papers, reading scientific papers, and so forth. In the academic "field" or "sphere", the system is fair, as long as the rules and academic procedures are followed. This doesn't mean the academic "sphere" is entirely separate from economy, politics, religion, et cetera, but these other fields are not allowed to control the field of education by neglecting academic values and regulations.

The same applies in the public sphere of market economy. The social goods distributed are services or products that can be purchased with money. The economic sphere, for instance, is a store located in a mall

that has differing rules to traditional market. The prices in the store are fixed whereas the prices in traditional market are to be negotiated. In the store, anyone willing to pay the price can take the goods. In a traditional market, if the seller and buyer didn't feel mutually compatible, the goods might not be sold to the buyer although she/he is willing to pay sufficiently. Nevertheless, be it traditional market or modern store, both have rules in distributing goods or services based on monetary exchange (or swap). Fairness in economy, including fairness in procedures (not violating the law or regulations in place) and fairness in distribution, leads to beneficial results for all parties. Once Timor Leste seceded from the Republic of Indonesia, it is said that many militia members who possessed Indonesian military weaponry entered West Timor. They would often come into stores or shops, taking anything without paying. At the time, the political field controlled the economic one by not honouring the values of the economic sphere.

In the religious public sphere, there are also rules different to economic regulations. If someone were to become a religious figure, she/he must follow the rules of religion. Possibly included in those rules are having studied at a particular Islamic boarding school or seminary, and obedience to traditional Islamic religious educator (*kiayi*) or professors. Meditating, studying, and praying. The system is fair if the social goods of religion, such as enlightenment, closeness to God, respect from the society or position in religious institutions, are distributed in accordance to the values and regulations of the religion.

The same applies to the public sphere of art. If a person were to become a traditional puppeteer (*dalang*) in Java, she/he must speak Javanese, learn the art of shadow puppetry from a prominent puppeteer, meditate, and follow a lengthy process before acquiring approval as a puppeteer. If one were to be a star footballer, she/he must train extensively and gain extraordinary experiences sufficiently before securing a position in a good football team. If one were to become a

fashion model, then she/he must be beautiful, has great skills, charismatic, sharp in choosing suitable attires, capable of putting on cosmetics properly, and so forth.

According to Michael Walzer, fairness is not alike in all public spheres. Every sphere has its own rules and one isn't allowed to dominate another. For example, in the economic field, fairness relates to the distribution of money. Goods are sold with decent price and products bought are of quality in accordance to its price. However, in the field of education, academic positions or a place in the university should not be acquirable by money. A person wanting to become a professor should possess vast amount of knowledge, not money. In the field of sports, for example, a football star should be selected based on the capability of scoring goals, not because his/her father is the Governor of East Java. In the field of religion, a person should not become a *kiyai* because she is gorgeous (like a movie star) or rich, but because of her proper understanding and contemplation of religion.

Every field has valuable social goods which should be distributed in accordance to the rules of each field. No one field possesses the right to dominate other fields. Certainly, the field of politics issue laws which regulate every field. Nevertheless, just and fair laws follow important and differing values of the respective fields. The field of politics retains the right to use the police which use violence to uphold the law. However, if a politician were to use the police to safeguard their own business interests or to kill a judge who could not be bribed, then this is unfair because one field (politics) tries to dominate another field (judicial) through methods that are not suitable with the rules of each field.

The influence of Politics (including violence), Economy (including money) and Religion has been extremely powerful throughout the social life of Indonesian society. In my opinion, this is typical. Indonesia does not need to imitate the West who is attempting to establish a secular

public sphere controlled by scientific rationality. Modern science, physics for example, is also one of the field in the public sphere that should not be dominated by other fields. Religion should not dominate physics. As affirmed by Amin Abdullah, it is better to establish dialog among different academic fields, including between religious knowledge and science, rather than one dominating over another. Physics should not dominate religion as well. Experimentation and logics of physics could not prove that there is no God or that miracles are impossible. The rules in the sphere of religion are different from the rules of physics experimentation.

The Indonesian public sphere will always be influenced by religion, politics, and economy. These three fields are intensely inseparable. There will always be a process of mutual influence between one another. However, each field is not allowed to dominate another. In the end of the New Order period, the family of President Soeharto dominated the field of Indonesian economy massively. As a result, the state became bankrupt and the government overthrown. If Indonesia intends to overcome the many problems related to the poser of religion, politics, and economy in the public sphere, then it must respect the values and rules which applies in the respective fields so that one field is not intervened by other fields.



## **DEVELOPING ETHICS OF INTERACTION AMONG RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

*Fatimah Husein, Ph.D*

### **11.1 Introduction**

As a country with the largest Muslim population in the world which has quite a significant amount of non-Muslim population, interreligious relationship in Indonesia is a topic of many discussions. Various local and foreign media often highlight incidents relating to interreligious relation in Indonesia, particularly if they were in the form of conflict or involving violence. Many people have attempted to convey ideas on how interreligious social relations should be developed in Indonesia, this writing will observe ethics in education of religion in higher education in the context of interreligious relation in Indonesia. Although the discussion in these passages specifically refers to religious education, it is hoped that it can be considered as an ethics manual of general education in the context of higher education.

Regarding religious education, the Law on the National Education System (UUSPN) No. 2 year 1989 has given mandate in Chapter IX section 39: “The curriculum contents on every education types and tiers are obligated to contain religious education”. Moreover, UUSPN No.

2/1989, verse 39, section 2 affirms that “religious education is the conscious effort to prepare student learner in believing, understanding, contemplating and practicing the teachings of religion through activities of mentoring, teaching and or training with attention to respect other religions regarding interreligious harmony in the society in order to realize national unity.” Subsequently, UUSPN No. 20/2003, Chapter V, verse 12, section 1(a) mentions that “Every student learner in an education unit reserve the right to religious education in accordance to the religion adhered and it is taught by an educator of the same religion”.

Regarding religious education in higher education, it is stated in Chapter III, verse 9 sub b Law No. 22/1961 on Higher Education as follows: “In Public Higher Education, Religious Education is given as a subject matter with the understanding that students have the right not to partake in by stating their reservations”. Consequently, MPRS Decree XXVII/MPRS/1966 Chapter I, Verse 1 states: “Establishing religious education to be a subject matter in public schools from Elementary up to University level.”

The regulations above explain the importance of religious education in elementary, intermediate, and higher education. In this writing, the theme on ethics of interreligious interaction in higher education is approach from three aspects, namely: 1) philosophical and theoretical aspects which are the basis of interreligious relations that needs to be introduced to university students, 2) educator (lecturer) aspect in regards to university students with various religious backgrounds, and 3) education institution aspect in regards to the execution of multi-religious education. Several personal experiences as a university lecturer will be given as illustrations.

## **11.2 Philosophical and Theoretical Aspects**

As one of the efforts in developing ethics of social interaction for higher education students of various religious backgrounds, we need to begin with fundamental questions on our existence and the existence of religious communities different to us in the face of God. Here, it is important to understand the paradigm of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. This can be explained through the existing religious courses, such as Introduction to Islamic Studies (which is an obligatory course to all students of UIN (State Islamic University) Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta), without needing to separately create a new course.

Prior to discussing these three paradigms, it is important for us to mutually realize that the use of these terms or labels is definitely not without risk or problem, especially if we were to label it to individuals or groups. Firstly, these labels can be easily interpreted as value judgements; secondly, when we label certain group as exclusive, as an example, we are often led to include several categories that are not entirely theological; thirdly, certain groups we label might not agree with our labelling.

Nevertheless, as a paradigm in interreligious interaction, it is important to shed understanding to university students regarding the three theological categories above. Several scholars, including Paul Knitter (1995), Douglas Pratt (2005), and Raimundo Panikkar (1999), have offered theological categories that have similarities between one another although not exactly. However, in the history of my lectures for the course Interreligious Dialog, both at UIN Sunan Kalijaga and the Centre for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies (CRCS), Gadjah Mada University, I think Diana Eck's writing is the most helpful to the students in shedding understanding upon the three paradigms above. In one of her writing titled "Is Our God Listening?" Eck (2005:21) questioned:

*“Is ‘our God’ listening to the prayers of people of other faiths? If not, why not? What kind of God would that be? Would the one we Christians and Jews speak of as maker of heaven and earth not give ear to the prayer of a man so earnestly, so deeply in prayer? On the other hand, if God is listening, what are we all about? Who are we as a people who cherish our own special relationship with God? If we conclude that ‘our God’ is not listening, then we had better ask how we are to speak of God at all as people of faith in a world of many faiths. But if we suspect that ‘our God’ is listening, then how are we to speak ourselves as people of faith among other peoples of faith?”*

In response to the above question, Eck explained that the exclusive group would opine that “our community, our tradition, our understanding of reality, our encounter with God is the only truth”. Therefore, in answering the question “Is ‘our God’ listening?” the exclusive group would have no doubt at all to speak of ‘our God’ or of ‘the truth’.

The inclusive group would opine that “in reality there are indeed many communities, traditions, and truths, nevertheless our point of view is the apex of other point of views, better than the others, or at least vast enough to include the others in it.” Hence, in response to the question “Is ‘our God’ listening?” the inclusive group would say that surely our God listens to prayers from all communities of different faiths, however, it is “Our God” that listens, and not “your God” or “their God”. Meanwhile the pluralist group would opine that “truth does not belong to a certain community or tradition. Thus, differences in community, tradition, understanding of truth and of God are not problems that need to be resolved, but are in fact opportunities for us all to conduct mutual dialog.” Hence in response to the question “Is ‘our God’ listening?” the pluralist group would state that there is no God that could be claimed as

“Our God” because we could not limit God to the God that we know. God does not belong to us, it is rather a way to discuss reality.

As a lecturer in the Interreligious Dialog course, I am often asked by students “Which category are you in?” when introducing the three paradigms above. The students often question about pluralist attitude, or even the definition of pluralism. It is indeed undeniable that the MUI Fatwa on “Pluralism, Liberalism, and Secularism of Religion” (Gillespie, 2007:202-240) year 2005 had a role in advancing several students’ reluctance to have a pluralist attitude, or to empathize other people’s decision to be pluralists, although the definition specified in the fatwa is not grounded on academic debate. Once again, I feel that the definition of religious pluralism and pluralist attitude in conducting religion proposed by Diana Eck has proven to be of sufficient in helping students understand:

*As scholars, we are suspicious of universalizing harmonies and of the rush to find common ground and agreement. Perhaps this is the place to make clear, at the outset that religious pluralism is not primarily about common ground. Pluralism takes the reality of difference as its starting point. The challenge of pluralism is not to obliterate or erase difference, nor to smooth out differences under a universalizing canopy, but rather to discover ways of living, connecting, relating, arguing, and disagreeing in a society of differences (Eck, 2007: 743).*

Then, does this mean that lecturers should “lead” all students to have a pluralist attitude? I think if we agree on the definition proposed by Eck that a pluralist approach is in fact initiated by the courage to respect differences and promote dialog, then pluralist attitude in conducting religion is the attitude which needs to be promoted. However, one thing that we should be concerned about is the possibility of making religious pluralism an absolute condition and negating other point of views, because we will instead be confined in a form of religious exclusivism.

The discussion on the three paradigms above can be completed with discussions on “Rules for Interreligious Dialogue” (Panikkar, 2003). Although the rules were made in the context of interreligious dialog, several among them can be adopted in the context of higher education in Indonesia. One of the rules that in my opinion could be very useful in creating interaction among students of various religious backgrounds is what Leonard Swidler proposed: “Each participant must come to the dialogue with complete honesty and sincerity. Conversely each participant must assume a similar complete honesty and sincerity in the other partners”. In discussions with my students in class, we realize that this is not easy to do. Each of us grew up with various prejudices and stereotypes on groups of certain religion, culture, and ethnicity. That is why honesty and sincerity are the key words.

Another rule proposed by Leonard Swidler is: “In interreligious, interideological dialogue we must not compare our ideals with our partner’s practice, but rather our ideals with our partner’s ideals, our practice with our partner’s practice” (Swidler, 2003). Often times we are unconsciously comparing teachings of our religion to religious practices conducted by our friends of different religions. This could be a thorn in social interaction among higher education students. Both rules above, for instance, could be a part of our learning contract with the students so that there is an atmosphere of mutual respect in the learning and teaching process.

### **11.3 Lecturer and Student Aspect**

What about the roles of lecturers and students in developing ethics of interaction among academic members of different religions? My experiences teaching students of different religious background, either in Indonesia or abroad, show that we need to consider not only perspectives, teaching materials, teaching methods, and assignments that

we give to students, but also preparation in facing various critical questions regarding doctrines of one religion, including our own.

The opportunity to teach Interreligious Dialog course at CRCS Gadjah Mada University since 2005 provided numerous valuable experiences in connection to ethics of interreligious interaction. Every batch, students of CRCS comes from various religious and cultural backgrounds, although almost always filled with Muslim majority. As a lecturer I also have the chance to engage in team teaching with other lecturers of different religion. When I taught with Professor Bana Wiratma from Duta Wacana Christian University, we made a course description as follows:

*This course is an introduction to dialogue and an attempt to conduct a constructive dialogue. It will not only discuss theological issues related to dialogue but will also critically analyse realities related to dialogue, including conversion and proselytization. Even though some aspects of inter-religious dialogue in Indonesia will be explored, some cases of inter-religious dialogue at the international level will also be discussed.*

*The course will be based on dialogue of life as experienced by the participants. The whole process of the course will be shaped in dialogue. The participants will converse with other participants and with people of other faiths through written materials. The participants will also dialogue with his/her own faith traditions.*

The description above explains a number of important points regarding ethics in interaction between lecturers and students, and among fellow students. As lecturers, we must firstly respect the variety of differences in the students' religion and beliefs. We turn the class into a place to practice dialog among students of various religious and cultural backgrounds, and as a place for each student to conduct dialog

with their respective faith. In practice, our classes are definitely always interesting with various critical questions and contribution of ideas from both Indonesian and foreign students.

The organization of teaching materials also has an important standing since it needs to be designed with considerations to the developing theories or paradigms in interreligious dialog studies. We are fully aware that the course we offer must be taught academically, so that although it includes broad perspectives from various religions, we do not lead students to choose one particular perspective. These perspectives of various religions are presented to provide better opportunity for students to conduct dialog not only with fellow students of differing religious background, but also with writers of various books and articles who come from different religions and cultures (See Durham Jr., 2008:229-239).

In the Interreligious Dialogue course we supervise at CRCS, aside from the task of reviewing the teaching materials we distribute, we also request students to make a mini project which we describe as follows:

*From the beginning of the course, each student has to initiate a mini project on interreligious dialogue as a group assignment. This mini project aims at giving the opportunity to the students to understand the complexity of the issue of interreligious dialogue at the grass root level. This will also help the students to conduct empirical research so that it will not produce moralistic discourse. This project is to be presented as a group report. However each student has to submit an individual report which later to be developed and submitted as a final paper.*

*The object of the mini project on inter-religious dialogue could be: daily life experiences, institutions, symbols, or religious teachings as observed within the community. It is important to explore interreligious dialogue which is deeply rooted at grass-root experiences. What is specific about Indonesian experience*

*on interreligious dialogue? Could it be a model for interreligious dialogue internationally?*

The main goal of this mini project is actually to provide field experience regarding interreligious issues. Aside from that, we deliberately place students of different religious and cultural backgrounds into one group to create cooperation and mutual understanding. This group task would also provide students the chance to know their co-workers better, both socially and theologically.

The importance of the experience in directly knowing “the religious other” also applies to the lecturers. A lecturer teaching or attempting to develop social interaction among students of different religions must have experiences of living together with communities of different religions. My experience teaching at the Vienna International Christian Islamic Summer University (VICISU) in 2010 and 2011 could be set as one of the illustrations. VICISU is a summer program organized by lecturers from the University of Vienna and it runs for three weeks in Altenburg Monastery, Lower Austria. This program is conducted once every two years since 2008 and it brings together around 50 students and lecturers from five continents to discuss important questions we confront in this era of globalization from Muslim and Christian perspectives (<http://www.univie.ac.at/vicisu/index.php/vicisu-2012/documentation>).

During the event, both students and lecturers stayed at the Benedict Monastery together with the priests although in separate quarters. We also had the opportunity to interact with the priests every breakfast and on visitations to other monasteries. We heard their direct explanations on the teachings of Saint Benedict, their rituals of worship, as well as what it means to live a celibate life. Moreover, we also interacted with lecturers of other countries and differing religions, as well as students originating from 15 countries. I believe such experiences are very important, especially to me as a lecturer teaching Philosophy of Religion and Interreligious Dialog, but it was also rewarding for the students

coming from all corners of the world participating in VICISU, and for the priests in Altenburg Monastery as well. This way, possibly existing prejudices and stereotypes among one another could be diminished.

As mentioned above, another matter which is of no less importance is our preparedness as lecturers to confront various critical questions posed by students, regarding course materials or directly in connection to our own religious doctrine. Being a Muslim woman bearing a non-detachable identity in the way I dress often raises various curiosities particularly from other religious communities. Questions referring to the role of women, the position of men and women in Islam, Islamic view on polygamy, often become popular topics. In my lecturing experience, at higher education institutions both in Indonesia and abroad, among the questions that were asked are:

*Fatimah, how do you negotiate your seemingly contradictive identities? You are a practising Muslim, you wear a traditional Muslim dress, but you travel to the United States by yourself, you earned a Ph.D degree from an international university, and.... You speak English! Are you the only person in Indonesia with such identities? (Husein in Wijayatsih, 2010: 400-414).*

We may knit our eyebrows listening to this question and ponder how could such “ridiculous” question come out of an American student who attends one of the leading universities there? However, amidst various negative assumptions on Islam, particularly post 9/11, the question could be considered ordinary. This is the importance of understanding our own religion and being astute in responding to such question. We could begin by explaining how exegesis models of al-Qur’an are, because the question actually assumed that in Islam, women are not allowed to pursue higher education, must stay at home, and must always be accompanied when travelling afar. In my experience, explanation on exegesis models of al-Qur’an is proven to be an eye opener for non-Muslim students that exegesis on Islam is not only one. Consequently,

we could explain on what it means to be a Muslim woman as we understand it, what model of exegesis we follow and how these exegeses discuss women and man-woman relations in Islam.

I often receive various positive impressions from non-Muslim students regarding my lectures. I don't think it's because of my sophistication in providing theories nor is it because of my concealment of Islamic teachings frequently criticized by other religious communities such as the teachings on women, or on religious other. I think it is more because of my openness in sharing my belief/faith of my religion. A number of emails I received while teaching "Islam in Indonesia" at the University of Washington in Seattle and the University of Salzburg, Austria are as follows:

*Dear Fatimah,*

*Thank you so much, you have changed the way I understand Islam. I have read and heard about Islam, but until I saw in you, it makes a big difference.*

*Dear Fatimah,*

*Thank you very much for all your lessons you gave to us. They were so much different to all other lessons and that was great. I'm very hopeful that you will return next year. What will you tell your students when you come back home? Are Austrian students very different to yours in Indonesia?*

Another example occurred while I was teaching some exchange students from Australia who took courses at the Faculty of Economy in the Islamic University of Indonesia, Yogyakarta. The course I conducted at the time was "Islamic Thought and Civilization" and it was attended by 5 students. When we discussed "Art Expression in Islam", I brought several books including a *Great Ages of Man* book series titled *Early Islam*. One of the students opened the *Early Islam* book and noticed a picture of the Prophet Muhammad and his daughter Fatimah with parts

of their faces covered in white. Underneath the picture, the following information was written:

*When the Prophet reached the age of 63, the Angel of Death appeared and offered him a choice: he could either live on earth for ever or join Allah in Paradise. Mohammed chose Paradise, but his decision left his followers –particularly his devoted daughter Fatima (far right) deeply bereaved. After the Prophet had distributed his few belongings to the poor and enjoined his congregation to hold to the faith, his soul was borne away by the angel (Stewart, 1968: 29).*

One of the students asked me: “Fatimah, why are their faces covered? Is it because their faces are ugly?” Wisdom is once again necessary in responding to such question. I think we do not need to directly assume that such question intends to degrade Islam. In my opinion, such question surfaced because of their unfamiliarity regarding Islamic history, Islamic doctrines, and possibly due to Islamic prejudice and stereotype they’ve read in the media in their country.

As a lecturer we also need to know various models of approach that can be used in religious studies, which in this case is Islam. At least two approach models written by Koren and Nevo regarding historical studies of Islam need to be mastered. The first approach model could be classified as source-critical or revisionist approach which could lead the reader or researcher to arrive at a conclusion which is very contradictive to what is believed by the followers of religion under analysis. Meanwhile, the second approach is called the traditional approach which is different to the former because it utilizes sources originating from the Muslim community itself more. By using this approach model the result of a person’s reading or research on Islam would usually be closer to what is believed by the followers of Islam (See Koren and Nevo, 1976:29-56).

The examples above, although specifically refer to lectures in religion courses, in my opinion could be utilized as one of the methods in developing ethics of social interaction in higher education institutions in general. The questions and responses of my students above could provide an outlook that in the context of higher education, we are not only expected to prepare teaching materials that are plentiful in perspective, various in methods, with tasks which provide the opportunity for students to be able to interact with fellow students on a deeper level, but we must also be prepared for various critical questions posed by students, let alone if it is related to our own faith. It is in this context that I felt the importance in understanding our own religious teaching deeply before we could share and conduct dialog with others. I think it is highly significant for us to consider one of the ground rules proposed by Leonard Swidler on the need to define ourselves in the context of interreligious relation. It is only us alone who can define what it means to be a Muslim, Christian, or others.

#### **11.4 Education Institution Aspect**

Aside from the two aspects discussed above, higher education institutions have a very strategic role in developing interreligious social interactions, particularly in and around the campus. The swift advance of knowledge and technology simultaneously give way to several problems. It is not infrequent that the problems that arise need ethical and religious response, hence higher education institution could take the role in teaching education that is polite, inclusive, nonviolent, and capable of answering the challenges of the advancement of time. This compels higher education institutions to possess a clear vision which would be translated into mission, graduate competence, and curriculum.

Subsequently, in regards to the teaching of religion, higher education institution should form a consortium of supervising lecturers. This is important so that supervisors understand the values, aims, and methods

in teaching religion that is inclusive and nonviolent. Because lecturers are at the forefront in delivering education to students, then higher education institutions need to be convincing that the religious education conveyed also emphasizes historical aspect and not constantly on normative aspect of religion (Abdullah, 1996).

Then there are several important questions which must be answered: in neutral higher education institutions or those that have no religious affiliation, how would lecture on religion be given? If we were to refer to USPN No. 20/2003 mentioned previously, then higher education institutions are also obligated to provide religious education in accordance to the religion adhered by each student and it is taught by an educator of the same faith. The question is that if higher education institutions provide religious education separately to each followers of religion, how could theological dialog happen among students? However, in the history of Indonesian education, we note that there have been many private schools and higher education institutions of religious character that bear a heavy heart in regards to this law since they are of the view that religion, which is the defining character of their institution, should be taught and contemplated by all of its student learners.

Another issue related to this is in regards to acceptance of students into higher education institutions with religious characteristic, would they accept students who are different with the religion of the institutions? I think that in today's globalization era, higher education institutions, particularly those with religious characteristic, are no longer able to confine themselves and only accept students or lecturers who are of the same religion as the institution. The interest of students from the United States to learn Islam in Indonesia, or a group of European Parliamentary members who are present as participants of Indonesia Interfaith Scholarship, for examples, would render an Islamic higher education institution unable to seal themselves off and reject them. The presence of students or lecturers from various religions should enrich the

perspective of higher education institutions and facilitate in the possibility of conducting interreligious dialog for the academic community of those institutions.

Acceptance of students, lecturers, or several guests from various religious backgrounds is related to facilities of worship which should be provided by the institutions. I remember my experience when intending to conduct midday prayer at Monash University, Clayton Campus, Australia. Since I didn't attend classes there and I lived far from Clayton, I tried to look for a prayer space. Consequently, I found a Religious Centre which was quite interesting in shape and wide enough to be used as a place of worship for students from all backgrounds of religion and faith. I think such initiative needs to be considered by higher education institutions in Indonesia. This is not only important to students or lecturers of various religions who attend the institutions, but it is also of benefit to the institutions when they receive guests who are present for seminars, workshops, or such events. Provision of a place of worship that could be used by various religious communities (multi faith center) could also be a place for the academic community to mutually interact and cooperate in comparison to worship facilities that are exclusively utilized for each religious community (Tidswell and Franzmann in Engebretson et. al, 2010:389-402).

Then how about the rules and regulations which applies, such as Muslim attire, should it be worn too by non-Muslim students? As a lecturer at UIN Sunan Kalijaga, I am frequently asked by foreign students who wanted to learn or merely conduct research "do I have to wear Muslim attires while I am in the UIN campus ground?" I am often confused in answering this question because although Muslim attires are indeed one of the student's codes of ethics, in my opinion, it should not be applicable to students and lecturers who are not Muslim.

The challenges above are a small part of what higher education institutions confront in managing and providing education in general,

and religious education in particular, as well as in accepting the academic community that comes from a variety of religious backgrounds. In the future, it should be a matter of fact that every higher education institution possesses a social interaction manual among academic community of various religious backgrounds which is produced based on the vision and mission of the university, both in terms of teaching courses and provision of supporting facilities.

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