

RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF MUSLIM PHILOSOPHER: THEORY AND EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

One of the teachings and the difference between philosophy and other sciences is the importance of rational and objective thinking. The implication of this teaching is the birth of an open-minded, inclusive view and acceptance of the truth from wherever it comes, including from different religions and cultures. Openness and acceptance of differences are the indicators of religious moderation. Therefore, there is an inherent relationship between openness and religious moderation. Without an inclusive view, there is no religious moderation. Likewise, a person's inclusive and moderate view will be present only if he thinks rationally and objectively. This article aims to analyze the meaning of religious moderation from the perspective of Muslim philosophers and its implementation in history, either in the global or Indonesian context. This research answers and seeks an alternate solution to the problem of extremism and radicalism in the name of religion. The method used is philosophical and historical-hermeneutic. In addition to library data, the research sources also use field data obtained through observation and interviews with students, alumni, and lecturers of Aqidah and Islamic Philosophy (AFI) in Indonesia.

Keywords: Islamic Philosophy; Rational; Moderate; Tolerance; Harmony.

Abstrak

Salah satu ajaran dan pembeda antara ilmu filsafat dengan ilmu lain adalah pentingnya berpikir rasional dan objektif. Implikasi dari ajaran tersebut adalah lahirnya pandangan terbuka, inklusif, dan penerimaan terhadap kebenaran dari manapun datangnya termasuk dari agama dan budaya yang berbeda. Keterbukaan dan penerimaan terhadap perbedaan merupakan salah satu dari indikator moderasi beragama. Oleh karena itu, ada hubungan yang saling terkait antara keterbukaan dengan moderasi beragama. Tanpa pandangan inklusif, maka tidak ada moderasi beragama. Demikian juga, pandangan yang inklusif dan moderat akan hadir dalam diri seseorang hanya jika ia berpikir rasional dan objektif. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisa makna moderasi beragama dalam perspektif filsuf Muslim dan implementasinya baik dalam konteks global maupun Indonesia. Penelitian ini menjawab dan mencari solusi alternatif dari problem ekstremisme dan radikalisme atas nama agama. metode yang digunakan adalah analisa filosofis dan historis-hermeneutik. Sumber penelitian, selain data kepustakaan, juga menggunakan data lapangan yang diperoleh melalui wawancara kepada mahasiswa, alumni, dan dosen Aqidah dan Filsafat Islam (AFI) di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Filsafat Islam; Rasional; Moderat; Toleran; Harmoni.

INTRODUCTION

Historians denote that the development of philosophy in Islam began at the beginning of the 9th century AD or the 3rd century H since al-Kindi (185-252 H/801-866 AD) did a systematic translation and writing of philosophy.¹ Al-Farabi (870–950 AD) further developed this practice by attempting to integrate Islamic disciplines like kalam and fiqh with Greek philosophy in his work, *Ihsa al-Ulum*.² Later philosophers such as Ibn Sina, Suhrawardi, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Khaldun, and Mulla Sadra continued to be perfected these efforts.

From the very beginning of its emergence, philosophy was applied as a general term for all fields of essential science, commonly called knowledge of existence as it exists. With this title, philosophy spans metaphysics, mathematics, physics, ethics, economics, and politics. From the entire range of objects of philosophical study, there is no direct connection with the theme of moderation, let alone religious moderation. However, if studied from the division of philosophy into theoretical and practical features, it is found that the study of moderation is in the area of practical philosophy, especially ethics. Clearly, the discussion is not directly related to religious moderation but to how to achieve and obtain the central values.³ Muslim philosophers held that there must be a middle ground between the two extremes in order to attain virtue and perfection. One must start from a reasonable viewpoint in the soul to get at these places in the active component.

Meanwhile, religious moderation in Indonesia is understood in terms of socio-religious relations, namely the way humans are

religious and their relationships with different beliefs, as mentioned in the book *Religious Moderation*, published by the Indonesian Ministry of Religion.⁴ Religious moderation refers to a moderate religious attitude related to personal experiences and respects for the practice of other religions. By choosing the middle way, it will avoid extreme and fanatical attitudes in religion.

It is stated in the Roadmap for Strengthening Religious Moderation for 2020-2024 that there are four indicators of religious moderation, namely the existence of national commitment, presenting tolerance, acceptance of tradition, and anti-violence.⁵ The indicator of the national commitment is accepting the principles in the nation and state or commonly called the four pillars of nationality, namely Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Indicators of tolerance include respecting differences and providing space for others to believe, express their beliefs and also express opinions. The indicator of acceptance of the tradition is friendly and accepting of local wisdom as long as it does not conflict with the main teachings of religion. Whereas, the last indicator, anti-violence is to reject every action that tries to use violent means, both physically and verbally.

The Islamic philosophy asserts that every human activity, whether it is good or bad and whether it occurs individually or in groups (based on nationality), is the result of habits and choice (commitment). Rational reason is the ability to select and decide on an action that will

¹ Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2004), 66-106.

² Abu Nasr Al-Farabi, *Ihsa Al-Ulum* (Beirut: Dar wa Maktabah al-Hilal, 1996).

³ Abu Nasr Al-Farabi, *Risalah Al-Tanbih 'Ala Sabil Al-Sa'adab*, ed. Subhan Khalifat (Aman: Al-Jamiah al-Ardaniyah, 1987), 277-194.

⁴ Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta: adan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI Gedung Kementerian Agama RI, 2019), 18.

⁵ Tim Pokja Moderasi Beragama Kementerian RI, *Peta Jalan (Roadmap) Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Tahun 2020-2024* (Jakarta: Kementerian Agama RI, 2020), 22.

eventually become a habit.⁶ The development of the reasoning mind led to the realization that harmful actions of aggression against other people or species are undesirable. The decision not to use violence—verbally or physically—is also made by human reason.

It is also claimed that living alone will prevent a person from achieving perfection and happiness since he will not be able to meet all of his demands there. As a result, everyone must cooperate and support one another in order for each person to experience happiness, perfection, and prosperity. Here, the applicability of religious moderation can be evaluated in light of Islamic philosophy. In addition to being a thorough, holistic, and integrative approach, he is able to address the issues of radicalization, extremism, and religious intolerance that are occurring in Indonesia today by using Islamic philosophy as a point of analysis.

Radicalism has its roots in the Greek word *radix*, which means base or root. In the Islamic philosophical tradition, words and their meanings become one view and approach that must be held as a value system in an effort to seek and find the truth. The more basic and rooted these views and approaches, they will have a foundation, and the more the truth will be revealed. However, the word radical in the social aspect has a negative meaning because it relates to actions that want change by using violence. Thus, religious radicalism means a view and action that demands radical change through violent means based on religious principles and teachings.⁷ This is called extremism,⁸ which refers to using one single method - violence - and rejecting other

approaches such as dialogue, persuasion, and mutual understanding. Radicalism and extremism in Indonesia in recent years have increased through direct actions such as suicide bombings, intimidation, and hatred on social media.

Similar to this, a person's loss of critical power results in the problem of fanaticism, which is the source of extremism. Radicalism and terrorism, which show signs of utilizing violence, are destructive and appear in people when reason and rational thought have been lost. The absence of an open and inclusive viewpoint also leads to intolerance against various religions (practices). Because of his broad knowledge, a person will be inclusive, but Abd Samad al-Palimbani claimed that only the intelligent, *anna al-'aqla wa al-'ilma sawa'un, faman la 'aqla la 'ilma lahu*, possess wisdom.⁹ People who do not make sense or do not reason sensibly are ignorant. Darkness, a metaphor for ugliness, emerges when reason and understanding are absent.

The type of this research was qualitative, which was conducted using library data such as books and journals and combined with field data obtained through interviews with lecturers, students, and alumni of Aqidah and Islamic Philosophy (AFI). In the process of presenting the data, the researcher utilized a philosophical approach, namely inductive-deductive analysis and a historical-hermeneutic approach.

THE IDEAS OF MODERATION IN ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

The word moderation can be described with various meanings such as chosen, best, being fair, humble, moderate, *istiqamah*,

⁶ Ibn Sina, *Tis'u Rasail Fi Al-Hikmah Wa Al-Tabi'iyat* (Kairo: Dar al-'Arab Lilbustani, 1989), 142.

⁷ Rindha Widyaningsih, S Sumiyem, and K Kuntarto, "The Potential of Religious Radicalism Movement in Banyumas," *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 25, no. 1 (2017): 203, <https://doi.org/10.21580/ws.25.1.1807>.

⁸ Fadlil Munawwar & Husni Husni Manshur, "Promoting Religious Moderation through Literary-Based Learning: A Quasi-Experimental Study," *International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology* 29, no. 6 (2020): 5849–55.

⁹ Abd Shamad al-Palimbani, *Anis Al-Muttaqin*, ed. Ahmad Luthfi (Jakarta: Wizarah al-Syu'un al-Diniyyah Liljumhuriyyah al-Indonesia, 2009), 63.

following the teachings, not extreme. In Arabic, the word moderation is usually translated from the word *al-wasth*. Other terms that are synonymous with the word *al-wasth* are *tawazun*, *iqtisad*, dan *i'tidal*.¹⁰ However, this term is used in various aspects of science, such as the word *iqtisad*, which is used in the field of edokoni. Likewise, the word *i'tidal* which comes from the verb *'adala*, can be applied to all aspects of life and also the universe.

According to Kamali, as a concept, moderation or *wasathiyah* is transitive (*muta'addi*) in the sense that it does not stand alone unless it is applied to a qualifiable subject. In other words, moderation does not give a definite, steady, and relative meaning. Thus, the concept of moderation can be related to the enforcement of punishment, can be implemented in the fields of economics and finance, speech, lifestyle,¹¹ and also religion.

However, the general meaning of the word *al-wasth* or *wasathiyah* is the existence of an attractive relationship between the midpoint and the edges of the two ends.¹² Using the word moderation, *al-wasth* or *i'tidal* in Islamic philosophy departs from this general meaning, such as moderate between mind and heart, moderate between bodily needs and spiritual needs, moderate between theoretical and practical science, balance between religion and philosophy. In fact, Muslim philosophers use this word not only to refer to the importance of religious moderation, being at the middle point in the socio-religious context, or the relationship between religion, and sect, but also using the principles of psychology, health, as well as actions that are of value and importance. or morals.

Al-Farabi for example, in his book, *Risalah al-Tanbih 'Ala Sabil al-Sa'adah*, discusses specifically related to the theory of moderation in the chapter of *nazariyyah al-wasth al-fadil*, the main theory of moderation. The sub-chapters of this section are *mabiyah al-wasth al-fadil*, the main essence of moderation; *kayfiyyah al-wusul ila al-wasth al-fadil*, how to achieve the main moderation; and *al-tabaqquq min fi'li al-wasth al-fadil*, the actualization of the main moderate action; and the last sub-chapter is *al-tabdhir min asbab al-wasth al-fadil*, warning of which resembles the main moderation.¹³

Similar to what al-Farabi mentions in the book *Fushul al-Muntaza'ah*, the balance (I'tidal of all its aspects and combinations) is what causes the body to become healthy. When the body's composition is out of equilibrium, illness results. Al-Farabi goes on to say that a morally balanced and upright city results from its citizens' moral habits and that the opposite is also true, with a city collapsing owing to moral discrepancies among its citizens.¹⁴

Historically, the theory of moderation, according to Ahmad Abedi and Raziye Tabrizzade, came from the ideas of Aristotle. Furthermore, this theory entered the Islamic world through the translation of the works of Aristotle by Muslim philosophers. It was from Greece that Muslim philosophers such as al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, and Ibn Miskawaih developed the theory of moderation. However, it does not mean that in Islam, especially in the Qur'an and hadith, there is no or no idea of moderation. Through the verses of the Koran, the idea of moderation is increasingly becoming perfect and holistic.¹⁵

¹⁰ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam: The Qur'anic Principle of Wasathiyah*, Oxford University Press (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 9.

¹¹ Ibid, 11.

¹² Quraish Shihab, *Wasathiyah: Wawasan Islam Tentang Moderasi Beragama* (Ciputat: Lentera Hati, 2020), 3.

¹³ Al-Farabi, *Risalah Al-Tanbih 'Ala Sabil Al-Sa'adah*, 194-211.

¹⁴ Abu Nasr Al-Farabi, *Fushul Al-Muntaza'ah* (www.al-mostafa.com, n.d.), 1.

¹⁵ Ahamd dan Raziye Tabrizzade Isfahani Abedi, "A Comparative Study between Aristotelian Theory of Moderation and The Ethical Theory of Islam," *Philosophy of Religion* 11, No. 4/4 (2015), 619-644.

Religious moderation is defined as knowledge, views, attitudes, and moderate actions based on religious teachings and values. There are four indicators of religious moderation;¹⁶ the first is the national commitment, implying that a person's views, attitudes, and actions have an impact on acceptance and loyalty to collective agreements in the nation and state, both at the level of ideology, law and legislation or what are commonly called the four pillars of nationality, Pancasila, the Constitution. The 1945 Constitution (UUD) and all its derivatives, the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika. The second is tolerance, which is the acceptance and giving space for differences and diversity, both thoughts, beliefs, and religions, and does not interfere with other people's beliefs and carry out what they believe. The third indicator is non-violence, meaning not using violence in dealing with and overcoming a problem, but through dialogue, persuasion, and mutual understanding or through deliberation, based on wisdom and wisdom. The last indicator is accommodating to local culture, which is friendly to the traditions and values adopted by a community group.¹⁷

All indicators of religious moderation above are fully contained in Islamic philosophy. Likewise, these indicators are implemented in the practice of Muslim life, especially the past and current Muslim philosophers in Indonesia as can be seen from the facts and analysis in the sub-chapter below.

THE EXPERIENCE OF MUSLIM PHILOSOPHERS IN RELIGIOUS MODERATION

Al-Kindi, who is believed to be the first Muslim philosopher in Islamic history, said that

the truth from wherever it came must be accepted.¹⁸ Similarly, philosophy originating from Greece also asserts that everything containing the truth needs to be developed and taught. His open-mindedness and thought were applied when translating Greek works into Arabic. According to Henry Corbin's notes, al-Kindi's translation team consisted not only of Muslims, but also Christians, "he had a large number of collaborators and translators working for him".¹⁹

Corbin's statement above is reinforced by Callatay who states that among the translators of Greek works into Arabic were Christians, Jews, Persians, and even pagan groups living in the city of Harran. This group specializes in translating works related to the field of astronomy. According to Callatay, the diversity of the people who did the translation showed tolerance and moderation at that time. Therefore, this plurality has implications not only on the social level, but also on the acceptance of sources that are used as references, namely not only from Greece, but also from Iran, India, and also ancient Egypt.

The subsequent Muslim philosopher known as the second teacher, al-Farabi, completely embraced al-tolerance Kindi's in regard to interreligious relations (870-950 AD). Al-Farabi, whose full name is Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Uzalagh Ibn Tarkhan, was born in Farab in the Transoxiana region, which is presently in Kazakhstan, according to Majid Fakhri. Al-Farabi left his birthplace and roamed until he arrived in the Syrian capital of Damascus, where he worked as a gardener. He makes time in his busy schedule to read texts in the logic and other branches of science. Seyyed Hossein Nasr claimed that after Aristotle, he

¹⁶ Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama*.

¹⁷ Shihab, *Wasathiyah: Wawasan Islam Tentang Moderasi Beragama*.

¹⁸ L Alfred Ivry, *Al-Kindi's Metaphysics: A Translation of Ya'qub Ibn Ishaq Al-Kindi's Treatise on First Philosophy (Fi Al-Falsafah Al-Ula)* (New York: State, 1974), 58.

¹⁹ Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 2014), 154.

received his second title as a result of his mastery of logic.²⁰

After some time in Damascus, Al-Farabi then went to Baghdad to study Arabic. While in the city, al-Farabi not only studied Arabic but met scientists who were experts in logic, namely Abu Bishr Matta (d. 911) and Yuhanna Ibn Haylan. These two scientists became al-Farabi's main teachers in the field of logic. Historians say that both Matta and Haylan were bishops or Christian priests.²¹ Although both of them had different beliefs from al-Farabi, it did not reduce his desire to learn and study with him. For Muslim philosophers, religious differences are not an obstacle to gaining knowledge and gaining truth.

After that, moderation and religious tolerance are practiced directly, namely by the Muslim philosopher group Ikhwan Shafa who lived around the 10th century AD. Ikhwan Shafa was a group of Muslim scientists possessing various expertise ranging from theology, philosophy, and the field of science. Their names did not appear in their works, because they were a group of scientists who moved and organized themselves without showing their identity, or the so-called underground movement, to avoid the persecution of the ruling government at that time. This group was indicated to have an affiliation with the Shi'ite Isma'ili religious sect, while the ruler at that time was Sunni. The general style of Ikhwan al-Shafa's thought was more influenced by Neoplatonic philosophical thought such as Plotinus and Proclus.²²

They wrote as many as 52 treatises from various fields of science which were later

published into the book *Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Shafa'*. As emphasized by the Ikhwan al-Shafa, the sources of reference in writing these treatises were not only limited to Islamic sources such as the Qur'an and Hadith, but also Islamic sources as well as the books of the Old and New Testaments, and other traditions that contain truth. According to Ian Richard Netton, acceptance of various sources of references and references shows that they choose a moderate and tolerant path.²³

The acceptance, openness, and tolerance of al-Kindi, al-Farabi, and the Ikhwan al-Shafa towards differences and truths coming from outside Islam, especially Greece, India, Persia, and Egypt, are examples of the implementation of religious moderation as the indicators mentioned above. Likewise, the practice of moderation and tolerance carried out by Muslim philosophers cannot be separated from the views and principles of Islamic philosophy itself which teaches to always think rationally, objectively, universally, and only oriented to the One Truth. Objective means that knowledge possessed by humans must be based on objects that really exist, are real, and real. This object is related to the whole reality, both factual, mental, and metaphysical. Islamic philosophy holds to the view that any knowledge which corresponds to these objects, or which corresponds to any domain of reality is true.²⁴ According to Murtadha Mutahhari, what is called true is the compatibility between propositions and reality.²⁵

The above understanding is in line with the meaning of philosophy stated by al-Kindi, namely the knowledge of the true nature of

²⁰ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia* (New York: Curzon Press, 1996), 59.

²¹ Majid Fakhry, *Al-Farabi, Founder of Islamic Neoplatonism: His Life, Works, and Influence* (Oxford: Newworld Publications, 2002), 10-12.

²² Callatay de Godefroid, *Ikhwan Al-Shafa': A Brotherhood of Idealists on the Fringe of Orthodox Islam* (Oxford: Newworld Publications, 2005), xii.

²³ Ian Richard Netton, *Allah Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology and*

Cosmology (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2006), 70.

²⁴ Sihabuddin, "Allamah Tabataba'is View on Nafs Al-Amar: An Ontological Basis for the Correspondence of Proposition," *Ulumuna: Journal of Islamic Studies* 20, no. 1 (2016): 51-68.

²⁵ Murtadha Muthahhari, *The Theory of Knowledge: An Islamic Perspective* (Kuala Lumpur: Amir Research and Cultural Center (ARCC), 2011), 152.

things, insofar as is possible for man. The aim of a philosopher from the aspect of knowledge, is nothing but to reach the truth and in the aspect of his actions is to act rightly. The search will never end until it arrives at the truth itself, namely the One Truth, the True One.²⁶ Al-Kindi added that we, as Muslims, should be grateful to our predecessors, such as Aristotle and other Greek philosophers, who paved the way for introducing the truth.

On the other hand, rational is a function of reason, which has the meaning of thinking, contemplating, seeing, understanding, selecting, analyzing, classifying, distinguishing, connecting, making narratives, descriptions, and justifications. Rationality is the difference between humans and other creatures, including animals and even angels. The more functioning a person's mind (rational), the more human he becomes. And vice versa, the more you don't think, the farther you are from humanity. The more people use their minds, the wiser they will be. Mentioned in the book, *Religious Moderation*, published by the ministry of religion, that rationality and wisdom are the main indicators of moderation.²⁷

Muslim philosophers believe that the rational method can lead humans to an ultimate truth.²⁸ Islam's rationalism is transcendent, which is linked to the reality of deity, in contrast to Western rationalism, which is just humanism and anthropological. The source of transcendence, namely the Absolute Being, also known as Al-'Aqil, cannot be separated from intellect, which serves as a tool or container in thinking processes. The transcendent meaning in this context is both ontological and epistemological, i.e., reason has the capacity to both abstract particular forms into general

conceptions as well as to grasp metaphysical forms, such as revelation.

Transcendent reasoning has ramifications not only at the ontological vertical level but also at the axiological horizontal level, specifically at the level of individuals' social interactions. This style of reasoning is seen in two areas: first, in how people act and think about one another, particularly in the area of morals and ethics. that a person's mental state cannot be isolated from any of his actions. The finer and more worthwhile the deeds of the soul will be as it absorbs more of the divine qualities. If someone frequently engages in behavior that is out of character for social media, such as cussing, blaspheming, and belittling others (horizontal connections), both in writing and verbally on social media, this can be an example. Bad words and deeds come from people who have impure souls and minds, not because their behaviors are bad in and of themselves.

As a result, Muslim philosophers frequently explore the link between nazari and amali, or theoretical and applied science. Gaining knowledge and understanding of realities or forms in which these realities or forms are not tied to human actions is what theoretical science entails. The goal of this science is to acquire theoretical information, such as that found in mathematics and divine science, in order to perfect the soul and realize the potentials of reason. While the goal of practical science is to apply knowledge and truth through behaviors, such as learning that sharing is good, stealing is evil, and hate is blasphemy.

The second aspect's implications of transcending reason have something to do with the diversity of religions and cultures. This doctrine is also referred to as perpetual philosophy, and it is based on the idea that there

²⁶ Ivry, *Al-Kindi's Metaphysics: A Translation of Ya'qub Ibn Ishaq Al-Kindi's Treatise on First Philosophy (Fi Al-Falsafah Al-Ula)*, 55.

²⁷ Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama*, 20.

²⁸ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 11.

is only one, undifferentiated, source of absolute truth from which all other truths in all other realities emanate. Therefore, the distinction is not in the origin or esoteric level, but in the exoteric expression.

The general theory of "unity in diversity and diversity in unity" is produced by the transcendent rational arguments and techniques mentioned above. This thesis was founded on Islamic philosophical concepts, which claim that everything emanates from the single, *la yasduru min al-wahid illa al-wahid*, and nothing else. With the help of the *wahdah al-wujud* doctrine, which was created by the famous Spanish Sufi Ibn 'Arabi, this rule later gave rise to another principle. This idea holds that God is the sole essential entity, and that all other beings are only expressions of His names and qualities.²⁹

The diversity of religions and cultures occurred in the world is viewed from the principles of Ibn 'Arabi stated above. It implies that the number of religions such as Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism are nothing but the manifestation of a single being. Frithjof Schuon argues that a religion has an esoteric (outer) and an exoteric (inner) dimension. The exoteric dimension of the religion becomes the boundary between one religion and another. Exoteric refers to the dimension that acts as an additional means for the process of one's spiritual perfection which does not affect the esoteric nature of the supernatural at all.³⁰

In the meantime, esotericism, which is a component of all religions, is what unites them. The fact that every religion shares the same aim and goal—the Supreme Being and the Eternal, or the True One, to use al-terminology—is Kindi's an illustration of the esoteric aspect of

religion. The transcendent oneness of religion, also known as the idea of *wahdah al-adyan*, is the name given to this unification of direction.³¹

Islam has been greatly influenced by this viewpoint and idea of *wahdah al-wujud* when it first arrived in the archipelago. Islam Nusantara is therefore more moderate and tolerant compared to the ideology and religious practices in other parts of the world, such as the Middle East. By way of traders and missionaries from Arab nations, China, and India, this religion first arrived in Sumatra and Java and then peacefully spread throughout the Indonesian archipelago.³² The acceptance of Pancasila and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika which is a composition from the book of Sutasoma by Empu Tantular becomes clear evidence of the strength of the principle of *wahdah al-wujud*.

IMPLEMENTATION OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN INDONESIA

Mulyadhi Kartanegara, an associate professor of Islamic philosophy at Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah (UIN) Jakarta, states in his book *Panorama of Islamic Philosophy* that before attending UIN, he was only familiar with one school, the *Ahli Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*. He became familiar with Harun Nasution's ideas while attending the Ushuluddin faculty through his book *Islamic Theology: The Schools, History, and Comparative Analysis*, particularly in the area of Kalam. Since then, he has come to understand that Islam has numerous theological schools rather than just one. He even acknowledged that, ever since learning about Harun Nasution's viewpoints, he is no longer a supporter of one particular Islamic theological school. He subsequently altered his identity

²⁹ Miftah Arifin, *Wujudiyah Di Nusantara: Kontinuitas Dan Perubahan* (Jember: STAIN Jember Press, 2015).

³⁰ Neelam Bano and dan Humaira Ahmad, "Religious Pluralism: The Perspective of Twentieth Century Muslim Perennial Philosopher of Frithjof Schuon," *Al-Qamar* 3, no. 1 (2020): 1–16.

³¹ Nur Kolis, "Wahdat Al-Adyan: Moderasi Sufistik Atas Pluralitas Agama," *TAJDID: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman Dan Kemanusiaan* 1, no. 2 (2017): 166–80, <https://doi.org/10.52266/tajdid.v1i2.42>.

³² John R. Brown, *Islam, Law and Equality in Indonesia: An Anthropology of Public Reasoning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

from being an Ash'ari to a Mu'tazili as a result. In contrast to the Ash'ari, who held that human fate was predetermined by God, he felt that the Mu'tazilah school offered more logical theological notions, particularly with relation to destiny—that human destiny is significantly influenced by human efforts.³³

The same idea was admitted by Haidar Bagir, a lecturer, entrepreneur, and founder of numerous educational institutions. In the preface to his book, *A Pocket Book of Islamic Philosophy*, he acknowledged that Harun Nasution was the reason he was familiar with and intrigued by Islamic philosophy. In fact, he did not hesitate to pursue studies in Islamic philosophy when he continued his studies at Center for Middle Eastern Study of Harvard University for the master's and doctoral programs.³⁴

The acknowledgment of Kartanegara and Haidar from their intellectual journey highlights three points. First, they state outright that their opinions are not extreme and are more amenable to dissent. With relation to the diversity of religions, sects, and beliefs, this principle is crucial. Second, he is becoming more rational, which means that while making decisions, he considers a wider range of factors, including fate. He is not a zealot because of his more logical thinking, which is related to the first and second factors.

This thesis is supported by Amin Abdullah, a professor of Islamic philosophy at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. He claims that there are three advantages to applying (rational) philosophical approaches, particularly in the context of a varied society, which supports this argument. In contrast to other techniques like theological-doctrinal and cultural-sociological-

political ones, he suggests the philosophical method in order to create a more inclusive view of the reality of human diversity, which is quite diverse in Indonesia.

Amin Abdullah's arguments are supported by the following considerations. First, philosophy constantly encourages the quest for and development of fundamental concepts regarding the topics being studied.³⁵ The second advantage is that by introducing and exploring fundamental themes, a critical way of thinking can be developed. Thinking critically, fundamentally, and essentially teaches an individual or community group to avoid becoming mired in momentary issues. A critical mindset will help someone become intellectually neutral, moderate, and disengage from passing political and cultural interests. The third advantage is the capacity to develop a mindset, way of thinking, and personality that values intellectual independence as well as a tolerant attitude toward many perspectives and beliefs and freedom from extremism and dogmatism, as has recently occurred in Indonesia.

The third element that can be highlighted from Kartanegara and Bagir's recognition is the shift in viewpoints from being obsessive to being more open-minded and reasonable. The rector of the Jakarta State Islamic Institute (IAIN/UIN), Harun Nasution (1919–1998), and his influence on this statement cannot be separated. In Indonesia, where theology and fiqh were then more prevalent, the presence of Harun in reintroducing a rational thought has given the discourse of Islamic thought a new subtlety.³⁶ Through Harun's success in bringing rational thinking to life in Indonesia, Martin calls him 'The Defender of Intellect.' The

³³ Mulyadhi Kartanegara, *Panorama Filsafat Islam: Menembus Batas Waktu* (Bandung: Mizan, 2002), 7-8.

³⁴ Haidar Bagir, *Buku Saku Filsafat Islam* (Bandung: Penerbit Arasy, 2005), 17-18.

³⁵ Amin Abdullah, dkk, *Rekonstruksi Metodologi Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* (Yogyakarta: Suka Press dan LPKM Intropeksi, 2003), 23.

³⁶ Richard C. Martin, and Mark R. Woodward, and with Dwi S. Atmaja, *Defenders of Reason in Islam: Mu'tazilism from Medieval School to Modern Symbol* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2003), 139.

success instills the rational thoughts after he returned from McGill University; then he became the rector of IAIN Jakarta for two periods (1974-1982). Subsequently, he pioneered the establishment of a Postgraduate for Islamic Studies at IAIN Jakarta and became a director until he died in 1998 at the age of 79 years.

Harun asserts that sense separates humans from other animals. Man's mental capacity determines his status and honor. The perspectives, philosophies, ways of life, and attitudes will change, becoming more liberal and inclusive as a result of having a high regard for this sensibility. Sensibility can serve as the moral cornerstone of a life of tolerance for variety and diversity. Social issues will be easier to solve if one adopts a liberal way of life and a rational mindset.³⁷

At the time Harun was the postgraduate director, the rational Islamic thinking underwent significant development and renewal. After graduating, students who had studied with him became instructors at the universities in their home regions. As a result, Harun Nasution's thoughts obtained when studying at IAIN Jakarta are taught back to students where they serve. Among Harun's students, Abdul Aziz Dahlan, Amsal Bakhtiar, and Zaim Rais were some interviewed by the researcher.

The followers of Harun Nasution's teaching, according to Abdul Aziz Dahlan, a professor of Islamic philosophy at UIN Jakarta, are no longer fanatics about religious differences and are no longer averse to those who have different ideas. He claims that Harun, in addition to encouraging students to always think critically and objectively while analyzing a certain sect, school, or ideology, bans them from being classified as heretical even when

they differ from our own beliefs. Dahlan's admission is consistent with the aforementioned markers of religious moderation, namely being more accepting of and receptive to variations in religion and belief.

In addition, Amsal Bakhtiar contends that Harun Nasution established an example by his demeanor, deeds, and attitudes in addition to imparting philosophy to various elements of thought and teaching. When teaching, he used the first discipline as an example, which includes being on time and reading and commenting on all student work. Also, he is really honest. Each student is given the chance to engage in conversation, ask questions, and even criticize another student's opinions if they differ. A reasonable viewpoint is the foundation of discipline and openness. He claims that this mindset has influenced him.³⁸

Whereas, for the lecturer of Imam Bonjol, Padang, Zaim Rais argues that Harun Nasution was a leaving teacher. According to Harun, as conveyed by Rais to the researchers, the awakening of the ummah lies in how far to use the energy of rational thinking. That view is also the view of his life. He said, "*Prof. Harun Nasution has become my view of life. That the progress of the ummah depends on using the energy of rational thinking.*"³⁹

According to Zaim Rais, the chairman of the Counter-Terrorism Communication Forum (FKPT), intolerance, radicalism, and the widespread violence in Indonesia today are brought on by the loss of (rational) philosophical thinking, which leads to the assertion of truths, subjectivity, and a lack of respect for opposing viewpoints. In actuality, the philosophy (Islam) teaches the contrary, which is to constantly be objective, receptive to all truths, and respectful of all differences. He provided an illustration of philosophers with

³⁷ Saiful Muzani, *Islam Rasional Gagasan Dan Pemikiran Harun Nasution* (Bandung: Mizan, 1996), 139-146.

³⁸ Amsal Bakhtiar (Lecturer of UIN Jakarta), *Interview*, 13 September 2020.

³⁹ Zaim Rais (Lecturer of UIN Padang), *Interview*, 4 Juli 2020.

divergent viewpoints. They never bother or insult others, though. Because tolerance is a byproduct of philosophy, if we can embed philosophy in society, intolerance will inevitably go and moderation will emerge.⁴⁰

H Robby Habiba Abror, a lecturer at UIN Yogyakarta, backed up what Zaim Rais had said. He claims that the curriculum development at AFI is focused on having values that develop a moderate attitude. In fact, he emphasized that nearly every course is focused on religious moderation. It is acknowledged that there are no particular religious moderation training programs. The material is, however, tied to the value of religious moderation when you look at the semester lesson plans (RPS), for instance in the philosophy of religion courses. This course covers the development of religion, the connection between religion and people, and the justifications and counterarguments for why there are multiple religions. The conversation is being held in an atmosphere of religious tolerance. The same is true of the subject of kalam (theology), which examines ancient, medieval, and contemporary thoughts and brings together numerous concepts from many schools, including Muktazilah, Asy'ariyah, and the discussions of theologians (mutakallimun). Such information can serve as the foundation for fostering tolerance and coexisting peacefully with differences.⁴¹

The rational, moderate, and tolerant views and attitudes of those lecturers are implemented when they teach. This was acknowledged by students and alumni of UIN Jakarta and Padang such as Gufron Akbari Wardan, Julhendra, and Silmi Novita Norman. Julhendra, a student of UIN Padang, admits that the lecturers convey the value of moderation through the method of

description and rational arguments.⁴² Likewise, Ghufron, a student at UIN Jakarta, said that students and lecturers are used to having different opinions. Thus, if there are differences of opinion and beliefs outside the classroom, students are used to it. *In the class, they are different and accept each other's differences, and so are they outside the classroom*, he said. According to him, this kind of process has influenced students in thinking, arguing, and acting, including in the relationship between religions.⁴³

Additionally, according to Silmi, a UIN Padang alumnus, rational viewpoints have influenced the preferred thoughts, perspectives, and style of life. She has so been involved in a Padang-based non-governmental organization (NGO) called Pusaka Foundation since since she completed the AFI study program. This NGO works to promote religious and philosophical freedom (KKB). In particular in the Sumatra region, the Pusaka Foundation has goals and initiatives pertaining to religious freedom.⁴⁴

Teaching Islamic philosophy has a significant impact on broadening students' horizons, particularly in terms of the interactions between religion, sects, and beliefs, according to lecturers, students, and alumni. They are influenced by the teachings of Islamic philosophy, which enables them to be open, reasonable, and responsive to local wisdom.

CONCLUSION

Based on the description and analysis above, it can be said that Islamic philosophy provides an alternative way of instilling the values of moderation, being open, and tolerant of differences about religions, thoughts, opinions, or sects. Studying Islamic philosophy aims to achieve perfection, virtue, and the

⁴⁰ Zaim Rais (Lecturer of UIN Padang), *Interview*, 4 Juli 2020.

⁴¹ Robby Habiba Abror (Lecturer of UIN Yogyakarta), *Interview*, 1 Juli 2020.

⁴² Julhendra (Student of UIN Padang), *Interview*, 8 Juli 2020.

⁴³ Ghufron Akbari Wardana (Student UIN Jakarta), *Interview*, 13 Juli 2020.

⁴⁴ Silmi Novita Norman (Alumni of UIN Padang), *Interview*, 13 Juli 2020.

highest happiness. To achieve these values must be in a balanced way, moderate, between the theoretical and practical, between the transcendent and immanent, between esoteric and exoteric. Likewise in religion and inter-religious relations. A person will gain harmony and peace when he is able to balance between rational thought and theological doctrine or between submission and choice of will. This is the main teaching of Islamic philosophy.

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