

The Dialog between Hick and Rawls An Endeavor to Search a Proper Understanding of Religions Plurality within Indonesia' Context

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Abstraksi

Pluralitas agama di Indonesia sejatinya bukan hanya merupakan ciri otentik kebangsaan, melainkan juga berperan sebagai salah satu jaminan keberlangsungan masa depan bangsa. Upaya mengoptimalkan potensi terbaik dari kenyataan pluralitas agama inilah yang menentukan gemilang tidaknya masa depan Indonesia. Pluralitas agama tak pelak memiliki potensi sebagai modal sosial yang membangun kekuatan bersama guna menghadapi krisis-krisis sosial dan menginspirasi perwujudan nilai-norma yang luhur, di samping potensi memunculkan konflik akibat pertentangan terkait klaim kebenaran dalam setiap agama. Adapun upaya konkret dalam rangka meminimalisasi peluang konflik tersebut adalah dengan mendialektikakan intisari pemikiran Hick terkait Realitas Tertinggi sebagai titik temu yang menghubungkan agama-agama dengan pemikiran Rawls yang menekankan pentingnya konsensus bersama antar agama bermula dari kesediaan menemukan nilai dasar bersama yang menjamin terwujudnya kesetaraan bagi semua warga negara. Dalam konteks Indonesia, Pancasila merupakan konsensus bersama ala Rawls yang memuat nilai dasar dari semua pengajaran agama yang berterima secara umum. Sementara sila pertama yang berbicara perihal konsep ke-Tuhan-an dari dan bagi semua warga negara Indonesia -Realitas Tertinggi ala Hick- juga merefleksikan titik temu antar agama yang ada. Pada akhirnya, benang merah antara pemikiran Hick dan Rawls adalah upaya memastikan agama-agama dalam

ruang hidup bernegara untuk senantiasa merevitalisasi sekaligus mengoptimalkan nilai-nilai dalam ajarannya yang selaras terhadap nilai keadilan dan kesetaraan bagi seluruh warga negara.

Kata Kunci: Pluralitas Agama, Indonesia, John Hick, John Rawls, Konsensus, Pancasila,

Abstract

The plurality of religion in Indonesia is not only an authentic characteristic of the nationality, but also serves as a guarantee of the future sustainability of the nation. Our efforts to optimize fact of the plurality of religion is what determines the future presence of Indonesia. The plurality of religion inevitably has the potential as a social capital that builds a common power to deal with social crises and inspires the embodiment of sublime norms, in addition to the potential for raising conflicts due to conflict related the truth claims in every religion. The concrete efforts in order to minimize the chances of the conflict are to be in the essence of Hick's thought in relation to the supreme reality as a meeting point linking religions with Rawls' thoughts that emphasize the importance of mutual consensus between religions begins with the willingness to find a common fundamental value that guarantees equality for all citizens. In the context of Indonesia, Pancasila is a joint consensus in Rawls' concept that contains the fundamental value of all generally acceptable religious teachings. While the first to speak to the concept of deity from and for all Indonesian citizens-the ultimate reality of the ala Hick-also reflects the intersection of the interfaith. In the end, the underlying causes between Hick and Rawls's thought was to ensure the religions in the living space of state to constantly revitalize while optimizing the values in its teachings that align the value of justice and equality for all citizens.

Key Words: Plurality of religion, Indonesia, John Hick, John Rawls, Consensus, Pancasila

Introduction

There is no peace among Nations without peace among religions (Hans Kung: 1990). Affirmed a reality where there is no single life within this world. Every community is assured to have such pluralities. As a reality, Indonesia as a part of world territories, is a nation known by its spacious characteristics of pluralities. These pluralities existed earlier than a concurrence to establish independence state of Indonesia on August 17th, 1945. To sum up, according to Kung, it is explicitly declared that the future of Indonesia depends on peace among religions.

On the other hand, we cannot deny that religious pluralities potentially cause two diverse effects. First, as national unifier, it is potential to congregate every religious person in purpose to face such social crisis in Indonesia. Here, they are enabling to live together in a spirit of inter-religious tolerance proposes to attain the nation future. Conversely, the second is a potency to cause such a conflict among religious people because of any different kind of religion teaching. The condition then goes to alienate one to another so that the possibility of disintegration opens.

As a matter of fact, Indonesia already preserves the regulation which guarantees

the rights of religious people to hold their own devotion. However, observing the reality, religions conflict happened, for instance in Ambon, Poso and so forth. That points out to us whether the dominant potency of religions is to cause a conflict than reconciliation. I suppose that one of causal factors is an exclusive apprehension - ignoring Indonesia' context- toward a truth claim within religions.

An endeavor to prevent even solve the second potency, and then run straightly to reach the unity and raise a tolerance among religions; the participation from every part is needed. Not merely a participation from the people as the laity or *grass root* who are the actor of life, but also the scholar, theologian and religious leader as well as religious institution. Those people are responsible for provisions the laity with a comprehension of truthful religious values. Further, they must direct the laity to live within a tolerance toward others and treat them inter-subjectively as God creation.

Narrowing my topic, I would like to take Hick together with Rawls interpretation or thought based on the plurality issues. As a theologian, Hick already contributes his thought, especially by establishing some theories to face the religious problem on conflicting the truth claims. Observing the incompleteness of Hick's thought, and then I take Rawls theory in searching an overlapping consensus, to sustain the plurality. Through the dialog among them, I would summarize what kind of understanding should Indonesian care for?

For that reason, I organize my paper beginning with a description of Hick's and Rawls theory, followed by the Indonesia' context and analyzes both theories within Indonesia' problem of religions plurality. After that, in my conclusion, I would present the result of analyses together with the concrete example. Eventually, I would title my article: *The Dialog between Hick and Rawls; An Endeavor to Search a Proper Understanding of Religions Plurality within Indonesia' Context*.

John Hick's Theory of Truth Claim

Discussing even examining religion as an object study is interesting also debatable. Religion itself does not contain one single element. Generally, religion covered human beings together with their activities like interpretations, exegeses, criticism, and so forth try to apprehend one transcendental element outside themselves. As a result, the effort is crystallized in a certain paradigm; concept until apprehension and sacred text. The transcendental truth which is confessed as infinite and independent is the ontological aspect. On the other hand, a variety of humans' endeavors to describe the Transcendent is the depictions of epistemological aspect. From these epistemological forms, people run to have judgments to determine which one is appropriate to confess. This judgmental rationality is potential to cause such a clash among the religious adherents, because there are some efforts to assess; then, decide claim which one is closest to reach the Truth -Transcendent-. Those efforts could be divided into two models. First, is the open one which people are trying to preserve what they confess without declaring it as the absolute truth; second, as the opposite is the closed way where certain people attempt to make their apprehensions absolutely to others. However, the three elements -transcendent element, human activities and the result (Smith: 1993) - become the core elements that guide people.

Further, it aims at understanding the meaning of religion.

On the other hand, I assured jointly with many scientists even the laity people do realize that the term religion is too partial. The term cannot capture the whole essence within each social entity. For instance, Wilfred Cantwell Smith on his book entitled "The Meaning and End of Religion" emphasized that the term religion is a word which is influenced by Western and monotheistic religion and connected with certain histories (p.58-59). Hence, our endeavor to comprehend the meaning of religion is not too easy like what we used to do that narrowing the meaning is merely as an institutionalized term.

In line with Smith explanation, Hick proposes that religion is humans' construction which stands according to human background of live. It could be their history, tradition, culture, language and so on. As a result, the construction is appearing in many different forms of responses toward the reality beyond them.

Further, as humans' endeavor, religion contains two kinds of contradictive aspects. First, it is the good impact and secondly, it is the harm impact. As the good, religion is able to integrate various people purposes to face the social problem within societal life. Likewise, it is inspiring people to do a positive action in purpose to establish a better condition, such as the science development, infrastructure building, problems solving, and so forth. On the contrary, the harm thing determines the domination of some people to others; motivate to war and so on. In brief, the good is to present peace; conversely, the conflict is the bad one. Both of these aspects are sustained under institutionalized power. Here, the meaning of religion is more institutionalized.

Religion as institution existed inheritably. Hick explains that most people are not adhered to religious teaching, sincerely, as the earlier. This is because of their place of birth and their culture behind (Hick: 1980). For example, if someone is born to devout Christian parents in Christian country, that person is likely to be a Christian.

Because religion is potential to bring harm effects, then to verify a good one is from the commitment toward humanity that lies on practical effectiveness of teaching. Here, the focus is change. Before, religion preserved merely as institutionalized meaning, now the meaning is depending on people spirituality. Spirituality is the inner aspect of religion. If we live under the regulation which does not allow every person to adhere more than one institutionalized religion, there is still a chance to experience the spiritual influence of other religions. Furthermore, each of them can interact in dialogue and learn about one another. If they do so, the tendency to divide people into opposing groups is lessening. As an inner aspect, spirituality still depends on outer aspect -institutionalized religion- to hold a ritual, preserve sacred text, learn the methods of pray, worship, and so forth. To sum up, both aspects are complementary than contradictory.

Enhancing spiritual live provides the possibility to accept and experience other's existence. Hick uses a term overlapping sphere to mention this influence. To create it, the initial way is to find a parallel beginning with an Ultimate Reality as the Transcendence element within each religion. Hick prefers to use the term Ultimate Reality rather than a God, to embrace the non-theistic religion such as Buddhist, Hindu, Confucian, Taoism, and many others. This Ultimate Reality is known as the

noumenal world that is real ineffable reality. More, the Ultimate Reality depicts its entity as *an sich* (in it self) (Hick: 1990). In sum, Hick proposes that every religion aims at single Ultimate Reality. It is not referring to two parts of Reality but two ways to comprehend the single Reality.

On the other hand, the Ultimate Reality as I state previously expresses different philosophical terms. Epistemologically, it is because by the boundary of human live, it is bound on such of certain tradition, culture, language, history that raise any conception to comprehend the Ultimate Reality. Here, Hick named the condition as a phenomenal world, where the Ultimate Reality is as humanly thought and experienced.

The phenomenal world, explicitly, affirmed that there is no space for religions absolutism, especially on their truth claim. Every religion is unique but not superior. All religions are in contact with the same object that is Ultimate Reality, whether some take form on theistic-persona or on non-theistic-impersonal.

John Rawls' Theory of Overlapping Consensus

In fact, Rawls does not discuss religion, directly. He concerns more on the constitutional democracy. Further, Rawls is questioning how can religious and secular doctrines get on together and cooperate in running a just? Here the main matter that authorizes is people use or revitalize their comprehensive doctrines which are secular and religious to be able to contribute in public life, which is plural.

Rawls observes the reality of plurality as a permanent condition within societal life. As a permanent condition, it could be considered through several ways; those are: preserving the pluralism vividly all the comprehensive doctrine; using the oppressive state power to legitimize one comprehensive doctrine; enduring a widely majority comprehensive doctrine as a public foundation of justification; and finding a basic intuitive value within each comprehensive doctrine to provide a conception of justice (Freeman: 1999).

However, within the plurality which contains various norms, values, moral views, religions and so forth, there is a strong propensity that some groups are willing to build even force their basic conception in purpose to establish an ideal society. If they do so, other communities are alienated within their society and nation. They do not have a sense of unity or belonging toward the legitimized conception of others. The societal life based on threatens and forces by certain group; consequently, causes a conflict.

For that reason, Rawls suggests that to face the conflict intend to sustain the plurality and does not neglect other comprehensive doctrine; the basic concept of fairness is needed. Realizing the plurality as the permanent fact, lead us also to be aware of similar values among those communities. Rawls named it with overlapping consensus. The overlapping consensus that Rawls means is a basic value within each community that works for justice, tolerance and fairness (Tjaya & Sudarminta: 2005).

The overlapping consensus, which is set up, depends on two factors. Those are reasonable and unreasonable pluralisms. The reasonable pluralism requires every community to be open and would like to compromise even argue in searching, not the doctrinal teaching but a practical frame of suitable conception into societal life. It is

done through their comprehensive doctrine. Consequently, some communities cannot dominate others and as a result, the overlapping consensus is emerging.

On the other hand, the overlapping consensus together with the reasonable pluralism is not merely an effort to find a basic consensus. It is also an endeavor to revitalize the comprehensive doctrine within each community. Every community is inviting to realize their comprehensive doctrines which contribute to public reason.

Contrary with the reasonable one, the unreasonable pluralism indicates the affinity to treat certain comprehensive doctrine as an absolute and exclusive one. This community would not like to compromise and accept the reality of pluralism. They become intolerant and be hard to arrange just consensus for social life.

Based on that explanation, Rawls does not deny the role of religious comprehensive doctrine. He gives a chance toward religion to play role as long as its teaching or doctrine is understood by others. If the religious doctrine contributes just, tolerance and equality, it assures to be accepted. Conversely, if a religion forces doctrine, it will not be accepted by others because of its failure to present the public reason to create an equal citizen.

Indonesia Context

Indonesia is a nation that has existed since August 17th, 1945. Titaley (2001), describes it as a new phenomenon that integrate the entire primordial identity. As a new reality, Indonesia brings such conversion that impinges societal life. The double identity as an implication prevails. If the sense of primordial more dominates, the sense of nationalism will demolish. On the other hand, if the sense of nationalism dominates, it means that Indonesia begins to loose its identity.

Over the year, the histories prove such of tension among primordial and nationalism issues. For instance, Indonesia already experienced a democracy and military dictatorship; non-religious constituents and Islam Syariah; extreme prosperous and the laity's struggle to survive; tolerance and oppression and so many paradoxical experiences.

Beginning at the end of May until August 18th, 1945; followed by the second step at 1956-1959 until the last is the collapse of Soeharto's new regime. All demonstrated the political live in Indonesia; an effort to construct the state foundation that is acceptable by society. Connected with the previous example mentioned above, the reality that cannot be denied is there is a consensus toward religious tolerance. Hence, Indonesia affirmed that the secularism and theocracy is not taken as a state structure of Indonesia.

Analyses

Conflicts which usually branded as religious conflict, tickling everyone to question the original part of religion causes the conflicts. The single cause of conflict is rarely found. Even categorically, most people refuse to acknowledge that the conflict is inter-religious one. Even though the fact cannot deny that within each conflict is tinted by religious issue. If it is not, why should the adherents of the house of worship, likewise, become the object of mass vengeance. Consequently, it verifies the paradox within religion. Once as a media to establish the peace, others are sources of conflict.

Religion interrelated with humans' awareness toward Supernatural or Transcendence power that lives outside their existence and in relation with them. The awareness is appearing as a comprehension enclosed in an exclusive conviction. The exclusiveness among religious persons cannot claim as mistake; wholly, either their truth claims. I emphasize that religion is an individual even group conviction principally constructed by themselves. Each of those convictions is special, unique and different. Hence, the conviction cannot affirm as true even absolutely false. However, that reason cannot functions as a self-justification to have exclusive attitude which culminate in blind fanaticism and superiority.

Scrutinize more on exclusives attitude happening in Indonesia, I found propensity that is caused more by religions institutionalized comprehension which is not rooted in Indonesia context. The awareness toward the Transcendence or Ultimate Reality is not yet an authentic awareness. Mostly, Christian in Indonesia habitually comprehends the Ultimate "God" similar to West Christian likewise their context - which are different and more homogeny-, also other religious people in Indonesia. Then we realize if religions in Indonesia came from outside -which consist of different context- and adopted in Indonesia.

As a result, there is a propensity that every religious person would treat their religions as superior than others. Tacitly even unconsciously, they put their religious teaching as the main even single norm among societal lives. The echo of these exclusives attitude decorates societal live in Indonesia, practically. Ironically, less of religious people are able to realize, acknowledge and transform it. Here, the religion more beneficially stand for institutionalized understanding which is too rigid, than a spiritual that opens for a possibility to experience the other influence.

Resting within Indonesia context, where a tension whether to preserve the plurality or to eliminate it. I connected that the truth claim within religions that wrapped on the concept toward Ultimate Reality must be examined. For that reason, I take a first principle of Pancasila as the guidance.

Scrutinizing the concept of Ultimate Reality or stated as God within Pancasila, raises a question of whose God that is meant by Pancasila? Based on the explanation above, Indonesia would like to cover all the primordial ties; thus, the answer is God or The Ultimate Reality of all Indonesians. Consequently, this Principle gives no chance to religions in Indonesia to absolute their principle or conception. All of religions are coordinative connected and positioned equally. Here, Hick's concept of the same single Ultimate Reality that is worshipped by all the religions is appropriate toward Indonesia context. To sum up, I would like to emphasize more on spirituality according to Hick's explanation, intend to accept and experience the other good influence, or be inter-religious.

Conclusion

Sustaining the unreasonable pluralism means that it reduces the existence of the Ultimate Reality itself. The reduction also impinges into an Indonesia essence of a religious state as stated in Pancasila. Pancasila already guarantees the independent rights including humans' rights especially a right to adhere a certain religion. Hence, if

some people are trying to absolute their convictions including their religious comprehensive doctrine, the rights do not belong to every human.

Looking forward the proper comprehension within the plurality of Indonesia context as caused by the restricted understanding by every religion, I take the dialogue between Hick's and Rawls' theory as the alternative. Their thought represented within Pancasila presents the principle to live in tolerance and peace as the goal. Here, Pancasila is put as the state of philosophy or as an overlapping consensus that is acceptable by citizens.

Narrowing into the first principle, explaining that the position of all religion together with their comprehension toward Ultimate Reality is equal. In line with it, there is an awareness to extend the spirituality as the essence of becoming religious related to the context.

Here, the Hick's concept is complemented by Rawls' concept. Both try to solve the problem of the Ultimate Reality as the main concern of each religion. Then, it searches the acceptable consensus as the foundation to regulate the societal life.

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Endnotes

1. This is the reality which epistemologically, as human beings tries to capture the other Infinite or Transcendental and Independent reality in limited ways.
2. I would not deny that the individuals justification of their truth claims is needed to maintain their unique identity without claimed it as complete, intentionally.
3. Theistic – persona, commonly use by the theistic religion such as Abraham religions which named the Ultimate Reality as God. Conversely, non-theistic religion for instance Buddha, Hindu and so on, are called the Ultimate Reality as Ground of Being.

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