

Remaining Devout Muslims in Affectionate Citizenship: A Possible Modus Vivendi

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Abstract: *The response of the New Zealand prime minister Jacinda Ardern to the Christchurch massacre at two mosques has lighted a flickering flame of hope for diversity and coexistence. The proposed article is a furtherance of my paper presented in the University of Waikato Islamic Studies Conference on Islam and its Relations with Others, on November 11-12, 2015: 'A Matter of Faith, a Matter of Meaning. The Need of Epistemological Pluralism'. The paper is published in International Journal of the Asian Philosophical Association (Alkatiri 2016b). In that article, I argue that in order for the dialogue between Islam and the West possible, there is a need of concrete recognition of the legitimacy of different 'systems of representation' between that of the religious Muslims and that of the non-religious modern West. Further to the aforesaid, in this proposed article, I am going to articulate a number of issues required to be addressed for the needs of religious Muslims to coexist in multicultural citizenship. In the main, a caveat against the superimposing character of nationalism ideology as it insists to replace the ontological, epistemological, and axiological positions of religion in the citizen's minds and hearts needs to be recognized. The article proposes, instead, to leave the notion of nationhood in the 'heart' domain only. That is the domain of 'affection', rather than making it an all-encompassing point of reference to define the 'true-false' (epistemological); 'real-unreal' (ontological); 'good-bad' (axiological) quality of all things for the citizens as the modern nation-state concept requires. That being the case, the Muslims can remain to be religious and at the same time, maintaining affectionate citizenship within the society at large.*

Introduction

My article attempts to contribute to the creation of peaceful global world community. I came from a multidisciplinary background. Over the last two decades I have been engaged in varied works that directly or tangentially concern ethnic and religious diversity on the one hand, and on the other, the so-called radicalization, either that of religion or that of nationalism. In all my works (Alkatiri 2014, 2016a, 2016b, 2018a, 2018b), I did not seek to evade the facts and ignore realities of the complex world we live in today. Perhaps, many have done unintentionally so by the needs to comply with tidy compartmentalization of academic fields. In contrast, I adopted a 'systems thinking'

paradigm. 'Systems thinking' is a new way of seeing the world in terms of relationship, connectedness and context on the premise that everything is connected to everything else (Capra 1999, Strachan 2009). The proponents of 'systems thinking' argue that at the heart of the crises facing the world today is the inability of people to identify the interconnected nature of the crises. They believe 'the problems just refuse to arrive in the neat categories of academic departments' (Sach2 2008:14). The paper I'm presenting in this session would like to make the audiences see the problems of growing Muslims presence in the Western societies, and the perceived 'collapsing Western civilization' which some has attributed to the Muslims presence, from the following perspectives.

I. Multivarious Worlds

We live in a rather special era, a point in history where so much has been happening, with much of contradictions as well. For the purpose of this article, I highlighted six tendencies that characterize our present-day world:

1. Globalization
2. Digital era
3. Late modernity
4. Post modernity
5. Post-secularism
6. Ecological epoch

Globalization is a major characteristic of the contemporary life, which has caused increased interrelations in every single aspect in societies, nations, and cultures. Politics and human affairs in the present era are heavily influenced by globalization. Simultaneously, in a post-modern world, diversity is celebrated and the basic premise of modernity is severely questioned. It is also important to highlight that this late-modern era is characterized by the 'cry of spirit' with spiraling outbreaks of depression, suicide, addiction and psychological sufferings (e.g. see Webb 1979, Oldmeadow 2004).

From political-economic point of view, many have argued that globalization has appeared as the rapas of societies and the environment by transnational economic interests in the name of free market and its supposed benefits for the welfare of all (e.g. Mander & Goldsmith 1996). While globalization affects the worldwide economy and provides more marketplace opportunities, it is believed to be the root cause of the world's crises resulting in:

1. Inequality, mainly in developing countries, causing to great extent the rise of migrant workers (e.g. see Allen 2017),
2. The global politics have led to regional conflicts and civil wars in many parts of the Muslim world, which forced people to migrate.

With the help of the advancement of transportation technology alongside the information and telecommunication technologies, people migrate easier. The people migrate bringing their culture and traditions with them.

Despite the unsympathetic view of religion by the predominant secularization theory, according to which religion is mythical, anti-rational, superstitious, anti-science, unethical, oppressive, cruel, backward, and goes against the dignity of human, I argue that religion must also be acknowledged as human endeavor of pursuing the inner purpose of life in the context of an ever-changing social and material world. Accordingly, religion has been integral to the lives of many individuals and to the constitution of human societies throughout the ages. In the Muslim world, the fact is that Islam has been a lived reality for many if not most of the population up to the present day. This view is the cornerstone of this article. Further, I am putting forward three propositions:

Premise-1: The peaceful coexistence of Muslim migrants in diverse society is NOT impossible

Premise-2: There is a need to understand the 'Cognitive-Meaning-Action' trilogy of Muslim's religious life, on both levels:

- a. The knowledge encounter between Modernism and Islam
- b. The citizenship of devout Muslims in a modern nation state

Premise-3: ‘Affectionate citizenship’, in which the citizen’s allegiance to the state was freely given and based on love, without necessarily forcing a single homogeneous national identity as the assimilationist’s and integralist’s approach of nation building, is possible and viable.

With this article I argue that this ‘heart’ or affection dimension of human relations needs to be studied more, supported by empirical works, with qualitative approach.

I. The Psychology of Globalization and Migration

I will begin with premise-1. The psychological effects of migration and globalization have been the subject of many studies. The research by Kinnvall (2004) identified three main plights of migrants. They are: (i) identity confusion, (ii) ‘ontological insecurity’¹, and (iii) ‘existential anxiety’². According to Kinnvall, the insecurity and anxiety among individuals and groups will guide them to seek reformation of self-identity, driving them to take a grip on any collective that is believed as being able to reduce their dilemma and answer their questions. She identified further the two groups that are well-known as identity signifiers are: (i) religion and (ii) nationalism. In this context, I suggest that religion, both as a spirituality – namely, as a source of hope, optimism, and inner-peace; and as a sociological system, i.e. as an identity signifier, an institution, and a value system, might have been given a renewed prominence.

In nearly the same way, a longing for community or longing to belong is widely discussed in ‘green community movement’ literature in environmental studies as a rising

¹ Ontological security refers to ‘a stable mental state derived from a sense of continuity and order in events’ (Bilton et al 1998, p.4)

² Existential anxiety refers to feelings of unease about meaning, choice, and freedom in life. The anxiety or despair or angst is attributed to the idea that life is inherently pointless, that our existence has no meaning, because there are limits or boundaries on it, namely, that we all must die someday.

phenomena in urbanized society (e.g. Maser 1997). Given the current state of economy, politics, disintegrating families, violent social relations, uncertain sense of security, and the confused condition of our guiding values, there is an increasingly common yearning for clearer ethical values on which to base a politics filled with meaning and purpose (Maser 1997), or to reconnect people with a set of shared values and principles with which to embrace the uncertainties of life. In this situation, ‘language of community’ is believed by social psychologists as one way of overcoming:

1. Breakdown of community principles
2. Feeling of isolation and disconnectedness

It’s interesting and important to recognize a parallel between (i) the longing for community, (ii) the resurgence of religion whatever its hue; and (iii) the rising alternative lifestyles which many of them demonstrate explicit resistances to urbanism and capitalism; as well, (iv) the emergence of neo-paganism and other invented spiritual traditions. In Max Weber Language, those are attempts to ‘re-enchant’ the world (Jenkins 2000).

In light of that, my article would like to highlight that the grouping phenomena is not always a bad thing. A number of studies such as what follows, show favourable aspects of grouping to the possibility of peaceful coexistence in multicultural society:

1. Contrary to Samuel Huntington’s (1996) prediction that cultural differences necessarily tend to lead to conflict, thus, immigrants who have multicultural affiliations will put less effort into civic associations, public life, and politics, Jensen’s (2008) work shows that people who have affiliation with their cultural origin are twice as likely to be the source for civic engagement. They usually have more concern for the welfare of one’s cultural community and a desire to bridge communities to embrace understanding

2. Peucker and Ceylan's (2017) study offers a counter-narrative to the widespread allegations that Ethno-religious community organizations in Western countries, the Muslims especially, have often been described as being disconnected from mainstream society. They draw on a synthesis of emerging research on the citizenship-enhancing effects of mosque involvement and on an explorative study involving thirty in-depth interviews with civically active Muslims in Australia and Germany. The article examines the potential of Muslim community organizations to mobilize their member into performing their citizenship through civic and political participation. It offers empirical evidence that many Muslim community organizations, rather than promoting social segregation, act as accessible entry point for Muslims' civic participation, facilitate cross-community engagement and provide gateways to political involvement. These civic potentials of Muslim community organization have remained underestimated in the public and political discourse on cohesive societies and healthy democracies.

II. 'Cognitive-Meaning-Action' Trilogy

Having said that, I will turn to premise-2 to point up the need to understand what I termed in my PhD thesis "the 'Cognitive-Meaning-Action' trilogy" of Muslim's religious life (Alkatiri 2016a). That is to articulate the idea that religion - Islam in this context - bestows 'meanings' to the adherents, and influence their domains of thought and action as well, and furthermore, that the three are correlated. To explicate that, my thesis developed a theoretical framework in sociology of knowledge and sociology of religion. The piece is published in a special issue on 'Islam and Social Contract' (Alkatiri 2014). For the purpose of this article, in the context of diversity and coexistence in which the devout Muslims are a part, I would like to point out the need to consider the aforesaid 'cognitive-meaning-action' issue upon two levels. They are on the levels of:

1. Knowledge encounter between Modernism and Islam
2. Citizenship of devout Muslims in a modern nation state

In what follows, I will begin with the first point.

Right here at Waikato Conference in 2015, I presented a non-political, non-economic issue that lie at the heart of the enduring conflicts between Islam and modern West. The aforesaid issue, however, has not been given adequate attention academically. I presented the ontological and epistemological disagreement between Islam and modern system of thought, between the God-centric Islam and human-centric modern thought. By bringing up the ‘*Muslim reconstruction of knowledge*’ project or what has been inaccurately called ‘*Islamization of knowledge* project’ that has been debated between Muslim thinkers and philosophers for over half a century (e.g. see Zaidi 2006), I concluded that we need an ontological and epistemological pluralism to exist in order to make the dialogue between Islam and the West possible. What that actually means is a concrete recognition that specific worldview shapes a specific set of cognitive system. In other words, a concrete recognition of the legitimacy of different “systems of representation” so it is called in *representational* theory of mind in Cognitive Psychology. My article is published in International Journal of the Asian Philosophical Association (Alkatiri 2016b). For the sake of brief presentation here, I would like to highlight the incompatibility between materialist and religious ontology. Materialist ontology denies any pre-constituted structure of being and any teleological order of existence, whereas in all non-materialist ontology such as religious and mythological worldviews, belief in the existence of metaphysical dimensions of reality is a common feature. As for Islam, the physical and metaphysical domains are variously referred to in religious terminology.

Furthermore, the disagreement between Islamic and modern knowledge epistemology has been debated for long in Islamic philosophy literature (e.g. Yazdi 2003). Islamic cognitive system recognizes (i) *ilm huduri* (Arabic for ‘knowledge by presence’) besides

(ii) *ilm husuli*, i.e. 'knowledge by correspondence' which is knowledge in the ordinary or modern sense of the term. With those in mind, clearly, there are potential clashes between Islam and modern West in the cognitive realm. Let me reiterate however, by bringing up Muslim's *reconstruction of knowledge* project I aimed to demonstrate that there is more to the Muslims' desire to re-enchant the world than simply anti-imperialist sentiments. The fact that Muslims resent the West for its cultural invasion, economic exploitation, political oppression, military superiority, cannot negate the incompatibility of *Allah-centric* Islamic thought and homo-centric modern thought. Accordingly, for a peaceful coexistence between Islam and the West, this cognitive issue needs to be intellectually recognized and addressed. In light of that, I would like to suggest that New Zealand pioneer the attempt by taking initiative to open up philosophical dialogues between Islam and modern West in higher education and community levels.

Turning to the second point of Premise-2, with respect to the issue of Muslim citizenship in a modern nation state, in a conference in Turku, Finland, on "Ethnic and Religious Future of Europe" in 2017, I problematized the modern nation state concept as it necessarily implies a requirement to force a unity into diversity in order to build a solid nationhood. Subsequently, in practice, every citizen is supposed to adopt a single national identity. Drawing upon empirical studies from Indonesian history – a country with a highly diverse society with Muslim majority population; and a comparative literature review of equally diverse African states, my thesis concludes to advocate embracing diversity instead of forcing unity into diversity by way of integration, acculturation, and assimilation. Given the characteristics of the present era, embracing diversity is the only way to move forward into the future, to create harmony globally by staying true to our own identity whilst respecting others. My paper is published in the conference journal by the Donner Institute in Finland, the *Scripta Donneriani Aboensis* (Alkatiri 2018a).

III. Devout Muslim and Affectionate Citizenship

Finally, is the last premise of this article. Based on my first-hand knowledge about New Zealand Muslim community, especially the one in Christchurch where a number of who were killed in al-Noor mosque terrorist attack are people I and my family know quite well, I contend that ‘affectionate citizenship’ in which the Muslim citizen’s allegiance to the state was freely given and based on love, and without necessarily implies a single national identity, is possible and viable. In fact, that could be an ideal scheme of citizenship for remaining to be devout Muslims in multicultural global society. This ‘heart’ or affection dimension of human relations has not been adequately studied. On that account, I would like to suggest the Waikato Islamic Studies Group conduct a qualitative research for the purpose of unveiling the extent of its viability and the complexities of issues involved, with NZ devout Muslims as the respondents.

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