

Discourse from the Perspective of Mohammed Arkoun: An Examination of the Values of Interfaith Dialogue

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ABSTRACT

Interfaith dialogue is presented to appreciate the truth in others and work together to realize actual problems, such as citizenship rights, violence, ignorance, poverty, equality, injustice, social inequality, and so on. Arkoun's influence with the post-structuralist reveals the critical urgency of religious teachings in shaping the integrity of society. So, in Arkoun's thought, every interpretation is not sacred and must be done with a sociocultural approach that is contextual and open to criticism. He sought to deconstruct Islamic thought, which was considered sacred and closed, using the social sciences approach to represent a humanist, rational, and loving dialogue. This research method uses critical analysis methods with Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic approach in reading sources about Mohammed Arkoun. The results of this research are the development of contemporary Islamic thought by Arkoun by presenting Islam as Epistemology, including producing interreligious dialogue as a tool to create tolerance, prioritize dialogue, and establish a brotherhood.

Keywords: Contemporary Islam; Interfaith Dialogue; Mohammed Arkoun; Tolerance.

INTRODUCTION

The urgency of religion today is to explore universal issues and reconstruct positive relationships between followers of different religions. Melnik (2020) cited the words of Peter Berger and the majority of scholars in the *Types of Interreligious Dialogue*, that today's world is highly religious, and modernity does not give birth to secularization but pluralism. Thus, there will be close interaction between adherents with different value systems and worldviews in one society, and it is called interreligious dialog.

Arkoun & Fletcher (1998) argue that modernity breeds dogmatism because its structures are considered established and protected from critical reasoning. This triggered a crisis about the notion of Truth and sacralised the mind of a particular regime. Before the advent of modernity, religions have always been the necessity of all humanising activities, governing the perception, representation, and formulation of the real in ritual, artistic, conceptual, and institutional terms, the passage to action, in other words, the production of what we call culture and civilisation. That is why one can only know or recognise a religion through language or culture, which has been shaped over centuries. Before modernity, such a process must have ended in conversion because all interpretations of the world, mankind, and history must be linked to the supreme, unique, fixed and necessary Truth expressed in and by the "true Religion"; (*dīn al-haqq* the Qur'ān puts it, to rework and adapt to itself a concept already enacted by two competing religions before it).

Furthermore Arkoun (1990) criticised the 1977 Aga Khan Award for Architecture, which did nothing more than produce a classical heritage but had no impact on its reflection and relevance to contemporary Islam. Islam is not as it is portrayed in the award. Instead, the development of "Islamic" societies and cultural expressions is undergoing a process of decline, disintegration, and destruction. Islam needs new strategies to create living traditions contribute to modern Muslim societies.

How will Muslim societies express themselves over the next decade? In which international "order", in which intellectual and cultural contexts will the various expressions of different societies take place? What is the future course of the struggle between "Islam" and the "West" that has been going on since the nineteenth century, or even since the rivalry between Byzantium and "Islam", between Western Christianity and "Islam"? These questions are asked because of the Western mass media. They influence every day the representation of "Islam" of "Arabs" in the collective consciousness of the West. On the other hand, millions of Muslims have also developed a strong ideological vision (imaginary) concerning the West. Is there a possibility of imagining the architectural and urban expression of Muslim societies outside this context of mutual exclusion, ideological militancy, and explicit strategies of domination? (Arkoun, 1990).

In 1983 A.D., according to Khan et al. (2020), reflects the first Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago. It is sometimes considered the birthday of the interfaith movement. The majority of world organisations within the scope of interfaith have been working on interreligious dialogue, such as Association for Religious Freedom (IARF), World Council of Churches (WCC), United Religions Initiative (URI), Interfaith Centre for Sustainable Development, and King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAAICIID).

In contrast to Arkoun, interreligious dialogue emerged after World War II, after colonial liberation and the emergence of sovereign states. At that time, the churches cooperated with colonial regimes, which sought to convert Asia and Africa as had happened in the Americas since 1492. Arkoun said the Second Vatican Council was the first official theological manifestation of the Roman Catholic Church's acceptance of scientific studies, rationalism and interreligious dialogue since 1960 (Arkoun & Fletcher, 1998).

This activity has developed, such as in Finland, by establishing Together for Finland (TFF) (Ojala, 2021). Likewise in Germany, (EMMERiCh, 2022) states that Germany's national policy to institutionalise Islam through dialogue agreements and cooperation is manifested through constructing a Muslim kindergarten in the North German city of Gifhorn. In Africa, the family is the starting point for understanding religious differences as conflict reconciliation, education, health, social justice and development. The principle in this research is that we are equal as humans, created by the one and only God (Anaehobi, 2022). Malaysia and Indonesia are not left behind in promoting the value, variants and applications of interfaith dialogue. Zain et al. (2014) argue that there are two models adopted by both, namely, social dialogue can occur in schools, and the environment and intellectual dialogue can occur in government agencies with formal and structured issues.

This research aims to strengthen the interfaith dialogue discourse by elaborating on Mohammed Arkoun's ideas. According to him, the reason why Islamic-Christian dialogue is effective is because of political reasons. However, Jewish-Islamic is not; its presence is considered worse because of disagreements and different references, and it is urgent for dialogue. This is reversed when observing Jewish-Christian dialogue as opposed to Muslim-Christian or Jewish. One of the factors is the familiarity of Christians and Jews with the Bible. At the same time, Muslims, apart from not trying to observe the Bible, also argue with what the Quran stipulates about the "distortion" (*tahrīf*) of the books of the people of the Book (Ahl al-Kitāb). Arkoun objected to this situation because of the imbalance and limitations of Islamic-Christian dialogue, either because it is polemical or it is just a flat form of mutual respect and the consensus only focuses on "shared values and beliefs in the same God", which feels like an illusion (Arkoun & Fletcher, 1998).

As an Islamologist, Arkoun uses various approaches and arguments in interpreting religion in society. According to him, the holy books do not only talk about the existence of God, his attributes, and his power, but they are all actualised in a form that everyone can understand with practical and theoretical concepts; ontology, cosmology, anthropology, biology, law, ethics, politics, history, mythology, psychology, and sociology. Some countries such as Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Algeria, and others confirm the question of including additional perceptions, understandings, and actions. Islamic law is thus necessary due to the difficulties in upholding the legitimacy of power arising from violent confrontations and facilitated by the absence of social sciences that present a critical vision of socio-historical phenomena (Arkoun, 1997).

Arkoun uses the approach of critical analysis of texts and deconstruction of history in understanding Islam, resulting in reconstruction into actual meaning. Social sciences are used as weapons to dismantle the anomaly. However, it does not necessarily discard the traditions built by Islam. This idea still imagines the Islamic tradition but with a new face so that this fusion can answer the challenges Muslims face in a humanist and egalitarian contemporary world (Arkoun, 2001).

Arkoun's ideas are used as a basis to strengthen and further elaborate the concept of interfaith dialogue. Besides enhancing peace and tolerance, this is an effort to open human horizons to alleviate global problems. This research makes interreligious dialogue a necessity for a pluralistic society. From the variety of existing dialogues, the dynamics of discourse and actual ideas are needed to form an adaptive and loving dialogue concept because of the many forms and ideas of interreligious dialogue, harmony, comfort and novelty determining people's interest in agreeing and participating in the idea.

METHOD

This research uses a critical analysis method with Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic approach in reading sources about Mohammed Arkoun. This approach aims to produce the meaning of contextualization, which is reading productively so that the text will continue to live. Paul Ricoeur has two weapons; distanciation and appropriation. Distanciation is the taking of distance to reveal the actual meaning so that it can be enlightened between the sacred and profane. Appropriation is the reader's authority to produce new value with the knife of ideological criticism or demolition. Among the steps, understanding the literal meaning, reflective phenomenology based on its purpose, and existential/ontological version of subjective recontextualization solve the mystery behind the text and context at different times because it could be the same object but different in meaning (Haryatmoko, 2016).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Biography of Mohammed Arkoun and His Work

Mohammed Arkoun was a philosopher or thinker born in Taourirt-Mimoun, in Kabilia, a mountainous Eastern region in Algeria, on 1 February 1928. The community was predominantly Berber and surrounded by three languages: Kabilian, Arabic and French. From 1950-1954 he studied Arabic language and literature at the University of Algiers. From 1954-1962 he studied in Paris, concentrating on Arabic literature and Islamic thought. French culture was familiar, as he was used to hanging out with French people when Algeria tried to escape French colonialism (Meuleman, 1996).

In 1969, Arkoun received his doctorate at the Sorbonne University in Paris and became a lecturer there, with the title of his dissertation on the ethical thought of Ibn Miskawaih (d. 1030 AD). He was also a guest lecturer at the University of Amsterdam and the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London (Arkoun, 2001).

Robert D Lee said Arkoun lived in three worlds; Arab, Islamic, and European. However, he was not friendly with Orientalism and distant from nationalism, to create independence in discussing Islam and not clashing religion and politics. He aims to free Islam from the prison of orthodoxy and Western domination in universalism (Arkoun, 1996). *Penser l'Islam* project Arkoun (2001) in 1961 AD. Reflecting his dissatisfaction with Islamic Studies in Algeria from 1950-1954 AD, he was conservative and often confronted the terms modernity and establishment thinking. He also criticised nationalists on religion and politics.

According to Kersten (2007), it was called Applied Islamology in 1970 AD. According to Kersten, Arkoun proposed Applied Islamology in 1980 and 1990 AD. Applied Islamology is the opposite of pragmatic Islamology (classical Islamology). This was done to protect against being trapped in manipulating Islamic ideology. Its two foci are dismantling dogmatism, logocentrism, and its motives and "modern critical analysis" as Rethinking Islam.

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In applied Islamology, there are five essential points to understand. Firstly, new methods of thought that use historical criticism and Foucault's epistemology, reinterpretation of religious traditions, especially related to the nature, function and interpretation of religious texts. Secondly, each era's modes of thought or epistemes must be interpreted and recontextualised. Third, historical studies trace what has

been thought and what has not been thought in Islam. Fourth is the book's society, which is a religious and cultural phenomenon. Fifth, the deconstruction strategy changes the social image in interpreting the text and finding new meanings relevant to the contemporary context. Sixth, revelation and history are objects of deconstruction to interpret the text according to the times (Arkoun, 2001).

The concept offered Arkoun (2007) is fully summarised in his book "The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought". It is divided into sections; Those concepts are the Quranic fact and Islamic fact (1970), applied Islamology (1973), dogmatic closure and prophetic discourse (1982), cultural systems of reciprocal exclusion and institutionalised ignorance (1983), critique of Islamic reason (1984), closed official corpus, societies of the Book-book (1988), researcher-thinker (1995), emerging reason (1996), anthropological triangle (1997), the cognitive status of Revelation, withholding of the theological moment, the strategy of cognitive intervention, From Inter-Religious Dialogue to the Recognition of the Religious Phenomenon. Other works include "Traité d'éthique (traduction française avec introduction et notes du Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq) and Contribution à l'étude de l'humanisme arabe au IV^e/Xe siècle: Miskawayh philosophe et historien" (Masdani, 2020).

"La pensée arabe"/Arab Thought. "Ouvertures sur l'Islam", Lectures du Coran (reading the Quran)", "Pour une critique de la raison islamique", "Aspect de la pensée musulmane classique", "Discours coranique et pensée scientifique", "Quran wa Qirāāt al 'Ilmiyyah", "L'Islam, hier, demain", "L'Islam, Religion et société". Some were also translated into English and Arabic, such as "Rethinking Islam Today", "Rethinking Islam: Common Questions, Uncommon Answers", "Min al Ijtihād ila Naqd al Islāmī", "Al Islām, Aurūbā, Al Gharb: Rahānāt al Ma'na Wārādāt al Haymanah", "Al Fikr al Islāmī: Naqd wa Ijtihād", "Qaḍāyā fi Naqd al 'Aqlī al Dīnī, Al Quran min al Tafsīr al Mawrūs ila Tahlīli al Khitāb al Dīnī" (Hajriana, 2018).

Islamic Thought and the Critique of Arkoun's Islamic Reasoning

Arkoun interprets Islam as "surrender" and "resignation", entrusting all of oneself to God. Ibrahim is introduced in the Quran as a Muslim because he was willing to sacrifice for God, meaning a person who acts in love and obedience to God. The Quran describes Ibrahim as neither a Jew nor a Christian, but a Muslim, which, according to Arkoun, is the ideal religious attitude in the frame of *mīšāq* as in the Gospel and the Quran. That is why Ibrahim is called the father of believers, the monotheist, before forming rituals and laws in the three monotheistic religions. Not Muslim, as theologians and jurists interpret the Quran and Muhammad's teachings (Arkoun, 1996).

The book, *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, is Arkoun's key opening essay on the great idea of Islam. According to him, Islam is "the city is the deeply multifarious metropolis" of the pluralist metropolis. It is a source of

identity, pride, egalitarianism, care and curiosity for those outside Islam (Shaikh, 2004).

He also questioned the image of Islam. Can Islam be understood scientifically in the West, or is it just an image because it is "painted" with violence? Is such a Western understanding objective? If we look at the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962), the advent of the 1955 Bandung conference, and the Zionist establishment of Israel, these events were violent, political, and provoked. Intellectuals must, therefore, ideally reconstruct a proper historical perspective on the political, economic and strategic stakes of the endless wars around the Mediterranean (Arkoun & Lee, 2019).

Haidar Bagir quoted Muḥammad Iqbal's qaul that there will continue to be a novelty in this world. Hence, the demand for every human being is to continuously carry out progressive *ijtihad* to answer the novelty created by God, as He said Qs. Al Raḥmān [55]: 29 "Every day He presents a new creation" because every era has its people and every era has its challenges, so the world was not created dead-end or just present (Bagir, 2017).

Historically, the pre-modern phase was dominated by traditional knowledge-authorised scholars in the Islamic world whose nature and religious authority were fluid. It continued into the modern phase towards the end of the 19th century, when mass media and education modernised and interacted with European powers. This caused the authority of the ulama and knowledge to decline. On the other hand, educated elites emerged; Al Afghani, Abduh, Rashid Ridho discussed the relationship between Islam, modernity and the West and opposed traditional, religious methods of knowledge and criticised the decline of Islam and carried out political resistance to European hegemony. Finally, the third phase developed with globalisation, advances in communication technology, the growth of Muslim diaspora communities in the West, and the emergence of previously underrepresented voices, such as women and Muslims from the geographical "periphery" of the Islamic world. These structural changes resulted in a further multiplication of authority within Islam. Arkoun belongs to the 20th-century reformists who discuss pluralism, democracy, freedom, human rights, gender, minorities, and interreligious dialogue (Zohouri, 2021).

Islam must accept these challenges inclusively. At the height of its glory, Islam always accepted novelty and honoured it. Abdurahman Wahid (Gus Dur), when describing Nurcholish Madjid's (Cak Nur) "cultural Islamic" thought, said that Islam's rejection of the world's openness, whether religious or cultural, would narrow Islam's own space amid an increasingly advanced civilisation. Instead of forming its own identity, it will become more backward and primitive (Wahid et al., 2007).

According to Ali (2003), inclusivism between people is characterised by religious freedom, tolerance, equally carrying out good, and even competing with

each other to build the nation, the principle of humanism, in the sense of caring and saving humans from arrogance and misery.

For Arkoun, "the West" has become his identity even though he comes from the East. He was more familiar with Western modernity and more ready to criticise it. Arkoun and other 20th-century thinkers, such as Gadamer, Foucault, and Derrida, are characterised by hermeneutics. Arkoun's interdisciplinary approach uses linguistics, anthropology, semiotics, and other social sciences. Arkoun tries to create a method of Islamic studies that can answer contemporary problems because the historical-philological orientation tradition and the classical understanding of *ijtihad* fail to answer contemporary problems. Meanwhile, political intellectuals have two-faced conditions (dominating Islamic studies and supporting the rise of militant Islamists). So there is a space that needs to be filled, namely reinterpreting the traditionalist part of dogma and analysing the knowledge of the people of the book with multidisciplinary approaches, such as history, anthropology, linguistics, hermeneutics, semiotics and discourse analysis Zohouri (2021).

In *Min al Ijtihād ila Naqd al Islām*, Arkoun calls for open criticism (*al naqd al munfatiḥ*) using the proven sciences of humanity and society, particularly criticism of imaginary concepts (*mutakhayyal*), myths, or sociological facts through the perspectives of anthropologists and historians, such as Claude Levi-Strauss, Jean Pierre Vernan, George Balandier, George Duby, Robert Mandury, Jacques Lugoff, Pierre Bourdeaux (Arkoun, 1991).

Furthermore, according to him, this approach has always been neglected. Nowadays, contemporary researchers find the issue of faith and religion less daunting, especially for those with the slogan "going back in time" (*raj'iyah*). So by considering humanity and society as a whole, both the spiritual and material dimensions, a combined humanities approach leads to results beyond positivism. This is a new stage in contemporary thought (Arkoun, 1991).

According to Arkoun, conflicts and divisions in the context of globalisation are not considered by experts, researchers and politicians alike. This is because the philosophical implications of the global change process are not an important parameter in decision-making in all fields of activity. In addition, philosophy as an academic discipline is not considered a tool to rethink the relationship that binds philosophy and democracy. Teaching philosophy in secondary schools is also rare in many countries, including in the rich Islamic philosophical tradition that has been lost since the 13th century. Hence, the report prepared by Roger Pol Droit at the request of UNESCO entitled *Philosophie et démocratie dans le monde* is very suggestive of the current state of philosophy teaching in member states. Nonetheless, teaching philosophy remains very important in teaching the younger generation critical and analytical thinking skills. By maintaining a rich philosophical tradition and developing critical thinking skills, we can better understand the relationship between philosophy and democracy and improve the current global situation (Arkoun, 2000).

In his work, Arkoun explores many forgotten or ostracised traditions in Islam through a critique of what he calls "Islamic reason": a form of reason that "accepts its function in religious propositions", considering it an "unrivalled gift" (Zohouri, 2021). However, Islamic reason can change to hegemonic reason. This change occurs because its image has reached a peak. Hence it becomes irreplaceable forever (Arkoun & Fletcher, 1998).

In conclusion, when reason is imposed through political, economic and social vehicles that cannot be freely criticised, it becomes the hegemonic reason. During the medieval period, Islamic reason dominated the Mediterranean, Asia and Africa. It was embedded in the Arabic language, the Caliphate, and the social and political systems that succeeded it. It is also rooted in the works of civilisation and the anthropological and metaphysical-religious frameworks seen as cultural extensions of the Quranic text. Thus, Islamic reasoning can become hegemonic when it forces its cognitive system to cross critical boundaries freely—understanding the interconnections in understanding the dynamics and influence of Islamic reason in historical and social contexts (Abdullah, 1996).

Arkoun (2003) attempts to think productively about Islam. Islamic revivalism, he argues, has monopolised the discourse on Islam; social scientists, moreover, do not pay attention to "Silent Islam" - the Islam of true believers who are more concerned with the relationship of religion to God's absolutes than the demonstrations of fiery political movements. Yet intellectual dynamics must continue to evolve by evaluating knowledge with new epistemological perspectives, characteristics, and abundance of knowledge systems, whether historical or mystical. This explains the need to study Islam as an epistemological project. The great difficulty is to incorporate their critical approach into a social and cultural space currently dominated by militant ideologies.

Islam as an epistemological project means making the text the centre of the future. Texts are not historical collections but dynamics. This is the task of applied Islamology to rethink the text that is considered sacred as a result of interpretation. Arkoun (2007) exemplifies the focus of Applied Islamology; In France, there are significant changes in the social order and the role of parents, while in the Islamic context, there is a disintegration of traditional structures. At the same time, the state imposes traditionalist policies to protect religion and Divine Law.

The main difference highlighted is that social and cultural change occurred in France with the rejection of traditional roles, a shift in patriarchal authority, and looser control over sexuality. However, despite similar social changes in the Islamic context, there is still a rigid legal order and traditionalist policies that restrict women's rights and protect religious values. In this context, there is a gap between traditionalist policies that regulate society based on perceived truth, morality and legitimacy and liberal philosophy that seeks to expand individual freedom through dialogue with civil society. There is a challenge in finding a middle ground between the social changes taking place and the protection of traditional values, as well as

the need to be mindful of individual rights and unforeseen social changes (Arkoun, 2007).

The second example is about post-war Iraq. It wants the world to forget what happened ten years ago. The discourse analysis here is to strive for the day that will surely come when we can welcome back Iraq as a full participant and partner in the international community. Applied Islamology deconstructs past and contemporary forms of discourse while maintaining a distance from the political controversies associated with ideological choices related to the will to power in an ongoing conflict. The aim is to uncover hidden and forgotten motives considered obsolete, insignificant, and irrelevant to the current conflict and the debates manipulated by these protagonists. That Applied Islamology has an important role in understanding the social and political dynamics related to Islam, as well as revealing the hidden motives and principles underlying political actors' geopolitical thinking and worldview (Arkoun, 2007). In this context, it is urgent to view the controversies related to the Gulf War within a broader framework, including engaging data from the "long duration" of history and contemporary social inquiry. In addition, it is important to analyze the principles, arguments, and themes underlying the beliefs and understandings that shape the choices and behaviours of political actors.

Thus, to achieve a definition of contemporary Islam in Arkoun's view, a radical approach is needed to overcome scientific and epistemological practices that view Islam as an area separate from history, culture, and civilization. He approaches the definition of "contemporary Islam" to break down epistemological attitudes and scientific practices that view Islam as separate from the history of religion, culture, and civilization. Therefore, according to Arkoun, it is important to understand the changes in meaning and truth under the pressure of globalization when defining contemporary Islam. Extended rituals, militancy, and political strategies are no longer the main focus of understanding Islam today (Arkoun, 2000).

As Islam undergoes changes and challenges, "contemporary Islam" comes to terms with them. In the development of Islam, important phenomena include the rise of minority communities and the presence of previously marginalized religions. Behind it all, internal conflicts are a tricky challenge in Islam, namely, the conflict between traditionalists and revivalists. On the other hand, there are conflicts between groups that seek to take over political power and groups that want to separate religion and the state (Arkoun, 2000).

Interfaith Dialogue Discourse According to Mohammed Arkoun

The religion of Islam, as a mercy for all of nature, has a thorough *syamil-mutakamil* nature. In this case, Islam regulates all aspects of human life, from personal to social and state affairs. Therefore, all aspects of human life are regulated and governed by Islamic law, either explicitly or implicitly. This concept consists of the following:

Tolerant Attitude

Islam believes tolerance is essential in the face of cultural, ethnic, national, linguistic and religious diversity. In Islam, tolerance is one of its important characteristics known as *al-hanifiyah as-samhah*. This concept is a solution to the unavoidable diversity in human life. As part of human rights, freedom of choice of religion is the right of every individual, and Islam guarantees this right. Recognition of all religions indicates religious freedom, which binds its followers in action (Hashas, 2021).

Etymologically, tolerance comes from the words *tolerance* and *toleration*. Tolerance means a person's readiness to accept the beliefs or habits of others different from him. At the same time, *toleration* according to Al-Wahhab (2006) is the acceptance of other people's different religions. Terminologically in the view of Zain et al. (2014), tolerance is an attitude of allowing other people's beliefs, thoughts, and actions even though they differ from their opinions, without coercion so that other people's opinions change, or efforts to prevent the implementation of other different opinions. As if taken from the root word *tolerate*, which means allowing something to happen or be done without objecting (Webster, 1976).

As for the terminological word *tasamuh*, according to Al-Wahhab (2006), it has the meaning of *qabul al-akhar* (attitude of accepting the presence of others). So, it can be concluded that tolerance (*tasamuh*) is to appreciate and respect the beliefs or beliefs or culture and culture of someone or another group patiently and consciously. Tolerance does not mean justifying other people's beliefs or trust but rather appreciating and respecting the human rights of others, even if they differ from their beliefs.

Several issues turned out to be related to the notion of the ideal human community, including tolerance, the perception of non-Muslims, and the status of protected groups (*dhimmi*) such as Jews and Christians, especially in the caliphate period. And I cannot sidestep a problem that is current in the West, in the Muslim world, and indeed in all contemporary societies: human rights. I am now prepared to consider the problems of tolerance, of the status of non Muslims, and of human rights without introducing anachronisms.

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The mission of Islam in perspective Abu Yasid (2004) is to spread love to all corners of nature. Indeed, several verses of the Qur'an explicitly explain that differences are sunnatullah that cannot be avoided and are the will of Allah. This is explained in Az-Zuhaili (1997) and interpretation Shihab (2017) that Allah cannot unite different humans but does not want it. This is intended so that humans compete for goodness. Thus, the denial of coercion and force is evidence of the recognition of freedom of choice.

Therefore, it is impossible if Muslims are forced to eliminate these differences. Islam presents and teaches togetherness in diversity and upholds brotherhood (al-ukhuwah) between people. So there is no reason to live hostile to each other. However, an attitude of affection exists between fellow human beings to form a society that works together and helps each other based on love, so there will be a sense of security on earth. The concept of ta'aruf can be realized by developing an attitude of tolerance between fellow human beings, mutual respect and respect. With tolerance, brotherhood, unity, and togetherness will be realized (Al-Jazairi, 1993; Al-Zamakhsyari, 1986).

According to (al-Syarif, 1972), the application of tolerance values has been exemplified by the Apostle Muhammad (Peace be upon him). History has recorded how the Prophet has shown tolerance by promoting peace towards several religious communities, tribes and races in Medina and outside Medina, even against non-Muslims, even though the Prophet still invites them to be jointly responsible for maintaining the city of Medina. This event is known as the Hudaibiyah agreement, which was driven by the spirit of tolerance. This happened when the Prophet wanted to perform the pilgrimage but was always prevented by the polytheists (Mahmudunnasir, 1981).

The Companions also followed this. Umar, for example, once saw a blind Jew begging, then Umar took him to Baitul Mal and told the companions to meet his needs (Ibrahim, 1984). Therefore, planting tolerance material in education is very important and must receive special attention. Because this material can directly impact students when interacting in the environment and social life.

Prioritize Dialogue

Islam is one of the religions with the largest number of followers in Indonesia and the world. In the context of changing times and the existence of plurality or diversity in this country, Islam highly values plurality because it is considered sunnatullah and must be respected. However, only some understand that diversity is sunnatullah. Some religious groups only think that their group is right and blame others. Therefore, Islam provides space for plurality to be managed and studied correctly, so there is no division or unwanted things through dialogue.

Dialogue and communication between religious communities are necessary, not to say the need that must be implemented by all elements of religious communities to eliminate suspicion and suudzan and to establish a harmonious

relationship between fellow religious communities. Islam is very open and always open to dialogue with fellow religious people as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad in the Medina period, the dialogue that the Prophet Muhammad built with the residents of Medina later gave birth to a very famous agreement, namely the "Medina Charter" (Tilawati & Kafid, 2015).

If there is a dispute in interpretation Shihab (2017), Islam does not necessarily call for a fight to solve a problem, but Islam offers a path of peace through dialogue. The main capital of Indonesian society in knitting tolerance in religious life is *kalimatun sawa'*, namely Pancasila, especially the first principle. Wahbah Az-Zuhaili said that *kalimatun sawa'* is a fair, middle and equal sentence not disputed among many parties (Az-Zuhaili, 1997).

Over the past thirty years, the interfaith dialogue has helped raise awareness of the need to address "confession of faith" issues. However, such awareness may vary depending on the individuals' cultural level and spiritual expectations. In such dialogues, limits become apparent as each side realizes the limitations in their efforts to convert the other from a strategy of dogmatic rejection based on "definite belief" towards critical clarity where the dogma involved can be abandoned. Many religious leaders agree to such changes during an exchange of views supported by the context of a successful encounter. However, they return to their orthodox sermons before their congregations again (Arkoun & Fletcher, 1998).

He promotes the search for common ground across various religious experiences beyond the theological domain. The current practice of religious dialogue, he argues, is dominated by "psychological barriers"-that is, the participants' need to protect and ensure the unparalleled particular values and authenticity of their religion, rather than entering into the perspective of others-the "philosophical perspective of the reciprocity of conscience" in Arkoun's terms (Hashas, 2021).

So the invitation to turn to *kalimatun sawa'* is fair. This is because it is an invitation that does not favor one religion or teaching. Instead, it is an invitation that all parties can accept. This is where the justice of *kalimatun sawa'* lies.

Regarding dialogue ethics, Husain al-'Assal provides the rules of the dialogue game that apply. It should not be perfunctory, and some strategies and methods must be done. With a good strategy, the dialogue will bring someone to the point of togetherness and beautiful understanding. Among the best dialogue strategies are: First, there should be no sense of self-winning; second, one should not consider themselves superior and others inferior; third, always pay attention to ethics and norms of courtesy (Al-'Assal, 1960).

The Idea of the People of the Book

Religion is a system of beliefs, faith and knowledge that still dominates and governs the existence of many societies. In the context of revolutionary movements,

Islam has a brilliant track record. However, it is complicated regarding revelation (the Quran) and Muslim tradition, a condition of tension provoked by "some" theologians. This contrasts with Christianity, where nothing causes a prolonged reaction because it is only a topic for theologians (Arkoun, 1988).

In *Rethinking Islam Today*, Arkoun explains that the rigorous methods of the classical heritage paralyze the study of religion. Religion should be approached with relevant epistemological perspectives because religion is a universal dimension of human existence. The difficulty is that old and entrenched traditions of thought cannot be changed or even revised through a few essays or suggestions made by individuals. However, optimism always exists because thought will continue to live against eclectic ideologies (Arkoun, 2003).

Arkoun offers epistemological equivalence for studying religious traditions. Islam, he argues, has ties in terms of religious phenomena with Judaism and Christianity called Societies of the Book. Therefore, he promotes the generalization of his methodology for the Qur'ān to move beyond a single religious tradition. He reinterprets revelation as access to human space through diverse religious traditions as a social phenomenon. Such an inclusive description of revelation includes any teaching-including of "Buddha, Confucius, and African elders"-that symbolizes "the collective experience of a group". It projects it onto new horizons and new human experiences of the Divine (Zohouri, 2021).

What Arkoun means by "people of the book" are individuals who have access to knowledge and literature and can criticize and interpret religious doctrines. In the Islamic context, the people of the book can read, understand and interpret the Quran and hadith critically and contextually. According to Arkoun, a more open and inclusive society of the book will accelerate society's intellectual, moral and social progress (Arkoun, 1996).

Epistemological integration of the holy books is not without reason. When referring to the society of the book since medieval times, the book is influenced by religious and cultural phenomena. Kitab itself consists of two meanings; first, that which is stored in *Lauḥil al maḥfūz* (Ummul al Kitāb) and second, sacred texts, such as the Quran in Islam. In the latter phase, in the East, it became a vertical belief from God and then passed down to the prophet. The book *The Word of God* has similarities in anthropological patterns and world religions (Arkoun, 1997).

Arkoun distinguishes between the Quran, which is absolute and cannot be contradicted, and relative interpretations. Each interpretation has its episteme according to the interpreter's place, sociocultural situation, and intellectuality. Although the method of Qur'anic interpretation proposed by Arkoun is still neglected, his thoughts have influenced many scholars in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. However, they are also often criticized or rejected (Arief, 2020).

Shaikh (2004) argues that the idea of revelation is placed within the "dogmatic fence" in the Islamic tradition. At the same time, Arkoun discusses it

with a socio-cultural approach and gives an example in Qs. Neo-conservatives and some Christians often quote Al Taubah to demonize Islam. Arkoun explains that the violence in the verse is not given theological justification but is merely an expression of the idea of glory and victory they have internalized through pre-Islamic legends and myths.

The post-inauguration of the Mushaf created a "functional solidarity" between the state, jurists-theologians, state bureaucracy, and the written word. However, the Qur'ān is not one-dimensional, and its contents became a productive source for interpretation, theological doctrine, and religious and legal jurisprudence. Moreover, the mythical aspects of the Qur'ān also became a living source of rich imagination, which was exploited to legitimize true beliefs and crystallized into competing orthodoxies. A permanent job was open for the "sacred setting", whose task was to define true belief and hunt down heresy. This is also true for other "Peoples of the Book", such as Judaism and Christianity. Therefore, a general approach is needed to the socio-religious environment of the Mediterranean world in which the "Peoples of the Book" were formed (Esmail & Filali-Ansary, 2013).

According to Wekke (2014) to read according to Arkoun, adequate analytical skills in psychology, sociology, anthropology, and adequate knowledge of language are needed. Arabic as the language of the Qur'an also needs to be understood as a discourse that does not stand alone, but is related to the context of space and time. In Arkoun's perspective, this is referred to as tradition.

Arkoun, trained in postmodern literary theory, adopted the poststructural method to reread the Quranic text. Arkoun's critique and approach are interwoven with complex terminology. He advocates the desacralization of texts and a radical rethinking of Islam as a cultural and religious system. This assessment promotes a philosophical perspective in combination with anthropological and historical approaches. However, as this paper argues, Arkoun's approach to understanding the Qur'ān can undeniably disrupt prevalent conventional belief systems (Ahmad, 2023).

Establishing Brotherhood

Islam has recognized the term *ukhuwah Islamiyah*, which also contains the notion of *ukhuwah insaniyah* and *ukhuwah wathaniyah*. *Ukhuwah insaniyah* relates to universal human brotherhood without distinguishing ethnicity, race, nation, religion, and other aspects of specificity. While *ukhuwah wathaniyah* relates to brotherhood bound by nationalism/nationality without distinguishing religion, race, customs, and other aspects of specificity (Wahyudin, 2008).

According to Arkoun (1996) against Jews and Christians, contemporary Muslims have shown concern for human rights. However, they also seek to assert that the cultural roots underlying human rights come from the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. They claim that the vision of human beings,

legal and political practices in Islam, which was only accepted after the British, American and especially the French Revolutions, was demonstrated at the UNESCO meeting on September 19, 1981. At that meeting, the Islamic Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drafted by an initiative of the Islamic Council and its Secretary General, Salem Azzaro.

In the West, there has always been a tendency to exclude Islam from the cultural domain where human rights are understood and expressed, and their meaning is defended. The Islamic Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a response to such exclusion. Leading scholars, Islamic jurists, and representatives of Islamic movements and currents of thought have prepared the text of this declaration, and all twenty-three articles are based on Qur'anic verses or selections from the official Sunni compilation of hadith. Unfortunately, no reference is made to the canonical corpus of Shia traditions (Arkoun & Lee, 2019).

Human rights are the same as the brotherhood that Islam wants, not only among fellow Muslims (*ukhuwah islamiyah*) but also among sects. It is further than that, Shihab (1996) explains that Islam calls for universal brotherhood among fellow human beings *ukhuwah insaniyah* and *ukhuwah wathaniyah*. *Ukhuwah Islamiyah* requires good relations between one believer and another believer without any acts of discrimination and betrayal. Related to *ukhuwah Islamiyah*, Quraish Shihab explains that the use of the word *innama* in Q.S. 49: 10 is in the context of the explanation of "brotherhood between fellow believers", implying that actually, all parties have known for sure that the believers are brothers so that there should be no things that interfere with the brotherhood from any party. Meanwhile, the word *ikhwah* in the verse means "the same".

Likewise in Tafsir al Misbah (Shihab, 2017). Similarities in lineage result in brotherhood and similarities in nature or any form, meaning that the relationship of religious brotherhood among Muslims must be as close as the relationship between brothers in lineage. This form of *ukhuwah* is not limited by region, nationality or race because all Muslims around the world, wherever they are, are brothers.

Ukhuwah insaniyah is the brotherhood of fellow human beings. This *ukhuwah* requires a harmonious relationship between one person and another without seeing and differentiating ethnicity, race, class, belief, belief, skin colour and language. Humans are motivated to create a climate of true brotherhood that develops on the basis of a universal sense of humanity. All humans in the world are brothers.

While *ukhuwah wathaniyah* requires good diplomatic relations between countries, diplomatic relations cover political and economic aspects and touch on social, cultural and security aspects. Brotherhood is a universal value that all human beings always aspire to. Brotherhood that is established with sincerity will foster a sense of mutual love and belonging. From there, care and cooperation emerge, creating a solid unity.

CONCLUSION

Arkoun, as an Islamologist, seeks to develop Islamic thought to be in tune with contemporary times. He offers Islam as an epistemological project with Applied Islamology. The goal is to reinterpret Islamic teachings to free them from orthodoxy by using social sciences and historical analysis. From this, interreligious dialogue will emerge urgently in contemporary human life worldwide. Interreligious dialogue aims to develop positive relationships between followers of different religions and identify the causes of tension between religious groups. The foundation for interreligious dialogue, according to Arkoun, is understanding Applied Islamology, Islamic-Hegemonic Reason, and the Society of the Book. The term "society of the book" characterizes the discourse of interreligious dialogue in Arkoun's thought in addition to tolerance, prioritizing dialogue, and establishing brotherhood.

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