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**Islamic Ethics as The Foundation of Religious Brotherhood (Study of Isma'il Raji Al-Faruqi)****Sangkot Sirait**

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**Abstract:** This paper is part of the results of research on the thoughts of Isma'il Raji al Faruqi. The problem discussed is related to al Faruqi's concept of Islamic religious ethics, especially regarding the relationship between religious people. The purpose of this research is to find out the concept and its relation to conflict and how to rebuild religious fraternity. The data in this paper are obtained from the results of the literature review, both primary and secondary. From the results of this research, an understanding can be drawn that the religious ethics built by al Faruqi is sourced from normative Islamic values, but is integrated with universal humanism regarding humans and their status. In this way, the ethical values of religion can be measured and verified, not only in the realm of norms and discourses. Humans are really a measure of whether an act or policy addressed to him is called good or bad.

**Keywords:** *Ethics, Humanism, Islam, Social Harmony, Theology.*

**INTRODUCTION**

In the philosophical tradition, the term ethics is usually understood as a scientific theory that examines what is good and what is bad with regard to human behavior. Ethics is a human effort with his mind to formulate a theory regarding the administration of a good life. Ethical issues arise when the morality of a person or group of people is critically assessed. Morality is concerned with behavior, while ethics works on a theoretical level. Furthermore, ethical values that are understood, believed, and embodied in empirical life are sometimes called ethos [1].

In the Islamic philosophical tradition, if the word ethics is combined with the word religion, the question that arises is whether religious ethics is theistic subjectivism [2] or *rationalistic objectivism* [3]. An act is judged to be good or bad based on divine norms or due to the fact that the act itself already contains virtue or badness objectively. In contrast to what was conveyed by Faruqi, that religious ethics actually enters the realm of humanity and is not just a theoretical study of the meaning of religious ethics itself. For him, when something is associated with the word 'religion', something automatically relates to concrete and measurable human beings. Faruqi's construction of religious ethics automatically becomes the construction of humanity itself, namely what humans should do to themselves and to others. In this context, religion is not only understood as a value, but also as an axiological aspect. The religious ethics

conveyed by Faruqi resembles the concept of humanism in Islam which is always connected with humanity, not mere thoughts.

### **RELIGIOUS ETHICS AND HUMANISM**

The Islamic humanism referred to here is somewhat different and is not part of the rhetorical tradition of western philosophy. Humanism here is closer to Islamic renaissance humanism which avoids philosophy a lot but is intense in ethical discourse [4]. It has been mentioned earlier that as a branch of philosophical thought, ethics has a number of patterns of thought, including theistic subjectivism or rationalistic objectivism. The first says that an action is called good when it is in line with the will or consideration of a particular subject. The subject here can be collective norms, laws, or God. This understanding produces rationalism in ethics, which says that an action is called good, not because we like and enjoy doing it, or because it is in line with the will of society, but merely a universal rationalism decision that urges us to do so [5]. The existence of these two opposing thoughts creates problems in Islamic thought. Various experts in the field of Islamic thought studies in the classical era emerged, including Asy'ary with his al-Kasb theory [6], An-Najjar with his moderate theory of Jabariyah, and al-Faruqi in the modern era with his theory of humanism. Humanism as a prominent understanding in al-Faruqi's religious ethics is a synthesis of normative religious ethics as opposed to immoral behavior and violates the human rights of many adherents of the religion concerned. The function of religion as a solution to solving human problems is a tangible manifestation that religion is the only fundamental reason why someone embraces it. This means that when it is associated with Islam, this religion must be a means of solving human problems, functional Islam is the highest form of human spirituality. [7]. If in the theistic subjectivism view the measure of virtue and evil is God, while in rationalistic objectivism it is the nature of action, in Faruqi's view the measure is man himself. The essence of religious truth must be measurable and verifiable through religious expression itself. Religious ethics in Faruqi's view is more positivistic, not only normative and rationalistic but also more humanistic.

### **HUMANITY VALUE AWARD**

The background of the emergence of humanism stems from the pressures on human freedom carried out by rulers and religious leaders in the Middle Ages, namely the 5th century to the 15th century. At that time, when the church and the aristocratic groups were in power, the general public were often treated inhumanely through the policies of the oppressive authorities and generally approved by religious leaders. [8]. In this medieval era, human life, especially in Europe, was confined by the structure of Greek mythological thought so that humans lost their creativity in utilizing the potential of nature. Therefore, the renaissance period can then be seen as a period in which there is an attempt to reposition humans as individuals who are free, rational, and have the ability to regulate nature on their own. In short, humans are the measure of everything. This awareness also breaks away from the dogmatic theological-metaphysical framework. The direction of thought shifts to a critical anthropocentric framework, no longer God being the starting point or the only center of thought. So here it seems that humans are so precious and central [9].

Although this ideal of humanism is more universal, in the course of its history it has finally experienced a setback, especially when Western sciences continue to talk about humans and humanity in terms of

Western humans only. Moreover, humans such as those with black, brown, and yellow skin such as Asia, Africa, and Latin America, are actually seen as humans who can be colonized, exploited for the welfare of Western humans. Therefore, as al-Faruqi said, humanism in Western thought is not an ideal humanism to return humans to their real position. [10].

From the explanation above, it can be understood that religious ethics, in the context of Islamic humanism, is different from modern Western thought, which is generally always formulated in terms of general philosophy. Religious ethics stems from the term Islam, namely the concept of monotheism, which is the source of the spirit of human freedom to determine a way of life that is not interfered with by other views. In Islamic humanism implied an acknowledgment of human rights and must be respected.

The implication of this concept is the establishment of a strong bond between Muslims and other people, including those who are not religious, because the goal of Islam itself is to restore them as integral members of a universal society. This kind of relationship shows the universalism and humanism of Islam. The meaning of restoring here is to provide as much information as possible about Islam which is more related to the cultural interests of the people and the interests of their lives. The characteristics of a society are not only determined by the human qualities of each member, but by the principles and standards that apply in it. First, ensure the tolerance of each group and society in their religion, belief, attitude, and value system. Second, to guarantee basic human rights, namely that all members of society without exception are treated as human beings, that gross violation of human rights are not tolerated. Third, make national solidarity real, this is evidenced by efforts to realize social justice, attitudes towards the poor, the poor, and so on. Fourth, maintaining the integrity of the environment and actually realizing solidarity with future generations [11]. Respect for each individual is interpreted not only to acknowledge the existence of other communities but to go deeper into the elaboration of this recognition in the reality of life. Therefore, humanism here is more functional, namely, the stages that make religious awareness and truth must be proven through a sense of certainty that appears in society.

## **THE PROBLEM OF RELIGIOUS PEOPLE**

There are three factors that ultimately make the relationship situation between Muslims and Christians worse. The negative perception between the two parties has been going on for generations because the synergistic efforts carried out by various parties have not been maximized. The three factors are colonialism, missionary, and orientalism [12].

### **1. Colonialism**

In past history, Christians have made a mistake when they, intentionally or not, used colonialism and mission as a means of destroying Muslims. Colonialism has destroyed everyone in its territory, and it is through this colonialism that Christians robbed the freedom and freedom of the Muslims, including the education and future of their children. North Africa, for example, has been torn apart due to colonialism, an even worse example is Palestine whose inhabitants were treated inhumanely. According to al-Faruqi, the inclusion of colonialism in the discourse on the relationship between religion, especially Islam and Christianity, has a fairly long history, which was found since the Protestant Reformation and the beginning of colonial history until the Crusades, 27 November 1095. [13].

Thus, al-Faruqi saw and even said that the attitudes and beliefs of the Western colonialists, missionaries, and orientalist towards the Muslims constituted an insensitive and insulting paternalism. This is what makes al-Faruqi's thoughts, especially in the field of relations between religions, have two extreme poles, namely between acknowledging and respecting the existence of Christianity on the one hand, and being intolerant on the other. In a global view, al-Faruqi not only saw that colonialism had a negative impact only on Muslims but also on humans as a whole. Therefore, morally and religiously, Muslims, Christians, and even other communities must work together to free their victims from these colonial crimes. The abolition of colonialism means the realignment of human values as a requirement for the realization of social harmony. In colonialism, religious differences are no longer seen as important, because the center of attention is non-ideological human beings.

## **2. Missionaries**

According to religious and moral views, a mission is a commandment, because through that mission one can show the truth to others. Thus, every believer must be called to carry out a mission. Missions related to Ur-Religion. Al-Faruqi said Christianity and Islam are the mission religions par excellence to find the truth. However, the mission in Christianity lost its noble ideal after it went along with colonialism. Missionary activities that cooperate with colonialism and have a symbiotic relationship have a long history. Therefore, al-Faruqi views missionary activity as a very dangerous activity as well as colonialism. Moreover, colonialism and missionaries entered certain areas simultaneously. This view was formed naturally because coincidentally the religion adopted by the colonial rulers was Christianity. This inherent connection between colonialism and the religion they profess can be an entry point for Christianization [14].

Al-Faruqi mostly uses the term Christian, because that is not Christianity as a religion. Seeing the old wounds, as a result of Christians, al-Faruqi also mentions the despair of the Palestinian people as a result of the work of Christians in alliance with Zionism. True Christian teaching is freedom and equality of rights and duties. He called on Christians to stand up for the benefit of the Palestinian people and those expelled from it, further rejecting all new forms of colonialism through its puppet states.

In order to reorganize the dignity of the community and to create social harmony, especially among religious people, al-Faruqi asked Christians to stop their missionary activities in Islamic areas. In a functional perspective, al-Faruqi views that human intuition is above morals and morals are above belief, while ethics occupies a central position. However, al-Faruqi did not try to create a new ethical system. He still agrees with the revealed norms of humanity. By this, he means an ethical system in which society must live and must not destroy society through conflict.

## **3. Exclusive religious attitude.**

The expressions of the Qur'an are generally understood by Muslims as they are. Belief in one God for Islam is a principle truth that has been upheld since the time of the Prophet Adam. The unity of the human race and the equality of all nations before God is based on the concept of the oneness of God. Theology is not synonymous with faith, although the two are closely related. Theology can be called a critical reflection of faith. Going out as a rational responsibility, into theology can play a role in providing illumination [15]. Because theology is based on "logos" or reasoning, then as rational discourse, theology

will not be able to accommodate and express the mystery and depth of faith regarding one's spiritual experience. Theology is a product of reasoning, while the system of rationality in a person encourages and directs a system of action. For this reason, theology does not always produce acts of faith.

### **ISLAM AND BROTHERHOOD**

Muslims, by understanding the value of monotheism and their religious ethics, already have the capital that can be used as a methodology to create unity of opinion among Muslims in particular, and towards religious adherents in general. Also with the monotheistic view of nature (creation), the perspective of order and progress can be obtained at the same time for the future of mankind as a whole. So, the discussion of religion in the current era should be oriented towards humanity which tends to be non-ideological. The basis of the relationship between religion and its adherents is no longer explained as a theological obligation or God's command only through revelation, but is more anthropological, based on human principles without being woven by supernatural traits. [16].

Admittedly indeed, even though the current era is an era of humanity's territory, it is not necessarily separated from the mythological-theological way of thinking when understanding revelation. For Muslims, revelation remains as the main guide, which is believed wholeheartedly. In discussing aspects of humanity, the Qur'an has for centuries conveyed, including those related to the Hanif Tradition as the basis of prophetic unity and the basis of relations between religious communities. The verses consist of: surah al-Baqarah: 135, Ali 'Imran: 67, 95, an-Nisa': 125, al-An'am: 79, 161, Yunus: 105 and an-Nahl: 120, 123 . The religious ethics built-in Islam are almost the same as the theocentric brotherhood concept centered on God. This concept implies that affirmation and full acknowledgment of the oneness of God and His transcendent nature make humans have a true sense of independence. Embracing Islam creates a belief that is almost emotional in nature so that it encourages being truly loyal to God, religion, and fellow human beings. This solidarity has gone beyond the limits of rational or material interdependence, then entered a stage of community brotherhood under God's sovereignty, a theocentric brotherhood.

To fulfill the duty as caliph, God has equipped man with intellectual potential, thinking and religious skills, by which man knows God. It is on this basis that all humans are equal, there is no reason to see one as inferior to the other. Humanism found in Islam is not anti-religious humanism but moderate or balanced humanism. Moderate humanism, as written by Franz Magnis Suseno, is a humanism that upholds noble human virtues, such as kindness, generosity, broad insight, openness to art, universalism, the religiosity that feels close to nature, rejection of fanaticism, and positive tolerance. It is on this basis that Muslims and non-Muslims are members of a family, and their different religious views are merely a matter of their respective households. Therefore, it is very appropriate if the relationship and cooperation between religious adherents is based on the ethical framework above. It is natural if one member reminds other members if it is considered to have deviated from the tradition in general.

In this context, Faruqi once wrote: "The almost universal self-identification of the world with the Algerians and Vietnamese in their past struggle, and with the Palestinians in their continuing struggle, for human dignity, is positive evidence of this new awareness. Violation of the human rights of the Algerians, Vietnamese and Palestinians has itself stirred up as well as confirmed these rights in the consciousness of mankind." Even in the 'urubah' theory, it is said, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are

the three movements of the Arab (Semitic) consciousness that came later. They were preceded by countless movements, each headed by a leader and all responsible and advocating for his followers to carry out God's laws and commands on this earth. These movements include Sumerian City-States (3000 BC), Akkadian Empire (2400-2150 BC), Babylon (1950-1500 BC), Nineveh (1450-1150 BC). In the field of legal reform is Sargon of Agade (2334-2279 BC), Dipit Ishtar, and Hammurabi (1792-1750 BC). Each of them faced a different situation with the situation faced by known prophets such as Noah, Moses, David, 'Isa, and Muhammad. However, the spirit that drives all of them is the same, namely religion and humanity. As for the areas of cooperation, Faruqi emphasized the importance of awareness among adherents of each religion in general, especially Christianity and Islam, to review the revelations and history of each. The positive traditions once found in Christianity must be reclaimed. Those that are detrimental to humanity must be eliminated. What has been done by Vatican II must be refreshed, even according to al-Faruqi, it can be used as a means of rehabilitation about the truth of Islam from a Christian perspective. The spirit of Vatican II must be passed on to the Christian churches and their congregations, even to the whole world [17].

In building the area of cooperation between adherents of these religions, al-Faruqi views that there are several aspects of other religious traditions that are worthy of being taken up by Muslims as the basis for such cooperation. Al-Faruqi menyatakan:

“Judaism and Hinduism are essentially ethnocentric religions. In this modern era, both religions have revived with a more ethnocentric nature than before. The exclusivity of these religions makes them unable to hold a dialogue with other major religions in the world. Yet their traditions still have value suitable for ecumenism and stimulate dialogue. Monotheistic and ethical Judaism, which was born in the Middle Ages under has gained strength since the time of emancipation under the influence of the Age of Enlightenment and Western humanism. It's just that later on, this condition has been weakened by zionism, as an archetype of ethnocentric exclusivity. Likewise Hindus can seek values from established traditions in philosophical Hinduism, which provide ample opportunity for dialogue between religion and universal human friendship. Thus these tendencies in Judaism and Hinduism need to be encouraged. [18].

## **VIRTUE AND SOCIAL HARMONY**

Virtue here is a value that is more directed at upholding human dignity and existence, then maintaining social harmony. In fact, a religious view that emphasizes the importance of humanity can be called a religion that is full of ethics [19]. By upholding human values, social arrangements will be carried out properly. Social harmony will be realized, if humans are placed in their real positions. On this basis, it can also be said that al-Faruqi talked a lot about humanity.

Al-Faruqi creatively and ambitiously compiles a more ethical and humanist concept of religion after he himself was heavily involved in religious discourse as well as from its practice. Almost all of his works contain dilemmas and tensions to create a society that adheres to religion well while being responsible for maintaining social harmony. For example, there are still tensions between stability and progress, between deterministic scientific perspectives and humanistic morals. It is in this humanistic moral perspective that al-Faruqi indirectly offers his religious ethical teachings to support the realization of

social harmony. Al-Faruqi's ideals of humanism can be understood, especially when he talks about three aspects that are considered important in religious discourse, as is widely discussed in his da'wah concept. Historically, Islam's attitude towards other religious communities has taken two forms, namely accommodation and confrontation. The Qur'an only provides a basis for Muslims to behave towards other people and religions at any time. Prophet Muhammad conveyed the message of Islam after the Prophets 'Isa and Moses. Therefore, Islam became the inheritor of the universalism they taught and characterized the important period in the history of the Near East between the time of Alexander and the Prophet Muhammad. Likewise, Kristen has found her success. However, it should also be realized that the two religions achieved their success through a struggle, conflict, and even competition that took quite a long time.

In addition, a very chronic problem according to al-Faruqi is the Western interpretation of the religion of Jesus and the Western Christian mission to Muslim areas which is still ongoing. According to him, this is the actual context as a basis for studying the historical relationship between the two communities. Even the alternating periods of interaction and conflict, creative symbiosis, and devastating warfare can be explained through this perspective. Regarding this ambivalence attitude, Karel Steenbrink also wrote, "that this attitude has been characteristic of the relationship between Christianity and Islam, and between the two traditions there is a distorted image in viewing other traditions, which is sometimes also caused by theological factors. [20].

From the aspect of revelation, the relationship between religions is also shown by the Qur'an through two forms at once, namely accommodation and confrontation. The Qur'an itself always presents these two aspects in the same issue. Such a confrontation is not only in the socio-political area, but also enters the theological area. The Qur'an calls for a just dialogue with the People of the Book such as Jews and Christians, and instructs Muslims to say "Our God and your God are one". The Qur'an also categorically condemns the belief in the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus.

The recognition of the primacy of Judaism and Christianity as carriers of God's truth has been stated in the Qur'an. It aims to accommodate and respect the People of the Book and their holy books, including removing the most important social barriers for the three Abrahamic communities down to the theological and intellectual aspects..

### **RELIGIOUS CONFLICT FROM A SOCIAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE**

In reality, there are almost no religious adherents in an area that is free from conflict. Conflicts can occur because there are different understandings between one another, especially in understanding and interpreting the Holy Scriptures, or can be caused by various socio-political factors in the community who adhere to a religion. The four elements are facilitating contexts (supporting contexts), core (roots) of conflict (roots of conflict), fuse factors (axis), and triggering factors (triggers). [21]

In social conflicts with religious nuances, the supporting context can be in the form of separate employment or settlement patterns based on religious lines between various groups, or competition for the development of religious demographics, or urbanization in the form of evictions of certain local (indigenous) residents. This is, for example, found in the case that occurred in the Palestinian area where

al-Faruqi was born. The existence of supporting factors does not necessarily create conflict but becomes a place for potential conflicts to accumulate so that the time comes. [22].

The core of the conflict is usually in the form of social deprivation or social marginalization that can no longer be tolerated in the struggle for resources and power. The final limit of tolerance will disappear when the social suffering itself becomes unbearable. If the dominating and persecuted groups happen to come from certain and different religious groups, then the conflict that occurs can develop into a religious conflict. In this context, al-Faruqi is understood as someone who sees that the emergence of conflicts in religion (especially Islam and Christianity) is not much different from this perspective. The control of strategic places in underdeveloped Muslim areas by Christian groups, ultimately makes the Muslims live in prolonged psychological suffering, especially when all facilities such as government, trade, military, hospitals, education, livestock, industry, and so on, are used as means for their goals. a Christian mission of its own [23]. The axis factor usually doesn't just light up as a conflict but is first ignited. The axis of conflict is usually in the form of sentiments of race, religion, and so on. The trigger aspect is the event when all the elements have accumulated which in turn gives rise to social conflict. Thus, a case that may not be so large can serve as a justification for the start of a large-scale conflict.

The religion of humanity places morals and human goodness in a place of honor. Al-Faruqi proposed a reorganization of society with a number of procedures designed to generate pure and unselfish love, for the sake of the greatness of humanity and the realization of social harmony. But this reorganization of society cannot be carried out properly unless it must first solve the problem of conflict as the cause of the fracture of social harmony. In al-Faruqi's religious view, moral ideas in Islam are strong enough to support justice and relations between humans, even to convey humans to conditions that can be fully understood in a multicultural and religious society. Al-Faruqi also seeks to obtain basic interpretations of the social conditions of society. Al-Faruqi's statement about Islamic morality, which in fact became a source of inspiration for his Islamic humanism, can be interpreted as a view that supports human goodness and morality in a positivistic-functional framework to support people who are equal in their rights and obligations.

## CONCLUSION

Ethics and religion for al-Faruqi are like two sides of a coin. Ethics cannot be separated from religion. Islamic monotheism in this context is not just a verbal assertion that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His messenger. More than that, the meaning of monotheism teaches that the existence of all mankind is essentially one. All activities must be associated with religious norms, whatever the activity. The concept of Islam does not recognize the dichotomy of religious-secular, state-religious, sacred-profane, and historical-normative. To be a good human being, one must have monotheism in a comprehensive sense, namely being a civilized and ethical human being. Al-Faruqi considers that civilized humans are people who are fully aware of their responsibility to God, understand and carry out justice for themselves and others.

From Faruqi's view, religious ethics need to be put forward because the building of civilization is not well constructed except by civilized humans. The ethical man is fully aware of his spiritual and social responsibilities. Understanding and exercising justice towards God, towards himself and his society, is



the essence of Islamic civilization and that is the true function of religion. Therefore, Faruqi's thesis is correct, namely when the world is under the rule of unethical, anti-religious rulers, that's when human values become corrupted. Ethics in Islam is based on monotheism. Therefore, at the beginning of laying the foundations of civilization, the Prophet Muhammad did not apply the laws but did purification of the faith of the people of Mecca first. In the current context, what must be done is to raise awareness of monotheism.

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