

Building Religious Moderation through Theophany Concept with Philosophy and Religion Approaches

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Abstract

This research described an approach to building Religious Moderation according to the Theophany concept, which is an attempt to decide an attitude and action in life through a wise, unbiased perspective, and risk beneficial to many parties. Building religious moderation means forming attitudes and actions to avoid harming oneself, others, and the environment. Furthermore, achieving this process using the Theophany concept enables the formation of attitudes by considering human compassion and contempt, generosity, and stinginess, as well as sensitivity and hostility, which are consistently correlated with moral and religious norms. The formation of religious moderation in one's soul brings many benefits to the world. Therefore, it is important to build this concept to determine right from wrong according to certain religious claims. These decisions are based on values, norms, morals, beliefs, and other considerations beneficial for living life. Theophany concept builds the idea that the truth in acting and behaving is God's business as the most righteous judge. In conclusion, building religious moderation is to form a personal soul with moral values beneficial for human life without being free from the justification of certain religious truths.

Keywords: *Religion Moderation, Philosophy, Religion, Theophany Concept*

Abstrak

Penelitian mendeskripsikan tentang suatu pendekatan dalam membangun moderasi beragama menurut konsep Teofani, yaitu suatu upaya untuk memutuskan suatu sikap dan tindakan dalam kehidupan melalui cara pandang yang bijaksana, tidak memihak, dan berisiko menguntungkan banyak pihak. Membangun moderasi beragama berarti membentuk sikap dan tindakan agar tidak merugikan diri sendiri, orang lain, dan lingkungan. Lebih jauh lagi, pencapaian proses ini dengan menggunakan konsep teofani memungkinkan pembentukan sikap dengan mempertimbangkan belas kasih dan penghinaan manusia, kedermawanan dan kekikiran, serta kepekaan dan permusuhan, yang secara konsisten berkorelasi dengan norma, moral, dan agama. Terbentuknya moderasi beragama dalam jiwa seseorang membawa banyak manfaat bagi dunia. Oleh karena itu, penting membangun konsep ini untuk menentukan benar dan salah menurut klaim agama tertentu.

Keputusan tersebut didasarkan pada nilai, norma, moral, keyakinan, dan pertimbangan lain yang bermanfaat bagi kehidupan. Konsep teofani membangun pemikiran bahwa kebenaran dalam bertindak dan berperilaku adalah urusan Tuhan sebagai hakim yang paling adil. Kesimpulannya, membangun moderasi beragama adalah membentuk jiwa pribadi dengan nilai-nilai moral yang bermanfaat bagi kehidupan manusia tanpa lepas dari kebenaran-kebenaran agama tertentu.

Kata kunci: *Moderasi Agama, Filsafat, Agama, Konsep Teofani*

INTRODUCTION

There are assumptions that diverse religious groups mainly cause interreligious conflicts. This means religion can also represent a violent protest against the existing order.¹ However, not all forms of violence and oppression in the global society are triggered by religion.²

Some research stated that interreligious conflicts are triggered by other influential variables other than the diverse religious groups. These are political and social welfare, such as the gap between the rich and the poor, and weakness due to pressure from the oppressors.³ It was further predicted that religious teachings and values play a huge role in shaping people. Due to technological developments, religious matters are discussed on various social media platforms. This was reported by the innumerable research carried out on the Center for Religious Studies in various universities.⁴

Humans have inhabited the earth for thousands of years. It is full of diverse people marked by their skin color and innumerable languages. For example, in Indonesia, the citizens communicate with one another in Indonesian. However, because the earth is inhabited by individuals from various tribes, groups, and races, diversity and pluralism that tend to be *sunnatullah* are not strategically distanced from humans. Diversity occurs not only in social groups but also in the smallest scope of people's lives.⁵

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative scientific research employed a library review approach. It was used to determine the systematic steps needed to resolve the formulated problem based on the acquired data. Furthermore, it focuses on examining reliable and up-to-date references to resolve the issues fabricated.

¹ Wim Beuken, *Agama Sebagai Sumber Kekerasan* (Pustaka Pelajar, 2003). H. 131

² Beuken. H. 10

³ Yusril Ihza Mahendra, *Modernisme dan Fundamentalisme Dalam Politik Islam* (Paramadina, 1999).

⁴ Syahrin Harahap, *Islam dan Modernitas: Membangun Kesalehan Modern* (Prenada Media, 2009).

⁵ Abdul Moqsih Ghazali, *Argumen Pluralis Agama: Membangun Toleransi Berbasis Alqur'an*, 1st ed.). Katakita (Depok: KataKita, 2009).

To obtain reliable data or reference sources from various literature research, an instrument (question list) was used to strengthen the acquired answers. Library analysis was carried out on various journals related to building religious moderation through the Theophany concept with Philosophy and Religion approach. Data sources were obtained based on several research problems, creating a rationale for discussion. This led to the strengthening of religious moderation according to the Theophany concept. Meanwhile, further analysis was used as a supporting reference to resolve the research problems described in the results and discussion sections.

DISCUSSION

Religion is like a tree trunk with numerous branches, which is answerable to the apex religious body comprising several intermediaries. The word of God is translated into the language of individuals who are unable to speak clearly.⁶ The perception of God's Theophany is different in every religion. There is an unforeseen power with a good relationship between God and humans through worship.

Theophany Concepts in Philosophy and Religion

Humans are otherworldly beings and, at the same time, miniature animals of infinite scale. As social beings, they tend to undergo some form of development. In addition, they exhibit certain attitudes such as affection, contempt, generosity, stinginess, sensitivity, and hostility bound by moral and religious norms.⁷

In creating humans, God made various forms based on His imaginative will and innermost nature. Therefore, enjoying the benefits and happiness derived from maintaining a good relationship with God is better because He is devoid of evil thoughts.⁸

God is the basis or foundation of every religion due to His unique and special nature. The diverse religious groups believe in the existence of God, as reported in the scriptures. Mahatma Gandhi once said that the belief in God, not in intelligence possessed, results in an attitude of loving one another, irrespective of ethnicity, nation, or religion. Therefore, eternal love does not recognize these differences, rather it embraces everyone, irrespective of whether they are Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, etc.⁹

At some point in life, humans decide to become closer to God with the desire to establish a permanent relationship with the creator and to achieve self-purity. This characteristic is referred to as "sacrifice" or "union". Humans have realized that both happiness and suffering are the

⁶ Mahatma Gandhi, *Semua Manusia Bersaudara* (Gramedia, 1988).

⁷ S.H. Nasr, *Traditional Islam In The Modern World* (Kegan Paul, 1987).

⁸ Frithjof Schuon, *Roots of the Human Condition* (World Wisdom, 2003).

⁹ Gandhi, *Semua Manusia Bersaudara*.

outcomes of their actions, from unfulfilled desires to being close to God. Schuon likened them to a tortoise swimming in the middle of the ocean while floating on a wooden plank with a hole. When this creature sticks its head through the hole, it simply depicts that humans must find a way to be free. The vastness of the ocean depicts the universe.¹⁰

Religion contains truth values that are achieved with an emphasis on worldly needs and human psychology. Religion consists of two basic components, principles and strategies, used to distinguish between highest and relative, reality and daydream, as well as direct and indirect values. Meanwhile, strategies are a way of getting closer to the real and direct will of God to fulfill the purpose of human existence.¹¹ These two components recognize what really exists and what appears to happen when individuals are closer to the actual situation. Not all religions can exist without directly and relatively recognized principles, despite their diverse ways and methods of drawing one closer to God and living according to His will.¹²

According to Schuon, a serious discussion about God is centered on the truth and His presence. These two aspects are inseparable and are related to one another because the truth continues to walk with closeness followed by the truth. The element of His presence comes before the truth.¹³

Furthermore, Frithjof Schuon stated that absolute truth saves. This simply means that all consequences need to be perceived as a whole because the truth to save mankind is realized through faith as the initial foundation for understanding God's manifestations. Faith brings about a spirituality full of sacrifice and an attitude of mutual love.¹⁴

Schuon further explained that exotericism emphasizes faith and godly values applied in daily activities. At the same time, esoteric is a form of logical intelligence combined with inner values to create an absolute and relative or real and illusionary picture. Absolute is described as spirit, heaven, revelation, and other supernatural elements, which cannot be captured by the five human senses.¹⁵

Karen Armstrong stated that God does not forcefully visit humans, rather His encounter with them is based on their understanding of Him. Experience with God is subjective because

¹⁰ F. Schuon, *Transfiguration Of Man* (Word Wisdom Books, 1995).

¹¹ Fiki Khoirul Mala, Muhammad Ikhlas Supardin, and Muhammad Aminul Wahid, "The Government's Role in the Implementation of Religious Tolerance Practices in Southeast Asia," *Millati: Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 7, no. 1 (2022): 96–110, <https://doi.org/10.18326/mlt.v7i1.6739>.

¹² Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (ABC International Group, 1994).

¹³ Frithjof Schuon, *Islam and The Perennial Philosophy* (Word of Islam Company, 1976).

¹⁴ Schuon.

¹⁵ Schuon, *Roots of the Human Condition*.

everyone involves the Almighty in their businesses, even in unexpected ways. From conception, every teaching emphasizes the basic secrets of God, and the Prophets were unable to decipher certain riddles after analyzing them for a long time. This is because God is great and cannot be understood by human reasoning.¹⁶

The essential relationship between humans and God has its basis in each religion, and the difference lies in accentuating a certain perspective. Every religion has an element of truth that is practiced in totality. Humans cannot become closer to God without adhering to religious teachings. God's goodness provides a way for people to become closer to the Almighty.¹⁷

Ibn Sina believed that the majority should depend on primal unity since human minds see compound objects as complementary objects from secondary derivatives. This tendency is beyond one's intellect because compound objects are not independent, and non-existent beings are lower than the reality on which they depend. This is in line with the philosopher, an obligatory creature, meaning it does not depend on anything to survive. Ibn Sina further stated that God's existence does not depend on anything in the universe because He is the most perfect and deserves to be worshiped.¹⁸

According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, there are four basic qualities in understanding the highest reality as stated in the Qur'an 57:3, meaning that "He is the First and the Last, the Outer and the Inner, and He knows all things". In detail, this verse explains that the highest reality is God. Humans cannot completely understand God, but the Almighty is perceived as an Outer and Inner being following its external abilities and capabilities.¹⁹

In line with the Qur'an, God is one because He cannot be analyzed or broken down into components or qualities. His existence has no cause or earthly measure. Human reasoning cannot ever be beyond God because He is special and cannot be compared with anything. Moreover, Ibn Sina stated that God is unique and is responsible for all humans in the universe.²⁰

According to theologians, the Prophet and his holy book helped humans to have potential knowledge of God. Based on their primordial promises, they know the Almighty's existence and believe He is an absolute being. Even though their knowledge is vague, some humans deny God and worship objects or people considered sacred.²¹

¹⁶ Karen Armstrong, *A History of God The 4000 Year Quest Of Judaism* (Ballantine Books, 1994).

¹⁷ Nasr, *Ideals And Realities of Islam*.

¹⁸ Armstrong, *A History of God The 4000 Year Quest Of Judaism*.

¹⁹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam And The Plight Of Modern Man* (ABC International Group, 1975).

²⁰ Nasr.

²¹ Yunasril Ali, *Sufisme dan Pluralisme: Memahami Hakikat Agama dan Relasi Agama-agama*, 1st ed. (Elex Media Komputindo, 2012).

Generally, all God's creation is a manifestation of The Absolute, which cannot stand alone. The universe is multi-level, starting from God to the lowest humans and other creatures. Religion is the most important path for humans to reach the highest level and meet God, who is the origin of human existence.²²

God commands humans to do great things, as He reminded nature, in other words, it is a primordial talent for people to respect his words from the depth of their hearts. This is in line with human nature, although it is usually violated by evil deeds.²³

Every individual has a self-based orientation in the form of a sacred symbol. This concept has long been popular and was initiated by the religious phenomenologist, Mircea Eliada. The opinion mentioned above depicts both religious unity and diversity, as well as helps to resolve certain issues.²⁴

Theophany Concept in Building Religious Moderation

Religious differences and diversity do not serve as a tool used to justify or claim the truth about religion. These are used to assess the true nature of religions, and the point is that it is left to God, who is the supreme judge to decide a case, as stated in Q.S. al-Anbiya 113.

There is no absolute claim to justify that humans do not have the right to judge based on their knowledge and understanding. Therefore, there is a need to possess the following religious dimensions, including 1) Belief Dimension: implies that these teachings adhere to a theological understanding that there is a religious truth outside one's own belief; 2) Religious Practice Dimension: constitutes the values of worship that need to be practiced by every religious community to become closer to God; 3) Religious Experience Dimensions: every religious community is hopeful and directly communicates with God in various ways; 4) Knowledge Dimension: every religious community has knowledge of the basis, faith, and metaphysical things. This tends to shape their thoughts and motivates them to practice the teachings of religion; and 5) Social Consequences Dimension: is a combination of dimensions one to four, which is applicable in daily life in the most tangible form. It further enhances religious teachings, thereby ensuring that adherents of other religious groups live in peace and harmony.²⁵

When humans worship God, they seem to be perfect in the presence of the highest (absolute) reality. They pray and ask God to solve their innumerable challenges, as well as prepare

²² Budhy Munawar Rahman, *Islam Pluralis: Wacana Kesetaraan Kaum Beriman* (Paramadina, 2001).

²³ Nurcholish Madjid, *Pintu-pintu Menuju Tuhan* (Paramadina, 2008).

²⁴ Budhy Munawar Rahman, *Islam Pluralisme dan Toleransi Keagamaan Pandangan Alqur'an* (Yayasan Abad Demokrasi, 2012).

²⁵ Jalaluddin, *Psikologi Agama* (Rajawali Grafindo Persada, 2005).

themselves for the afterlife. The purpose of worshipping God is to be properly guided in life and to boost conformity between humans and God's will.

Some individuals face the absolute reality by engaging in special worship and rituals in God's presence. To reach a certain elevated point, several steps need to be taken, including mandatory sunnah worship and adhering to the teachings of Islam.

Religion is an inner affair, and tracing it is not easy, although an alternative approach is urgently needed to resolve different related problems.²⁶ According to Capra, there are two ways to solve the challenges presently encountered by humans, namely awareness and limitations. These help humans to interact with others, thereby being able to solve problems that they were unable to resolve. Awareness and limitations aid in resolving various problems that emerge in society.²⁷

Humans can use greatness, nature, and Theophany to approach God. This simply means that the ability to approach the Almighty is dependent on the coordinative, objective, and subjective nature of humans. Therefore, the soul must align with God, who reigns in heaven. At that time, it can be human-God or more, mostly called images and skarmaen, and the third is the intrinsic self.²⁸

Metaphysically, it is important to distinguish between objective and subjective transcendence. Analogically, immanence's subjective aspect must be distinguished from the objective aspect. Likewise, in principle, Theophany, transcendence is perceived as objective if it contains a subjective aspect. This is because immanence also has a transcendent nature, and there would not have been a form of existence without the presence of an imminent Divine.²⁹

Based on Islamic conception, there is no known aspect of Plato's "thoughts" or Summum bonum (big most important), which are far apart and completely unrelated to the history of humans. A highly committed individual exhibits the most glorious and actualized lifestyle to God.³⁰

Judaism and Islam emphasize transcendence, while Christianity and Buddhism are built on Theophany and immanence, respectively. Each of these three perspectives negates or limits the other. For example, Judaism and Christianity emphasize immanence, thereby leading to the emergence of an attitude that rejects all external recommendations and only emphasizes inner qualities. Buddhism involves immenism, primarily belonging to the cult of 'nirvana' by definition, which is spiritual, and both exclusive and inclusive Theophany, such as Buddha.³¹

²⁶ Alwi Shihab, *Islam Inklusif: Menuju Sikap Terbuka Dalam Agama*, vol. I, Vol. 1 (Bandung: Mizan, 1999).

²⁷ Agus Purwadianto, *Jalan Paradoks: Visi Baru Fritjof Capra Tentang Kearifan dan Kehidupan Modern* (Teraju, 2004).

²⁸ Schuon, *Roots of the Human Condition*.

²⁹ Schuon.

³⁰ M. Amin Abdullah, *Studi Agama: Normativitas atau Historitas*, 2nd ed. (Pustaka Pelajar, 1999).

³¹ Schuon, *Roots of the Human Condition*.

God never reveals His true identity but communicates with humans through beautiful natural phenomena. This is realized through beauty and goodness, thereby making it possible for mortals to participate in the mystery of infinity. He failed to reveal certain elements, besides from his divine presence, which humans usually feel. God's identity is disclosed through mundane beauty as well as the essence of the lower layers.

This is dependent on two attributes, firstly through an objective path, an individual can come to terms with an immanent omega (end) of physical existence. There will always be an understandable element because the omega relied upon is objective. Secondly, human intellectual subjectivity and supreme knowledge cannot be based on cultural or historical information. What happened in the world is the world, and the world is human.³²

Understanding Theophany Concepts through Philosophical and Religious Approach

There are several approaches to understanding the concept of Theophany. These include the believer and "*mukmin*" approaches (receiving wholeheartedly) and a "*muarrikib*" method. For pious individuals, this approach is considered the best approach. However, the believed method is faced with the empirical reality of religious life.

A pure historian approach requires objectively-positively-realistically thought. There are several criticisms of this method, such as it does not receive equal attention as described by a physicist who is diligently researching X-rays. However, he was unable to feel the warmth of the light being examined. This approach must be refined to make it even more perfect.³³

Alwi Shihab stated that two approaches are used to understand God's absolute form, namely the historical method, which seeks to describe and explain unseen circumstances comprehensively. This includes God's form in Islamic teachings, reincarnation in Hinduism, the four main truths and the eight ways of salvation in Brahma, the elect in Judaism, and the doctrine of tyranny in Christianity. These clearly and objectively explained all historical facts without any disruption. It is further explained without any attitude to put aside the value of truth. Meanwhile, the normative approach explains the ideal values of religion by employing a persuasive approach (apologetic). There is nothing to hide the weaknesses and shortcomings of the other religious groups.³⁴

Capra offered to explain existence with quantum physics. In the world, nothing is absolute, this is because it does not enrich individual ideas but impoverishes them. Absolutism performed in

³² Schuon.

³³ Abdullah, *Studi Agama: Normativitas atau Historitas*.

³⁴ Abdullah.

a country, in which the people are from different ethnicities, religions, languages, and cultures, triggers interreligious conflict. There is no absolute world, only God is, and everything else is relative and unclear.³⁵

The Taoist model is more holistic and can accept two different realities in one unit (yin-yang). This is contrary to the mystical Tao, which is not included but tries to understand the nature of the universe. In the Taoist approach, people tend to accept that there are bad and good behaviors. They can peacefully co-exist, even though they generally possess different characteristics.³⁶

According to al-Farabi, God is the living cause of existence in nature, and all forms are important in His essence. Assuming there were no forms, its design would not have manifested in its existence as well as affected what was created.³⁷

Human potential, including reasoning, will, and the ability to speak, are used to know God further. The possession of Judgmental skills is an awareness of God's solidarity. Reasoning covers the awareness of God's presence and relativity as well as everything that exists outside of Him. Furthermore, the truth tends to be grasped by absolute reasoning, while the other attributes are grasped by relative reasoning. Will is the ability to select freely between the original and the non-existent. However, when an individual does not have free will, then religion is meaningless.

According to Schuon, human intelligence encompasses knowledge of God, although it also has certain limitations. Munajat stated that intelligence is positive or negative knowledge depending on its use.³⁸

Schuon further stated that integral intelligence is not thought about, while goodness always implements its elements. Assuming it is not polluted with arrogance, it is always open to the truth, such as the expression that moral and social perfections are paired with faith and spiritual contents, respectively.³⁹

Free will is important for religious conceptions of humans, both for Islam and adherents of other beliefs. There are many misunderstandings about Islam as a fatalistic religion, in which free will and initiative do not play any role, even though it is completely contrary to that view. God has absolute freedom because He is infinite, at the same time, people also have free will. It is

³⁵ Purwadianto, *Jalan Paradoks: Visi Baru Fritjof Capra Tentang Kearifan dan Kehidupan Modern*.

³⁶ Purwadianto.

³⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mehdi Hairi Yazdi, *Menghadirkan Cahaya Tuhan : Epistemologi Iluminasionis dalam Filsafat Islam* (Bandung: Mizan, 2003).

³⁸ Munajat, "The Battle of Ideology: Seeking the Strategy for Indoctrinating Pancasila for Those Who Are Anti-Pancasila," *Millati: Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 7, no. 1 (2022): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.18326/mlt.v7i1.7071>.

³⁹ Schuon, *Roots of the Human Condition*.

difficult to explain the difference between free will and determinism, which goes beyond the scope. Meanwhile, unimportant thoughts grasped with knowledge trigger the awareness or existence of one or two qualities. Direct opportunity acquires a place in front of God, while that of humans is based on the decisions made.

The ability to speak is the most coordinated quality of human beings. People find it difficult to express themselves clearly in any other way than by speaking. This is because it is a form of human intelligence. It can also cause the word to become the centerpiece of all ceremonies in the frame of respect. All religions have different forms of supplication, which are allotted to reasoning and free will. However, Islam places emphasis on reason, will, and the ability to speak as the premise of otherworldly existence.⁴⁰

Basically, reasoning, will, and the ability to speak have a place for God, who is All-Knowing, as implied in the title *Al-Aleem*, one of His extraordinary names. There is no external force that limits His control. God is infinite and flexible and possesses the capacity to make a certain speech. Judgmental skills, the willingness, and the ability to speak are His characteristics endowed on humans always to bring them back to Him.⁴¹

Humans are described as theomorphic animals who possess extraordinary qualities, such as being healthy, free will, and the ability to speak. Reasonable individuals can recognize the good from the bad, distinguish between reality and daydream, and consequently, create awareness of material solidarity and existing will. They are able to detect between right and wrong. In Islam, humans are not perceived as evil creatures, they are also reasonable and intelligent beings who can persuade others to become closer to God and communicate with Him.⁴²

Furthermore, Schuon reported an absolute transcendent reality that cannot be detected with the five senses. It is also beyond space and time, and mainly detected through one's intellect, thereby depicting God's presence because He is absolute. God expects every good individual to communicate with Him. This simply depicts that God wants to be known not only within Himself but also outside.

Accordingly, the intelligence possessed by humans aims to achieve essence and totality in Him as an absolute reality. His presence is a relatively intrinsic consequence created from the absolute and manifested on various levels. The lowest level essentially contains the axioms that God is all good and gives grace to humans to do good in the world.⁴³

⁴⁰ Nasr, *Ideals And Realities of Islam*.

⁴¹ Nasr.

⁴² Nasr.

⁴³ Schuon, *Transfiguration Of Man*.

Referring to Mahatma Gandhi, seeking the truth is the same as searching for God. God creates the truth in question, and it can be realized in many ways. For those who do not believe in God their reasoning is dependent on determining the truth.

Regarding God is a true being both in the highest and lowest degree. The journey to find God is far more than an expedition exploring the peaks of the Himalayas. Without spirit and faith, what is seen with the eyes is the absolute truth compared to reality. Trivial issues must be assumed as a reality and a struggle to find God.⁴⁴

When the truth is already served, the journey is an effort to unite with God because He is the truth. However, it should be continued to be a seeker to realize its shortcomings. Humans tend not to feel satisfied because they are unaware of God's presence. They can become God's servants when they do not feel worried about everyone, and as those who seem to seek the truth, it simply implies that humans are free from the fear of others. Furthermore, they are bound to feel the presence of God by analyzing their journey of life.

CONCLUSION

In religious moderation, a problem should be addressed wisely and neutrally without having to sacrifice adherents of other religions. The differences in understanding the theophany concept are because God is unique based on various perspectives. Due to His uniqueness, humans are curious about themselves and desire to inflect religious teachings that manifest within them. Subsequently, an attitude arises to respect each other's differences about the concept of God. Finally, there will be peace and tranquility in every religious community.

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⁴⁴ Gandhi, *Semua Manusia Bersaudara*.

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