PLURALISM: PROGRESSIVE MUSLIMS ADDRESSING RADICALISM
(A Philosophical-Hermeneutical Approach in Islamic Studies)

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Abstract
Faith in Islam is considered a divine blessing for all Muslim communities. As a divine mercy, faith is intricately linked to humanity, influencing moral character and virtues. However, radicalism, understood as the fundamentalist ideology and extremist movements of certain Islamic groups, rejects coexistence in diversity and refuses pluralism. This exclusive spirit not only harms interfaith harmony but also poses internal challenges within the Muslim community. Progressive Muslims, as a more open and flexible trend and movement, advocate for the values of Pluralism as essential aspects of humanity and religiosity. This is manifested in inter-subjective and inter-faith relations, as well as in the spirit of sharing love and compassion. The author employs a philosophical-hermeneutical method to qualitatively understand and interpret the central components of this writing, namely radicalism, the concept of pluralism in the context of Progressive Muslims popularized by Omid Safi, and the Multiple Critique Method.

Introduction

In the increasingly complex context of global civilization, pluralism emerges as a critical concept within Islamic studies. Emphasizing diversity and coexistence, pluralism contributes significantly to fostering social harmony and interfaith understanding. However, the challenges of pluralism are intertwined with the rise of radical ideologies that assert the exclusivity of religious identities. This issue is particularly pertinent in the Islamic world, where debates among various Muslim ideological groups—ranging from conservative to progressive—continue to evolve. One notable response to these challenges is the intellectual framework of "Progressive Muslims," which promotes an inclusive approach and reinterprets religious traditions in addressing modernity and radicalism.

Pluralism provides a compelling framework for understanding the multiplicity of human experiences and their coexistence. Rachman (2010) describes reality as a collection of plural entities that coexist coherently, much like the unity of body and soul. Within Islamic discourse, however, the concept of pluralism often encounters dialectical tensions and ideological debates, particularly in the context of radicalism. Radical ideologies frequently advocate exclusivity, challenging the pluralistic ethos and labeling Muslim groups in ways that promote division—such as traditional-conservative, moderate, or extremist Muslims. Progressive Muslims, as a contemporary movement, provide an alternative narrative by advocating for inclusivity and reinterpreting Islamic traditions to address the challenges of modernity.

Farid Esack (2004, xiii-xiv) exemplifies this perspective in *Being a Muslim*, where he reflects on the values of pluralism and the struggles of minority communities, particularly Christians in

Pakistan. Esack observes that these minorities often face inhumane treatment due to their non-Muslim identity. He identifies two extreme realities affecting interfaith relations: the oppression of modernity, imperialism, and colonialism, and the exclusivist tendencies of radical Muslim groups. Esack's work emphasizes the need for a progressive reinterpretation of Islam as a source of compassion, encapsulated in the concept of *rahmatan lil alamin* (mercy to all the worlds). His analysis highlights the ethical responsibility of Muslims to foster harmonious coexistence across religious boundaries.

Ronald Lukens-Bull (2008, 1-15) penned a compelling article titled "The Traditions of Pluralism, Accommodation, and Anti-Radicalism in The Pesantren Community." He argues against the Western misconception that pesantren are breeding grounds for radicalism, demonstrating instead their role in promoting pluralism and peaceful coexistence. Lukens-Bull identifies three key themes: (1) the evolution of pesantren as accommodating institutions, (2) the mystical underpinnings that resist radicalization, and (3) the emergence of radical groups within Indonesia's socio-political context post-New Order. His work underscores the pesantren's potential to serve as a model for interfaith harmony and anti-radicalism. Similarly, Adis Duderija (2010, 127-136) explores the identity and ethos of Progressive Muslims in his work "Progressive Muslims—Defining and Delineating Identities and Ways of Being a Muslim." Duderija contends that the Progressive Muslim mindset provides a moral framework for engaging in public life with inclusivity and ethical integrity. His reflections extend the discourse on pluralism by emphasizing its centrality to Islamic ethical teachings.

The concept of pluralism, as embraced by progressive Muslim thought, is considered a fundamental aspect. However, it is important to note that pluralism in religion does not necessarily entail endorsing the truth claims of one religion over another. Ahmad Khoirul Fata (2018), in the *MIQOT Journal*, authored an article titled "Diskursus dan Kritik terhadap Teologi Pluralisme Agama di Indonesia" ("Discourse and Critique of the Theology of Religious Pluralism in Indonesia"). Fata raises a thought-provoking issue regarding religious truth claims. Absolute truth claims in religion are often seen as catalysts for religious conflicts and violence. Consequently, the idea of pluralism has gained traction among religious individuals, particularly within the Muslim community. Pluralism is viewed as a potential catalyst for fostering peaceful and harmonious coexistence among religious adherents, and it has become a focal point in the teachings of various religions.

However, radical ideology poses a challenge to pluralism. Pedro Góis Moreira (2020, 263–78) in the *Athens Journal of Sciences* has highlighted this issue. He critically examines the thoughts of Ernesto Laclau, a post-Marxist writer, on Radicalism and Pluralism. In my opinion, this is an interesting article because it demonstrates the rational and empirical efforts of Laclau to reconcile two crucial concepts in the history of human civilization. Laclau's rejection of the concept of "essentialism," which posits that the spirit and struggle of the social subject are predetermined, distinguishes him from Orthodox Marxism. This divergence is evident in his collaborative work with Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985), where they argued that the left (Orthodox Marxism) should abandon the essentialism of Marxism and its focus on revolutionary actions. According to Laclau and Mouffe, the Left must embrace pluralism to build a hegemonic bloc against neoliberalism and promote the struggle for equality in coexistence. This marks a departure from traditional Marxist ideologies and reflects a more nuanced and adaptable approach to addressing contemporary social and political challenges.

Muslims often confront Western perceptions regarding issues of radicalism attributed to "Islam." This paradigm needs to be critically examined. Siti Amalia (2022, 1-12) has begun to address this issue by researching the concept of Progressive Muslims. She wrote an article entitled "Multiple Critiques as a Method of Progressive Muslim: Thinking Confronting Plurality." Inspired by Omid Safi's thoughts on Pluralism, Siti focused her research on the presence and role of progressive Muslims as a movement to dispel misconceptions about plurality in Islam and the issues of radicalism that

intensify in certain Islamic communities. Consequently, the presence of radicalism leads to a negative perception of Islam, portraying it as a rigid, extreme, and exclusive religion.

The concept of Progressive Muslims by Omid Safi is intriguing and warrants further investigation. Therefore, I am interested in exploring how Progressive Muslims respond to the challenges of radicalism through inclusive thinking about pluralism and provide critical interpretations for the lives of religious communities. Thus, a philosophical-hermeneutical approach is considered a critical method to offer a specific understanding of the concept of Progressive Muslim Pluralism.

Radicalism Challenges Plurality

In certain Islamic societies, regressive attitudes towards non-Muslim cultures are often adopted to portray Islam as more exclusive and dogmatic, distancing it from widely acknowledged values such as justice and tolerance of diverse realities. However, do we overlook Muslims who exhibit tolerance and respect towards others? This has been a focal point of concern for Progressive Muslims. Consequently, criticism is directed towards "ultra-conservative" groups, who not only dogmatically oppose Western, Jewish, and Christian perspectives but also contradict other Muslim groups.

Radicalism is a central issue that is considered "dangerous" for the enforcement of human values such as tolerance of religious life and the realization of human peace. We need to explore its meaning etymologically and the development of its understanding. The term "radical," as per the third edition of The Oxford English Dictionary, was initially utilized in the English language as an adjective towards the end of the fourteenth century. In its early usages, spanning the first few centuries, it denoted something pertaining to the root, essence, basis, or foundation of something or someone: a vital principle, a defining attribute, an original cause, and so forth. By the seventeenth century, the adjective was employed to characterize change or action affecting the foundations or essence of something or someone, signifying very basic and significant change or action. It was only from the eighteenth century that the adjective was used to describe political or social change or action (and associated beliefs) of a similar nature, originally perceived as even more fundamental political or social transformation, akin to a 'revolution,' in the late eighteenth century (Chenoweth et.al., 2019, 258). Such change (and its associated beliefs) was initially understood to be of a democratic and/or socialistic nature. Only in the early twentieth century did "radical" start to describe the 'right-wing' equivalent as well, though such usage became more prominent later in the century, especially in the post-war period. As a noun, 'radical' apparently first appeared (in a very obscure anatomical sense) in the early fifteenth century and later, in a much less obscure linguistic sense, by the late sixteenth century. Politically, the noun gained usage in the early nineteenth century to describe supporters of 'radical' political and social reform. It took on its revolutionary sense somewhat later in the nineteenth century and its right-wing sense in the twentieth century, certainly by the 1960s. The noun "radicalism" was first used around the same time, referring to the beliefs and practices of political 'radicals.' Thus, while the primary meaning of 'radical' was not political, the meaning of "radicalism" was primarily political (Chenoweth et.al.,2019).

Sociologically, radicalism entails a commitment to comprehensive change, challenging not only superficial aspects but also the fundamental structure of social reality. Similarly, from a philosophical perspective, radicalism involves essential thinking, focusing on the essence of a particular reality, rooted in its original source, and aiming at the ultimate purpose of reality. This paper does not specifically address the historical aspect of radicalism but explores its influence in the Islamic world, impacting interfaith relations. Thus, in the context of this paper, radicalism is viewed as being against plurality and fundamental human values such as unity, brotherhood, respect, and justice. Such a definition of radicalism strongly influences religious faith and belief. For instance, in Islam, radicalism extends into theology, creed, interpretations of the Quran, hadith, Sufism, fiqh, and even its implementation in political, social, and economic aspects. However, the question arises: is radicalism exclusively inherent in the life spirit of religious individuals? Kamaruzaman Yusoff (2010),

a Malaysian academic, in his research on "Islamic Radicalism in Malaysia: An Overview," defines the term 'radical' as "pertaining to, constituting, proceeding from, or going to the root." It could also mean fundamental, original, intrinsic, primary, and primitive. According to Yusoff, Islam should not be equated with "extremism" because radicalism is more associated with sociological dimensions, such as conflicts and contradictions within the social order. Many Muslims find themselves entangled in internal divisions, engaged in debates about values and experiences they struggle to reconcile. In this social context, radicalism tends to emerge. Yusoff proposes two broad understandings of radicalism. Firstly, it makes sense and is natural for a Muslim to 'get to the root' of Islamic principles and teachings, especially in cases where Islam is not a hegemonic entity. Secondly, following the first understanding, those who adhere to the mainstream view may interpret Muslims' attempts to adhere to the true teachings of Islam as abnormal or even irrational. Such acts by Muslims are often viewed as 'primitive' and, at the same time, 'extremist.'

The meaning of radicalism has undergone a significant shift. Yusoff explains that true Islam does not manifest in narrow fanaticism, and individuals who employ religion for violence do not adhere to the authentic teachings of Islam. Islamic radicalism fueled by fanaticism can lead to distortions of the core tenets of Islam. Yusoff illustrates this with the example of the Kerling incident that transpired on August 19, 1978. In this incident, a group of Muslim youth misinterpreted the concepts of *jihad* and *shahid* (martyrdom). They mistakenly believed that destroying temples was aligned with the Prophet's ways and a form of jihad. Furthermore, they believed that if they were killed in the process, they would be considered as shahid. Tragically, this misconception resulted in the brutal killing of four Muslim youths by the temple keeper.

As a consequence of an identity crisis triggered by a response and resistance to the West, which brought about colonialism and imperialism in the Islamic world, it is believed that the phenomenon of radicalism in Islam is an invention of the 20th century, particularly in the Middle East. The impact of modernization, leading Muslims to sense the erosion of religious and moral bonds, presents considerable challenges to the Islamic world, exacerbating the situation. In the journal ADDIN, Ansar Abdulah (2016) makes an interesting point that the term "religious radicalism" is not inherently rooted in Arabic but is purely a product of the Western world. This term is often linked with religious fundamentalism, extremism, and narrow fanaticism. Omid Safi, within the Progressive Muslim movement, seeks to broaden the perspectives of the Western world and religious communities, emphasizing that religious radicalism contradicts Islamic values and portrays Islam as a rigid, closed, intolerant, or anti-pluralistic religion. al-Asymawi characterizes this radicalism as a movement of religious extremism within Islam. The Islamic world does not accord it a proper place because Islam does not endorse anarchic forms of criminality, radicalism, and extremism, such as suicide and the destruction of people and ecosystems (al-Ashmawi, 1998, 21).

This brand of radicalism was historically practiced by the "Khawarij" movement; their methodical, natural, and extreme use of religious symbols for political and social influence. Abdullah (2016) explain that, the historical debate commenced with the caliph 'Uthman b. 'Affān (r. 23–35/644–656), the third caliph following the Prophet's demise. He encountered a severe rebellion when accused of not governing through *shūrā* (consultation) and allegedly ruling based on personal will rather than in accordance with God's law. Uthman's death triggered a polemic and gave rise to the "grand slander (fitnah)." Ali ibn Abi Talib succeeded Caliph Uthman ibn Affan (r. 35-40 AH/656-661 AD). Following Uthman's death, various rebellions emerged, but those led by puritan factions (Qurra: the Qur'anic reciters, Qari), commonly known as Khawarij ([*Kharijite*] referred to as such due to their perceived separatist stance), garnered particular attention during the "grand slander" episode in the era of Caliph Ali ibn Abi Talib. The primary issue centered around "God's Sovereignty in the Qur'an and the Interpretation." This predicament stemmed from the Battle of Siffin (37 AH/657 AD) between Ali and the faction led by Mu'awiyah. While initially supporting Ali, the Khawarij broke away from him when he opted to resolve the conflict with Mu'awiyah through arbitration. This decision marked the beginning of a heated debate among the Kharijites and Ali. The Kharijite doctrine is that "all

sovereignty belongs to God" (*al-ḥākimiyyah li Allāh*); sovereignty belongs solely to God (*lā ḥukm illā li Allāh*). By accepting arbitration, they argued, 'Ali had betrayed God by accepting man's judgment rather than God's judgment. That is, the law of God in the Quran must be upheld. It must not be settled according to human judgment (El Fadl, 2001, pp. 59-62). Religion and its symbols are frequently perceived as effective tools for advancing political interests and power. Over time, individuals may transform into "true believers" and regard those outside their group as "outsiders." Ashmardi Azra describes this phenomenon as *isti'rad*, signifying a religious execution rather than Islamic jihad (al-Ashmawi, 1998, p. 21). Within the community of exegesis, Muslims may adopt radical and fanatical perspectives, leaving little room for dialogue with other communities.

Progressive Muslims on Pluralism: Against Radicalism

Faith is considered a gift, a supernatural endowment that directly influences humans and bears moral consequences. Consequently, there is a unanimous agreement that no religion advocates evil. Religions guide their followers towards virtues and the path to salvation. The author interprets Progressive Muslims as a contemporary trend, as the spirit of Progressive Muslims adapts flexibly to the dynamics of today's world. Positioned as a trend, it is characterized by inclusivity rather than exclusivity, welcoming all individuals who show respect for others and are open to plurality.

Saadia Yacoob (2004, p. 5) explain that the emergence of "Progressive Muslims" as a systematic movement can be traced back to Omid Safi, an Iranian-American Muslim thinker. He took the lead in establishing the Progressive Muslims Network (PMN), headquartered in Toronto, Canada. The objective is to advocate for a more positive and open paradigm regarding the position of Islam in Western countries, which often perceive Islam as a rigid religion, closed-minded, restricting women's rights, and even associated with acts of violence in the name of religion. The intention is to showcase the beauty of Islam (*ihsan*) to the Western world, portraying it as a religion of peace and a path to salvation. Islam, as depicted, is a faith that promotes plurality and upholds human rights. The Islamic identity is portrayed as not rigid but open-minded and supportive of shared rights. Omid Safi published "*Progressive Muslims: On Gender, Justice, and Pluralism*" in 2003, where he underscores the importance of Islam's progressive aspects. According to Safi, being progressive is not simply seen as a forward movement of certain elites who are considered smarter or wiser. He imparts a distinct meaning to the term.

"Progressive" as a basic concept that encompasses people who want an open and safe space to carry out a rigorous and honest engagement with tradition, and will hopefully lead to further action" (Murfi & Nursyahidin, 2015).

Essentially, Islam is inherently progressive, existing and evolving with the changing times, as are its followers. However, it is crucial to emphasize that Islam should not be envisioned solely in internal and divine terms. Islam asserts a connection between the divine and the human, encapsulating the tangible lives of Muslims. In the introduction section of the book "Progressive Muslims on Justice, Gender, and Pluralism," Safi further reaffirms the use of the term "Progressive Muslim."

… but in terms of a relationship between humanity and the Divine, Islam cannot be interpreted, experienced, and articulated without engaging with real live human beings. To keep the focus on the responsibilities of human beings, we have titled this volume Progressive Muslim rather than Progressive Islam (Safi, 2003, p. 7).

A Muslim is encouraged to be progressive, open-minded, and continuously evolving amidst changing times, all while retaining their identity as genuine followers of Islam. Despite being contemporary and adapting to the times, there is no necessity for them to become unrestrained adherents of liberalism. This stance, however, does not imply a complete dismissal of the possibility of regressive paradigms. It acknowledges the existence of contemporary Islamic groups or trends that resist progress, adopting a closed and anti-tolerance stance. Progressive Muslims orient themselves towards a better future, envisioning what Islam can achieve in the times ahead. Safi

asserts that something is deemed better if it fulfills two crucial criteria: justice (*al-'adl*) and goodness or beauty (*al-'ihsan*) (Murfi & Nursyihidin, 2015). Progressive Muslims have always sourced from the Quran to answer the central issues of humanity, namely social justice, gender equality, and pluralism; that everyone has lofty values in him that must be respected (in the Quran, al-Hijr: 29 and as-Shad: 71); that man's primary mission in the world is to be a warrior and enforcer of justice (al-'adl) for all mankind, and that man is obliged to be courteous and benevolent to his fellow creatures of God (verses of the Quran, al-Nahl: 90). In line with this, pluralism in particular is one of the main concerns in the Progressive Muslim paradigm that rejects regressive and exclusive radicalism-fundamentalist issues.

Thoha (2005) notes that plurality does not justify competition between fanaticism groups of every religion. This plurality is not an attitude of regression and opposition as the case with Christians and Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Southern Philippines and South Sudan; conflict between Islam and Judaism in the Middle East, Hinduism and Islam in Kashmir, Protestantism and Catholicism in Northern Ireland. Mereka mengukuhkan iman dalam sebuah perdebatan dan persaingan. Plurality in the context of progressive Muslims recognizes the reality of diversity; people who recognize and respect each other, are open to dialogue, and build a harmonious inter-religious life. People should accept to coexist with others despite different faiths and live in certain social contexts. People become co-existence of beings, not paranoid. People are not bound in extreme discomfort and worry about their fellow human beings in a country, a city, and a region.

Be Inclusive rather than be Exclusive

Progressive Muslims embrace inclusivity rather than exclusivity, making their movement more comprehensive in addressing pluralism. It's important to note distinctions between Progressive Muslims and liberal Islam. Liberal Islam primarily focuses on internal critiques of Muslim perspectives and behaviors that deviate from humanist values, with less attention to external criticisms of imperialism, modernism, consumerism, colonialism, and the like. The inclusiveness of Progressive Muslims encompasses all aspects of human life, both internally and externally. The following points highlight the Safi's description of the inclusivity of Progressive Muslims (Safi, 2003, pp.10-11):

1. Progressive Muslims endorse individuals aligned with universal life values, contributing to the construction of a better world. Internally, they strive to modernize outdated, rigid, and closed ideas within Islam, aiming for a flexible and open world that encourages dialogue, development, and respects authentic Islamic traditions.
2. Externally, Progressive Muslims create space for interfaith dialogue, rejecting issues of radicalism and terrorism often associated with Islam by the Western world. Concurrently, they critique Muslims who resist change and become slaves to modernity.
3. In a social-communal context, particularly in Muslim-majority regions, progressive Muslims play a significant role as a movement fostering progressive dialogue and courteous interactions with "minority" communities. Farid Essack's perspective on the dehumanization of minority Christians in Pakistan offers hope for the possibility of such dialogue. Despite facing dehumanization, there exists a shared awareness among progressive Muslim communities to express love towards others and appreciate their lives.

Contrarily, exclusivist individuals assert the sole truth of their religion, maintaining that only followers of their faith attain salvation, while those who perform good deeds but are not Muslim face condemnation to Hell. Gamal Al Banna describes such exclusivists as feeling in control of God's grace, limiting it to their group. Hence, the issue of pluralism remains relevant in every era where humans, religions, and civilizations intersect.

Relationship between Subjects

The philosophy of Pluralism (ta'addudiyah) shapes the form of subject-subject relations, viewing individuals as humans. In essence, individuals are not treated as objects but as subjects

deserving respect and acknowledgment as the House of Adam, born out of God's love. The inherent worth of every individual, rooted in the essence of Progressive Muslims' foundations, is marked by deep respect. Each person is considered a profound blessing from God, a manifestation of God's creation and spirit. Consequently, every individual possesses inherent wisdom to show respect and courtesy towards other creatures of God. As Safi's explanation that progressive Muslims vehemently reject any Islamic ideology leading to dehumanization, desecration of human values, injustice, and violence. They advocate for Islam to perceive humanity as a divine gift. The true Jihad of Progressive Muslims involves striving against inner demons and presenting universal values through *Islamic Ijtihad* (Safi, 2003). According to Omid Safi, pluralism is not just an option for Muslims; it extends to all humans and all dimensions of life.

> Human beings are likes members of one body, created from one and the same essence. When one member feel pain, the rest are distraught. You unmoved by the suffering of others, are unworthy of the name human (Safi, 2003, p. 16).

Since the outset, Progressive Muslims have aimed to actualize plurality as an inherent aspect of human existence. In this regard, they create space and opportunities for individuals to live in accordance with their faith, denouncing all fanatical and extremist actions that infringe upon other religious beliefs. Everyone lives together as a co-existence or what Safi means as the "Bani Adam" communities (Safi, 2003). Hence, plurality is not subjective, focusing solely on "me," or exclusive, limited to "us" (referring to a particular group only), but rather objective and inclusive, embracing the collective "us" in the sense of co-existence. This implies that, from a human perspective, individuals enhance the quality of life by embracing openness to others. Consequently, the relational pattern is not based on subjects and objects but on subjects. Fellow human beings are not perceived as objects but as subjects deserving respect as "fellow human beings." Every religion promotes goodness, advocating for love towards others, justice, and assistance to the underprivileged, irrespective of their religion or belief. Moreover, all religions emphasize resistance against acts of tyranny and strive to "convert" those who engage in such behavior. As Al Kindi, a distinguished Islamic philosopher, stated:

> We should not be ashamed to aknowledge truth; and to assimilate it from whatever source it comes to us, even if it is brought to us by former generations and foreign peoples. For him who seeks the truth there is nothing of higher value than truth itself (Safi, 2003, p. 20).

Who is our enemy? Are those who do good and righteousness our enemies? Certainly not, as the most formidable challenge for all religious individuals is tyranny. Therefore, Al Kindi asserts that everyone, regardless of their affiliation with Islam, possesses truths that coexist with the lives of all Muslims. The strength of a Muslim's faith is demonstrated when they accept and acknowledge the truths present in others' faiths, highlighting the nobility of a Muslim. In other words, love and compassion towards others are fundamental aspects of Islam, following the example set by the Prophet Muhammad. When personal egoism and communal radical ideology are overcome, the community will focus on the quality of compassion, and it will naturally and spontaneously be expressed (Shah-Kazemi, 2010). Thus, Islamic qualities are inherently embedded in the fitra (primordial nature; innate disposition) of every soul, no longer constrained by the coagulation of egoism and worldly concerns. Love and compassion will radiate to the entire creation. A compassionate soul will become an Islamic characteristic, radiating the mercy of Allah, and every individual has the capacity to continuously embody faith (al-iman), submission (al-islam), and excellence (al-ihsan) (see Surah Al-Isra 17:20). In this manner, a Muslim truly becomes directed towards Allah. Allah is the Most Compassionate and Most Merciful (al-Rahman and al-Rahim); He is the first to demonstrate the importance of compassion in the lives of all humans. Thus, just as He, the Compassionate and Merciful, His servants act in the same manner (al Harbi & al Hadid, 2018).

Adil Salahi (2013, p. 112), in "*Muhammad: His Character and Conduct*," explains that the Prophet controlled his emotions through his faith. He was a man full of love and concern for many

people, primarily because of his faith. The more someone believes, the more they possess moral qualities in their practical life. Henry Bayman (2003), in his book "The Secret of Islam" states that Islam is a religion of ethics and morality. Bayman quotes a Hadith from Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), where the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "*I have been sent to perfect the noble traits of character.*" Bayman explains that the religion contains commendable moral values to rid oneself of undesirable qualities. Muslims live in this spirit, where morality implies that love and compassion become the appropriate measures to perfect the character and personality of Muslims in communal life. In this way, Islam is inclusive. Islam encourages its followers to go beyond themselves. A Muslim is no longer solely focused on their self-interest but strives to enhance their spiritual qualities, helping them become individuals of integrity.

1.   The Multiple Critique Method of Progressive Muslims: A Method of Renewal

Omid Safi has actively worked to alter the Western world's perception of Islam by promoting a new form of pluralist and progressive Islamic thought. Islam, inherently dynamic in time and space, possesses the potential to evolve into a universal religion. Muslims, as individuals, have the capacity to contribute to the development of an Islamic civilization that remains true to its principles while remaining open to non-Muslims. Despite the challenges posed by radicals, Progressive Muslims are engaged in a renewal agenda, employing an effective methodology—The Multiple Critique.

The Multiple Critique Method is a comprehensive approach that simultaneously critiques various communities, including radical Islamic religious groups and the Western world with extreme and aggressive views toward Islamic countries. Moreover, it encourages the active involvement of numerous individuals. While Safi initially critiqued the Western world for its extreme paradigm towards Islam, he also scrutinized Muslims themselves who practice Islamic teachings in an extreme and anti-pluralistic manner (Safi, 2003, p. 2). In the context of plurality, the foundation of the Multiple Critique method, as mentioned earlier, emphasizes that all human beings, regardless of their kind, form, race, or class, possess intrinsic value that must be respected. The injustices perpetrated in the name of Islam, involving radical authoritarian, dogmatic, and persecutory actions against minorities in Muslim-majority countries, must be dismantled and renewed. Following the principles of the Multiple Critique, there are several prerequisites that must be implemented (Safi, 2003):

1. Total Involvement in Islamic Traditions: Progressive Muslims need to be actively engaged in Islamic traditions, fostering an Islamic spirit while adapting to various dimensions of life and faith. Renewal must originate from the authentic "heart" of Islam, emphasizing active involvement in the tradition itself—what Safi refers to as a tradition-in-becoming.

2. Rejection of Apologists and Simplistic Attitudes: Recognizing the complexity of issues faced by Muslims, Progressive Muslims reject apologetic and simplistic approaches. Intellectual jihad, drawing from the rich tradition of Islam, is essential to address the intricacies of challenges faced by Muslims.

3. Transformation and Concrete Social Action: Progressive Muslims are visionary in their approach, combining vision with concrete actions that benefit not only the Muslim community but humanity at large.

4. Openness to Humanity and Civility: Adhering to the belief that at-tashawwuf kulluhu al-adab (all of Sufism is good character), Progressive Muslims champion human values and cultivate ethical conduct in relationships with others. Emphasizing Sufism becomes crucial in forming a humanist and civilized Muslim community.

5. Openness to Sources of Knowledge and Wisdom: Recognizing the inseparable connection between faith and knowledge, Progressive Muslims advocate for an epistemological approach that is open and integrated with Islamic tradition. In addition to the Quran and Hadith as primary sources, secondary sources such as sciences and philosophy should be considered, fostering a more inclusive understanding of knowledge for Muslims.

Conclusion

This article endeavors to elucidate the significance of the Progressive Muslim trend and movement in the context of plurality. The emergence of Progressive Muslims becomes pivotal as a response to the exclusivism exhibited by certain Muslim groups towards other religions and beliefs, compounded by the escalating chaos induced by radicalistic issues on a large scale. While interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith vary among adherents, both sources espouse universal kindness. The Islamic tradition's concept of "Bani Adam" (Children of Adam) seeks to convey a crucial message of inclusivity within Islam, emphasizing respect for differences, the promotion of unity in diversity, and the continuous self-updating of Muslims. Omid Safi, through the lens of Progressive Muslims and employing the Multiple Critique method, directs Muslims towards a transformative path. This entails internal criticism for rigidly interpreting Islamic laws and teachings, as well as external critique towards prevailing paradigms. Progressive Muslims actively cultivate inter-subject relations, engage in inter-faith dialogue, and impart a moral message asserting Islam's merciful nature for all. The progressive facet embodied by Progressive Muslims serves as an agiornamento, urging Muslims to perceive reality through the lens of togetherness, illuminated by sacred Islamic traditions. In this way, Progressive Muslims contribute to the ongoing evolution of Islamic thought and practice.

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