Imagining the World with #NoReligion

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Abstract

Segregations caused by religions may diversely be responded by a group of people. Being partly perceived as a subject for conducting dialogue, religion may also be considered as a segregating factor that shall better be diminished. Religion, for some groups of people, tends also to be seen as contradictory to the nature of science and toleration. To this extent, the notion of engaging the segregated groups of people can also be related to the concept of Asutosh Varshney in terms of promoting civic engagement through social media with a different setting. Although the movement is virtual community based, the promotion of #NoReligion is also intended for giving another view in the state realm.

Keywords:
#NoReligion, #atheism, engagement, segregation, dismissal of religion

Introduction

Discourse in the realm of religion may be formed everywhere. In the virtual era, the emergence of discourse in social media cannot simply be unconsidered. Responding to the current religious spheres, people may diversely be engaged with any discourse in defining what the role of religion is. In this article, religion is simply considered as the primary trigger for the emergence of religious conflicts. Therefore, a group of people evaluates the notion of religion with the current condition of humanity, which finally renders to a nature conclusion that religion shall better be dismissed.

Based on a small research on people writing posts in twitter, a social media, by using the hashtags[1] of #NoReligion and #atheism, this paper examines the content of those twitter posts, a perception about diminishing segregation through revising the concept of religion. By analyzing hundreds of twitter posts, I will slightly choose some posts representing a group of the theme to be discussed here. There is question rising on this issue, what is an alternative solution proposed by an ethnicity in a virtual realm for promoting inter-ethnic engagement? This article will discuss within the three parts. Firstly, it is started with theoretical framework for reflecting the virtual discourse of religiosity in the realm of social science. Secondly, the data narration will be the following section, to give a view of the Twitter user's perception on religiosity at a glance. Thirdly, the paper will be wrapped with a conclusion.

Virtual Discourse of Religiosity: Theoretical Frameworks

Research conducted by using the internet as media is already done in myriads field of sciences. The use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the realm of research is "offers researchers a new platform for interaction, with novel ways of creating and obtaining data" (Madge and O'Connor 2002, 92). The research can be done by implementing qualitative research in the virtual realm, in order to research the "on-line communities" by using participant observation and discourse analysis methods (Madge and O'Connor 2002, 92). In this extent, the research conducted for analyzing discourse in the virtual sphere can also be used to see the reproduction of values[2]. I will use the data of Twitter

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1   Hashtag (noun) is a: (on social-networking Web sites) a word or phrase preceded by a hash mark (#), used within a message to identify a keyword or topic of interest and facilitate a search for it (http://m.dictionary.com/d/?q=hashtag)

2   Literature about the reproduction of value, in the context of the article is about prejudice, in virtual realm can be seen in: Cholil, S., and Rubi, E. (n.d.). "Agama atau Manusia? Analisis Diskursus Bencana Alam dalam Media Cyber". In Indiyanto, A., and Kuswanjono, A. Konstruksi Masyarakat Tangguh Bencana. Kajian Integratif Ilmu,

postings in order to grasp the perspective of inter-ethnic engagement and religion in view of people who are promoting the notion of living without religion.

According to Arjun Appadurai, the concept of ethnic is transformed to be "ethnoscapes", which means that the formation of group identity is "no longer familiar anthropological object, insofar as groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogenous" (Appadurai 2003, 48). In terms orai implies that the current ethnicity is no longer means as a group of people living in the same territory, but can also be seen as separated people who share the same meaning on something. Moreover, relating to the concept of deterritorialization, Appadurai implies on the new definition of territory, which currently tends to be globalized due to the role of media (Appadurai 2003, 38). Deterritorialization employs on the current condition of movements carried by "political formations", sectarian group or ethnicity which "increasingly operate in ways that transcend specific territorial boundaries and identities" (Appadurai 2003, 49). The concept of territory is also revised not to be geographically based merely. To this extent, the concept of ethnicity may also be formed in the territory of virtual sphere. Therefore, people taking the similar position in perceiving religion in the virtual media can also be considered as belongs to the same ethnicity in the current global setting.

Religion is perceived as a divisive factor for humankind for a group of people posting on the Twitter about living without religion. According to Asutosh Varshney, dealing with the segregated group of society, the emergence of tensions and rumors may diversely be perceived by society in accordance of how the ethnicity are being engaged. The further relation between those engagements and responses to conflict can be seen in the following flowchart:

Agama, dan Budaya. Yogyakarta: Mizan.

FIGURE 2
CIVIC LIFE AND ETHNIC CONFLICT
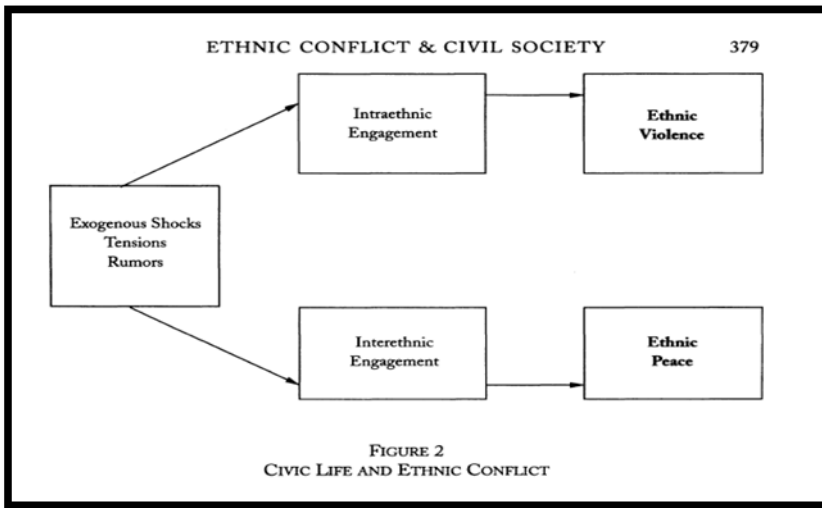
Source: Varshney (2001, 379)

The flowchart above represents responses diversity through conflicts is critically related to the notion of ethnic engagement. Inter-ethnic engagement, or engagement between different groups of ethnicity, may render to the ethnic peace. Conversely, intra-ethnic engagement, or engagement inside the group of ethnicity tends to render ethnic violence. In another word, Varshney implies that "multiethnic society with few connections across ethnic boundaries is very vulnerable to ethnic disorders and violence" (Varshney 2001, 380). To this extent, the goal of forming a connection between ethnicities is presumably building a common sense of belonging, which can be achieved through conducting a dialogue or communication for the least.

In the context of Indonesia, Mohammad Zulfan Tadjoeddin responded the concept of ethnic involvement promoted by Varshney by also emphasizing on the role of ethe lite for integration. Hence, Tadjoeddin implies the importance of elite engagement beforehand the mass engagement. The concept can further be seen in the following diagram:
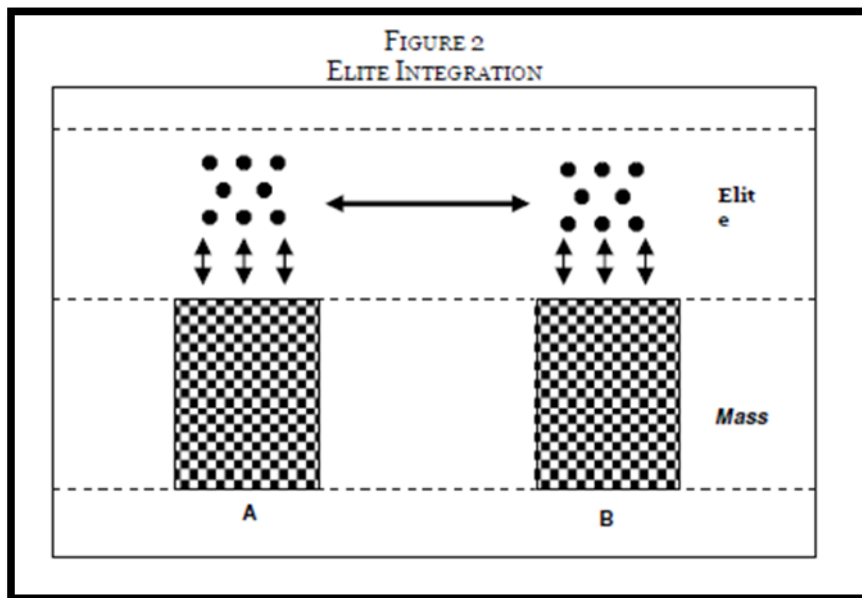
Source: Tadjoeddin (2004, 9)

According to Tadjoeddin, the elite integration is urged to be done in the Indonesian context due to the "highly segregated nature of Indonesian community" (Tadjoeddin 2004, 9). To this extent, integration among the members of ethnic shall also be based on the elite integration in the massively fragmented society to stabilize the conduct of inter-ethnic engagement. In the realm of virtual based discourse, the notion of the elite integration cannot actually be gained. However, at the last section of data narration, we can see the discourse of bringing the concept of life without religion in the realm of state. To this extent, I presumably consider that the discourse of living without religion is in attempt to be promoted as a state-level discourse, which finally may render to the role of elite in advance.

The notion of religion dismissal can also be subtracted to the theory promoted by Asutosh Varshney and Mohammad Zulfan Tadjoeddin in looking at the ethnic engagement, although with some adjustments. For

Varshney (2001), inter-ethnic civic engagement renders to ethnic peace and for Tadjoeddin (2004), the civic engagement in a naturally segregated society may only be achieved through the elite integration. For this people, any integration related to religion will only be achieved through diminishing the notion of religion. Furthermore, bringing the idea of life without religion in the realm of state, the concept of elite role in creating integration through proposing living without religion, may also be gained in advance. At last, according to Appadurai, the current notion of ethnicity is no longer being entrapped by the concept of territory (Appadurai 2003, 48). It means that the concept of conducting inter-ethnic engagement is in attempt to be promoted by an ethnic in the virtual realm by proposing the notion of living without religion.

Discussion in the Twitter on #NoReligion and #atheism

Religion as a divisive factor, for people promoting the concept of living without religion, is a subject to be diminished to build peace through inter-ethnic engagement. To this extent, religion is seen as the complete segregating factors that can hardly burden the conduct of dialogue for peace-building. In another word, inter-ethnic engagement may only be achieved by diminishing the segregating factor, since dialogue cannot simply be achieved on behalf of religion. The discussion can be seen in the following data narration.

Being firstly appeared on the twitter on 7 May 2009, the notion of dismissing religion with the hashtag of #noreligion may variously be proposed by people in the Twitter. The first comment using hashtag of #noreligion was "klare worte http://bit.ly/dGEQO", written by a twitter account namely @t00nfish on 7 May 09, which means the clear words that also stated the link of a video entitled "Rastafari explication".

The comments written on the Twitter about the notion No Religion and Atheism can be grouped into several categorizations, one of which is

about dissatisfaction with the institution named religion. Reviewing their comments, some people are notably expressing dissatisfaction to some religions, which can be seen in the following comments:

> "33k+sects of Xtianity. They can't all be right; logical conclusion is they are all wrong. http://bit.ly/6OaUGD #atheist #nogod #noreligion" (@AtheistJohnny, 6 December 2009)
> "RT @Monicks Pastor jailed for making 'rape' video http://bit.ly/51i1IH #atheism #noreligion #atheist" (@BibleAlsoSays, 11 December 2009)

Implying dissatisfaction with the institution named religion, in the first comment, a twitter account named @AtheistJohnny comments on the huge number of sects in Christianity and emphasize that all sects can be incorrect. On the other hand, the second comment publishes the link of a pastor who was jailed for making a sexual harassment video. Unfortunately the link is already unavailable.

The other perception on living without religion or committing atheism is related to the concept of promoting love by dismissing religion. Being engaged in logical thinking as well as living with love and tolerance due to the dismissal of the segregating factor named religion, can clearly be seen in the following comments using the hashtag of #NoReligion and #atheism:

> "Teach children to value faith over evidence and you deprive them of the chance of seeing the wonder of reality. RT @Gods_Beard #noreligion" (@AtheistJohnny, 21 December 2009)
> "RT @Monicks: I would rather have a mind opened by wonder than one closed by belief. #atheism #noreligion #skeptic #nogod #atheist #agnostic" (@scott_hurst, 30 December 2009)

The two comments above are mainly implying on the notion of religion which closely related to the perception of being narrow minded. The first comment implies the importance of teaching the evidence-based knowledge in comparison with faith in order to make children value the wonder of reality. The second comment employs the concept of having

belief equals to the closure of mind. To this extent, embracing religions is considerably unequal with rational thinking.

In addition, the concept of religion may also be perceived as diminishing love for humankind and promoting the conduct of violence in the name of God. The perception can also be seen in the following three comments:

> "Strange but true: those who have loved God most have loved men least. ~Robert G Ingersoll. #atheism #noreligion (cont) http://tl.gd/9cnr5" (@VantageView, 16 February 2010)

> "If you wanna kill someone, just do it in the name of God. That way, you won't be a sinner" – John V. #atheism #teamjesus" (@ThkGodImAtheist, 10 May 2013)

> ""@JHillBest People who push athiesm are as bad as those who push religion"+ Points for guessing which mutilates more genitals. #athEIsm" (@GSpellchecker, 26 April 2013)

> "Apparently I'm unqualified to join any religion. I know too much science, don't hate gays and am already happy. #Atheist #atheism" (@kaimatai, 18 April 2013)

The comments above employ the relation between religion and the dismissal of love for humankind and the legitimacy of violence conduct. The first comment, written by a twitter account named @VantageView denotes that people who love God tend not to love another human. The second comment emphasizes on the legality of killing another people in the name of God. The third comment, in another hand employs the concept of some religions that make circumcision as compulsory, so that the freedom to push religion may be problematic. Moreover, the last comment employs a message of why a person chooses not to be embraced by any religion, due to the preference of respecting homosexuality and loving science. In the four comments, we can see that the main consequence of embracing a religion for the three people above is related to the diminishing of love for humankind, which can be seen at the notion of respecting homosexuality,

and the promotion of violence conduct in the name of God, which exemplify the practices circumcision in some religions.

Being perceived as related to the violence conduct, the concept of religion is further perceived as contributing the emergence of conflict and crime conduct. The conflicting perception on religion and religious people can be grasped through the following comments:

> "I wonder how long it will be until people start saying the tornado in Oklahoma is gods wrath about gay marriage. #atheism" (@ enigmaflex, 21 May 2013)

> "Can we please stop thanking God for the survivors? Did he hate the victims who died? Stupid! #Atheism #Boston Thanks for stopping the bomb God" (@GillianBauer3, 16 April 2013)

> "JUDAISM IS BRINGING CONFLICT TO MY LIFE #imagine #noreligion" (@forever_alona, 5 May 2013)

The three comments above employ the opposing point of view caused by embracing religion. The first comment implies the probability of religious people making relation to a catastrophe with immorality in the point of view of religion. The second comment implies the perception about God in relation to Boston Marathon Bombing by emphasizing that people shall not thank to God for the survival, because it can be divisive. The last comment is clearly stating the conflicting side of Judaism, although the exact conflict is unclearly defined by the writer.

Religion can also be perceived as a divisive factor for humanity. Embracing religion, for some people writing posts on twitter, also tends to be considered as equal to have a potency for intolerance. The segregating role of religion can be seen in the following comments:

> "Christians, you know how certain you are about Jesus, that's the exact same certainty you'd have for Allah if you were a Muslim. #atheism" (@Atheist_Tweeter, 26 April 2013)

> "Religion and nationalism are both divisive concepts that restrict our growth as a species'. http://dld.bz/cnSa8 #kindle #atheism"

(@robertbreeze, 19 April 2013)

"Religion: Divide/Control/Delude (don't forget murder and maim too). #Atheism pic.twitter.com/gI3GGE2XIw" (@VegasJessie, 18 April 2013)

"There is just one and only real possibility of dialog among religions: giving up on all of them #atheism" (@comonadie, 21 May 2013)

The four comments above are mainly denoting about the segregating substance of religion and suggesting the peace conducted by diminishing religion. The first comment is interestingly implying that the similarity between Christian and Muslim in terms of respecting God by still carrying the hashtag of #atheism. Moreover, the second comment carries on a message that the role of religion is similar to nationalism, which tends to be divisive and restricting. The third comment employs the concept of religion as a divisive factor for humankind as well as another source for committing violence, which is exemplified by murder and maim. The fourth comment emphasizes on the alternative for building peace through conducting interreligious dialogue, which is by diminishing the religion itself. The four comments above employ the similar message on the perception that the role of religion renders a conflicting substance as well as restricting people for being unified in the name of love and respect for humankind; so that the possible alternative for peace building can be reached by diminishing religion.

The other point of having no religion can also be related to the other ways of expressing religiosity. In this context, some informants are notably expressed their view on religiosity by still promoting the concept of no religion, which can also be seen in the following comments:

"Havin a relationship with Christ is waaayyy different from going to chirch nd ACTING holy.....#noreligion" (@Iam_Mr_Rager11, 4 May 2013)

"I dont go to church, worship or read bible verses. I believe in god but I dont think theres a need to go to church to show that

#noreligion" (@sJandrisch, 31 March 2013)

"Religion asks us to choose between respecting their gods, or respecting women. I choose women. They exist. #atheism pic. twitter.com/vQX5pvbzxd" (@SyLazovik, 8 April 2013).

The three comments above employ the concept of religiosity in the eyes of some people that promote the concept of no religion. The first comment implies the religiosity owned by a twitter account named @Iam_Mr_Rager11 that does not always marked by going to the church and appeared to be pious. Similar to the previous comment, the second one also implies that the religiosity of a person that does not always be symbolized with the regular concept of piety. The last comment related to the concept of respecting others. The twitter account namely @SyLazovik states that respecting women is more real in comparison to respecting "gods". The three comments share some similarities, which are: implying on the concept of respecting others and diminishing the regular way of expression religiosity that can be closely seen as tightly related to the identification of belonging to a religion.

The notion of living without religion is apparently also in attempt to be promoted to a broader realm of state, for instance Australia and UK. Some people post their opinion about making "no religion" as a legal choice to be filled up for the citizen in Australian Census. The discourse can be seen in the following comments:

"UK folk: If you are Jedi, please use 'No Religion' this Census. http://census-campaign.org.uk #noreligion #fb" (@peteaylward, 7 March 2011)

"#Census2011 #NoReligion Not Religious? Then Mark 'No Religion' on this years census. http://yfrog.com/h084266141j" (@OzAz, 11 February 2011)

"Mark "No Religion" on the Australian Census campaign in the Sydney Morning Herald. http://bit.ly/fivlFr #noreligion" (@askegg, 31 January 2011).

The three comments above imply the discourse of having no religion in the realm of state. For the people above, the concept of no religion shall legally be admitted in the level of state, not only in the level of personal or social. The first comment states the freedom of not admitting any religion in the census in UK. The second comment implies the ability for people to mark 'No Religion' in the census of the year 2011 if one is not religious. The last comment employs a link from Sydney Morning Herald that campaigns the ability for citizen to mark 'No Religion' in the census. The three comments above are mainly implying the discourse that 'No Religion' was already at the census on 2011 in some Australia and UK.

Articulating Beliefs with #NoReligion and #atheism in Social Media

Perceiving the role of religion, some people who are promoting the notion of not embracing any religion are notably considering a big divisive factor in an institution named religion. In addition, embracing religion tends to also be linked to the irrational thinking. The concept of not promoting love for humankind and legalizing violence conducted in the name of God are also notably appeared in the perception of people promoting the concept of living without religion. To this extent, peace building may be achieved by diminishing the segregating factors, which means the dismissal of religion. At last, the discourse of supporting living without religion is publicly derived to be legalized in the realm of state. In sum, the discourse of living without religion can also be seen as an attempt to promote peace building by committing love for humankind and revealing violence through the act of rational thinking. Here is the chart of perception on religion extracted from the tweets above:

Perception on Religion

■ Segregating factor   ■ Irrational   ■ Source of Immorality   ■ A rights
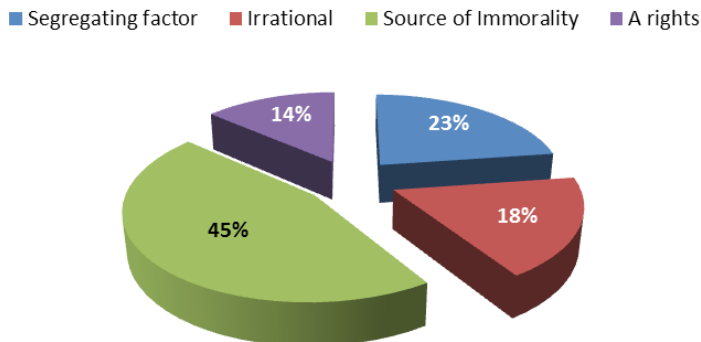
From the chart, 45% of the tweets consider religion as a source of immorality. They perceive that religion tend to be used as a tool to degrade other people as well as a source to justify the unethical behaviour towards others that are considered as less religious. The other 23% considers religion as a segregating factor in society. The divisive nature of religion tends to be seen as a source of conflict. 18% of the tweets dissociate religion with rational thinking, by endorsing the act of embracing no religion as an implication of their logical thinking as well as understanding on sciences. The rest 14% of the tweets stated that the atheism or no religion should officially be recognized in the realm of state. They imply that embracing religion or atheism should legally be protected.

The concept of no religion and atheism is understood as the way to enhance morality by humanizing others while promoting rational thinking among everyday life, which has to be publicly recognized by the state. Moreover, the dismissal or religion is also seen as a way to unify people by erasing the dominant divisive factor. This, however, can be considered as a belief embraced by people endorsing the concept of #NoReligion and #atheism on Twitter. In other words, promoting peace and rational thinking among society can be achieved by diminishing religion, in accordance with the people.

Conclusion

The notion of religion may diversely be perceived by people. Related to the current condition of violence on behalf of religion, the discourse of diminishing religion in order to gain a better living is started to be promoted. The notion of religious intolerance, especially in responding the current cases of humankind, such as homosexuality, is perceived as an inability provided by religion for creating a better livelihood. In addition, related to the notion of science which presumably considered as contrasted with the concept of religion, the role of religion tend to be perceived as irrelevant for building the current civilization.

Responding to the current fundamentalism cases, such as the Boston Marathon Bombing, people are reacting by positioning religion as basically irrelevant to the concept of creating a better livelihood and supporting civilization. To this extent, religion is also considered as promoting its believers to be doctrinal or in another word less rational. Being perceived as merely doctrinal, the notion of religion tends to be seen as a total segregating factor; so that, interreligious dialogue will hardly be achieved for peace-building.To this extent, the concept of peace building may also be variously approached by a group of people, which in this case is by diminishing religion.

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