



Plurality of Creatures and the Oneness of the Creator

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the relationship between the plurality of beings and the oneness of the Creator from philosophical and theological perspectives. The plurality of beings reflects the diversity of God's creation, which includes humans, animals, plants, and inanimate objects, as manifestations of the greatness and complexity of the Creator. This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach and content analysis to understand the interaction between the diversity of creation and the oneness of God. Data were collected through literature studies, interviews with religious figures, and observations in religious communities. The analysis was conducted hermeneutically to interpret religious and philosophical texts, as well as through thematic analysis to identify patterns of thought. The results show that the plurality of beings not only affirms the oneness of God but also encourages tolerance, interfaith dialogue, and social harmony in pluralistic societies. By understanding this relationship, society can create strong social cohesion and reduce the potential for identity-based conflicts.

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INTRODUCTION

Pluralism is a hot topic of discussion and is increasingly recognized by the wider society, not only because it is frequently written about in the media but also because it is actively preached in mosques, religious study groups, regular lectures, short courses, and meetings for cadres. The discussion on this theme has resurfaced following incidents of violence, both against individuals with progressive thoughts and against groups adhering to minority beliefs or religions.

In theological and philosophical studies, the concept of the plurality of creatures and the oneness of the Creator becomes a significant theme to understand in the context of the relationship between creation and the Creator (Sinaulan, 2016). The plurality of creatures refers to the diversity and complexity of various entities in the universe, including humans, animals, plants, and inanimate objects. On the other hand, the oneness of the Creator emphasizes that there is one supreme entity as the source of all that exists, which in many religious traditions is identified as God. This research aims to explore the interaction between the

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plurality of creatures and the oneness of the Creator, as well as the philosophical and theological implications that arise from this relationship. By understanding both, we can delve deeper into how the diversity within creation can reflect the attributes of the one true God and how this influences human perspectives on existence and the purpose of life.

In this context, it is important to analyze how various philosophical and theological viewpoints shape the understanding of the relationship between the diversity of creation and the oneness of God, taking into account the social and cultural impact of the belief in the oneness of God in a pluralistic society, as well as how these values can bridge differences and promote harmony among various groups. Each religious tradition offers a unique perspective that enriches interfaith dialogue and fosters mutual respect among its followers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pluralism is a concept that refers to diversity or variation within a group or society. It encompasses differences in culture, ethnicity, religion, and individual perspectives. Pluralism is considered important because it can enrich shared experiences, promote tolerance, and create space for constructive dialogue between various groups. In a social context, pluralism can also contribute to innovation and creativity, as diverse viewpoints can lead to better solutions for complex problems. However, there are also views that oppose the concept of pluralism.

The plurality of creatures refers to the vast diversity and variety of everything that exists in this universe. From inanimate objects like rocks and dust to complex living beings such as humans, plants, and animals, all of these display limitless variations (Connes & Lequeux, 2020). This plurality encompasses differences in form, size, function, and other characteristics. In the context of religion and philosophy, the plurality of creatures is often linked to the concept of creation, where the Creator made everything with its inherent diversity (Vavrikova, 2023).

The relationship between the plurality of creatures and the Creator is a central theme in various studies of religion, philosophy, and science. How can such vast diversity emerge from a single source? This question has been the subject of debate and reflection for centuries. Some perspectives attempt to explain this relationship through the concepts of creation, evolution, or a combination of both. However, regardless of differing viewpoints, the concept of the plurality of creatures and the Creator remains one of the greatest mysteries that continues to captivate human interest in the search for answers.

Some people argue that pluralism can lead to division within society, where the existing differences create tension and conflict between various groups. Furthermore, in some cases, pluralism may result in the loss of unique cultural identities, as individuals or groups might feel pressured to adopt more dominant norms or values. There are also concerns that pluralism can hinder effective decision-making, as diverse viewpoints may lead to confusion or uncertainty in reaching a consensus.

According to Koentjaraningrat, a prominent Indonesian anthropologist, human plurality is an inevitability shaped by the diversity of ethnicity, religion, race, and social groups within a society (Susanto, 2016). He emphasized that this diversity is not merely a matter of physical differences, but also includes differing value systems, customs, and perspectives that have naturally developed within each community.

Meanwhile, Parsudi Suparlan views human plurality as a social reality shaped through a long process of history and interaction between groups. According to him, pluralism is not just about differences, but also about how various social groups can coexist and influence one another in shaping a dynamic cultural identity (Muhammad, 2022).

RESULTS

The plurality of creatures and the Creator can be understood as a concept that emphasizes the diversity within God's creation. From this perspective, pluralism is seen as a manifestation of the greatness and complexity of the Creator, who creates various forms of life and reality. This indicates that God has the power to create different creatures with distinct characteristics and purposes, each playing a role in the ecosystem and the order of the universe. However, there are views that reject the idea of the plurality of creatures and the Creator. From this perspective, the emphasis on pluralism may be seen as a diversion from the unity and uniformity that should exist in creation. Some arguments suggest that focusing on pluralism may lead to confusion in understanding the essence of a singular and indivisible God. In this belief, everything in the world is a manifestation of one inseparable entity, and pluralism only creates an illusion of non-essential differences.

Philosophical Perspective on Unity and Diversity

Pluralism, from a philosophical perspective on unity and diversity, views reality as a complex yet interconnected whole. Philosophers such as Plotinus regarded diversity as an emanation of the One, where everything originates from a singular source but manifests in various forms and levels.

The Neoplatonist philosophy developed by Plotinus perceives reality as emanating from the One — a

singular source that bestows existence upon all things. Diversity is understood as levels of manifestation of the One, yet they remain connected within a fundamental unity. This thinking has influenced many mystical traditions within monotheistic religions (Sholikin, 2008).

Muslim philosophers like Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina developed the concept of *wahdatul wujud*, which sees the diversity of the universe as a manifestation of divine attributes. Meanwhile, modern Western philosophy through Spinoza proposed a pantheistic view that God and nature are one — *Deus sive Natura* (God or Nature), inseparable. The diversity of natural phenomena is understood as modes or ways of being of the same singular substance.

Clifford Geertz, an American anthropologist who conducted extensive research in Indonesia, explained that human plurality is a cultural mosaic composed of various elements that complement each other. He emphasized that this diversity becomes a strength that can enrich a nation's cultural heritage, with each group contributing uniquely to form a larger collective identity (Dick, 2020). This diversity also drives innovation and creativity, as the interaction between various cultures can generate new ideas beneficial for the overall development of society (Tahir, 2016). By understanding and appreciating these differences, society can create an inclusive environment where every individual feels accepted and has the opportunity to participate in social and cultural development. Openness to differences can also strengthen solidarity among groups, build better communication bridges, and reduce the potential for conflicts that may arise due to misunderstandings.

Theological Perspectives from Various Traditions

In Islamic theology, the concept of *tawhid* (the oneness of God) is fundamental, yet it does not prevent the recognition of the diversity of creation. Rather, diversity is viewed as a sign (*ayat*) that reflects the greatness of the Creator. The Quran mentions the differences in languages and skin colors among humans as evidence of Allah's power. Christian theology acknowledges the mystery of the Trinity—three Persons in one Divine essence. This provides a theological foundation for understanding how unity can encompass diversity. The diverse creation reflects the richness of God's attributes. Jewish tradition emphasizes the transcendence of the One God (YHWH), yet also recognizes His immanence in creation through the concept of *Shekinah*. The diversity of creation is seen as a reflection of *Ein Sof* (The Infinite). Hinduism teaches that Brahman is the singular ultimate reality, while the diversity of gods and beings is understood as manifestations of the same Brahman. "Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti" - Truth is one, the wise call it by many names (Joyo, 2020).

By understanding these different perspectives, we can create space for reflection and mutual learning, thereby strengthening the bridges between various communities in the effort to achieve a more harmonious life. Awareness of this diversity also encourages us to appreciate the universal values present in every tradition, such as love, compassion, and justice (Jeprianto, et al., 2022). Through recognition and appreciation of these values, stronger and mutually supportive relationships can be built among individuals from different backgrounds, creating an inclusive and peaceful society (Imami, 2024). Therefore, it is important to continue educating ourselves and others about the richness of these religious traditions so that we can collectively create an environment conducive to constructive dialogue and mutual understanding

Socio-Cultural Impact

Understanding the relationship between unity and diversity has important implications in social life:

Tolerance and Pluralism

The awareness that diversity is the will of the Divine can encourage a tolerant attitude towards differences. The recognition that various spiritual paths ultimately lead to the same Reality enables constructive interfaith dialogue

Social Cohesion

The understanding that all humans, regardless of their differences, are creations of the same God can strengthen the bonds of universal brotherhood. This becomes an ethical foundation for social solidarity.

Appreciation of Diversity

The view that diversity reflects Divine perfection encourages appreciation for the uniqueness of different cultures, traditions, and ways of life as a shared treasure.

Conflict Resolution

Awareness of the fundamental unity behind diversity can help resolve identity-based conflicts by reminding us of a deeper unity.

Intergroup Tolerance

The understanding that diversity is the will of God encourages a tolerant attitude towards differences. The awareness that every human is a creation of the same God can minimize identity-based conflicts.

Cultural Development

Diversity encourages cultural exchange and the enrichment of traditions. Interactions between different groups result in cultural synthesis that enriches human civilization.

Social Harmony

Recognition of unity in diversity helps build a harmonious society. Differences are not seen as threats, but as a blessing that enriches communal life. In the context of a modern, pluralistic society, this understanding has several implications:

a. Interfaith Dialogue

It encourages constructive dialogue among followers of different religions, with the awareness that each spiritual tradition has its own truth value

b. Public Policy

It influences the formation of policies that accommodate diversity, such as the protection of minority rights and religious freedom

c. Multicultural Education

It encourages an education system that teaches appreciation for diversity from an early age

CONCLUSION

The relationship between the oneness of God and the diversity of creation has been the subject of profound reflection in various philosophical and theological traditions. Understanding this relationship has significant implications for contemporary social life. The challenge lies in maintaining a balance between recognizing the fundamental unity and appreciating the diversity of manifestations, while also developing new models for living together in a pluralistic society. The synthesis of traditional wisdom and contemporary understanding can provide valuable guidance in navigating the complexities of the modern world.

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