The Dilemma of Religious Tolerance: Levinasian Critique and Proposal

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Abstrak: Religious tolerance is a critical issue in pluralistic societies such as Indonesia. Without tolerance, the expressions of beliefs can lead to fanaticism, conflict, and hostility that negatively impact social security and stability. This article addresses the dilemma of religious tolerance by exploring and connecting the concept of "the Other" in Emmanuel Levinas' thought as an ethical subject who requires protection and respect for the individual with the discussion of tolerance indicators in the context of religious moderation. This qualitative study employs a literature review method, with data collected through literature review and analyzed descriptively using Emmanuel Levinas' philosophical perspective. The results indicate that religious tolerance in the framework of religious moderation, as found in Emmanuel Levinas' thought, entails the recognition and respect for the identity of the "Other". The "Other" is an ethical subject with the right to live free from discrimination and oppression. In the framework of tolerance, the "Other" is not merely allowed to exist and differ but necessitates the growth of respect and appreciation through fair and respectful treatment of those who are different. From Levinas's viewpoint, the practice of religious tolerance must be carried out by considering the concept of ethical relationships between individuals and "The Other." Religious tolerance manifests ethical responsibility to recognize and respect the existence of others with different religions and beliefs. This article proposes that Levinasian philosophy can provide a useful critique and proposal for the dilemma of religious tolerance in pluralistic societies.

Keywords: *Emmanuel Levinas*; *Ethical subject*; *Pluralistic society*; *Religious tolerance*; *the Other*

Introduction

Religious diversity is a hallmark of modern, pluralistic societies. While diversity can be a source of strength and enrichment, it also presents significant challenges and dilemmas, particularly when it comes to promoting religious tolerance (Petrov & Croitoru, 2022). At the heart of these challenges is a tension between respecting religious diversity and promoting social unity. On the one hand, societies that value diversity must respect the beliefs and practices of various religious communities, allowing them to freely express themselves without fear of persecution or discrimination. On the other hand, societies also need to promote social unity, which can be challenging when different religious beliefs and practices conflict with one another, or when some groups feel marginalized or excluded. This tension between diversity and unity lies at the core of the dilemma of religious tolerance (Ernaningrum, 2022).

Another key challenge is the limits of tolerance itself. While tolerance is often seen as a positive value, there are limits to what can be tolerated in the name of religious freedom or diversity (Verkuyten & Kollar, 2021). For example, some may argue that certain religious practices or beliefs are inherently intolerant or harmful and should not be tolerated in a

pluralistic society. This raises difficult questions about how to balance the right to religious freedom with the need to maintain the purity of faith and religious teachings and to protect the broader interests of society. In early 2023, two events caused controversy related to Islam. The first was the burning of the Qur'an by Rasmus Paludan, an anti-immigrant politician, which sparked global reactions from the Muslim community. The second event was a protest by students at Hamline University in Minnesota against the teaching process of Islamic art. During the protest, Adjunct Professor Erika Lopez Prater showed a 14th-century painting depicting Prophet Muhammad, which is considered forbidden and insulting to the Prophet by most Muslims. While these events may be open to academic debate, they highlight the lack of clear boundaries when it comes to religious tolerance.

There is also a risk of cultural relativism in promoting religious tolerance, where all religious beliefs and practices are seen as equally valid or deserving of respect, regardless of their impact on others or their adherence to universal ethical standards. This is particularly problematic when certain practices or beliefs violate fundamental human rights, such as the right to life, the right to express oneself, or the right to be free from torture. The challenge, therefore, is to promote tolerance while also acknowledging the limits of cultural relativism and the need to uphold universal ethical standards (Insel, 2019; Lammer-Heindel, 2013).

The challenge of religious tolerance poses significant obstacles for modern, pluralistic societies. By understanding the key challenges and dilemmas, people can begin to develop more nuanced and complex approaches to promote religious tolerance that recognize the importance of balancing diversity and unity, respecting universal ethical standards, and promoting mutual understanding and respect among different religious communities. In Indonesia, the need for religious tolerance is particularly urgent given the country's diverse religious landscape, which includes a predominantly Muslim population as well as significant numbers of Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and others. In recent years, the Indonesian government has taken steps to promote religious tolerance and moderation through a variety of policies and initiatives, particularly through the policy of religious moderation in response to the ongoing phenomenon of intolerance in Indonesian society.

Data from Setara Institute (2022) regarding the state of religious freedom in Indonesia, for example, shows that in 2021, there were 171 incidents and 318 violations of religious freedom recorded. According to Setara Institute's research data, there are three issues of violations of religious freedom committed by state actors, which include discrimination (25 cases), discriminatory policies (18 cases), and allegations of blasphemy (8 cases). Meanwhile, six dominant issues of violations of religious freedom committed by non-state actors are intolerance (62 incidents), hate speech (27 cases), rejection of the establishment of places of worship (20 cases), reporting of blasphemy (15 cases), rejection of activities (13 cases), and attacks on places of worship (10 cases).

However, despite these efforts, religious tensions and conflicts continue to arise in Indonesia, particularly in areas where different religious communities coexist. One key challenge facing Indonesia's policy of religious moderation is the need to balance respect for religious diversity with the promotion of social unity. While the government has emphasized the importance of tolerance and respect for diversity, some critics argue that these efforts have not gone far enough in addressing the root causes of religious tensions and conflicts. Another challenge facing Indonesia's policy of religious moderation is the need to balance religious freedom with the need to protect broader societal interests, such

as public order and security. While the Indonesian constitution guarantees freedom of religion, there have been instances where religious practices or beliefs have been seen as a threat to public order or security, leading to restrictions or even criminalization of certain religious practices.

The important issue that requires further analysis of this religious moderation policy is the interpretation and implementation procedures of tolerance indicators, which are definitively seen as an attitude that allows space for others' beliefs, expressions, and opinions without interference, even if they differ from one's own (Ministry of Religion, 2019). This definition essentially places religious tolerance as an attitude of respect, the ability to accept those who are different as part of oneself, and the ability to think positively about others. Although such an understanding of tolerance is commendable, it is difficult to apply in practice. This is because the application of religious teachings often begins with textual interpretations that, from the outset, place people of different religions as "The Other," who are subordinate due to their differences. As a result, existing tolerance is often only passive, which encourages indifference towards others, rather than true tolerance.

The freedom of religion or belief is never as simple as the freedom to make certain decisions regarding life choices, aspirations, or daily actions. Religious or theological beliefs are fundamental convictions that can drive a person to take certain actions for the truth they believe in. Misunderstanding or misinterpreting certain theological beliefs can lead individuals to a situation where their actions are no longer based on common sense, conscience, or prevailing norms. What is considered right for someone theologically is sufficient as a basis for their actions.

Adopting a Levinasian perspective, the promotion of religious tolerance entails recognizing the human face of "the Other" and our responsibility towards them, regardless of their religious beliefs or practices. This approach enables a shift from abstract debates concerning religious rights and freedoms towards a concrete understanding of the ethical aspects of religious tolerance. By incorporating the Levinasian perspective, Indonesia can establish a framework for religious tolerance that prioritizes mutual understanding and respect, while acknowledging our responsibility towards the Other. This study aims to analyze how the religious tolerance framework within the policy of religious moderation in Indonesia can be viewed from a Levinasian perspective. In doing so, the study endeavors to foster social unity and safeguard broader societal interests, while simultaneously recognizing the importance of respecting religious diversity and promoting the human face of the Other.

Literature Reviews

The concept of religious moderation was initially introduced by Lukman Hakim Saifudin, the Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia from 2014 to 2019, with the aim of fostering a moderate, harmonious, and tolerant society. To reinforce this policy's formulation and discourse, the Religious Moderation Working Group under the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia prepared the Roadmap for Strengthening Religious Moderation 2020-2024, based on Minister of Religion Decree No. 720 of 2020 (Ministry of Religion, 2020). The core of religious moderation lies in promoting justice and balance in the interpretation, response, and practice of religious concepts. The values that underpin religious moderation include balance, simplicity, unity, and brotherhood. The components of religious moderation are comprised of four key indicators: (1) national

commitment; (2) tolerance; (3) anti-violence; and (4) accommodation of local culture (Anshari et al., 2021; Ministry of Religion, 2019).

The indicator of national commitment focuses on how a person's religious perspective, attitude, and practices impact their loyalty to the basic national consensus, particularly with regard to accepting Pancasila as the state ideology, their stance on ideological challenges that contradict Pancasila, and their sense of nationalism. As part of the national commitment, one must acknowledge the principles of nationhood enshrined in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and its regulations. The tolerance indicator reflects the attitude of allowing space for others to express their beliefs and opinions without interference, regardless of whether they align with one's own beliefs. The anti-radicalism indicator, or violence, is an attitude that opposes any ideology or doctrine that seeks to use violent or extremist means in the name of religion to bring about changes in the social and political system. Such violence can manifest in verbal, physical, or mental forms. Religious practices and behaviors that accommodate local culture are also an essential aspect of religious moderation as they reflect a willingness to accept religious amaliah practices that accommodate local culture and traditions (Ministry of Religion, 2019).

Indonesia's diverse religious and cultural beliefs present a unique context to examine the challenges and dilemmas of religious tolerance. Despite constitutional guarantees of freedom of religion, Indonesia still experiences religious conflicts and intolerance, largely due to political interests, socio-economic inequality, and cultural differences. Previous studies have explored different aspects of religious tolerance in Indonesia. One such study is Skalski's (2017) investigation of tolerance using Emmanuel Levinas' perspective. In this study, Skalski traces the historical evolution of tolerance from its etymological origins, examines the experience of tolerating, and proposes how Emmanuel Levinas' philosophy revolutionizes the individualistic framework surrounding tolerance by providing a meaningful direction: "endurance for" the other rather than "endurance of" the other.

Another study by MacDonald and O'Regan (2013) analyzes the discourse of totality in Levinas' works and the discourse of the metaphysics of presence in Derrida's works to propose ethical grounds for intercultural praxis. The study suggests that a discourse ethics of responsibility still allows for critical intercultural praxis to make value judgments and take potentially transformative actions towards cultural practices that challenge the limits of intercultural tolerance and hospitality in intercultural communication discourse. Meanwhile, George's (2009) study highlights hospitality as an important discourse amidst the development of globalization and the consequent encounter with global diversity. Using Levinas and Derrida's perspective on cosmopolitan hospitality, the study analyzes the Indian hospitality tradition and ethos as expressed in culturally significant Indian texts and as a cultural practice that still exists today. The study argues that any attempt to recapture the core of Indian hospitality ethos should take into account this universalistic intent, with a genuine openness towards the other person, in the light of contemporary concerns raised by Levinas and Derrida, and fully aware of India's and the world's transformed context.

Manoppo et al. (2019) conducted a study on tolerance education in Indonesian society, particularly in North Sulawesi, and found that it can be based on the local wisdom of "Torang Samua Basudara". Using Levinas' theory of enigma (the face), the study reveals that the cultivation of tolerance among young children during the Industry 4.0 era in North

Sulawesi occurs through sincere face-to-face interactions, a natural self-awareness of tolerance, an implicit tolerance curriculum due to limited digital learning facilities and infrastructure, and an application that is still influenced by the ideologies of school owners or leaders.

Several studies on tolerance using Levinas' perspective essentially show that tolerance has a broad potential for development in the context of plural societies such as Indonesia, as long as individuals can respect the existence of "the other," have the ability to be open-minded, and have subjective ethical awareness in living with others. However, in the context of religious tolerance, these studies have not addressed how Levinas' thinking can solve the dilemma of religious tolerance that arises due to the dominance of interpretations, ideologies, and passive tolerance concepts. This study aims to examine this issue by focusing on the tolerance indicator in religious moderation policy in a more critical way using Emmanuel Levinas' perspective.

Methods

This study will adopt a qualitative research approach, specifically utilizing critical analysis of religious tolerance from the perspective of Levinasian philosophy. The research will involve primary and secondary sources, including scholarly articles, books, and other relevant literature on the subject. The main sources for this study will be academic texts on religious moderation policy in Indonesia published by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (2019), as well as statements from religious leaders related to religious moderation policy and the practice of religious tolerance in Indonesia in general. The study will primarily use textual analysis, employing a hermeneutic approach to interpret the meaning and significance of the sources.

The research will involve a critical evaluation of existing discourses on religious tolerance in Indonesia, with a particular focus on the dilemmas and challenges that have arisen. The study will explore how Levinasian philosophy can provide a new perspective on the issue, offering a critique of current approaches and proposing alternative solutions. Data will be collected through a comprehensive review of relevant literature, including previous studies on religious tolerance and Levinasian philosophy. The analysis will involve a close reading of the sources, examining the key concepts, arguments, and assumptions that underlie existing discourses. The data will be analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, identifying common themes and patterns across the sources.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, the researcher will employ various techniques, including triangulation, member checking, and peer review. Triangulation will involve using multiple sources of data and methods to strengthen the findings. Member checking will involve sharing the findings with key stakeholders to ensure that they are accurate and reflective of their perspectives. Peer review will involve seeking feedback and input from other experts in the field to ensure the credibility and rigor of the research. This study will use a qualitative research approach to critically analyze the dilemmas of religious tolerance in Indonesia from a Levinasian perspective. The study will contribute to the ongoing discourse on the topic, offering new insights and proposals for promoting greater religious tolerance and understanding in Indonesia.

Result and Discussion

Discourse on Religious Moderation in Indonesia

The discourse on religious tolerance has become an important topic of discussion in Indonesian society. The concept of religious tolerance, in theory, refers to the ability to appreciate the spiritual values, beliefs, and worship practices that differ among followers of different religions (Courtis, 2018). However, in reality, the concept of religious tolerance is complex and intricate, as it involves various dimensions of religious and spiritual differences. Moreover, the objective condition of religion as a topic and field has a profound existential, mental-psychological, and discursive impact on its followers or the shared life they lead.

Another complexity is that the manifestation of the concept of religious tolerance involves positive acceptance and appreciation of various differences in faith, mutual understanding, and respect for each other as part of an inclusive life. In this context, tolerance means appreciating differences and positively accepting the existence of others (O'Connor, 2017). This definition assumes a certain acceptance of differences in beliefs, which requires individuals to apply ethical relativism standards for the truth of religion in the public sphere while still believing in the absolute truth of their own beliefs. Believing in the truth of one's religious teachings while accepting the values and rights of others to exist amidst pluralism is a paradoxical condition for the theological beliefs that are held (Bajrami & Demiri, 2019).

One important policy issued by the Indonesian government to promote religious tolerance is the implementation of religious moderation through various training programs (motivation, strengthening, and leadership). Religious moderation can be defined as a mindset, attitude, and behavior that takes a moderate position, acts fairly, and avoids extremism in religion. The Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (2019) explains in its academic text on Religious Moderation that it is a balanced religious attitude (tawasuth) that lies between the practice of one's own religion (exclusive) and respect for the religious practices of others with different beliefs (inclusive). Finding a balance or middle ground in religious practices will prevent extreme attitudes, fanaticism, and revolutionary behavior in religion. The policy of religious moderation aims to address the two extreme poles of religion: ultra-conservative or extreme right-wing on one side, and liberal or extreme left-wing on the other (Ministry of Religion, 2019).

Religious moderation is believed to be the most valuable key and solution to build a peaceful and tolerant society in the diverse context of Indonesia. Rejecting extremism and liberalism in religion by choosing moderation is key to maintaining balance and building a peaceful civilization. Moderate attitudes in religion encourage each religious community to treat others equally, with respect, and acceptance of differences to live together in peace and harmony. In a multicultural society like Indonesia, which is filled with religious pluralism, religious moderation is not a choice, but a necessity.

The policy of religious moderation is based on the principles of balance and justice. The academic text "Religious Moderation" explains that these two principles are effective when a person embodies three main characteristics: wisdom, purity, and courage (Ministry of Religion, 2019). In other words, moderation towards religion, as a way of choosing the middle path, can be more easily achieved if one has adequate understanding and knowledge of religion that can guide them to be wise, resist temptation, be sincere without burden,

and not be selfish with their own interpretation of truth. By acknowledging the truth of others and confidently expressing their own views based on knowledge, one can embody the principles of religious moderation.

The discourse on moderation is often explained through three pillars: moderation of thought, moderation of movement, and moderation of action (Ministry of Religion, 2019). Moderate religious thought is characterized by the ability to integrate texts and context. This means that religious thought does not solely rely on religious texts, but instead dynamically dialogues with both texts and context. Moderate religious thought is therefore not solely textual, but also not too free and disregarding of the texts. The second pillar is moderation in the form of movement. In this case, religious propagation that aims to invite people to goodness and distance themselves from evil must be based on the principle of improvement and done in a good way, rather than preventing evil by committing new evils such as violence. The third pillar is moderation in religious traditions and practices, which involves strengthening the relationship between religion and the traditions and culture of the local community. Religion is not confrontational with culture, but rather both can engage in dialogue and produce new culture.

In practice, religious moderation has four main indicators: 1) national commitment; 2) tolerance; 3) anti-violence; and 4) accommodation of local culture and tradition. National commitment refers to a person's religious perspective, attitude, and practice that affects their loyalty to the fundamental national consensus, particularly the acceptance of Pancasila as the ultimate state ideology, their attitude towards ideological challenges that contradict Pancasila, and their sense of nationalism. Tolerance is the attitude of providing space and not infringing on the rights of others to hold beliefs, express their beliefs, and convey opinions, even if they differ from our own. The indicator of anti-radicalism, or violence, is understood as an attitude that opposes ideologies (ideas or concepts) and doctrines that seek to change the social and political system by using violent or extreme means in the name of religion, whether through verbal, physical, or mental violence. On the other hand, religious practices and behaviors that accommodate local culture and tradition can be used to assess the extent to which there is a willingness to accept religious practices that respect local culture and tradition (Ministry of Religion, 2019).

The Dilemma of Truth in Religious Moderation

Religious moderation entails that believers should not isolate themselves or be exclusive (closed) but inclusive (open), blend in, adapt, interact with various communities, and continuously learn while teaching. Therefore, religious moderation promotes the notion that each believer should not exhibit extreme or excessive responses to diversity, including religious and interpretation differences. Rather, they should strive to maintain fairness and balance, enabling them to coexist in a shared agreement.

Religious tolerance, an expected outcome of religious moderation policies, necessitates an awareness of pluralism as a necessity, as well as acceptance of existing differences with others. The concept of religious tolerance aims to reduce the potential and negative impact of the inability to face differences and pluralism of beliefs in society. However, as mentioned earlier, tolerance alone is insufficient. A passive attitude of not disturbing others or accepting differences with a hateful heart is not enough. Tolerance must be practiced actively, through an awareness that laws, whether present or not, regulate the boundaries of beliefs in communal living. People must accept religious and belief

pluralism as a necessary part of life. Acceptance and awareness are meaningful only when people engage in active tolerance through interfaith dialogue, offering cooperation in certain aspects of life (excluding faith-related matters), competing in virtues to build the nation, among other actions.

Ideally, religious tolerance should not be practiced to blend or violate the boundaries of faith, or to obscure the limits of belief, but as a means to improve the concept and understanding of faith. Faith must be tested in life by habitually applying values of goodness so that the teachings of religion can be returned to their original meaning, namely the ability to transform someone into a better person through its teachings. Therefore, religious tolerance should be seen as a positive acceptance and assessment, empathy, and respect based on teachings of goodness and justice for each individual's right to life, even with various differences. Religious tolerance is the most important factor or variable in realizing religious harmony in society. A tolerant attitude is a fundamental requirement for building religious harmony amidst the plurality of religious beliefs.

However, efforts to build religious tolerance are not always easy to do. This is because every believer is theologically required from the beginning to believe in the truth of their own religion and the opposite for other religions. This is what causes the dilemma of truth in tolerance. There are several views that every religion has an absolute truth claim and cannot be mixed with the teachings of other religions. This condition can lead to conflicts between different religious groups, which strengthens the view that religious tolerance only worsens the problem rather than solving it.

The practice of active and constructive religious tolerance should begin with acknowledging the right to life and freedom to believe and embrace certain religions. Every person is fundamentally equal to one another, and no religious believer is entitled to dominate or claim themselves as the sole owner of the only interpretation of truth. People must share spaces of belief and truth with others, although this may seem impossible without relativizing theological truth. Religious tolerance requires individuals to understand religious texts with humility and openness to accept interpretations that support tolerance itself. However, this is often challenging because the dominant understanding of religion in society is often textual, conservative, and subordinates the existence of other religious believers.

In Indonesia, religious tolerance is manifested as appreciation, respect, and recognition of the existence of other religious believers and beliefs, both within and between religious communities. However, it must be acknowledged that this ideal tolerance has not yet become an active awareness for society as a whole. Tolerance is more often practiced as indifference towards others' beliefs and differences. Although society does not disturb or commit actions that violate the rights and freedoms of others in practicing their religious beliefs, they also distance themselves from those who are different and do not share the same beliefs. This condition, in turn, makes even a small provocation able to ignite certain actions that may be destructive or discriminatory due to the lack of cooperation and active tolerance awareness among different religious believers in society.

Another challenge in implementing religious tolerance in Indonesia is the comprehension of the boundaries of tolerance. Textual, rigid, incomplete, and apathetic religious understandings frequently confine believers to perceiving tolerance through the subjective limits of their respective religious teachings. Ironically, this condition is also influenced by certain interests, particularly political, power, and social hegemony. These

subjective limits also lead to religious adherents of the majority often engaging in whatever they consider to be part of their religious teachings without considering the rights of those who are different (Courtis, 2018; Bajrami & Demiri, 2019). In the concept of religious moderation, religious tolerance is practiced within limits that do not contravene the tenets of faith. In other words, the limits of religious tolerance are the realm of humanity. People can only work together within the realm of humanity before going back to their respective religious beliefs. In this form of tolerance, there is no interfaith dialogue and no attempt to construct universal ethics from each teaching.

Levinasian Ethics and Religious Moderation: Embracing Respect and Responsibility.

The definition of religious moderation emphasizes the importance of ethics in human relationships. From Levinas's perspective, ethics is the most appropriate starting point for understanding the existence of others in our shared life. Ethics is from the outset related to the presence of "The Other." It teaches the importance of respecting and paying attention to others as unique, distinct individuals. In the context of religious moderation, an inclusive attitude and respect for the religious practices of others with different beliefs show attention and respect for the uniqueness of others.

The concept of religious moderation, which calls for avoiding extremes and acting with fairness, can also be associated with Levinas's ethics. According to Levinas, ethics is not merely an abstract idea about human relations but a concrete encounter with other people. In this encounter, "The Other" is present and demands attention and respect as a unique and distinct individual. To practice ethics, we must not degrade or oppress "The Other" but rather recognize their existence and treat them fairly and wisely (Levinas, 1987). For Levinas, the ethical relationship with "The Other" is characterized by an asymmetric relationship between "The Self" and "The Other." "The Self" has a responsibility to promote the well-being of "The Other" and is obliged to respond to their call for help. The call of "The Other" is a command that disrupts "The Self's" world and requires a response. This ethical relationship requires self-subordination to "The Other" and the duty to act for their benefit. The policy of religious moderation in Indonesia can be seen as an implementation of Levinas's ethical values. It calls for showing an inclusive attitude and respect for the religious practices of others with different beliefs, and for avoiding extremes and acting with fairness and wisdom towards "The Other."

Levinas's emphasis on the asymmetrical relationship between "The Self" and "The Other" provides a foundation for the concept of religious tolerance within the discourse of religious moderation. In societies where individuals hold varying religious beliefs, there will always be "The Other" who holds different beliefs than one's own. Religious tolerance, therefore, can be viewed as a way to acknowledge the existence of "The Other" and respond to their call for mutual respect and understanding. This approach allows individuals to fulfill their ethical obligations towards "The Other" and work towards building a more inclusive and tolerant society that respects religious diversity and beliefs.

From Levinas's perspective, several pillars of religious moderation fulfill one's ethical obligations towards "The Other." Moderate thinking in religion demonstrates the ability to integrate religious texts into everyday life while also considering the interests and rights of others who may hold different beliefs. Regarding the propagation of religion, Levinas emphasizes the importance of inviting people to pursue goodness and self-improvement rather than resorting to violence or forcing one's will upon others. In religious practice,

Levinas views the relationship between religion and the traditions and culture of the local community as strengthening dialogue and promoting openness to create a new culture that includes diversity and inclusivity. Levinas teaches that religious moderation fulfills the ethical responsibility to pay attention to and respond to the needs of "The Other," thereby fostering more symmetrical and respectful relationships among individuals with differing beliefs (Levinas, 1987; 2012).

In Levinas's perspective, several indicators of religious moderation can also be analyzed by considering the concept of ethical relationships between individuals and "The Other" (Levinas, 1987; 2012). In this context, national commitment can be seen as an ethical responsibility to acknowledge and respect the existence of others, particularly those with different beliefs. Tolerance can also be viewed as a form of recognition of the existence of others, where individuals have an ethical obligation to respect and create room for "The Other" to speak and express their beliefs without fear of repression. Anti-violence can be regarded as an ethical responsibility to avoid harming others with actions that could be dangerous and to uphold the right to live safely and peacefully. Accommodating local culture can be regarded as a form of recognition of the uniqueness and diversity of culture in society, where each individual has an ethical responsibility to respect and honor the existence of "The Other" and treat them fairly, without harming or oppressing them due to existing differences.

Levinas asserts that humans are responsible for others, and ethics involve interpersonal relationships that are mutually responsible (Levinas, 1987; 2012). In this context, tolerance is not only a passive understanding or attitude, but it is essential to establish an active and responsible relationship with others, particularly those who have different beliefs or religions. Levinas also suggests that when someone faces the other, they must forget themselves and prioritize the interests of the other. In this regard, religious tolerance is not only about accepting differences, but also respecting and creating space for the beliefs of others, as well as treating them with respect and kindness.

In Levinas's philosophy, religious moderation can be gauged by considering the concept of ethical relationships between individuals and "The Other" (Levinas, 1987; 2012). National commitment, in this context, is an ethical responsibility to recognize and respect the existence of others, particularly those who hold different beliefs. Tolerance, as a form of recognition of the existence of others, requires individuals to ethically respect and provide space for "The Other" to express their beliefs freely and without fear of repression. Anti-violence is an ethical responsibility to avoid actions that could harm others and to respect their right to live safely and peacefully. Accommodating local culture requires individuals to acknowledge the uniqueness and diversity of culture in society and to treat others fairly without oppressing them because of existing differences.

Levinas contends that humans are responsible for others, and ethics involves interpersonal relationships that are mutually responsible (Levinas, 1987; 2012). In this context, tolerance is not just a passive understanding or attitude, but it involves establishing an active and responsible relationship with others, particularly those who hold different beliefs or religions. Levinas also suggests that when one faces "The Other," they must forget themselves and prioritize the interests of the other (Skalski, 2017). Therefore, religious tolerance is not merely about accepting differences, but also respecting and providing space for the beliefs of others, treating them with respect and kindness. Regarding the dilemma of truth in religious tolerance, it is essential to understand that in Levinas's ethics, each

person should be regarded as a unique and different subject (Levinas, 1987). Everyone holds fundamental beliefs or faith, and this can lead to conflicts with those who hold different beliefs. Theological truth believed by each religion cannot be blended, and each religion may claim absolute truth for its teachings. Nevertheless, when individuals can ethically acknowledge the presence of others in asymmetric relationships selflessly, then the absolutism of truth is placed within a framework of uniqueness that does not have to trap people in what Levinas describes as "totalization" (Levinas, 2012).

Levinas describes human beings as having a character of the "Same," which is a tendency to absorb everything foreign into oneself. The "Other" cannot be controlled, absorbed, or incorporated into the "Same" because the "Other" has absolute otherness. The nature of human beings as the "Same" is related to two main elements that shape human beings, namely "separation" and "interiority." "Separation" refers to the relationship between us and others, that we are "separate" from others. The term "separate" should not be understood as being "different" or "opposed to" others. If it is understood as "different" or "opposed to," it can lead to totalization (Levinas, 2012). Totalization is built through the tendency to absorb everything else into oneself without respecting the otherness of others. "Separation" rejects any attempt to build totalization. Meanwhile, "interiority" refers to the self-presence that enables one to experience the world as a self and makes one comfortable with oneself. Interiority makes every self-unique and cannot be absorbed into a system. Although humans can be subdued physically, they cannot be subdued spiritually because they have interiority that cannot be touched by any hand or system (Levinas, 2012). Therefore, building religious tolerance must come from recognizing the right to life and freedom to embrace a certain religion. Every person must be treated equally, and no religious adherent has the right to dominate others.

According to Levinas, moral experience is not about values, but rather about accessing the exteriority that exists outside oneself. This exterior entity is what Levinas calls the "face", which refers to the way that "The Other" presents itself. The human face is always related to how "The Other" reveals itself. Specifically, the face performs several functions. First, the face is the "exact identity of a being." True relationships only occur through concrete encounters with the face of another person because the face is a "significance without context" that "means in itself." This means that the meaning of a person's existence is not determined by any context in which they are found. True relationships with others can only happen through concrete encounters with their face. In the context of religious tolerance, we need to see others as unique individuals who have a meaningful presence in themselves.

Second, the face of "The Other" opens up new relationships. Meeting the face of "The Other" should make us aware that "The Other" is not just skin, flesh, and blood that can be easily destroyed. Instead, they are human beings like ourselves who have hopes and anxieties, joys and sorrows. Therefore, Levinas uses the appearance of the face as an "epiphany," a sudden manifestation of the essence or meaning of a particular reality. Reality that has been hidden suddenly becomes revealed. In the context of religious tolerance, this is important because we must accept that people of different religions are not enemies or threats, but fellow humans who deserve respect.

Third, the presence of the face with its differences and uniqueness becomes a way to approach others not primarily through consciousness, but through sensitivity. Only through encounters with "The Other" in all its nakedness and with sensitivity can one

experience the meaning of ethical transcendence. The face reveals a rejection of violence in any form. This point emphasizes the importance of sensitivity in approaching those who are different. Only with sensitivity can each person experience the meaning of ethical transcendence and reject violence in any form. In the context of religious tolerance, this means that people must respect the beliefs and practices of "The Other," even if they disagree or do not fully understand them. People must open their hearts and minds to understanding others with understanding and patience, without resorting to violent or discriminatory actions against those who are different (Levinas, 1987; 2012; Oltvai, 2021).

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that, from Levinas's perspective, ethics provides the most appropriate starting point for understanding the existence of the other in the discourse of religious moderation. The concept of religious moderation, as one that is non-extremist and always acts justly, can also be linked to Levinas's ethics, which emphasizes the importance of not demeaning or oppressing others, but instead respecting their existence and treating them fairly and wisely. Levinas's emphasis on the asymmetric relationship between "The Self" and "The Other" can serve as the basis for the concept of religious tolerance in the discourse of religious moderation. Several pillars of religious moderation are ways to fulfill ethical obligations towards "The Other," such as tolerance, non-coercive religious dissemination, and the relationship between religion and the traditions and culture of local communities that are mutually open.

From Levinas's viewpoint, the practice of religious tolerance must be carried out by considering the concept of ethical relationships between individuals and "The Other." Religious tolerance manifests ethical responsibility to recognize and respect the existence of others with different religions and beliefs. Tolerance can also be perceived as a form of recognition of the existence of others, wherein people have an ethical obligation to respect and allow space for "The Other" to express their beliefs. Levinas's ethics underscores the significance of ethics in human relationships and respecting the existence of others as unique and distinct individuals. In the context of religious moderation, this Levinasian ethics can be applied to build an inclusive, tolerant, and compassionate community.

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