SOCIAL MEDIA, SHIFTING RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY, AND CONTEMPORARY *DA'WAH* IN "POST-SECULAR" INDONESIA

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Abstract

This paper's point of departure is the fact that while the "secularization thesis" has been academically swept away and religion has uninterruptedly been occupying modern public sphere, on the one hand; and the emergence of new media undoubtedly paves the way for various religious expressions, on the other hand; few muslims are fully aware regarding another contemporary religious challenge they have to critically as well as emphatically engage with: a shifting religious authority. In recent years, ulama, kiai, ustadz, or ajengan — to mention just few "old" or traditional religious authorities — should share their authorities with "new" religious authorities with their far-reaching new media they effectively use — Youtube, Podcast, X, Facebook, or Instagram. With respect to certain religious controversies, religious authority is consequently highly contested between those with religious intellectual expertise and "lay" people merely well-trained with excellent command in using new media. In this respect, this paper makes a case that contemporary da'wah should necessarily be equipped with a sophisticated and far-reaching approach derived from a kind of cosmopolitan Islamic worldview through which a pluriversal and peaceful coexistence would possibly prevail. Drawing on progressively more critical and non-essentialist scholarly works and employing decolonial perspective as its theoretical framework as well as critical discourse analysis (CDA) as its method of analysis, this paper seeks to address and sheds its light on the following main questions: how do new media both simultaneously facilitate and posit a critical challenge for contemporary da'wah; and how is cosmopolitan religious consciousness incorporated and nurtured within a pluriversal society and in an era of — what Jurgen Habermas aptly coins as — post-secular age? Against the backdrop of above-mentioned media disruption and undeniable Indonesian socio-cultural pluriversality, this paper contends, a "Cosmopolitan

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Da'wah" is not only possible but also the only academically plausible option to foster.

Keywords: *New Media, Post-secularism, Religious Authority, Death of Expertise, Cosmopolitan Da'wah*

Abstrak

Titik tolak makalah ini adalah kenyataan bahwa sementara "tesis sekularisasi" telah disingkirkan secara akademis dan agama telah tanpa henti menduduki ruang publik modern, di satu sisi; dan munculnya media baru tidak diragukan lagi membuka jalan bagi berbagai ekspresi keagamaan, di sisi lain; hanya sedikit umat Islam yang sepenuhnya menyadari tentang tantangan keagamaan kontemporer lain yang harus mereka hadapi secara kritis sekaligus tegas: otoritas keagamaan yang berubah. Beberapa tahun terakhir, ulama, kiai, ustadz, atau ajengan—untuk menyebutkan beberapa otoritas keagamaan "lama" atau tradisional—harus berbagi otoritas mereka dengan otoritas keagamaan "baru" dengan media baru mereka yang luas jangkauannya yang mereka gunakan secara efektif—Youtube, Podcast, X, Facebook, atau Instagram. Akibatnya, otoritas keagamaan diperebutkan antara mereka yang memiliki keahlian intelektual keagamaan dan orang-orang "awam" yang hanya terlatih dengan baik dengan perintah yang sangat baik dalam menggunakan media baru. Makalah ini mengajukan argumen bahwa dakwah kontemporer harus dilengkapi dengan pendekatan yang canggih dan luas yang berasal dari semacam pandangan dunia Islam kosmopolitan yang melaluinya koeksistensi yang plural dan damai mungkin akan terwujud. Mengacu pada karya-karya ilmiah yang semakin kritis dan non-esensialis dan menggunakan perspektif dekolonial sebagai kerangka teoritisnya serta analisis wacana kritis (CDA) sebagai metode analisisnya, makalah ini berupaya untuk membahas dan menjelaskan pertanyaan-pertanyaan utama berikut: bagaimana media baru secara bersamaan memfasilitasi dan mengajukan tantangan kritis bagi dakwah kontemporer; dan bagaimana kesadaran keagamaan kosmopolitan dimasukkan dan dipelihara dalam masyarakat yang plural dan di era—yang oleh Jurgen Habermas disebut dengan tepat sebagai—era pasca-sekuler? Dengan latar belakang gangguan media yang disebutkan di atas dan pluralitas sosial-budaya Indonesia yang tidak dapat disangkal, makalah ini berpendapat, "Dakwah Kosmopolitan" tidak hanya

mungkin tetapi juga satu-satunya pilihan yang masuk akal secara akademis untuk dikembangkan.

Kata Kunci: Media Baru, Post sekularisme, Otoritas Keagamaan, Matinya Keahlian, Dakwah Kosmopolitan

INTRODUCTION

We live in a post-secular era where both those who claim as religious people or secular ones should live coexistently and consider a mutual respect among people of diverse cultures and faiths as a *conditio sine qua non*. Openness to others constitutes the grammar of post-secular age and adopting the other way around is an ahistorical option and undoubtedly against the grain of plausible life style. Yet, the emergence of social media as the newest form of what is technically termed as "new media" put the expected peaceful coexistence and reciprocal respect within pluriversal society quite difficult to attain. Notwithstanding various positive aspects it brings about—through which religious sermon or preaching activities are easier to undertake and attain far-reaching audiences—other threatening consequences unquestionably deserve serious account.

It goes without saying that thanks to social media, *da'wah* practices (Islamic preachings), or the transmission of Islamic teachings, have been undergoing a major transformation from merely conventional methods which usually involved direct lectures and teachings in mosques or certain religious fora, its activities in disseminating religious messages have now been creatively adapted and radically appropriated by using various social media platforms. However, at the same token, the rise of social media (platforms like Instagram, X, and YouTube) not only manage to facilitate those religious activities and achieve wide-ranging audiences but also, in terms of *da'wah* activities, loosely enables all people—coming from all walks of life and regardless their expertise in religious knowledge—to be "new preachers",[1] "micro intellectuals" [2] and, in turn, brings about religious authority at stake.

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[1] Wāʾil Luṭfī, *Ẓāhirat al-Duʿāt al-Judud: Taḥlīl Ijtimāʿī: al-Daʿwah, al-Tsarwah, al-Syuhrah* (Cairo: Al-Hayʾah al-Misrīyah al-ʿĀmmah li al-Kitab, 2005).

[2] Bryan Turner states that the coming of new intellectuals, thanks to the presence of new media, "represent a sharp break from traditional, conservative, formally trained Muslim leaders and religious authorities (the *ulama*) of earlier generations, and their appeal is different from that of the secular, nationalist intellectuals of the 1970s". Citing Olivier Roy,

It could be even contended that one among the most important impacts of social media is the fracturing of religious authority through which certain "partial" or even "uncommon" religious interpretations exercised by lay people with good command in using social media oftentimes manage to prevail among Muslim community and put aside an authoritative and more academically plausible interpretations of religious experts (*'ulama*). To a certain extent and in several cases, what Tom Nichols aptly calls as the "death of expertise"[3] has also plagued our religious life in this era of media disruption. Ordinary people will preferably listen to a well-known public figure or celebrity with a large number of fans instead of the religious opinions of a qualified religious expert who is little known to the public.

This phenomenon blatantly shows new dynamics in how religious messages are delivered and received as well as how religious authority is maintained or challenged in this digital era. Lest this phenomenon critically goes unaddressed, a serious danger that will arise will not have only to do with the state of religious authority, but there will also blur and perplex Muslims in general in adopting the "sound" or "correct" religious interpretation. In this regard, the practices of contemporary religious preaching do require new perspectives and in dire need of theoretical re-examination.

This paper, hence, aims to explore analytically how social media—as a most cutting-edge kind of new media— influences religious authority in Indonesia, how da'wah practices are changing in "post-secular" Indonesian context, and what religious contents are deemed politico-socially appropriate to convey publicly as well. Furthermore, since they are unquestionably deeply intertwined, it is argued that a sound understanding of the relationship between social media, religious authorities, and da'wah method, can pave the way for a deeper insight into the dynamics of Islam as a religion as well as the challenges faced in maintaining its relevance and influence in an ever-evolving Indonesian society today. By so doing, a proper

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he reiterates that "Critics of these new intellectuals often refer to them as 'micro intellectuals' and argue that they are dumbing down the religious message of orthodox Islam". See, Bryan S. Turner, "Religious Authority and the New Media," *Theory, Culture & Society,* 24: 2 (2007): 117-34, particularly p. 128, doi: 10.1177/0263276407075001.

[3] Tom Nichols, *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign Against Established Knowledge and Why it Matters* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2017).

da'wah method or plausible approach is expected to prevail. A "cosmopolitan" *da'wah*, so this paper contends, is a suitable approach for traversing these entangled dynamics.

To sum up, it is the contention of this paper that new media, religious authority, and *da'wah* practices are incessantly altering and all Muslim preachers are accordingly in dire need for a contextual and appropriate method in conducting their noble activities. Prior to step further, however, the discussion of research method and certain technical terms used throughout this paper is in order.

While this paper heavily draws on progressively more critical and non-essentialist scholarly works and employs decolonial perspectives as its main theoretical lens, it also engages with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its method of analysis.

The decolonial perspective in social-humanities studies is an approach that seeks to challenge and dismantle the legacy of colonialism and coloniality in knowledge, culture, politics, and social structures. This perspective not only challenges the history of colonization, but also challenges how ways of thinking, values, and knowledge systems originating from Europe still dominate and oppress other ways of life and thinking in the non-Western world. Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh's *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* is one of the important works that formulates a systematic decolonial framework.

Some important points of Mignolo's perspective (particularly in his two chapters, "What does it Mean to Decolonize?" and "The Conceptual Triad: Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality") are, *first*: coloniality as the dark side of modernity. Mignolo emphasizes that modernity always has a dark side which he calls coloniality. According to him, modernity is built on exploitation, conquest, and the imposition of European ways of thinking on the rest of the world: "There is no modernity without coloniality."

Second, decoloniality as epistemic liberation. This means that decoloniality is not only about politics or economics, but especially about epistemic liberation: freeing oneself from the dominance of Western knowledge and reviving other ways of knowing and being, such as indigenous knowledge, indigenous cosmology, and non-Western philosophy. *Third*, pluriversality as an alternative to the myth of universality. Mignolo rejects the idea of the universality of Western knowledge. He

advocates pluriversality: the recognition that there are many valid and equal ways of being, thinking, and knowing, not just one Western "universal truth." *Fourth*, decoloniality is essentially praxis; not just theory. It is praxis in education, politics, art, and everyday life.[4]

The decolonial perspective is also exemplified in the so-called "Epistemologies of the South" — a term firstly coined by Boaventura de Sousa Santos and constitutes his theoretical proposal to disclose, among other things, the concept of cognitive injustice since, according to him, "there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice" and "the emancipatory transformations in the world may follow grammars and scripts other than those developed by Western-centric critical theory."[5]

Critical Discourse Analysis is an approach to discourse studies that emphasizes the relationship between language, power and ideology. CDA focuses on how texts or discourse function in social and political contexts, and how language can influence and be influenced by power structures and social relationships. What is called text in this sense refers to a unit of communication that can contain a message or meaning, and this is not limited to just writing. Text can be in the form of writing, images (graphics and illustrations can be considered text if they convey a certain meaning or message), video, or audio in the form of sound recordings or podcasts can also be considered text, especially if they convey a certain message or information.

In discourse analysis, all these forms of media can be considered texts if they have a communicative function and can be analyzed to reveal meaning, ideology, and power relation. The CDA approach can be applied to these different types of texts to understand how they function in their social and cultural contexts. The steps in critically analyzing discourse include selecting the text or discourse to be analyzed and attempting to understand the social, political and historical context in which the text was

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[4] Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press 2018), 105-152.

[5] Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* (New York: Routledge, 2014), xi, 118. In addition to Santos some scholars like Syed Farid Alatas, Vineeta Sinha, and Raewyn Connell also work under the similar epistemological stance. See Raewyn Connell, *Southern Theory: The global dynamics of knowledge in social science* (Nest NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2007); and Syed Farid Alatas, Vineeta Sinha, *Sociological Theory beyond the Canon* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

produced. This includes analyzing the intended audience as well as the social and political background of the author or speaker. After that, the researcher examines the structural elements of the text such as word choice, language style, sentence structure, and grammar, in addition to focusing the analysis on how these elements are used to form meaning and ideology. An examination of the power relations reflected in texts should also not be neglected because texts, within certain limits, often reflect and strengthen existing power structures. Researchers take seriously how such discourse might strengthen or challenge social, political, or economic power.

Identifying the ideology contained in the text is also important because the text shapes, is shaped, and is influenced by a certain world view, and, therefore, it must also be analyzed how ideology influences the message conveyed. Furthermore, it is necessary to review how texts can influence audiences and society in general by emphasizing the social, political and cultural impacts of the discourse, ending with critical reflection. By following these steps, in-depth and comprehensive critical discourse analysis can be carried out, and will provide insight into how language functions in social and political contexts.[6]

DISCUSSION
Social Media and Its Discontent

Drawing particularly on Francis Robinson's research regarding the enormous influence of print culture on the literacy level of Muslim communities,[7] Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori contend that the fracturing of Islamic authority has radically occurred, owing in part to the emergence of new media. Because, despite the "blessings" of new media such as social media for the birth of pluralistic religious understanding or more democratic theological interpretation, its emergence has also unintended consequences such as the rise of "hard-line Muslim groups" who

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[6] Haryatmoko, *Critical Discourse Analysis (Analisis Wacana Kritis): Landasan Teori, Metodologi dan Penerapan* (Jakarta: PT. Rajagrafindo Persada, 2017).

[7] Francis Robinson, "Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print," *Modern Asian Studies*, 27: 01 (February 1993): 229-251. Benedict Anderson's well-known account on the origin of nationalism as well as the genesis of nation-state and its intimate relationship with print world is unquestionably worth-reflecting comparatively. See his highly celebrated tome, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* revised edition (London: Verso, 2006).

actually do not have the competence or credentials of religious knowledge but social media unfortunately gives them the opportunity to control the religious public space.[8]

Put differently, social media platforms such as X (previously Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, as the newest kinds of new media, have profoundly changed the way we communicate. It has successfully revolutionized the means of communication; and these platforms, for religious preachers, undoubtedly offer unprecedented opportunities to reach diverse audiences and engage intimately with their followers in (oftentimes) real-time.

In the view of Michael Mandiberg,[9] an eminent academic of social media for his contributions to understanding and analyzing this field of research, social media should indeed be understood as a platform that allows users to interact, share and create content online. He defines social media as a platform that prioritizes active participation from users in creating and disseminating content. According to him, social media is not only a place to share information, but also functions as an arena for collaboration, social interaction and community formation. More explicitly, he describes social media as media with a level of active user involvement in the creation and dissemination of content. Users, according to him, are not only consumers of information but also producers.

Apart from that, social media also really sustains interaction and communication between users. This includes various forms of communication such as direct messages, comments, and content sharing. Another characteristic of social media is the existence of content created by the users themselves, whether in the form of text, images, videos or other forms of content. Social media also facilitates the formation of communities and social networks, where users can connect with each other based on

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[8] Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson, *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere*, 2nd, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003); Jon W. Anderson, "The Internet and Islam's New Interpreter," in Dale F. Eickelman and Jon Anderson, eds., *New Media in the Muslim World*, pp. 45-59; Gary R. Bunt, *Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

[9] Michael Mandiberg, ed., *The Social Media Reader* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2012).

shared interests, hobbies or goals. Social media platforms also typically have a constant stream of content that is constantly updated and changing, creating a dynamic and always new environment. In Mandiberg's view, it is very important to understand social media not only as a technological tool but also as a social phenomenon that, in turn, influences the way we communicate and interact in the digital world. Abundant numbers of research on how social media closely intertwines with religious preaching activities resonate and echo the above mentioned Mandiberg's view.[10]

Fracturing Religious Authority

In the view of Gudrun Kramer and Sabine Schmidtke, "religious authority is an elusive concept and notoriously difficult to define". For them, since "authority describes the ability (or "chance" as Weber put it) to have one's rules and rulings followed, or obeyed, without recourse to coercive power," deploying Weber's concept, they contend that "it is indeed the very absence of coercion that for Weber distinguishes authority (*Autorität*) from power (*Macht*)." They go on stating that the so-called "religious authority" is undoubtedly open for ascription to individuals, groups of people, or institutions. In their view, "Like any kind of authority, religious authority does not denote a fixed attribute, but is premised on recognition and acquiescence…it is relational and contingent."[11]

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[10] Martin Slama, "A Subtle Economy of Time: Social Media and the Transformation of Indonesia's Islamic Preacher Economy," *Economic Anthropology*, 4 (2017): 94–106; Martin Slama, "Practising Islam through Social Media in Indonesia," *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 46: 134, (2018): 1-4, doi: 10.1080/13639811.2018.1416798; Talib Hussain and Dake Wang, "Social Media and the Spiritual Journey: The Place of Digital Technology in Enriching the Experience," *Religions* 15: 616, 2024, doi.org/10.3390/rel15050616; Dayana Lengauer, "Sharing Semangat Taqwa: Social Media and Digital Islamic Socialities in Bandung," *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 46:134, (2018): 5-23; Eva F. Nisa, "Social media and the Birth of an Islamic Social Movement: ODOJ (One Day One Juz) in Contemporary Indonesia," *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 46: 134, (2018): 24-43; Fatimah Husein and Martin Slama, "Online Piety and Its Discontent: Revisiting Islamic Anxieties on Indonesian Social Media," *Indonesia and the Malay World,* 46, 134, (2018): 80–93.

[11] Gudrun Kramer and Sabine Schmidtke, "Introduction: Religious Authority and Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies: A Critical Overview," in Gudrun Kramer and Sabine Schmidtke, eds., *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2006), 2-3. See also Masooda Bano, "Introduction," in Masooda Bano, ed., *Modern Islamic Authority and Social Change, Volume 1: Evolving Debates in Muslim-Majority Countries* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 1-51; and Jon W. Anderson,

In other words, Gudrun Kramer and Sabine Schmidtke define religious authority as referring to individuals or institutions that have power or influence in the interpretation and application of Islamic religious teachings. This, according to both, includes various forms of authority, from traditional clerics and Islamic educational institutions, to individuals or groups that influence understanding of religion in society. There are several types of religious authority that can be identified such as, for example, *scientific authority*. This authority is based on deep religious knowledge and is usually held by clerics or scholars engaged in in-depth study of Islamic law, theology, and philosophy. Another type of religious authority is *social and political authority* which refers to individuals or institutions that make use of their position in society or government to influence religious practices and related policies.

Aside from the above-mentioned two types of religious authorities, there are also *popular authorities* who are figures who may not have formal education in religious knowledge but have great influence among the general public through means such as sermons, media, or social activities. What should be kept in mind is the fact that religious authority is not only focused on one type of structure or institution, but also is spread across various forms and institutions in Muslim society.[12] Religious authorities also play a significant role in the application of Islamic law and the interpretation of religious teachings. They are the ones who determine how religious teachings are translated into daily practice and how Islamic principles are applied in contemporary contexts.[13]

That said, religious authority is actually persistently evolving and shifting. The advent of social media has caused traditional religious authority structures becoming increasingly challenged and new religious

"Electronic Media and New Muslim Publics," in Robert W. Hefner, ed., *The New Cambridge History of Islam, Volume 6 Muslims and Modernity Culture and Society since 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 648-660.

[12] For a somewhat different discussion on religious authority and how it constantly evolve within Muslim society, see Ismail Fajrie Alatas, *What Is Religious Authority? Cultivating Islamic Communities in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021).

[13] Gudrun Kramer and Sabine Schmidtke, "Introduction: Religious Authority," 1-14. See also Azyumardi Azra, Kees van Dijk, and Nico J.G. Kaptein, eds., *Varieties of Religious Authority: Changes and Challenges in 20th Century Indonesian Islam* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2010).

authority has also altered the religious landscape within which "authoritative" religious authority oftentimes must share his/her religious authority with "unauthorized" religious authority with great number of audiences or followers. Not only religious public sphere that must be shared equally today but religious authority must also be put in the contestation in the "market" of *da'wah* in which religious knowledge expertise is at stake and one's popularity—regardless knowledge expertise any religious preacher holds—can supersede knowledge competence. As numbers of important research have showed, *da'wah* activities are consequently almost equal to other "secular" activities where the logic of market virtually works at its very meaning and within its literal sense as well.[14]

Contemporary Da'wah and (in) Post-Secular Indonesia

In his well-acclaimed book on *da'wah*, Matthew J. Kuiper explicates *da'wah* as "missionary efforts on behalf of Islam (or particular versions of Islam), and/or efforts to encourage Muslims towards a more devoted practice of their faith." He goes on stating that this somewhat loose definition of *da'wah* denotes "efforts that are focused on propagating Islam among diverse populations at the grassroots level" and is approximately synonymous with "'missionary preaching', 'missionary efforts', 'outreach'". It also means "'external *da'wa* (efforts to invite non-Muslims to conversion) and 'internal *da'wa* (efforts to instruct or revive fellow Muslims)". He goes further explaining that "missionary activity on behalf of Islam (or particular versions of Islam) can justifiably be referred to as '*da'wa*', even if in different historical periods the word itself lacked widespread currency." In addition, it is also worth-underlining that, according to him, "*da'wa* has been closely associated with other classical concepts, such as *jihad* (struggle), *al-amr bi'l-*

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[14] Eva Nisa, "Creative and Lucrative Da'wa: The Visual Culture of Instagram Amongst Female Muslim Youth in Indonesia," *Asiascape* 5 (1/2), (2018): 68–99; James B. Hosterey, "Marketing Morality: The Rise, Fall, and Rebranding of Aa Gym," in Greg Fealy and Sally White, eds., *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008), 95-112; James B. Hosterey, "Prophetic Cosmopolitanism Islam, Pop Psychology, and Civic Vertue in Indonesia," *City & Society*, Vol. 24, Issue 1, (2012): 38-61; and Greg Fealy, "Consuming Islam: Commodified Religion and Aspirational Pietism in Contemporary Indonesia," in Greg Fealy and Sally White, eds., *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, 15-39.

maʿruf (commanding the right and forbidding the wrong) and *tabligh* (conveying, communicating, or preaching Islam)."[15]

For the sake of avoiding misunderstanding, the last conceptual term used in this paper, "post-secular/ism", should also be clarified.

Post-secularism or post-secular society is a concept developed by philosopher Jürgen Habermas to describe social and political conditions in which religion returns to play an important role in public life after a period of secularization. Habermas introduced this idea as part of his analysis of the development of modern society and the relationship between religion and rationality. Therefore, to provide an explanation of post-secularism, we inevitably have to discuss the basic concepts of secularism and the secularization that preceded it.

As is commonly known, the so-called "secularization" refers to the process in which religion becomes less dominant in various aspects of social, political and cultural life, and is often replaced by scientific rationality and secular thinking. During the 19th and 20th centuries, many modern societies experienced secularization, with religious institutions losing power and influence in the public sphere. Post-secularism, thus, emerged as a response to the fact that religion did not disappear as some theories of secularization predicted. On the contrary, in many parts of the world, religion has shown a revitalization and plays an important role in public discourse, politics, and personal life. This phenomenon creates a situation where religion and secularism coexist and influence each other in complex ways.

According to Habermas, recognition of the role of religion, dialectics between rationality and religion, pluralism and tolerance, balance, public and political reconfiguration, are some of the key elements of a post-secular society. In this way, according to Habermas, post-secularism reflects a reality in which religion returns to play a significant role in modern society after a period of secularization. Interestingly, Peter L. Berger, one of the greatest proponents of secularization thesis, eventually revised his thesis and publicly contended that his previous sociological view with regard to the

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[15] Matthew J. Kuiper, *Da'wa: A Global History of Islamic Missionary Thought and Practice* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 8. See also his book with similar topic, Matthew J. Kuiper, *Da'wa and Other Religions: Indian Muslims and the Modern Resurgence of Global Islamic Activism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018).

role of religion in modern world was wrong since, according to him, "the world today…is as furiously religious as it ever was and in some places more so than ever". Hence, in his sociological perspective, "whole body of literature by historians and social scientists loosely labeled "secularization thesis" is essentially mistaken."[16]

The concept of post-secularism, simply put, highlights the need to acknowledge the existence of religion, as well as the importance of dialogue and balance between secular rationality and religious belief. Post-secular societies must adapt to these new dynamics in ways that support pluralism, tolerance, and inclusion, while ensuring that public dialogue remains productive and respectful.[17]

Towards a "Cosmopolitan" *Da'wah*

The presence of new media such as social media, as explained from the outset of the paper, not only provides opportunities for convenience in *da'wah* activities with almost unlimited reach but also allows a diversity of religious views to be presented in the public space. Social media, in other words, can become a very effective medium of *da'wah* in the midst of a pluralistic Indonesian society and within the era of—what Jurgen Habermas calls— post-secular age where those who claim to be religious and those who are not religious (not observant Muslims, not devout), even who claim to have no religion, can meet each other, exchange ideas and cooperatively solve shared socio-politico-religious problems as well.

However, managing religious and cultural diversity in the social media space is conversely different from that of the sphere in traditional life when religious authorities still play their role optimally and lay people virtually do not have the opportunity to express opinions haphazardly or express controversial views that differ from those of mainstream religious orthodoxy. Currently, thanks to the ubiquitous social media, Islamic

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[16] Peter L. Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: a Global Overview," in Peter L. Berger, ed., *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1999, 1–18, particularly p. 2.

[17] F. Budi Hardiman, *Demokrasi dan Sentimentalitas: Dari 'Bangsa Setan-setan', Radikalisme Agama, sampai Post-Sekularisme,* 22nd Edition (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2022), 175-275; A. Sunarko, "Ruang Publik dan Agama Menurut Habermas," in F. Budi Hardiman, ed., *Ruang Publik: Melacak 'Partisipasi Demokratis' dari Polis sampai Cyberspace* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2010), 219-240.

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preachers with a good background in religious knowledge have to compete with celebrities with large social media followers and ironically those opinions are often more followed even without adequate religious knowledge. It is at this point that the appropriate *da'wah* approach offered by this paper, a "cosmopolitan *da'wah*", worth considering.

As a conceptual term, the "cosmopolitan" or "cosmopolitanism" is very popular within the academia. Cosmopolitanism is a philosophical and political view that emphasizes that all humans, regardless of national boundaries, culture, or local identity, have the same moral rights and obligations. This concept proposes that there is universal moral equality where all humans have equal moral worth and should be treated with universal respect. Cosmopolitanism also puts forward what is called a global obligation which can be explained simply that we have a moral responsibility towards everyone around the world, including helping those in need and fighting for global justice.

Apart from the above mentioned ideal values, the idea of cosmopolitanism also recognizes a global identity where individuals are considered to have an identity as part of a global community other than their local or national community. Justice and human rights are some of the principles that must be accepted and respected throughout the world. Meanwhile, international cooperation is imagined as a solution to global problems and is suggested to be achieved through cooperation between countries. Cosmopolitanism offers a vision of an inclusive and just global society, but faces challenges in practical implementation, especially in the context of local identities and global inequality.

According to Kwame Anthony Appiah, cosmopolitanism is an ethical and philosophical view that emphasizes two main principles: The *first principle*, universal moral obligation. Appiah argues that we have moral obligations towards all individuals, not just those within our own communities or countries. This means that all people, regardless of their background, have the same moral values, and we should treat them with equal respect and concern. The *second principle*, according to him, is respect for cultural diversity, which means that cosmopolitanism must respect the diversity of cultures and views, and emphasize the importance of dialogue and exchange between cultures. Appiah believes that while we have universal moral obligations, we must also respect and understand

differences in culture and viewpoint, and strive to establish respectful relationships between various groups.

Cosmopolitanism, according to Kwame Anthony Appiah, is the belief that we have a moral responsibility towards all people throughout the world, and that respect for diversity of cultures and views is an important part of global ethics. Appiah emphasized the need for mutual respect and dialogue between various cultures and diverse beliefs, while maintaining commitment to universal moral principles.[18]

In a nutshell, while cosmopolitanism is undoubtedly could be understood in its both *prescriptive* and *aspirational* sense, it can be simply kept in our mind as an idea that as human beings, we are all now members of single world, one community, within which we closely as well as collaboratively engage a shared global responsibilities.

The idea on cosmopolitanism is unquestionably various in its interpretation and Kwame Anthony Appiah's view is just one among them. For those of narrow-minded nationalist, all (self-proclaimed) cosmopolitans are deemed parasitic, rootless and, accordingly, the proponents of cosmopolitan worldview will face—borrowing Appiah's words—"a familiar litany of objection". Yet, taking issue with, and against that, accusation, Appiah contends convincingly that cosmopolitans "can entertain the possibility of a world in which everyone is a rooted cosmopolitan, attached to a home of one's own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different people."[19]

In line with, and in a slight different way, what Kwame Anthony Appiah does, Walter Mignolo, for instance, proposes his critical perspective on Eurocentric cosmopolitanism through what he terms as "Cosmopolitan Localism".[20] Cosmopolitan Localism, according to Walter Mignolo, refers to the integration of cosmopolitan principles with deep local understanding and practices. This concept emphasizes the importance of recognizing and

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[18] Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007).

[19] Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Cosmopolitan Patriots," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 23, No. 3, Front Lines/Border Posts (Spring, 1997): 617-639, direct quotation from p. 618.

[20] Walter D. Mignolo, "Cosmopolitan Localism: A Decolonial Shifting of the Kantian's Legacies," *Localities,* 1 (2011): 11–45.

respecting local diversity while remaining connected to the global community.

Cosmopolitan Localism prioritizes respect for locality so that cosmopolitanism, according to Mignolo, must include and appreciate local uniqueness and perspectives. This means that while connecting with the world globally, we must also respect and celebrate local practices, knowledge and identity. Apart from that, according to Mignolo, Cosmopolitan Localism has an agenda for decolonizing knowledge by ceaselessly trying to decolonize European cosmopolitan knowledge and practices by challenging the dominance of hegemonic Western views and values. This includes recognizing the knowledge and cultural contributions of different parts of the world, especially those that are often ignored or suppressed in global discourse.

Walter Mignolo also emphasized the importance of mutually beneficial relationships between local and global communities. This means that even if individuals or communities are connected globally, those relationships must take into account local interests and values. Mignolo does advocate the idea that local communities should be empowered to participate in global dialogue and have a voice in decisions that affect them. This means making room for local perspectives in global discourse and not just being a passive recipient of global norms.

Thus, Cosmopolitan Localism, according to Walter Mignolo, is an approach that integrates cosmopolitan principles with appreciation and emphasis on locality. It aims to create more equitable and inclusive global relations by respecting local uniqueness and perspectives and decolonizing knowledge in global discourse. Citing directly Mignolos's words, Cosmopolitan Localism is also expected to "help end any religious or secular claim to universality and to truth and objectivity without parenthesis." It "means working toward a world in which many worlds would coexist; this means working toward pluriversality as a global/universal project."[21]

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[21] Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2012), 209.

Taking "Berbeda Tapi Bersama",[22] "Ngaji Filsafat"[23] and Oki Setiana Dewi's social media, a famous young public figure,[24] as three cases in point, this paper shades its light in analysing critically certain contents of those three very popular social media by deploying the concept of "cosmopolitan *da'wah*" as previously proposed. This paper contends that those social media—while sometime is less sensitive to certain issues with greater human interest, especially those of Oki Setiana Dewi's—have managed to meet Walter Mignolo's "Cosmopolitan Localism" criteria.[25]

The above mentioned three social media are undoubtedly very popular and have been successfully attracting huge audiences in Indonesia. "Berbeda Tapi Bersama", for instance, is social media program hosted by a very well-known young Muslim preacher Habib Ja'far that has managed to get a large audience. An episode entitled "Habib Jafar Kaget, Kejamnya Dukun Kalimantan Bikin Ria Tobat!", for example, was successfully watched and visited by 4.5 million visitors.[26] Through the program, Habib Jafar hosts informal discussions on diverse social issues by inviting guest stars with different backgrounds from famous cultural activists, stand-up comedians, to controversial figures.

With its tagline "private Madura cafe, a place to stop by to tell stories about togetherness amidst differences with Habib Jafar", an episode entitled "Davi Sumbing Sukses di Musik dan Sampai Ikut Les Vokal?",[27] for example, interestingly discussed Davi's engaging life story, the ups and downs of a disable figure, in a very humanistic and empathetic way. Through the

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[22] https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLO1Uccez2t66JV269hhMGIyZIzfW0ih3B

[23] Ngaji Filsafat is one of programs conducted and then broadcasted through the official youtube channel by young Muslim activists at Masjid Jenderal Sudirman besides other diverse programs such as *Khutbah Jumat, Ngaji Kitab, NgabubuRead* and *Tadarus Al-Qur'an* during Ramadhan month. See, www.youtube.com/@mjschannel.

[24] https://www.youtube.com/@OSDokisetianadewi

[25] Following Kairuddin Aljunied as he conducted his research on Southeast Asian muslim communities and drew his theoretical framework on Walter D. Mignolo's "Cosmopolitan Localism," it is cosmopolitan in Walter D. Mignolo's sense that I also engage with throughout this paper. See Kairuddin Aljunied, *Muslim Cosmopolitanism: Southeast Asian Islam in Comparative Perspective* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017).

[26] (Last visit on Friday, May 30, 2025).

[27] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsXWcLVDwi8. This episode attracted 175 thousand views (visited on Friday, May 30, 2025).

program, the audiences are invited to engage emphatically in the life of "the other" and foster humanistic values and cosmopolitan sensibilities as well.

"Mega Salsabilla dari Funk Penuh Tato Sampai Hijrah dan Umroh" is another interesting episode through which the story of a young Muslim girl is not only worth-reflecting but also revealing certain uncovered sides of a funk community. Getting 190 thousand views, the life story of this former funk member covers her life trajectories that transform from the streets, as a funk member, to the stage, as a rising star stand-up comedian. Likewise, her spiritual commitment is another interesting aspect discussed throughout the program.[28]

In addition to above-two themes, other themes like "Onad Curhat Soal Beby dan Anaknya di Warung Madura Habib",[29] "Habib Jafar Bahas Raja Jawa Sebenarnya Sampai Pengalaman Login",[30] "Habib Jafar Vs Pemuda Tersesat!",[31] or "Sujiwo Tejo dan Habib Jafar Bahas Soal DiskriminasiAgama Antarumat"[32] are not less thought-provoking and equally worth-watching. Disseminating cosmopolitan consciousness and raising inclusive religiosity through an entertaining program are unquestionably brilliant option to choose at the time when we live in a borderless and pluralistic world.

The second case in point, "Ngaji Fisafat", is a program broadcasted by young muslim activists at Masjid Jenderal Sudirman, Yogyakarta. They build website mjscolombo.com and its main objective is intended, as officially written in their website, as a medium for *da'wah* and dissemination of information on religious studies and Quranic recitations held by the Jenderal Sudirman Mosque. Founded in 1394 AH (1974), activists of Masjid Jenderal Sudirman (MJS) host a series of activities within a spiritual framework, honing intellectualism, while exploring culture. The mosque, in their religious view, should not just become a place of prostration, but also a place of study, research, Quranic recitation and literacy activities in their widest sense.[33]

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[28] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFqrGIuPJ7U.

[29] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5LyKN5T706s. This episode attracted 222 thousand views in four months.

[30] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkKi80c-oZk

[31] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBQ-324OO2Q

[32] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WEECJQy2ceM

[33] https://mjscolombo.com

While there are many other programs conducted at Masjid Jenderal Sudirman, "Ngaji Filsafat" remains its most popular program through which various themes of philosophical discourse are intimately discussed. The latest episode, for instance, discussed the crucial role of *mursyid* (spiritual leader/teacher) within the praxis of Islamic mysticism or Sufi order (*thariqat*).[34] Against the grain of what we are told about philosophy—as a serious subject and not for common people—the program has managed to host diverse philosophical issues regarding religious thought, education,[35] the crucial roles of intellectuals,[36] environment or land ethics,[37] or even the so-called "post-normal times"[38] and "burnout society"[39] as reflected in both Ziauddin Sardar's and Byung Chul Han's philosophical thoughts respectively, in a very "friendly" approach and highly accessible for common audiences.

Fahruddin Faiz, a doctor of philosophy at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Yogyakarta, has been consistently the presenter of this program since 2013, weekly every Wednesday night. He has been unwaveringly providing material and sparking discussions on the cutting-edge themes of philosophical issue at the Jenderal Sudirman Mosque and then broadly broadcasted through social media—MJS youtube channel.

The last but not least is Oki Setiana Dewi's social media, a young Muslim woman preacher with 3.31 million subscribers, and to date has managed to produce 1.6 thousand videos. With various theme from family life and Quranic learning as well as its recitation her videos have constantly been attracting great number of audiences. With regard to the themes of videos, in contrast with "Ngaji Filsafat" or "Berbeda Tapi Bersama", she sometimes produces her quotidian-yet-fascinating activities such as

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[34] "Ngaji Filsafat 467: Peran Mursyid dalam Tasawuf," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wHbbLN9lq0 (Visited on Thursday, May 29, 2025).

[35] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaEV-iPEDcQ. This episode discusses John Dewes' philosophical thought on education.

[36] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-JB2oHnXms. This episode vividly discusses Edward Said's thought on the expected critical roles of intellectuals within their society.

[37] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgFcrcRuAUc. This episode talk was about philosophical ethic of land as reflected in Aldo Leopold's thought.

[38] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VsluoVv87HA

[39] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZlYf5PH4lPo

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traveling. Her video entitled "Berangkat ke Mesir Ninggalin Sulaiman Sendiri di Indonesia!", for example, successfully got 1.44 thousand views.[40]

However, she sometimes hosts a certain crucial issue with regard to the role of wife in the family. In an episode entitled "Ketika Istri Mencari Nafkah untuk Keluarga, Betapa Muianya", for instance, she argues a somewhat progressive theological stance that at odd with mainstream conservative religious views. While the latter generally idealize domestic roles of wives in the family, Oki Setiana Dewi's religious view stands for its opposite instead.[41]

CONCLUSION

Keeping attentively cosmopolitan values and its sensibilities in mind, *da'wah* or preaching activities should not unquestionably cover religious theme in its narrow or parochial sense. All human problems — not excluding "ephemeral" things yet remain worth-solving — should equally be addressed since Islam regards them as part and parcel of its very teachings. The ubiquitous social media should undoubtedly help "rooted-cosmopolitan" Muslim preachers in managing diversity of culture, local-national political ideology, social justice and welfare, while critically engaging in global issues from literacy rate to even economic injustice, global warming or climate issues.

Any *da'wah* activity today needs and necessitates not only a high personal competence in terms of technical capability in using new media but also requires a kind of rooted-cosmopolitan sensibility or critical awareness through which religious preachers (*du'at*) navigate and traverse pluriversal themes or topics ranging from quotidian life problems to worth-reflecting and responding global controversies. This cosmopolitan sensibility should not be nurtured and preserved in a rootless way but, instead, critically incorporated within the practices of *da'wa*h that highly celebrate diversity and multicultural issues with a peaceful coexistence and global justice as its highest religious objective.

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[40] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOCZd8X4x0Y, (Visited on Friday, May 30, 2025).

[41] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3EZ4GU4sMs

By so doing, the birth of so-called micro-intellectuals, new preachers, or "death of religious expertise"—owing partly to the evolving emergence new media/social media—can be comprehensively dealt with. In this respect, "Berbeda Tapi Bersama", "Ngaji Filsafat" and "Oki Setiana Dewi" are three social media programs that successfully deal with contemporary *dakwah* problems and exemplify the practices of "cosmopolitan *dakwah*".

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