The Threat No More? Indonesian Atheists, Pancasila, and the Search for A Common Moral Ground

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Abstract

The fall of Soeharto's rule in 1998 marked the beginning of a new era in Indonesian democratization, allowing old and new voices in the public realm, including atheists who defined themselves as no less Indonesian and, more crucially, no less moral than the rest. Globalization and increasing access to information and communication technology facilitated this. This article analyses how and why Indonesian atheists have become more outspoken in recent years about their lack of religious belief and defence of their denial of the existence of any deity or gods in response to their upbringing, education, news about religious radicalism, liberalism, and scientific advancement. These atheists provide context for atheism in Indonesia. They also redefine Indonesia as a non-religious nation-state, despite the country's Muslim population and efforts and aspirations to bring it closer to an Islamic state or culture. In numerous official declarations and textbooks, Indonesia has historically been referred to as neither a theocracy nor a secular state. It is a Pancasila state. Indonesian atheists redefine the country as a whole by reinventing Pancasila and Bhineka Tunggal Ika. They are not opposed to collaboration and unity. Instead of sacred or religious principles, they emphasize humanity and morality as common values.

Key Words

Atheists, Indonesia, Pancasila, common moral ground

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Introduction

In June 2012, Alexander Aan, a 31-year-old civil servant in West Sumatera province, was taken into custody by the police, and charged with "blasphemy" when he declared on Facebook in February 2012 that "God doesn't exist" and called himself the Atheist of Minang ("Ateis Minang"). After receiving reports by the Indonesian Council of Islamic Scholars (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia* [MUI]), who charged him with "disseminating information aimed at inciting religious hatred or hostility", with "religious blasphemy", and with an act of "calling for others to embrace atheism", the court decided that his words incited hatred and animosity against religious groups, but charged Aan under the 2008 Cyber Crime law, (rather than the "blasphemy law"), to two-and-half year in jail and a fine of 100 million rupiah ($US 10,600). Aan later issued an apology for his Facebook posts and converted to Islam, praying "for God's mercy."

This arrest caused a mixture of international and domestic reactions in various forms: petitions, op-eds, news stories, and comments on social media. New public discourses were created. Some say "The arrest is a violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights"; "It is a serious setback for freedom of expression in Indonesia"; "Atheism does not pose a threat to public order"; "The arrest is a violation of freedom of expression and conscience". Others say "Aan's blasphemous words cannot be tolerated"; "Aan deserves more than that: beheading"; and "If you are an atheist, Indonesia is not for you".

Why did the issue become controversial in Indonesia and attract much international attention? Why do many Indonesians see atheism as a threat to public order? What are we to make of hatred and discrimination by the state and religious groups and leaders? Because Pancasila has been regarded by many as the ideology of compromise and tolerance, to what extent does it serve as a viable public ethical foundation across divisions of faith (and conscience, which would include the non-believers)? How and why do Indonesian atheists emerge? How do the atheists (including agnostics, freethinkers, the nones) negotiate their atheist identity and moral conscience in both national and international contexts? How are they trying to search for a new common ground for coexistence?

In this paper, I explore some philosophical, legal, and ethical aspects of the contemporary debate concerning atheism, using primarily online sources, including email interviews with two Indonesian atheists, as a way of exploring the meanings of tolerance and public ethics in both global and national context, in both predominantly religious and marginally non-religious Indonesia.

Indonesia is home to more Muslims than any other country in the world, but also to several million Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and others. Under former President Suharto's 'New Order' regime (1966-1998) inter-religious 'tolerance' was fostered through a combination of education and the brutal suppression of dissent. With the collapse of the regime in 1998 limitations on public expression were relaxed, giving rise to a vibrant debate around the relationship between religion and the appropriate use of state power. Theist and atheist participants in this debate have drawn inspiration from an often eclectic range of traditions, variously linking and opposing the ideals of Enlightenment with religion and nationalism rooted in the history of the Indonesian struggle for independence and the diverse yet unitary state. In the following section, I will review the mainstream, theistic views of Pancasila and Bhineka Tunggal Ika before I discuss the rise of Indonesian atheists and their views of these philosophies and then discuss the atheists' hopes for tolerance and common ground in Indonesia.

There have been studies on the rise of atheism in Indonesia. Pioneering studies on Indonesia's atheism include works Atack (2014), Hasani (2016), and Duile (2018, 2020). These were followed by other studies such as those by Himawan et al. (2022), Peranginangin (2022), and Adithia et al. (2023). Nevertheless, in general, literature on Indonesia's atheism is relatively new and scant so it still needs further exploration on understanding atheism in Indonesia. In response, this paper attempts to contribute to this literature by examining how and why Indonesian atheists have become more outspoken in recent years about their lack of religious belief and defence of their denial of the existence of any deity or gods and providing contexts for the rise of atheism in Indonesia.

Theistic Views of the State's Philosophy of *Pancasila*

Pancasila in particular has been regarded as uniquely Indonesian from its formation in 1945 to the present day. It has incorporated world ideologies – notably world religions (belief in one God), humanism (humanity that is just and civilized), nationalism (unity of Indonesia), democracy (democracy guided by the wisdom of representative deliberation), and socialism (social justice for all Indonesians), as penetrating the newly built, nation, and yet it has made them national. Pancasila itself is a Sanskrit phrase meaning five principles, which were stated in the preamble of the new Indonesian Constitution (*Undang-Undang Dasar*) in 1945 (thus called the 1945 Constitution). Yet, although it is a unifying ideology for many, its meanings and interpretations have become contested throughout Indonesian history.

Criticisms have been directed not only toward the interpretations of others or manipulation of particular regimes such as the one under Soeharto (1966-1998) but also toward its very existence and status as the state's philosophy, as the basis for political parties and organizations in Indonesia. It is a complex history in itself, but for the purpose of this paper, some references to Pancasila (particularly the first pillar "belief in one God) as defined and interpreted concerning theism (or lack of attention to atheism) by some well-known leaders are in order.

There were three formulators of Pancasila: Muhammad Yamin, Supomo, and Soekarno. Muhammad Yamin said that there were several possible names: Pancasila, Trisila, or Ekasila, and he asked a linguist who suggested he used "pancasila", supported by others on the committee of nine leaders. Soekarno, one of the formulators of Pancasila, defined it as "the philosophical basis for free Indonesia": "the fundamental, the philosophy, the underlying reason, the spirit, or the deepest desire, on which to build the structuring of a Free Indonesia, enduring and age-long." (Soekarno 1947). "Belief in God the Almighty" came the fifth in one of Soekarno's formulations: Indonesian nationalism, internationalism or humanism, consent, or democracy, social prosperity, and faith in God the Almighty. Soekarno said,

> The principle of Belief in God! Not only should the people of Indonesia have a belief in God, but every Indonesian should believe in his own particular God. Christians should worship God according to the teachings of Jesus Christ, Moslems according to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, and Buddhists should discharge their religious rites according to their books. But let us all have belief in God…. (Soekarno 1947:28).

For Soekarno, "Indonesians have always lived their life, worshipping something into which they have put all their wishes and belief." Soekarno himself believed in God and said in one of his speeches: "Is God changeable? No! God does not change. The essence of God does not change. What is changeable is the perception of human beings" (Notosusanto 1981:13-24).

In the early time, there emerged two major political factions: Islamist nationalists and secular nationalists. In the preamble of the Constitution, in "Belief in God", a phrase was added to it: "with the obligation for adherents of Islam to practice Islamic law" (*Ketuhanan, dengan kewajiban menjalankan syari'at Islam bagi pemeluk-pemeluknya*" (later called "the Jakarta's Charter") to resolve the tension between the Islamist and secular nationalists (Notosusanto 1981). Another compromise was made: the

Belief in God became the first instead of the fifth principle as in Soekarno's original formulation. However, this compromise with an additional phrase was ambiguous and problematic. Due to some perceived and real resistance voiced by Christian committee members who demanded the omission of the phrase (of the Jakarta's chapter), on August 17, 1945, the first principle became: "Belief in the one and only God" (*Ketuhanan yang Maha Esa*). A Hindu delegate proposed to delete the Islamic word "Allah" in the Preamble and to replace it with *Tuhan Yang Maha Kuasa* (God the Almighty), but without success (Kim 1998:359). The 1945 Constitution stipulated in Article 29: Verse 1: the State is based on belief in One God; Verse 2: the State guarantees the freedom of each citizen to have their own religion and to observe their religious duties according to their own religion and belief. In this Article, there was no specific formulation as to what each of the concepts of God (*tuhan*), religion (*agama*), and belief (*kepercayaan*) means, leaving ambiguity and multiple interpretations.

In 1945 and throughout his tenure, Soekarno tried to offer a compromise among the existing religions but didn't say in any explicit way about atheism or those without religions. He was concerned about how the believers of God could be equal in the new state and how they could practice their own ways of worshipping God in a "civilized way": "the way of mutual respect… a belief in God which has respect for one another" (Soekarno 1947:28). In 1965, a presidential decree (signed by Soekarno) listed religions followed by Indonesians: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. But it also stated that this doesn't mean that other religions such as Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Shintoism, and Taoism are prohibited in Indonesia. These religions are fully guaranteed in so far as they do not violate the stipulations in this presidential decree or other acts and regulations (Budiyono 1983:106).

Pancasila was regarded as being too strict on the one hand or too inclusive on the other side. Communist leaders also offered their views of the Pancasila. D.N. Aidit, one of the leaders of *Partai Komunis Indonesia* approved Pancasila as the state philosophy, commenting in 1964 that the five pillars "reflected an objective reality, encompassing the interests of all factions among the people of Indonesia and constituted a unifying mechanism in revolutionary struggle…." (Notosusanto 1981:31). More specifically, Aidit saw Pancasila as the tool of unifying the ideologies in Indonesia: nationalism, religion, and communism (Notosusanto 1981:32). The *kepercayaan* (spirituality) groups sought to be recognized as well under the Pancasila (Notosusanto 1981:31). Some of the Islamists wanted more than "Belief in One God", thus reviving the phrase of the Jakarta

Chapter's that was removed. Some of them promoted the banning of the beliefs (*aliran kepercayaan, kebatinan*).

Ministers of Religious Affairs and other Muslim leaders defined religion as a revelation coming from God, having prophets, and holy books, thus excluding indigenous religions and beliefs (Djojodigoeno 1982:126-129). As one of the responses to the debate, the Kebatinan groups had to define their belief: A Congress defined it as the basic source of the principle of Belief in One God, the aim of which is to achieve a noble character and perfection of life (Subagyo 1973:76). Confucians who were included in the official religions category under Soekarno (1945-1965) and then were excluded under Soeharto (166-1998), had to discuss whether Confucianism was a philosophy or a religion (Abalahin 2005:119-142).

There was no explicit reference to atheism. Agus Salim (1884-1954), one of the leaders of the Union of Islam (*Sarekat Islam*) and one of the members of the Committee Nine mentioned above was among the first in making an explicit reference to atheism, albeit in passing, in his writing about the functions of the Ministry of Religion in Indonesia. He wrote:

> How should we interpret religious freedom in our state, which is based on the belief in one God? Can the basis of the state recognize the freedom of conscience of those who deny the existence of God? Or the belief that admits many gods? Indeed and surely! (This is) because our constitution, like other constitutions of the civilized states, recognizes and guarantees freedom of religion, in so far as they do not violate the rights of others, public morality, security and peace (Salim 1951/1952:124-125).

But atheism remains taken for granted, even among progressive Muslim scholars. Abdurrahman Wahid, Nurcholish Madjid, and many others have promoted religious tolerance and pluralism within the framework of multiple religions, although they have talked about religious freedom in general and have become influential figures for some atheists who were learning from their liberal interpretations of religion. Nurcholish Madjid, for example, elaborated and promoted "a common platform", among the Peoples of the Book, Jews, Christians, and Muslims, a phrase derived from a Qur'anic phrase "*kalima sawa"*, based on the unity of God, *tawhid.* For Madjid, universal humanism is framed within the oneness of God. The unity of truth is manifested in the plurality of religion. Another contribution is that Madjid promoted inclusiveness, mutual respect, and tolerance, drawing from the Qur'anic texts, classical and medieval thoughts, as well as modern sources (Madjid 2008:173-194). Madjid's contribution

was his promotion of common ground that goes beyond historical Islam as practised by Muhammad, but also all religions, including Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Confucianism, and other moral teachers (Madjid 2008:173-194).

However, while attempting to describe atheism as broader than communism and saying that not all communists were atheists and not all atheists were communists, Madjid concludes that atheism was a failure, and has no future for Indonesia. Madjid says: "Politically and legally, our state shall not recognize atheism. The New Order has regarded it as the enemy of the State, because of bitter experience in the recent past with the Indonesian Communist Party". Madjid divides atheism into "philosophical atheism", "polemical atheism" or "confessional atheism", "hidden atheism" (the latter being formally religious but the heart denies god). Madjid then discusses atheism from an Islamic perspective of "La Ilaha Illallah" meaning "No God (negation, *al-nafy*) and but GOD (affirmation, *al-itsbat*)". For Madjid, atheism is a form of human arrogance, that is, "a reliance on one's self alone and only from the material side, in understanding "god". From an Islamic view, he says, atheism, as described by Bertrand Russel, is a product of failing to understand god using one's reason and science. Madjid says that Muslims should not fear atheists because Islam was freed from mythology, Islam was for science and civilization that atheists promote. Islam should not be blocked (*mahjub*) by Muslims (Madjid 1995:143-68).

Reading his views about "no compulsion in religion", based on an interpretation of a Quranic verse, one could argue however that Madjid would have supported the freedom of atheists as well as theists in Indonesia, although he didn't mention in his 1995 article referred above, the existence of Indonesian atheists beyond those associated with the Indonesian Communist Party in the recent history of Indonesia. His contemporary scholar, Djohan Effendy, however, was more explicit in suggesting that atheism is a belief and a religion that must be respected (Effendi 2002:135-38). Effendy didn't elaborate on how and why he used the terms "belief" and "religion" for atheism. The point he was making is that atheism had the equal right to exist in Indonesia (Assyaukani 2009).

Many religious scholars (*ulama*) have tended to focus on the debates within the framework of religious tolerance. When they talk about secularism, they talk more about the separation of religion and the public domain. Atheism has received minor attention. There were several fatwas about *kafir,* generally defined as "disbelief". In response to a question on the different kinds of *kafir*, the Nahdlatul Lama, the largest Muslim

organization in Indonesia, established in 1926, issued the following fatwa as follows: There are different kinds of kafir; first, the one who does not believe in God (called *kafir inkar*); second, the one who believes in God in his heart, but does not proclaim this verbally, such as Satan and some Jews (called *kafir juhud*); third, the one who says he believes in God verbally but does not believe it in his heart (*kafir nifaq*); and lastly, the one who knows God in his heart, and says it verbally, but does not obey Him in practice, such as Abu Thalib (called *kafir 'inad*) (Masyhuri 1997:61-62). Here, the term atheism is not mentioned.

The Indonesian Council of Islamic Religious Scholars (*Majelis 'Ulama Indonesia* [MUI]), which was established in 1975 and consists of Islamic scholars from different organizations, issued no *fatwa* about atheism or agnosticism. They have issued fatwas concerning Muslim groups considered controversial or problematic in their views, such as Ahmadiyya, Syiah, Dar al-Arqam, Al-Qiyadah Al-Islamiyyah, religious liberalism, religious pluralism and religions secularism, but not atheism (Majelis Ulama Indonesia 2011: 35-114).

Even the promoters of Pancasila rarely talked about atheism. More recently, political leaders and activists have promoted to revitalize Pancasila as one of the Four Pillars of the Nation (*4 Pilar Kebangsaan*) – the other three being the 1945 Constitution, the Unitary State of Republics of Indonesia, and Bhineka Tunggal Ika (Kansil and Kansil 2011: 9, 31-32). Atheism is mentioned in relation to communism. One of the books about the Four Pillars of the Nation states that communism is atheist. Communism is based on materialism and disbelief in god. Communism says religion is the opium of the people. Therefore, the authors of the book say, it is incompatible with Pancasila (Kansil and Kansil 2011:47). A member of House Representative, Dani Anwar, affirmed the incompatibility of Pancasila and atheism, although he noted Indonesian religious diversity and called for tolerance between religious communities.[1] Religious freedom is formulated in terms of freedom of religion, which doesn't state "freedom from religion". Tolerance (*toleransi*) and harmony (*kerukunan*) are discussed and promoted in terms of tolerance and harmony between religious groups.

In light of the historical and philosophical debates reviewed above, the question of being atheist and being Indonesian offers us a variety of issues about law and ethics as well as Indonesian nationalism and globalization. Because they are Indonesian first before they turn to be atheists, and in many cases, they were religious first before they turned away, Indonesian atheists refer to Pancasila and Bhineka Tunggal Ika in

[1] http://www.mpr.go.id/berita/read/2013/05/31/12125/dani-anwar-ateis-tak-sesuai-dengan-pancasila.

positioning themselves among mainstream Indonesians. They emerge in the contemporary time as a response to multiple phenomena: access to information and science, human rights activism, the rise of new atheist versus religious radicals, and religious liberalism versus fundamentalism in both local and global contexts. In Indonesia, atheism has become one of the public discourses primarily online, although atheists also hold offline gatherings among themselves.

The Rise of Indonesian Atheists

Scholars have tended to analyze Indonesian history as religious history, global and local or indigenous (see Stohr and Zoetmulder 1968). It was after the fall of Soeharto's authoritarian regime in 1998 that atheists emerged in the public sphere, along with new religious movements, Islamic and otherwise. Democratization allows new voices as well as a reassertion of old voices. Atheists, agnostics, or doubters of religion or belief in god or the supernatural, must have existed long before 1998, but self-identification seemed to be recent. They were born and raised in families with the mainstream religions: Islam or Christianity.

Most atheists have not disclosed their names or identities in public areas: many used aliases in their Facebook and Twitter accounts. Some of them have become open, vocal, and articulate. Karn Karnadi, now on his 30, was the founder of a Facebook group called "Indonesian Atheists" in October 2008. He was open to disclosing his identity because he studied and stayed abroad, in Germany, since 2006. Others, who live in Indonesia, who joined the group have decided to be anonymous: some are increasingly open to friends or colleagues. Others remain not, for security reasons as they study or work in an Indonesian environment. They all have been expressing their ideas freely online: Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and emails.

When asked why they become atheists, they responded in different ways. In an email interview with the author of this paper on October 27, 2013, Karl Karnadi said that he became an atheist through a personal search. He was not content with religious explanations about various mysteries that he encountered about the origin of the universe, the origin of humans, the origin of religion, and so forth. He watched documentary films (such as on Discovery Channel) which increased his curiosity and motivated him to read books about science and history. He encountered books by liberal thinkers and priests (such as Anglican Bishop Spong in the U.S.) and ex-nun Karel Amstrong whom he viewed as promoting "love" (*kasih*), rather than hatred (*benci*). He realized there were many religious streams. It took about two years for him before he decided to have a view

radically different from his family and community. He came to believe that it was no longer necessary to read religious interpretations and his religion, Christianity. He then sent an email to his family in Indonesia and openly declared he no longer belonged to a religion (*tidak beragama*). He expressed his gratefulness that his "very religious" Christian parents eventually accepted him although they were worried about his safety due to interviews in the media such as the Jakarta Globe and others in English.[2] Karnadi felt "freer" by expressing his views without fear and hesitation by turning away from any religious affiliation.

Another self-declared atheist did not want to disclose her identity. Let us call her Wati. Wati became an atheist because of "simple logic and rational thinking". She became sceptical about many things and was keen to know the scientific proof. A religious person, she wrote to me in an interview, would think that something has to be created and this universe has to be created but he would stop there. Wati said that she too kept thinking about things as being created, but this made her think that God has to be also created, as a scientific rule called Occam's razor states (She gave me the link: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/occam's%20razor). Therefore, she said, it would make more sense to think that the universe was not created so that God was not absent as He too was not created. The world is easier to be understood as being not created by a being, but it exists naturally on its own.

Wati said that she began to see the irrationality of religion when reading the translation of the Qur'an and reading science and science documentaries. She recalled no specific books that made her an atheist. She became one because of an accumulation of knowledge, simple logic, and humanitarian reason.

Wati learned Islam from her grandmother, who was an activist in the Nahdlatul Ulama organization. Her grandmother offered her a more humanist perspective on Islam. She also met some religious activists who were concerned about equality, humanitarian causes and justice. But she realized that everybody can have different interpretations. She found Islamic laws such as the death penalty, the cutting off of the hands, discrimination against women, hell punishments for other religious peoples, and so forth, no longer relevant in today's era. These laws, for her, were discriminatory and cruel. She had become sceptical since her junior high school years. Wati felt that she didn't need a religion to become a good person. She didn't need the threat of hell for her not to harm others, nor did she need the reward of paradise to act good.

[2] http://xwisnuajix.wordpress.com/2011/08/11/wawancara-dengan-atheis/.

Wati decides not to be open that she is an atheist. Only her close family, close friends, and colleagues know that. She has a foundation working on science development. She doesn't want people to assume that science is a window to being an atheist and fear learning science. She doesn't want people to look at human beings on their beliefs or lack of belief. She wants to see what people do and produce. Religious identification could lead to discrimination.

Her adoptive parent accepted her and she later realized that her father was also a sceptic after she informed him about her being a sceptic. Her blood parents didn't know she is an agnostic but they accept Islam as the religion of peaceful, rather than violent propagation (*da'wa*). She becomes open to others whom she thinks are open to accepting differences, such as activists of the liberal Islam network, researchers, Ahmadi, and human rights activists.

Another atheist discloses her reasons why he or she becomes an atheist by writing and posting an article on the Internet, in *Kompasiana,* a website provided by Kompas Daily newspapers for anybody to post their views on any kind of topic. Her posted name is Rainny Drupadi.[3] She became an atheist not because of her family, her friends, or of marriage (in Indonesia, couples have to be in the same religion to get a marriage license, she noted). Like the other two atheists above, Rainny said that she became an atheist because of her long search for God, but she could not find hard evidence to support God's existence. She admitted that she was raised by a Muslim parent, heard the call to prayer when she was first born, read the Qur'an since childhood, attended Islamic religious studies and gatherings in mosques, fasted, prayed, and paid the *zakat* alms as any other Muslim. Her father and mother were devout Muslims, very tolerant, and encouraged freedom of expression. They motivated her to love reading and science. When she reached junior high school age, she still prayed diligently but began to question god.

Rainny said that she was taught Pancasila in school, but was more an indoctrination than a discussion of ideology and philosophy as she did with her parent. She started to be curious about Pancasila's principle of "belief in god" and Indonesia's slogan Bhineka Tunggal Ika. She asked a question: Why are there many gods? If there were one, the same God, why had there been many, different laws and regulations, she pondered. From then on, she learned about all religions that exist in Indonesia and met different religious leaders (romo, *pedanda, biksu, pendeta,* and *kiyai*). She found that her beautiful journey led her to meet Romo Mangun, a

[3] http://filsafat.kompasiana.com/2010/06/12/mengapa-saya-memutuskan-menjadi-atheis-164721.html.

well-known Catholic priest, and Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), a well-known Islamic scholar, who happened to be a friend of her parent. But she didn't find the answer to her question: Which religion would bring her to God? She realized that the question was false because the answer to the question was a notion that all religions were equally good and following common sense. Her search through encounters with open-minded religious scholars led her to wise words: "Religions are like food, spiritual food, and choose what tastes good to you. If the food were nutritious, it should not be consumed forcefully. Forcing makes the food harmful to you." So she had become sceptical since her high school years. And at 20, she declared to be an atheist. Her encounters with atheists didn't make her an atheist. No atheist encouraged her to be an atheist. An atheist would tell her:" Follow your reason, seek knowledge, and study the history of human civilization."

In the three cases above, there is an emphasis on individual autonomy *vis-à-vis* family and a wider, generally religious community to which they belong. Their search for the truth and constant curiosity about what was taught to them, what they saw on TV or read in books and the internet, and no less importantly, about what they experienced in everyday life.

However, as individuals, they need group support. They felt better to belong to a wider community of like-minded individuals otherwise being in their own private spaces. The three atheists above then became affiliated with a wider network. Some of them administered websites and wrote blogs, and collected materials related to atheism in Indonesia and around the world. One of the websites is called You Ask Atheist Answers ("*Anda Bertanya Ateis Menjawab"* [ABAM], http://fb.ateismenjawab.com), created by Virgi Albiant. This has become the main medium for reaching out to the public. The administrators aim to introduce atheists and debunk false and negative stereotypes about atheists, and ensure moderation by avoiding insults and unhealthy interactions.

In addition, they have a Facebook group called "Indonesian Atheists" that Karl Karnadi created in 2008, as a support group to accommodate atheists, who need help, including those who suffer from difficulty and discrimination in Indonesia. They coordinate their activities offline and online. Offline, they hold gatherings to know each other, to eat and chat among themselves.[4] Wati, the co-founder of Indonesian Atheists referred to above, assisted Karnadi in mapping atheists, agnostics, deists, and others who support the right of atheists. According to her, some atheists were expelled from their homes, beaten by their husbands, and lost their jobs.

[4] Currently the coordinator for Jakarta is Karina and for Yogyakarta is Arimbi Dewinggani.

Wati personally attends and participates in interfaith meetings such as the interfaith network (*Jakatarub*) in Bandung, West Java. She finds that interaction between faith communities and atheists important because "to know the thoughts and views of different people lead to mutual respect of differences".

Apart from that, they have more recently created a Facebook group called "IA Parents" which has members of atheist parents who discuss the bearing and education of their children. The group's 70-plus members discuss topics ranging from specifically atheist issues, such as "What schools are secular?"; "What do you do when a relative asks the children about their religious studies?"; "How do you survive religious holiday gatherings?", to more general ones about sex education, home-schooling and holiday destinations.[5]

Support groups are not sufficient for them. Karnadi and others created a website about atheists in Southeast Asia (http://www.sea-atheists.org/indonesia/) and create connections to international atheists around the world. One of the tweets by an atheist tweep reads: "Humanism. Meeting in Cebu, Philippines, June 21-23, 2013. Asia Humanism Conference: Breaking Barriers" (Karin-isme). The Indonesian Atheists were affiliated with an international organization Atheist Alliance International (AAI) which assists them in introducing Indonesian atheism into the world.

Many Indonesian atheists post tweets actively. They make references to a variety of thinkers and groups whom they support and whom they criticized. Some cited Christopher Hitchen's " Mortality", and Salman Rushdie's words, "the Moment you declare a set of ideas to be immune from criticism, satire, derision, or contempt, freedom of thought becomes impossible" (posted by Karin_isme). Your body is free but your mind is prisoned. " Others criticized the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs: "Department of Religion's budget is much more than Department of Health" (5/16/13). They cited tweets about science news: "Evidence for Evolution. Evidence Against Evolution" (Karin_isme. 5/4/13). Some are critical of the Qur'anic verses, such as this picture tweet: "Surat Al-Maidah: 5:33: Indeed the penalty for those who wage war against Allah and His messenger and strive upon the earth (to cause) corruption is none but they be killed or crucified or that their hands and feet be cut off from opposite sides or that they are exiled from the land. That is from a disgrace in this world; and for them in the Hereafter is a great punishment." Another picture post looks the following: "We want to Kill Myanmar's Budhis!!! :

[5] "Raising Kids without God: Atheist Parents in Indonesia", *the Jakarta Globe,* July 15, 2013, http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/features/raising-kids-without-god-atheist-parents-in-indonesia/

"Bad spelling, bad costume, bad attitude, being proud of wanting to KILL people. Is that your religion of PEACE? " (Karin_isme 5/3/13).

The atheists under study do not want to be dichotomous in seeing whether atheism is foreign or indigenous, Western or Eastern. They would not agree with the binary opposition of the West and the East. The labelling of thoughts as Western or Eastern, to them, would bring people to narrow-minded thinking and even group conflicts. Rationalism and scepticism, Karl Karnadi argued, exist in various forms in the West and the East, such as in Hinduism and Buddhism (as in the Kalama Sutta), among Christian majority and Islamic majority kingdoms. Science, such as math and astronomy, flourished in Islamic empires before European enlightenment, Karnadi said. Karnadi was concerned about people often charging new ideas of "deviant" or "foreign", an act that could lead them to inter-group tribalism.

An anonymous writer posted his or her reconstruction of a brief history of atheism in the world and then in Indonesia.[6] The writer begins with an illustration that up to the seventeenth century, and even until today, belief in God has been taken for granted, although, in our century, there are between 500 and 750 million people who do not believe in God, positioning them the fourth after Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. Citing books, such as *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* and *Atheism: A Very Short Introduction,* the writer associates atheism and deism with European enlightenment and the advancement of modern science and philosophy. Marxism and Communism helped spread atheism, and in contemporary times, new atheists emerge in part as a vocal response to "Islamic terrorism."

The writer then discusses the rise and fall of atheists in a religious Indonesia with her belief in one God, pointing to the difficulty of exploring atheists before colonialism. Atheists emerged with communism, but Soeharto's regime (beginning in 1966) marked the demise of atheism conflated with communism. The writer mentions Haji Misbach, a Muslim trader who turned communist, and Achdiat K. Mihardja who wrote about atheists among Marxist groups in his novel *Atheis* (1943). The clash between the Indonesian Party of Communist and Islam and the military strengthened the perception of atheism as the enemy of the nation. Books, such as *Bahaja Atheisme terhadap Sila Ketuhanan J.M.E*. (The Danger of Atheism to the Principle Belief in God) by Muchammad Iljas (1967) and *Aliran-aliran Besar Ateisme* (Main Streams of Atheism) by Louis Leahy (1985), were produced in Indonesian to refute atheism. Only after the fall of Soeharto, atheistic works have come to the surface in Indonesia. Sigmund

[6] http://garrybrumadyadisty.wordpress.com/2012/04/01/sejarah-singkat-ateisme-modern-termasuk-indonesia-anonim/.

Freud's books including *Totem and Taboo* were translated into Indonesian. Translated were also the works of Nietzsche, Sam Harris, and Richard Dawkins. More recently, the Internet plays a major role in increasing the spread of atheist voices, especially among the youth generation, in the big cities of Indonesia, such as Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, and Bandung. The writer ends the overview with a remark: "Countries with a high percentage of atheists such as Sweden have a low rate of population's birth, whereas countries with marginalization and discrimination of atheists such as Indonesia, the rate is high..."

Indonesian Atheist Views of *Pancasila* and *Bhineka Tunggal Ika*

Generally, these Indonesian atheists are not concerned about whether or not atheism is recognized in the Pancasila state. However, some of them talked about this, given the circumstances and implications for their very existence in the country. When asked about Pancasila as the state's philosophy and in particular the first principle, Karl Karnadi attempted to contextualize it. He said that the principles were created as a unifying tool in the early years of the birth of the Republic when different factions with ideologies competed for influence: Soldiers who were not yet organized, nationalist students, Islamist scholars, Christians, and others. Pancasila was a hybrid ideology deliberately created from various ideologies that existed at the time for them to be united in the new state. It was in that context that the principles, including the belief in God, were formulated. The first principle unified the aspirations of the Islamist groups without alienating Christians and others, whereas other principles accommodate other factions. The belief in God principle was deliberately stated as "Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa" (the one God), rather than "Kepercayaan pada Tuhan" (belief in God), or "*kepercayaan enam agama*" (the beliefs of six religions) to accommodate the existing religions.

Karnadi said that he would not criticize or blame Pancasila's five principles, including the first one. It was by design to unify not to divide people. Part of it was suitable for some factions, and another part for other factions. So, Karnadi continued to say, someone who doesn't believe in God or someone who has a different definition of religion such as minorities cannot be regarded as deviant from Pancasila. For him, deviants are those people who make Pancasila the tool of disunity and conflict.

Likewise, Wati sees Pancasila as a combination of the existing ideologies in Indonesia. The ideology of "divinity" is in the first principle, the ideology of humanism in the second, and so forth. She said that if one holds the view that the first principle means to oblige every citizen

of Indonesia to have a religion or to believe in God, then one should also hold that the second principle obliges you to be humanitarian, the third to be nationalist, the fourth to be democratic, and the fifth to be socialist. Pancasila, she continues to say, can be interpreted according to social development in Indonesia. If an Indonesian society is tolerant toward differences, Pancasila serves as a philosophical basis (*philosopische grundlagen*) for accommodating all views. If society is intolerant toward differences, then Pancasila is a form of enforcement of one particular view. The first principle has to be understood alongside the other principles of humanism and justice.

Another atheist posted an article to argue that an atheist can be a nationalist. Atheists do not contravene Pancasila. Pancasila does not require citizens to believe in One God because Hindus and Buddhists believe not in one God but they are legal in Indonesia. Pancasila doesn't demand Indonesian citizens to have a religion. Indonesian atheists do not find it problematic to have a Pancasila that makes its principal belief in one god or many gods, as long as it makes the State better and progress.[7]

Being an atheist in Indonesia remains a stigma. Even a progressive vice-governor of Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama or Ahok, has to refute a rumour by disassociating himself from being not a believer: "It is not true that if you believe in Pancasila you do not follow the sacred book. Many charge me of being "nonbeliever, atheist". No? I still need God."[8]

Another atheist, named Alex Zulkarnain NoerDars, posted a blog in the form of dialogue among atheists about Pancasila. One suggests erasing the first principle of belief in God because it was a historical accident (Soekarno should have not made it part of the Pancasila in the first place: where are Muhammad Yamin, Syahrir and others who were more secular?) and because different people interpret god in different ways and the State should not interfere in people's belief or disbelief. Another person argues that Pancasila was meant to be a foundation for the State, and it has been broad enough to include even the non-religious as long as its interpretation is not monopolized by certain groups, let alone Islamic radicals. Alex contends that he accepts the first principle of Pancasila in the broad sense, including spirituality.[9]

Another wants to redefine the term "Esa" in the principle of Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa. Esa doesn't mean one. One in Sanskrit or Pali is Eka,

[7] http://laboratoriumreaksi.wordpress.com/2013/02/16/pancasilaateis/; http://hirethetruth.blogspot.com/2012/12/ateisme-melanggar-pancasila-sila-1.html.

[8] http://news.liputan6.com/read/699697/ahok-banyak-yang-cap-saya-tidak-beriman-ateis.

[9] http://alexznoerdars.wordpress.com/2011/05/15/ateis-menerima-pancasila-dialog-tentang-pancasila/.

not Esa. Instead of one, Esa means un-identified, beyond number, beyond form. Our founding fathers were very accommodating![10]

For the atheists we have discussed so far, Pancasila should be open to multiple interpretations.[11] But the national slogan that atheists appropriate and reinterpret alongside Pancasila (and in some cases instead of Pancasila) to support their place in Indonesian civil society is the slogan Bhineka Tunggal Ika, a Sanskrit phrase for unity in diversity. Bhineka Tunggal Ika means to them a principle that does not homogenize ideas and perspectives. The State was born in diversities, not in homogenization. Bhineka Tunggal Ika offers them a sense of being recognized and desires not to be discriminated against as minorities.[12]

Karnadi tends to turn to Bhineka Tunggal Ika, rather than Pancasila, in the context of the common good in an increasingly diverse Indonesia. It is crucial, he said, to maintain diversity in Indonesia because it is unique and enriches the national life. Diversity creates innovation and unique ideas and offers lessons to everyone in seeing the world not in the white/black fashion or friends versus enemies. Diversity at the same time can create clashes and conflict. The only way to live in diversity for common well-being is through healthy debates in the public arena, exchanging ideas in all kinds of forums which function as introducing each other and debunking misconceptions about each other, which tend to lead to enmity. Although this is still far away at this point, Karnadi is optimistic. Bhineka does not mean pretending to agree. It means to be honest in expressing opinions. Karnadi said: "We should respect diversity, support the exchange of ideas openly and resist discriminatory policies that contravene diversity."[13]

For Wati, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika unifies all differences. If Indonesians remember it and Pancasila as the unifying tool, not the forcing ideology, then collective good becomes possible. She believes that individual rights are fundamental. As far as an individual does not harm others physically or directly, then his or her rights should be protected. Wati maintains that the collective good should not deny individual rights. Collective good comes from public interaction to find social order and benefit. But private rights and public rights should be differentiated. Private rights should be protected and applied to every citizen so that conflicts do not harm the public interest. Collective good comes from the altruism circuit in the mind of every human being and a social strategy to survive in society. The

[10] http://forum.detik.com/berdasar-sila-kesatu-pancasila-layakkah-atheis-me-berada-di-indonesia-t602390.html.

[11] http://andabertanyaateismenjawab.wordpress.com/2012/10/14/apakah-ateisme-dilarang-di-indonesia-kaitannya-dengan-sila-pertama-pancasila/.

[12] http://indonesianatheists.wordpress.com/2013/05/22/suratrakyat-mitos-dan-pertanyaan-mengenai-ateisme/#more-244.

[13] http://xwisnuajix.wordpress.com/2011/08/11/wawancara-dengan-atheis/.

concept of collective good has developed according to human knowledge and understanding of human rights.

When asked about tolerance, Karl Karnadi replied that tolerance is to accept the reality that difference always exists and not to pretend that the difference does not exist. Tolerance does not prevent one from having healthy and polite debates and dialogues with good intentions. It is a misconception that to be tolerant people should be silent and should avoid all forms of conflict and controversial issues. Karnadi contends that avoiding differences would create negative stereotypes, which could lead to hatred and enmity.

In the context of religion, Karnadi said, the emergence of diverse groups such as the conservative, the radical, and the liberal, has its causes. Religion has the natural feature of a mechanism to avoid conflict or violation such as blasphemy law and the paradise and hell as reward and punishment. This feature is guided by the scriptures, triggering hate against other religions or religious sects, he said. In ancient and medieval times, this recipe was successful in motivating a great number of people to support wars against other nations with different religious ideologies, but in modern times, this recipe is unhealthy. Suffering and murder occur. In this modern time, to be successful, he said, people should not establish a state based on a religious ideology but should base the state on tolerance toward diversity so that they could use all the resources to the maximum. Today, he said, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and others should work together to be successful.

For Wati, tolerance is a human attitude or behaviour in which a person respects an act of another person so far as the act does not do any harm to him or her directly. Taking the right of another person is intolerant. In her view, to be radical or to be conservative is the right of each individual. To be intolerant is also a right. However, people should stop intolerance, which jeopardizes the right of others, and violent acts. In terms of thinking, every thought, radical or liberal, is subject to critical views. Violence has to be prevented or stopped, but the right of these groups, including the radicals, should be protected. They had the equal right to express their views, but they should not act violently.

Wati argues that there are various reasons why people turn violent. In her study of terrorism in Indonesia, different individuals turn to be terrorists for different reasons: some were influenced by religious interpretation; some needed to actualize themselves in groups (the more radical, the more they become heroes); some become terrorists because of lack of education

so they become intolerant toward other thoughts; others lack interaction with different people with different ideas; some others are mentally ill.

Wati said that she knows liberal Muslim and Christian thinkers and activists and interacts with them in a discussion about science. She agrees with their view that religious interpretation has to be free and progressive. The religious interpretation could be tyranny if it is imposed to be the same or serves as a political tool, rather than a humanitarian factor. However, for her, religion is needed for part of people, not for individuals like herself.

Addressing "Blasphemy Law" and Communist-Atheist Conflation

With the arrest of Alexander Aan mentioned in the introduction, the debate about atheism enters the legal sphere. Another atheist, the administrator of ABAM mentioned above, contends that no single principle of the Pancasila forbids an Indonesian citizen to be an atheist. One of the interpretations of the first principle states that there shall be no compulsion in entering a religion or belief in god toward others. These "others" should include atheists. It is admitted that atheism is not formally recognized in the state, like other recognized religions and beliefs. However, the absence of formal recognition does not mean a contradiction against the law. Pancasila is one of the sources of all laws in Indonesia (Law No.10/2004 on the Creation of Laws, article 2) and no such laws prohibit Indonesians to be atheists. The 1945 Constitution, Article 29 verse 2, stipulates that "the state guarantees freedom of every citizen to adhere to their religion and to worship according to their religions and beliefs".[14]

Pancasila, according to Karnadi, is a hybrid ideology that serves to inspire law, but not the law itself. The existing laws, he believes, have not fully guaranteed the rights of minorities, including atheists. There has not been a law that formally and explicitly protects the rights of atheists to the present day. Politically, during the administration of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, no real actions were done to prevent and address violent attacks against minorities such as the Ahmadiya, Shi'a, and atheists.

For Wati, Pancasila cannot guarantee any rights. It is the law which offers guarantees. However, positive laws in Indonesia prioritise the interests of the majority rather than minorities nationally and locally. But no prevailing law punishes atheists, she argues. But minorities like atheists may be subject to Article 156A of the Criminal Code, *(Kitab Undang-undang Hukum Pidana*, KUHP) concerning "religious insult"

[14] http://andabertanyaateismenjawab.wordpress.com/2012/10/14/apakah-ateisme-dilarang-di-indonesia-kaitannya-dengan-sila-pertama-pancasila/.

or "blasphemy" (*penodaan agama*). This law is discriminatory as she argues: "I think every religion is blasphemous to other religions. In every religion, other religions are false and will go to hell. Isn't this a blasphemy? Unfortunately, minorities suffer from the law". Blasphemy Law is defined under the Indonesian Criminal Code as "publicly expressing feelings or doing something that spreads hatred, abuse, or taints certain religions in a way that could cause someone to disbelieve religion."[15]

The Cyber Crime law, Chapter VII on "the forbidden actions", Articles 27 and 28, used to charge Alexander Aan mentioned above, stipulate legal charges against everyone who deliberately distributes and/or transmits and/or makes access to the content that contravenes "proper conduct" (*kesusilaan*), that contains gambling (*perjudian*), insult of one's name or reputation, threats, false and misleading accusations, which aims at creating hatred or enmity toward an individual or group based on ethnicity, religion, race, and factions (s*uku, agama, ras, dan antar-golongan, SARA*). But the interpretations have been contextual, shaped by socio-religious and political contexts.

Apostasy is often charged against those who differ. Religious people are worried that their children could have been misguided and turned apostates. "He has hurt the feelings of the people in Minang society and damaged the religious structure by his posting," said the local head of the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) Syamsul Bahri Khatib. Another said: "He has violated Pancasila because atheism has no place in Indonesia" (Osman 2012). For the Padang clan chief, Zainuddin Datuk Rajo Lenggang, religious minorities like Aan pose a serious threat to Indonesia's national identity and atheists are particularly risky. He said: "If you are not a religious person, you might be dangerous to others, behaving without control and doing anything you like. Religion brings order. You cannot be an individualist."[16] Zubaidi, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Religious Affairs, said:" We welcome every religion here, six recognized religions". When asked if religions not covered under these categories were also legally protected, he said: "Of course. But, if you are an atheist then it's different. Perhaps Indonesia is not the right country for you" (Aiyar 2013).

Some legal scholars see the first pillar as a compromise between secular nationalists, Muslims, and non-Muslim founding fathers. Indonesian law

[15] On cyber crime bill, see http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/archive/indonesian-cyber-crime-bill-to-spark-debate/349320/; Undang-undang Republik Indomnesia No.11 2008 Informasi dan Transaksi Elektrorik. http://id.wikisource.org/wiki/Undang-Undang_Republik_Indonesia_Nomor_11_Tahun_2008.

[16] http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/may/03/indonesia-atheists-religious-freedom-aan.

scholar Yordan Nugroho said the first Pancasila principle was not intended to ban atheism. "It was meant to bring together the different religions of Indonesia in a fair-minded, compromising manner," he wrote in the Jakarta Globe. He addressed the issue of identity cards. "If atheism were to be banned, similar questions could be raised as to why three religions with no monotheistic belief – Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism –are recognized in Indonesia. Atheists are charged with blasphemy for defiling a religion, and not because of atheism" (Nugraha 2012).

The former chairman of the Constitutional Court, Mahfud MD, incited controversy. He was first quoted to have supported the legalization of atheism and communism in Indonesia. He then refuted that he had said that or that was what he meant. Mahfud MD maintained that no law unambiguously punishes a communist or an atheist. What the State prohibits is "spreading the teachings of communism and atheism through organizations (such as reviving the Indonesian Communist Party) because these are in contradiction with Pancasila." "If a person says he is a communist or an atheist he is not subject to the law. This is different from murder and corruption that have clear laws. Pancasila doesn't judge. Law does".[17] The Congress decree (Consultative Assembly Decree [TAP MPR] No. XXV of 1966) prohibits the spreading of Communism, Leninism, and Marxism. President Abdurrahman Wahid proposed the decree be annulled but many resistances prevented that to happen. There are three reasons put forward by many Muslim leaders for resisting the annulation of the MPR Decree: communism and atheism are identical; communism is not appropriate in religious Indonesian people; and communism in its struggle allows all means to reach its goal.[18]

Thus, for many Indonesian scholars and activists, atheism is subject to an obvious legal judgment in Indonesia.[19] For atheists, there is still a "constitutional dilemma" and philosophical dynamics. The first principle of Pancasila, as also stated in the Preamble to the Constitution, is "belief in the one supreme god" as stated in the 1945 Constitution, Article 29 of the Constitution, and the MPR Decree. "Freedom of religion" in the 1945 Constitution is interpreted as the freedom to be religious (anyone), but to exclude the freedom not to believe in any religion or even in the existence of God.

[17] http://www.tempo.co/read/news/2012/07/12/173416582/Mahfud-Md-Bantah-Legalkan-Ateisme-dan-Komunisme.

[18] http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2012/07/16/06344493/Ketua.MK.Penganut.Ateis.dan.Komunis.Tidak.Dapat.Dihukum.

[19] "Bolehkah Menjadi Ateis di Indonesia?" : Pancasila, Kependudukan, Perkawinan, KUHP. http://www.hukumonline.com/klinik/detail/lt4f4545a9b77df/bolehkah-menjadi-ateis-di-indonesia.

Another difficult situation faced by atheists in Indonesia is the common association of atheists with communists. Pancasila has been held to be the guard of communism. The notion that atheism is illegal has its origin during former President Suharto's New Order regime, which treated atheism as an enemy of the state, because, deemed like communism, it rejects religion. Communism was and is still considered an enemy of the state because of an alleged coup attempt by the Indonesian Communist Party in September 1965. The aftermath saw the bloody killings of thousands of communists and their sympathizers. Atheists, fearing that they would be targeted, had to declare themselves Muslims or Christians to escape death. Since then, atheists eschew disclosing their rejection of God and all religions, for fear of being branded communists or accused of breaching the constitution and the state ideology.

The contemporary Indonesian atheists under study attempt to debunk the misconception. When asked about whether atheists are also fascist and communist, they replied they are not. Atheists disbelieve in God or gods whereas communism is an ideology for proletariat liberation. In Indonesia, an atheist argues, communism emerged earlier through the Islamic Trade Union (*Serikat Dagang Islam* [SDI]) which later became "the red faction" and then the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). However, there were a few communists who were religious such as Tan Malaka (d.1949), one of the Marxist figures and Indonesian founding fathers. Tan Malaka gave a speech at the global Communist meeting in Russia in 1922:

> I have been asked in public meetings: Are you Muslim? yes or no? Do you believe in God? Yes or No? How can we answer these? Yes, I answer. When I stand before God, I am a Muslim, but when I stand before people, I am not a Muslim, because God says many satans (iblis) among the people!"

This statement, for these atheists in contemporary Indonesia, means that atheism and communism are not identical, and communism and religion could coexist. [20]

Wati is aware that the problem in Indonesia is that many people think atheists are communists. She said that she is not a communist, but a libertarian. People become antipathetic toward atheists because they regard them as being immoral. They think that if a human being does not believe in God, and does not believe in paradise and hell, he or she must not have

[20] http://indonesianatheists.wordpress.com/2013/05/22/suratrakyat-mitos-dan-pertanyaan-mengenai-ateisme/#more-244.

moral guidelines. Wati maintains that moral consciousness is based on altruism which is found in every human being. There is awareness of not harming others. Morality changes according to the development of society and science. She maintains that the basis for morality is only one: harming none.

From Legal Uncertainty to A Search for A Common Ethics

Learning from legal uncertainty, atheists in Indonesia have begun to pay more attention to "polite", ethical ways of discussing religion, atheism, and all related topics in Indonesia. They define and address what "offending" God or religion means in a time and place where theists set the definition religiously, socially, and in a legal way.

Karl Karnadi said that because he had studied in Germany since 2006, he did not receive comments of hatred and enmity or discrimination. He received harsh comments regarding atheists, including those by what he termed as radical Islamists such as Hidayah.com, Arrahmah.com and voa-Islam.com. However, he found that his publicly declared atheism receives support not only from other atheists whom he didn't know previously but also from Muslims, Christians, and other theists who showed their respect and tolerance. Karnadi came to realize that the more open he became the more open others became. The more atheists become open to the public, the more they get supportive views toward their existence from Indonesian society.

In this spirit, Karnadi wanted to formulate their views and debates as politely and positively as possible to show that they have good intentions. They want to make friends, not enemies. Karnadi quotes local, Javanese words *"Witing trisno jalaran soko kulino*", meaning "love grows out of mutual understanding and meeting and then interaction becomes normal". Through Indonesian Atheists, Karnadi and friends introduced many aspects of atheism and give positive impressions to the public.

Thus, through the Facebook group and webpages, such as www.facebook.com/ateis.menjawab2, which currently has 23,074 likes, Karnadi seeks to create a medium for members, atheists and theists, to ask and comment cleanly and politely. The Facebook account also sends greetings on religious holidays as follows:

> We, the ABAM administration, send you Happy Galungan and Kuningan to those who celebrate them, " Happy Fasting" and "Happy Idul Fitri" to Muslims, "Happy Vesak Day 2557", or "Happy Indonesian Anniversary, may the future be more tolerant" to the atheist or theist friends.

These Facebook statuses and comments suggest healthy conversations that Karnadi hopes to see. Hatalla Langit posts his status: "Thank you for having been critical of my religion. I don't agree with some of the criticisms, but I agree with some others. All are interesting, as long as we are not attacking each other. " Another writes: "I can be more open to being religious." Another one writes: "Hopefully you become more accommodative, and respect and enjoy each other's faith. Theist."

Introducing and shuttering the myth about atheism in predominantly religious communities in Indonesia and the world remains a challenge for Karnadi and his friends. When Karnadi was asked if atheists are interested to spread Atheism like missionary religions, he replied in the following way:

> Atheism is not a doctrine, not a religion, not an ideology. Atheism is not an ism. It is not athe + ism, but it is a + theism. So there is nothing to proselytize. What we spread to the public is not atheism, but religious freedom, science, care for humanity, Bhineka Tunggal Ika, critical and mature attitude toward difference, and readiness for defending discriminated groups. I think many religious individuals agree with all of these. I'm ready to cooperate with anybody who agrees with these dreams, atheist or theist.

For Wati, only vocal minority in society shows their resistance against atheism. She understands if they show antipathy against new ideas. Therefore, she invites others to know an atheist. If they knew an atheist they would realize atheists were humans too, only that they have different views.

Wati hopes for the protection of the rights of all thoughts in Indonesia, not only atheism but also other minorities. She hopes for interaction between faith communities and theist and atheist communities in Indonesia. She wants interaction between everyone, including Ahmadiyya, Shi'a, traditional beliefs (*kepercayaan*), atheists, agnostics, deists, and all others. Pluralism comes from tolerance, and tolerance comes from healthy interaction, she affirms.

For Rainny, it is not her desire to call religious people to give up their beliefs. She just wants that atheists can live without pressure and fear in Indonesia. She still cannot erase the word "Islam" from her identity card. It is an official thing for everyone to state their religion (among the officially recognized ones) on their identity cards. Also when getting married, one has to follow the existing regulation. But to other atheists, she wants to say: "Don't be afraid, you are not alone."

The public discourse also concerns what constitutes politeness, insulting, or offensive when it comes to faith, religion, and God (as well as ethnicity and race called SARA). Karnadi is aware that many on the Internet demonstrate false accusations, insults, and hatred against each other. He attempts not to be trapped in that attitude. At the same time, religions and ideologies should not be immune from critical views. Differences of views should be discussed, rather than banned or punished. Attacks or provocative comments are different from criticisms. A good criticism in his view leads people to ask questions and discuss the topics: "Although I am honest and assertive in giving criticisms, I don't agree with insults or personal attacks." [21] Considering the legal case against Alexander Aan mentioned above, Karnadi calls his atheist friends not to say things arbitrarily.[22] The Jakarta Globe's editor suggests that "atheism is a fundamental right of citizens who choose not to have God in their belief systems. But atheists who want to proclaim their beliefs outside their circles might want to think carefully before zealously taking on established religions or worse, denigrating religious faiths" (Osman 2012).

Apart from journalists, people have expressed diverse comments on the Internet regarding the legal status of atheists in Indonesia. In response to a survey question regarding "when an Indonesian becomes an atheist", a reader from Aceh writes:" The issue is not about atheism, but it is about offending religion in either direct or indirect way. If an atheist is silent there should be no problem, but now in reality they deliberately show themselves by insulting religion arbitrarily." Another one, Fatimah, from Depok, gives her comment: "The Article 156 KUHP is right. Indonesia holds Pancasila. In civic education during my high school years, I learnt the law has to be in accordance with Pancasila. Being an atheist is subject to the law. Do not make our Eastern culture the same as the Western culture from Europe. We are not the same, and we are more civilized." Another reader says: "Which religion is insulted? He is free to believe or not to believe in God." Another supportive comment from Yogyakarta read as follows:

> Regardless of Article 156 KUHP and Pancasila, I think religious freedom is a fundamental human right, a Muslim, Catholic, Buddhist, or even non-believer. By being religious, we cannot serve as God and judge others who do not believe in God. With KUHP, the State is too interventionist in the people's beliefs. The State should focus on eradicating poverty and corruption rather than intervening in people's

[21] http://xwisnuajix.wordpress.com/2011/08/11/wawancara-dengan-atheis/.

[22] http://www.merdeka.com/khas/kumpulan-penolak-tuhan-komunitas-ateis-2.html.

> faith. I am a Muslim and I have never been taught by my parent and my religious teacher to bother others who do not believe in God or act criminally against them.[23]

Some Indonesian Islamist organizations in their websites offer their responses. For example, Hidayatullah.com begins its story with the following: "This is a warning for all parents who always trust that their kids are all alright, even the kids who study in a religion-based university. This group who do not believe in God has found their safe place on the Internet, in social media such as Facebook, Friendster, Multiple, and Twitter, thanks to the advancement of information technology." The story reads: "The atheists could pretend as if they are religious but they, in fact, hate religion." It concludes with this: "So, if you think that the haters of god and religion are just quiet, then you are wrong!" [24]

A Facebook group named "*Dialog Ateis Indonesia*", which currently has 12, 558 members, has active postings by self-declared atheists and theists. [25] The front page reads as follows: "All people become religious or believe in God because of tradition. 99% of them are born to a religion. This means there is no reasoning before belonging to one religion. What they have is a mere justification for their identity. Everybody knows this tradition that has lasted for more than 2,75 million years is wrong."

In responding to a question about why atheists often attack (*menyerang*) religion, the atheists replied as follows:

> Before making any conclusion that atheists often attack religion, we must define what "attacking" means: personal, physical, argumentative in the form of *argumentum ad hominem,* or dialectic of thinking. We have to understand that nothing is immune to criticism, including ideas about religion and divinity. Atheism is not a doctrine, and what atheists do is not monolithic or the same. Many atheists support the existence of religion but resist violence based on religion. Criticisms or attacks toward religion come also from the religious communities against each other and other interpretations of the same religion. A religion attacks other religions. Many religious people attack others violently. Are these not deemed an attack too? The question is: Who actually attacks religions most frequently?[26]

[23] http://www.bbc.co.uk/indonesia/forum/2012/01/120120_forum_atheis.shtml.

[24] http://www.voa-islam.com/lintasberita/hidayatullah/2010/12/14/12300/kaum-atheis-indonesia-subur-di-dunia-maya/.

[25] www.facebook.com/groups/ai.dai/permalink/301217470023738/.

[26] http://indonesianatheists.wordpress.com/2013/05/22/suratrakyat-mitos-dan-pertanyaan-mengenai-ateisme/#more-244

The atheists recognize that, unlike the official religions, their future in Indonesia is still uncertain, but the course of research is very wide open and promising. Recent legal cases and debates suggest more atheist individuals will likely come to the public and social media thus creating even more vibrant, dynamic debates about public morality and religiosity. Pancasila, Bhineka Tunggal Ika, Indonesia, and more broadly humanity, continue to be redefined and reinterpreted within changing circumstances.

Conclusion

This article has shown that combined with globalization and greater access to information and communication technology, the fall of Soeharto's regime in 1998 marked a new phase in Indonesian's democratization, allowing old and new voices in the public sphere, including atheists defining themselves as no less Indonesian and more importantly no less moral than the rest. The well-read and young educated individuals emerge as a response to their upbringing, education, and news about religious radicalism on the one hand and liberalism and science development on the other hand. In recent years, atheists have been more assertive in proclaiming their absence or lack of religious faith and defending disbelief in god or gods. In their discourses, Pancasila and Bhineka Tunggal Ika have to be addressed. Some have felt indoctrination, but others want to redefine and reinterpret the Indonesian state philosophy and national slogan. For them, Pancasila should serve as a unifying tool for every citizen and should not mean compulsion of a belief in God, or of belonging to any religion. Bhineka Tunggal Ika, unity in diversity, should mean tolerance of diverse ideas, not to exclude, let alone discriminate against non-believers. Indonesian atheists are aware of their minority status like the Ahmadiyya, Shi'a, Christians, and other religious groups, but they know that being an atheist has been more difficult for them than the other religious minorities.

Toward this public ethic, they have tried to refute misconceptions about the conflation between communism and atheism, about immoral or inhumane atheism, and about the common manipulation of Pancasila to reject dissent. They were also critical of the Blasphemy Law for they considered it to have contravened the fundamental human rights and the International Laws on political and civil rights. Focusing on individual human rights, they need support groups both in their localities and internationally, both online and offline. They have demonstrated that being an atheist and being an Indonesian are not incompatible. They wanted to demonstrate to other Indonesians that they are no longer a threat as in

the past as perceived and reconstructed by the State and the mainstream organizations and leaders.

These atheists are not only redefining Indonesia but also contextualizing atheism in Indonesia. They redefine Indonesia as not a religious nation-state despite the Muslim majority and attempts at making the country more toward an Islamic state or society. In many official statements and textbooks, Indonesia has been regarded as neither a theocracy nor a secular state. It is a Pancasila state. This allows atheists to redefine Indonesia by redefining Pancasila and Bhineka Tunggal Ika. They are not against common ground and unity. They support these but they emphasize humanity and morality as the common ground: not the sacred common ground, not the religious common ground.

Pancasila has been analyzed as an ideology of tolerance, a political compromise, a civil religion, or a common platform for all Indonesians. As an open ideology, Pancasila has been praised by many for its inclusiveness and tolerance, but has been criticized by others: some Islamists want to limit its role as they make Islam their political basis. Secular Indonesians define Pancasila as a common platform against Islamization, Arabization, and neo-liberalization, but atheists, even the liberals have not been inclusive enough when the latter promote religious liberalism or religious pluralism. Pancasila is both liberating and constraining. Indonesian atheists envisage moral pluralism and common ground.

Further research should be conducted on the different dimensions of Indonesian atheism: philosophical, theological, anthropological, sociological, legal, and political. In other countries, there has been research on America's civil religion, sacred ground, common ground, French laicité, Turkish secularism, and others. This paper has considered atheism in terms of philosophical, legal, and ethical questions in Indonesia and offers preliminary data that can be analyzed further to offer sound theoretical arguments.

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